

IS TITHING TAUGHT IN THE NT?

By Denver Cheddie

It is believed that since the tithes were part of the Law which is no longer applicable to Christians, so too the tithes are no longer a requirement for us today. It is also a fact that many preachers, in a relentless greed for filthy lucre, have manipulated crowds into giving huge sums of money for worthless causes. However the issue concerning us is not whether certain preachers are worthy to receive financial support, but whether the NT requires of us the tithing.

It must be noted that the tithing predates the law. The earliest reference to tithing before the Law was Abraham and Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20). Heb. 5:6, 10 state that Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek rather than after Aaron. In chapter 7 it discusses how great Melchizedek was that Abraham paid tithes to him. Although it is not spelled out, it would seem obvious that if Jesus is a high priest comparable to Melchizedek, then we ought to pay tithes to him as a testimony of His greatness (Heb. 7:3).

In Matt. 23:23; Lk. 11:42 Jesus, in the midst of scorching condemnation of the Pharisees, stopped to commend their practice of tithing – even though they were not doing it with the right heart (Lk. 18:12). One could always argue that they were still under the old covenant and Jesus was simply advising them accordingly. However there are other NT allusions to the principle of tithing.

Among the reasons given for the tithe under the Law were:

1. the support of the ministry (Num. 18:21-26; Neh 10:37; 12:44; Mal 3:10),
2. the support of the poor (Deut. 14:27-29; 26:12-14).

Basically the tithe was used to further the work of God. Paul had much to say concerning this.

- Gal. 6:6 – we must share material things with those who teach us in the Word.
- 1 Cor. 9:7-14 – ministers are to be supported by the congregation. This is the way God ordained it.
- 1 Cor. 16:2 – there is a relationship between our earnings and our giving. Although the OT gives that ratio as 10%, this verse seems to leave it up to the individual's discretion. I could hardly imagine though that the ratio would be less. Much more is demanded of us than in the OT (Heb. 10:28,29; 12:25). To conclude that we are not required to tithe since the NT does not explicitly command it, is to totally miss the point of the NT.
- Matt. 10:10; Lk. 10:7, 8 – Jesus taught his disciples to live off what was given to them by others, He himself setting the example (Lk. 8:4).

Thus the precedent is clearly set in the NT that ministers ought to be supported financially, very much as was the case in the OT. It is also clear in both testaments that they should not seek to live extravagantly but to be satisfied with their basic needs being met (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

There are other reasons why we should tithe. The golden rule implies that if we give generously, we would always be in a position to lend and not borrow (2 Cor. 8, 9; Phil. 4:19). We are certainly not limited to the tithe but giving to the ministry and to the poor should be our way of life. And if you wish to call it by a different name, fine. The principle of tithing and giving is clearly presented in both testaments. Failure to take heed could only be the result of a stingy spirit. Furthermore, if tithing were more consistently practiced, most preachers would be able to devote themselves fully to the ministry, better able to minister to God's people, and missionary work would be well funded. If we really are Christians, these things should be of foremost importance to us.

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