

Financial Principles of the Bible

Part 5: *What* is the tithe and *where* do we tithe?

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

The Tithe is Not From the Law

In the last teaching of this series we learned that the tithe is not from the Law. Tithing existed during the period of the Law, but scripture records multiple examples of tithing prior to the Law being given to Moses (and also speaks clearly of tithing after the resurrection of Christ). This is profound! If you look for teachings about tithing, you will see many good teachings about it, but you will also see many teachings about how tithing “is not for today” because it was from the Law and we are no longer under the Law in Christ. They are right - we are no longer under the Law in Christ. But they are also wrong, tithing was not from the Law!

Recall that God respected Abel’s offering, but did not respect Cain’s because it was not “rightly divided.” (Septuagint) Cain gave the wrong division / percentage. You can’t give an offering of a wrong division / percentage because an offering is based on our freewill. The implication is that Abel offered a tithe and Cain did not.

Also recall Abram tithing one-tenth of all to the high priest Melchizedek. (Gen. 14) This happened roughly 630 years before Moses was given the Law by God. Similarly Jacob promised God “I am surely going to give a tenth to You!” (Gen. 28:22) The Hebrew for “a tenth” in that verse, *Asar*, is used throughout Deut. 14 as “tithe.” So here we see Jacob making a vow that included tithing to the Lord – and hundreds of years before the Law was given through Moses.

Because of this, we don't have to be concerned with learning about the tithe from what was written in the Law, because we know tithing is not from the Law. The Lord reveals much about the tithe in the Law; He told Moses to write it down. It takes Jesus to reveal much, if not all, of what is in the Law. For example, the sacrificial lamb makes sense in light of Jesus' sacrifice. Similarly, there is revelation to be gained in the Law concerning the tithe even though tithing did not originate from the Law.

What is the Tithe?

According to the Hebrew, the tithe is quite simply “a tenth.” Tithe (in Hebrew *ma’ aser*) comes from the Hebrew *Asar* - which means 10. Adding “*ma*” as a prefix is like adding “th” to the end of “ten.” *Ma’ aser* is “tenth.” So when Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, it was a 10th.

So, the question of amount as it relates to tithing is self-evident from the original Hebrew word. In fact it is impossible to offer a tithe of any percentage other than 10%. A quarter of something is always 25%. Half of something is always 50% of that something. A tithe is always 10%. So, if the Word of God is our final authority, God has already declared what the amount is. It is 10%. Not 17%, 12%, 4%, or any other percent! If Jesus is our Savior, He is also our Lord! And if Jesus is Lord, we obey Him. His Word is our final authority.

"And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord." (Lev. 27:32) The shepherd would count sheep by making his flock all walk through a narrow gate. As the sheep passed through the gate one-by-one they could be easily counted. Here we see that every 10th sheep was "holy to the Lord." Why? Because every 10th sheep was the tithe for that shepherd! Notice also, that while yet in our possession, the 10th is holy to the Lord.

In Gen. 28:22, Jacob says *"And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."* The tithe as a very specific percentage: a tenth.

The scriptures teach us that the tithe is not just "any old 10%" but it is our first and best 10%. You give your best 10th because the tithe is to be an act of worship - you bring your best to worship. Imagine that you were going to host a foreign dignitary (even a king or president) in your home. Which silverware would you use? Which china? Would you offer Cheerios or mac-and-cheese? Surely your finest china, dinnerware, and food would be presented to the king. Well, when we make an offering to the Lord we are making an offering to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! When we worship we are presenting ourselves to Him as well! Let us offer our first and our best!

So the tithe is a tenth - but a tenth of what? Prov. 3:9-10 makes it clear *"Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."* (Prov. 3:9-10) The tithe is a 10th of all your increase - everything that comes into your life. Tithing is an invitation. When we "honor the Lord" we are worshiping the Lord. The tithe allows us to give honor to whom the increase came from!

In the Law the tithe is obligatory. That said, it is tough to say whether the tithe was obligatory before, or is obligatory after that. What is for sure is the tithe is an INVITATION from the Lord to enter into a dynamic relationship with Him as it relates to Him blessing our finances. He is inviting us into something, so it is going to be good!

