

Is Tithing New Testament?

Question: One area that I am researching is the Tithe and offering. I know very well what Malachi 3:7-12 teaches that according to the Law if a believer falls short then they have robbed God and fall under a curse. Paul wrote to the Galatians in Galatians. 3:13 telling them they had been redeemed from the cruse of the Law.

The main point of Malachi 3 is often overlooked. The prophet was telling the Jews to turn their hearts to God and give with love so the ministries would be fully supplied. I know that God wants us to give—and I believe in the law of reciprocity—and I know we need to support our local church, orphans, widows, etc. Here's my question shouldn't support and giving be from the heart and not because we are under a mandatory legal system? What are your views on Tithes, offerings and giving? –Brother Keith

Bible Answer: You asked a great question. I get this question all the time.

Tithing began before the law was introduced. The Law simply regulated the tithe. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, 400 years before the time of Moses and the Law, and according to Romans 4:12 we are to walk in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham. If tithing was good for him, it should be good for us, too.

We give tithes like Abraham gave them—not by the Law but by faith. And beside that, if the people of God paid 10 percent before the Law, and 10 percent under the Law, shouldn't we, who live by grace, be doing any less when we have a better covenant (Heb. 7:22)?

There is a passage in Hebrews, which deals with this issue directly. It is Hebrews 7:8:

In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but

in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.

Melchizedek received Abraham's tithe. The Hebrew writer shows that Melchizedek is a prefigure of Christ. We can conclude that just as Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek, we give a tithe to Christ who is declared to be living.

Some people think this is a new issue. It is as old as the second century when more and more Gentiles were being converted. The early Jewish believers had no problem with tithing since they had done it under the Law and gave it to the priests. They simply gave their tithe to the elders of the church and did by love. However, as the church became less Jewish this issue came up to the church fathers. They answered the question of tithing with Matt. 23:23: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."

Notice Jesus said, "You should have practiced the latter (justice, mercy and faithfulness), without neglecting the former (tithing)." The fathers argued, and rightful so, that Jesus word ends the discussion. Since Jesus said not to neglect the former—being tithing—then no believer should neglect tithing. I wholeheartedly agree!

Some argue that Jesus words are not applicable to us today, because Jesus was under the Law and spoke to those under the Law. Their theory goes something like this: Jesus was giving an instruction to the Jews, so His words are not binding to us.

The problem with this interpretation is that these teachers are bringing Christ down to the level of a Jewish prophet or Teacher of the Law. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, so this means every word that comes out of His mouth is eternal.

He cannot say anything without it being “spiritual law” and everlasting. Jesus emphasizes this point by saying, “Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matt. 24:35).

These supposed Bible teachers are making the words of Jesus pass away—obsolete and out of date. Besides, these same teachers pick and choose which teachings of Christ in the gospels they believe are applicable to us. I notice that even these teachers agree that most of Christ’s teachings are for us; however, because they are predisposed against tithing, they have had to come up with an excuse for not obeying the clear word of Christ in Mat. 23:23.

As a believer, you have to show who your Lord is! Is it the teachers who tell you tithing is not New Testament and who tell you that Jesus word on the subject is out of date; or is it Jesus who clearly told us not to neglect tithing? No modern teacher has the right to tell you to disobey Jesus instruction on tithing. Period!

Even if the only passages in the New Testament was Jesus’ word, then that would be sufficient, however, I want to present other New Testament passages on the subject. Let’s look at Paul’s teaching on giving.

Paul also uses the pattern of tithing under the law in 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 and says, “Don’t you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”

Paul argues that just as the priests got their food from the tithes of the people, so the preachers should live the same way. This passage clearly shows the mentality of the apostle and his understanding of carrying over the concept of tithing into the church. The passage often used to contradict this is

2 Cor. 9:7: "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

The argument goes something like this: "Each believer has a right to decide for himself what to give and should not be told what percentage he should contribute."

The problem with this argument is that the above passage is not dealing with giving to support the church, but rather giving to the poor. Under the Law, giving to the poor was a freewill offering. The Law commanded freewill offerings as well as tithes: "But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks" (Deut. 12:5-6).

It is quite inconsistent for people to appeal to freewill offerings yet claim that tithing has been abolished. Both tithing and freewill offerings were incorporated in the Law as the above passage shows, but they preceded the Law, thus they both should be practiced. The burden of proof is placed on those who teach that tithing has been abolished. If so, where in the New Testament does it clearly say that tithing has been abolished?

One last thing, notice the resemblance of the language Paul uses in the first passage in Galatians and compare it with the Old Testament passage about tithing:

"Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor" (Gal. 6:6).

"And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household. When you have finished setting aside a

tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied" (Deut. 26:11-12).

Galatians 6 is dealing with giving to the teacher of the gospel and he uses the same language about the Levites receiving the tithe of the people and he calls it "all good things." This is pretty good internal evidence that the early church tithed to the ministers of the gospel, although, I admit it is not explicit evidence.

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