

Learning About the Tithe

The Covenant Blessing of Giving

Introduction

Salvation was meant to have a life-changing impact upon every area of our lives. This includes our involvement with finances and possessions. Though many consider Christianity and money to be incompatible, the Bible contains a wealth of information and instruction concerning its use and abuse. The scriptures say a great deal about our financial priorities, stewardship, and responsibilities.

Though the Bible contains many cautions against the love of money, greed, and a carnal dependence upon it, it does not give a blanket condemnation against its value and use. It includes many scriptural principles concerning its proper purpose and function.

One of these principles involves the concept of tithing. This counseling booklet offers a comprehensive yet concise examination of this important financial principle. It explores the biblical guidelines concerning this subject and carefully considers what our relationship and responsibility to this financial principle should be.

THE CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP

Christian stewardship is defined as "an individual's responsibility to properly manage everything which God has entrusted to his or her care." The scriptures reveal that it is an area of responsibility which demands faithfulness: "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2).

Stewardship is an important dimension which involves the right use of our time, talents, resources, possessions, and finances. Tithing is a principle of financial giving included within the concept of stewardship.

Stewardship includes the recognition that everything, ultimately, belongs to God: "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness" (Ps. 24:1). It involves our accountability before Him for the proper use of everything we possess. This includes the scriptural use of a portion of our income for the glory of God, for the benefit of the kingdom, and for the furtherance of the gospel in the earth.

THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

The subject of financial stewardship is a challenging one to many. While most Christians have little difficulty accepting the scriptural guidelines for properly managing their finances or adjusting their financial lifestyle to the principles of God, some face this area of responsibility with confusion, consternation, and difficulty. It can actually become a major testing ground for their faith.

The awareness that our entire life belongs to the Lord, including our material possessions and money, is quite disturbing to some. The revelation that Christianity affects not only the spiritual dimension but our pocketbooks and purses as well is particularly sobering to some.

Problems arise either because of insufficient scriptural teaching, or because an individual has not fully surrendered his possessions and money to the Lordship of Christ.

We will examine the subject of tithing and carefully consider the reasons for it, as well as the blessings and benefits which come with it.

WHAT IS THE TITHE?

The tithe is a divine principle of giving ordained by God. Simply defined, the tithe means "one tenth". It is a spiritual system of proportional giving unto the Lord for the work of the kingdom. In the Old Testament, the tithe was a mandatory program of giving which equally applied to the whole nation of Israel. No one was exempt. It was levied upon the entire amount of one's income and produce: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of ALL THINE INCREASE" (Prov. 3:9, K.J.V.).

The Lord considered the tithe to be sacred and holy: "And all the TITHE OF THE LAND ...IT IS HOLY UNTO THE LORD" (Lev. 27:30, K.J.V.).

The tithe belonged to the Lord - it was His possession: "And all the tithe of the land ...IS THE LORD'S" (Lev. 27:30, K.J.V.).

WHEN DID THE TITHE BEGIN?

Contrary to the misconceptions of many, tithing was not initiated with the Laws of Moses. Though the tithe was a mandatory requirement after the giving of the Law, it was a financial principle which was observed by godly men long before the Laws of Moses came into effect. It traces its origin to the very beginning of history.

There is a definite indication that the tithing principle was first practiced when Cain and Abel brought the "firstfruits" of their labors unto the Lord (Gen. 4:3, 4). This lends support to the fact that God originally created this divine principle and imparted it to Adam.

The patriarchs of Israel also observed this principle hundreds of years before the institution of the Law. Abraham gave "tithes of all" to Melchizedek, King of Salem (Gen. 14:20, K.J.V.); Jacob made an oath unto the Lord concerning his

commitment to the tithe: "... all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. 28:22, K.J.V.).

These references prove the existence of the tithe principle long before the legal requirements of the Laws of Moses.

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