If you never tithe, your salvation and God's love for you is unchanged. God loves us regardless of anything that we do. You cannot get God to love you more. And you cannot make Him love you less. The tithe effects our finances. He is inviting us into a financial partnership

that has been designed to have great effect in our lives, but we don't have to participate. Sometimes when we struggle with a teaching we can feel so badly that we are struggling that it is hard to simply hear the teaching from the Word. So, if this teaching is hard for you right now, just relax into it and hear the Word for what it says. No need to feel bad. Simply let the Word speak to you for what it says. If the teaching opens a new door of understanding that's great.

Whose is the Tithe?

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord." (Lev. 27:30) Notice it does not say "it **will be** the Lord's once you give it to Him."

"And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord." (Lev. 27:32) Notice that even before the shepherd set aside every tenth animal of his flock, the tithe was already destined to be "holy to the Lord." While the tithe is still in your possession, the Lord says the tithe is His.

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation." (Mal. 3:8-9) Malachi chapter 3 reveals the ownership of the tithe. It's God's! Here's how we know . . . how is it possible to rob someone of something they did not own? Yet, God says we "have robbed Him in tithes and offerings." That means that the tithes are His. He owns them.

This is a powerful revelation if we find ourselves struggling about deciding whether or not to give a tithe from our increase. We tend to think that question amounts to "do I want to be generous towards God or not." You can do mental battle over that question, but it is not scripturally accurate. Since the tithe belongs to God while it is yet still in our possession, if we are deciding whether or not to give a tithe from our increase, the question at hand is actually "do I want to rob God?"

If that burns, press into these scriptures and let the Word speak to you.

Where do we Tithe?

*"But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. **There you shall take** your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, **your tithes**, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks."* (Deut. 12:5-6) God chooses where we are to take our tithes. And where are we supposed to take our tithes? "THERE" . . . to the place He has chosen!

*“But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry **the tithe**, or if **the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name** is too far from you, when the Lord your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses.”* (Deut. 14:24-25) Again, we are clearly instructed to take our tithe and “go to the place which the Lord chooses!” And that place is the place where the Lord chooses to put His name. Note also that in the agrarian society, God tells them if 10% of their crop or livestock was too cumbersome to transport to the place of offering the tithe, they could sell the 10% back at home for money and then bring the tithe in the form of money. Contrary to what some teach, tithing is clearly NOT limited to grain and cattle. Money is an appropriate format as well.

And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him . . . ’ (Deut. 26:1-3) The Hebrew word for “chooses” is *bachar* meaning “select.” God selects the place we bring our tithes! The Hebrew word for “abide” is *shakan* meaning “to reside, permanently stay, to dwell.” In verse 3, we see that when we go to that place where God has selected to make His name abide, we will find the priest there.

So, where was the priest? He was in the temple (or tabernacle before the temple was built). The temple was the local church. Our tithes are to be given where God has chosen them to be given. And He has directed them to be given to the local church.

Did the Lord say, “give your tithe to your neighbor who is low on rent money?” Did the Lord say “give your tithe to the prophet who came into town?” How about “give your tithe to someone who is doing the work of the Lord, and is in need?” The Lord tells us where to give our tithe and it is not to any of these otherwise worthy causes - it is to our local church. Yet the Word does say to give to your neighbor who is in need, and to give to other ministers to support them. But what is that kind of giving called? That’s an offering, NOT the TITHE.

By way of example, let’s say you personally gave \$100 to a friend and told him or her that it was for your mutual friend Sally. Upon receiving the \$100 bill from you, your friend went and gave the money to another friend of yours, Veronica. When you followed up with your self-willed messenger they said “Veronica was in need, so I decided to give your \$100 to her instead of Sally.” What would we call that? Basically, it’s theft. Your friend was entrusted with your \$100 and it was to be given to Sally. When your messenger friend decided to give the money to another, they effectively took that money into their ownership (stealing it from you) and then decided to do what they wanted to do with that money.

The tithe belongs to the local church because the tithe is the Lord's. It's His money and He is clear in saying "take this to where I tell you to take it." And God has told us to take the tithe to the priest - to the House of the Lord. To the temple. To the local church.

This message is **not** coming from Pastor Brad because our church is in any need financially. In fact, Brad realizes that many of us may at some point or another move to another city or another church, etc. The goal in presenting this message is not about blessing this ministry, but about blessing the members of this congregation with a scriptural understanding of the tithe that will bless each of us individually for years and years - even if it is well beyond the walls of this specific ministry! So, please understand the context of this message.

