

Tithe--Something You Ought To Do?

There are many different views that people have created in order to defend the concept of a Christian tithe. I have covered quite a bit about the simple concept that the practice of Christian tithe, which is Christians paying 10 percent of their income regularly within a Church group is really very very different then the biblical practice of tithe.

A quick look in the Bible and one can plainly see that tithe is spoken of as a practice of the Old Testament. What they don't seem to see is that it was sacrificial in nature. In fact all of the temple practices of the Old Testament had the central purpose of making atonement for Israel in the Old Testament. After all this was before Jesus had made His perfect offering for sin, on the cross. And it's also quite clear that Jesus and the New Testament church did not have a storehouse.

But many people seem to believe that since it seems as if the new testament does not exactly or clearly change the old testament practice of tithe, that it then is to be a continued practiced in the new covenant. One of the few mentions of tithe in the New Testament is where Jesus was speaking to a group of the Pharisees and he says they tithe, and rightly they should. This is then taken as a verification that tithe is something that should be done.....

Mt 23:23* Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay **tithe** of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Lu 11:42* But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye **tithe** mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

The first thing we ought to do is to set this into it correct context. Jesus was clearly not speaking to His followers but to people of Israel in a time before He had going to the cross and made the offering of His blood for sin. Certainly the completely accurate and correct thing for Him to say was-- yes you need to tithe, that is to say you need to keep on making those old covenant offerings for sin because He had not yet gone to the cross. But we also ought to realize that Jesus was criticizing these same leaders for placing money and physical items (these were the goods that were being tithed) ahead of the higher and more important principles of God. So Jesus was telling them you follow the outward parts of your covenant but you're missing the more important aspects.

We should of course look into the practices of the New Testament. It's very clear the New Testament church had no storehouse for goods. They were not accumulating wealth for themselves but rather following the example of Jesus which is to give directly to the poor and needy and to the needs of the gospel as God leads. Yes there are occasional perhaps even frequent times of taking up collections for these specific gospel oriented purposes, however there was no temple building plan nor a plan of the accumulated wealth in the leadership of the church, nor to support a full-time professional ministry.

We need to understand the history of the Christian tithe. The Christian tithe originates from the Roman Empire and their influence on Christianity. It was Christians sitting in console with Roman emperors who chose to utilize the Old Testament temple or synagogue system as the functional basis for Christianity. They chose to utilize the pagan temples as meeting places for Christians. They chose to minister from an altar and have a priest/pastor as leader. They chose to confine most people in a congregation which had no ministry within the function of the church but rather have the job of supporting these structures and ministerial functions. These were the choices and developments that literally can be traced back to the Roman Empire in the influence on Christianity which created the Catholic Church.

These were the decisions and influences of the "kings of the gentiles-- the princes of the gentiles" that Jesus warned of specifically (Mt. 20:25-26, Mar. 10:42-45, Lu. 22:25-29). Three times in the gospels Jesus warned that the "rulers of the gentiles" (certainly the Romans where the gentile rulers over Israel at that time) exercise authority one over another among themselves. This is a very accurate description of an empire, the roman empire. But Jesus said "not so among you" and so we see his followers doing their best to reach toward his highest example of ministry function which is to work in groups of equals and to follow the commands of a Leader who is not physically there, but rather to follow the commands of God the Father in heaven, and of course the Christians after Jesus's death and resurrection proclaim Christ as their head.

And over the centuries these choices of the Roman Empire were very well defended biblically by utilizing snips and bits from the Old Testament occasionally combined with a word or two from the New Testament. So we see the Christian tithe, which is clearly in history invented by the medieval Catholic Church being defended by the choice its own choice of structure and ministerial function. What I need to say is if you have already believed you must attend a church service every week, you must be a member of a congregation which does not minister, that you must be under the authority of a pastor, that you must meet with other believers in a large building, then it's rather easy to believe that you ought to pay tithe. Because tithe fits right into the established system of function. And so those buzzwords of 'House of God, sanctuary, ordained minister, delegated authority, submit, obey', seem to be the biblical verification of practices that have been handed down through tradition. But anyone who studies history clearly understands these are choices made by people in the past outside of the New Testament biblical function. This is begrudgingly acknowledged by most Christian groups but rarely ever openly talked about.

What so many people do not seem to fully understand is that the New Testament changes the sacrificial laws as of the Old Testament. And it makes perfect sense. We have a different and better offering in the blood of Jesus Christ! Tithe was simply the number of animals and the number of specific crops that God needed to be offered to make atonement for Israel's sin in the Old Testament. The New Testament changes the temple from a physical building to people. The New Testament changes the priesthood from being an authority only found in the Levitical tribe, to a priesthood and authority that is in all believers. The New Testament changes the functioning of Christians to be completely led by God on all terms, that is to say meetings can be in small groups or occasionally large groups but we ought to simply use what we have to meet in since we have a different purpose than Israel. The purpose of the New Testament church is to spread the gospel which means that we need to send people outward to those who have not heard the gospel as well as to help and pray for the sick, help and pray for those that need deliverance, and to help the poor and needy. The New Testament church had gospel witnessing meetings. They understood their purpose much better than we do since their practices were centered around the function of the gospel. Obviously if we are practicing Old Testament principles we are very easily disconnected from the

purpose of the gospel which is not found in the Old Testament. We are teaching a Gospel that we are not practicing.

Many Christian churches teach the New Covenant while they're practicing the old, and so it becomes an hypocrisy. It becomes that little bit of leaven that leavens in the whole lump. There is much good doctrine in Christian churches but our practice of Christianity is actually very far from what we preach. So we have a situation where a church leader genuinely attempts to teach the congregation that they are ministers, that they have a priesthood, that they are the temple of God-- and yet at the same time we are sitting in a practice that says very different. We are preaching the New Testament while practicing a form of the Old Testament that contradicts what we are teaching.

Tithe is one of the strongest "glues" that holds us to the Old Covenant practices. As I said there are many biblical excuses and reasoning for the Christian ties. Some say it is law, some say it is above the law. If only we could see the simple verse that changes ties that is in the New Testament. Hebrews 7:8 says....

"And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth."

Here men that die receive tithes-- these are the Old Covenant Levitical high priests who received the tithe. But the New Testament ordains a new High Priest, Jesus. Again most Christian churches will of course agree that Jesus is the High Priest, what they exclude is the fact that only the high priest in the Bible has the right to receive tithes. So what tithe does Jesus our High Priest need to receive? This simple verse spells it out.....

There, in heaven, He, Jesus, receives of them up who it is witnessed that he lives. Gospel witnessing is the New Testament tithe. Jesus wants to receive the souls of those who have received the witness that He is alive. Gospel witnessing is the New Testament tithe.