

## Tithe

The concept of tithes, or the giving of our “first fruits” to God, can be found from the very onset of scripture. In the Garden of Eden, God reserved for Himself the tree in the midst of the garden. Evidently, Adam and Eve passed this understanding down to their children because the Bible says that Abel brought of the “firstlings” of his flock. It does not say that Cain brought of his “first fruits” but only that he brought of the fruit of the ground. Could it be that was one of the reasons Cain’s offering was not accepted was because it wasn’t of the first fruits?

The tithe was an ordinance of the Mosaic law. However, it did not originate with the law, but rather preceded it. Even if one does not agree with the arguments given above, there is no arguing with the evidence of Genesis chapter 14:

(Gen 14:18-20 KJV) And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

The tithe mentioned in this setting was from the spoil taken when Abram came to the defense of Lot and the people of Sodom and was victorious over their captors. It has been argued that this was a voluntary tithe. The argument has no basis. In fact, Hebrews chapter 7 makes no distinction between the tithe Abraham gave and the one commanded by the law. The only distinction is who received them.

When Abram returned from subduing the enemy, the King of Sodom did not ask for any of the spoil, but only for the “persons” who had been taken away captive. The spoil was Abram’s to keep, but he absolutely refused to profit from it and gave it all back—except for the tithes given to Melchizedek. While taking a closer look at this setting of scripture for this writing, I saw in Abram an even greater concern about tithe than I had ever noticed before. He was so concerned about God’s tithe that, even though he did not intend to profit even one penny from the spoil, he still would not withhold God’s tithe. God had given them that victory and Abram was resolute about giving God the firstfruits of the spoil.

So, hundreds of years before the ordinances of the law, we find Abraham giving tithe to God.

Since there is no setting of scripture where God explains an ordinance of tithe to Abram (such as there is for the ordinance of circumcision) it is logical that the giving of tithe, or of one’s firstfruits, were passed down from generation to generation, especially with the reference to Abel giving of the “firstlings” of his flock.

When the tithe was instituted into the law, it was not the start of tithes. Just as it would have been wrong to commit adultery prior to the law, it was also wrong not to return to

God the first fruits of what He had blessed one with. God gives to His children abundantly and asks only that we honor Him with a tenth.

In the law, it was established that the tithe would be for the support of the Levites, or, the ministry.

(Num 18:21 KJV) And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

(Num 18:24 KJV) But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

(There was an additional tithe given to the orphans and widows. If you will notice, (Deu 14:28-29 KJV) this tithe was given only once every three years. There is no way that it can be argued that the normal tithe was only once every three years. This “poor” tithe was in addition to the normal tithe and was referred to as such by the Jewish secular writer Josephus.)

The Levites in turn, gave their tithe unto Aaron, the high priest:

(Num 18:26 KJV) Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.

(27) And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

(28) Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest.

So the children of Israel gave a tenth to the Levites and then all the Levites gave a tenth unto Aaron. The tithe was always given to the ministry for their support. Never can you find it any other way.

The tithe was a sacred thing to God. Leviticus 27:30 describes tithe as being holy unto the Lord:

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 unto the LORD.

One has to look no further than Jericho to see how God felt about the stealing of His tithe. Jericho was the first city to be taken when the children of Israel entered into the promise land. It was a type of “first fruit” or, tithe, to God. When Achan took the Babylonian garment, the shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold, he wasn't merely

disobeying God, he was taking of God's tithe. As a result, Achan and his whole family died.

In the New Testament, Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that they should pay tithe:

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. (Mat 23:23 KJV)

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. (Luke 11:42 KJV)

While some want to point out that He was focusing on their omitting the "weightier matters of the law," it does not change the fact that He said: "these [tithe of mint, anise, and cumin] ought ye to have done."

Paul presents no argument against tithes as he did again and again against the ceremonial issues of the law (i.e. meats, holy days, new moon feasts, Sabbath days, circumcision, etc.). Nor did he give any instruction as to any changes who received the tithe. Since Paul dedicated portions of several books, and almost the whole book of Galatians, to deal with circumcision, but says not one word about any changes to the ordinance of tithing, it would be a critical error to take it upon ourselves to make changes to God's written plan for the tithe.

In summary:

- 1) God reserved the tree in the midst of the garden for Himself
- 2) Abel offered of the firstlings of his flock
- 3) Tithing was clearly established BEFORE the Mosaic law
- 4) Tithe was for the support of the ministry
- 5) God reserved the "first fruits" (Jericho) of the Caanan land for Himself.
- 6) God said the tithe was "holy unto the Lord" and there was a great price paid for taking God's tithe; whether in the Garden, or at Caanan, or under the law.
- 7) Taught in the New Testament by Jesus