That said, whether a church is in any need financially should have NO BEARING on where we give the tithe, because the Lord has made it very clear where He wants **HIS TITHE** to be given! So let us be students of His Word (disciples) that are obedient to His wishes!

*But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes . . . **Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which the Lord chooses . . .*** (Deut. 12:10-14) God tells us to pay attention, to take heed, to be diligent and intentional about something - to not offer our offerings in "every place that we see." There is an important mindset about offerings we see here: "intentionality." Tithes are to be given at a specific location and we are to "take heed" to not offer them in any old place along our journey to give them to the place they were intended to go!

*And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes **to the house of our God**, to the rooms of the storehouse. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are; and **we will not neglect the house of our God.*** (Nehemiah 10:38-39) The temple had storerooms for the tithes and offerings of grain (and corrals for the offerings of cattle). The tithes came to the priests (the Levites) and to the house of God (the local church). We also see reference to the storehouses of the house of God in Malachi 3:10 "*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house . . .*"

Let's look at an example where someone "did their own thing" in bringing an offering to the Lord . . . *And Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.' Therefore **I felt compelled**, and offered a*

*burnt offering.” And Samuel said to Saul, “**You have done foolishly.** You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”*

(1 Sam.13:11-14)

Samuel, the prophet, had told Saul, the king, that he would be there in 7 days to make an offering to the Lord prior to Saul and his army engaging in battle. On the 7th day, with still no sight of Samuel, Saul took matters into his own hands and made the offering to the Lord himself before Samuel arrived. Saul later recounted to Samuel “I felt compelled.” This happens to many believers as well “I felt so strongly compelled to give my tithe to that homeless woman - she needed it.” Samuel responded “you have done foolishly.” Saul introduced self-will into the offering, instead of doing exactly what the Lord had instructed him to do through the prophet Samuel. God took the kingdom from him because of it. God was looking for a man wholly submitted to His Will and Saul was not. God chose David instead to establish the lineage of His Son Jesus through.

May we understand God’s Will as it relates to the tithe and be obedient to it!

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

Tithing existed during the period of the Law, but scripture records multiple examples of tithing prior to the Law being given to Moses (and also speaks clearly of tithing after the resurrection of Christ). Recall that God respected Abel's offering, but did not respect Cain's because it was not "rightly divided." Cain gave the wrong division / percentage. Also recall Abram tithing one-tenth of all to the high priest Melchizedek. (Gen. 14) This happened roughly 630 years before Moses was given the Law by God. Similarly Jacob promised God "I am surely going to give a tenth to You!" (Gen. 28:22) We don't have to be concerned with learning about the tithe from what was written in the Law, because we know tithing is not from the Law. The Lord reveals much about the tithe in the Law; He told Moses to write it down. There is revelation to be gained in the Law concerning the tithe even though tithing did not originate from the Law.

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So the tithe is a tenth - but a tenth of what? Prov. 3:9-10 makes it clear "*Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.*" (Prov. 3:9-10) The tithe is a 10th of all your increase - everything that comes into your life.

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Where do we Tithe? Deut. 12:5-6, Deut. 14:24-25, and Deut. 26:1-3 clearly show us that God chooses where we are to take our tithes and that we are to “go to the place which the Lord chooses!” We see in Deut. 14 that the place the Lord chooses is “*the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name.*” And we see in Deut. 26 that when we go to “*the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name*” we will find a very specific person there - a priest.

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May we understand God’s Will as it relates to the tithe and take heed to bring it to the place the Lord chooses! (Deut. 12:14)

Points to Ponder . . .

- Imagine you were talking with a younger brother or sister in Christ who happens to mention that they have been “working on tithing a greater percentage of their income.” You have your bible with you and they are willing to sit down with you for a few minutes. What would you share with them?
- We tend to think of tithing as “offering our own money” but, as we’ve learned in this teaching, that is not how the scriptures depict it. How has realizing that “the tithe is the Lord’s” blessed you or changed your perspective about the tithe?
- What can we learn from how Saul inserted his own will into the offering? By contrast what can we learn from the heart stance with which David approached making offerings to the Lord? (See 2 Sam. 24:18-24, and 1 Chron. 29:10-22 for examples)