

God's Word On Tithing

Jesus Approved the Tenth

Jesus Christ did not repeal the law concerning tithing—He endorsed it. Tithe paying was a general practice during the time of Christ. In the New Testament, the term tithe(s) is found ten times. The sect which was strictest concerning tithing was the Pharisees. In order to be admitted into the fellowship of the Pharisees, one was obligated to pay his tithe. He was obligated to tithe to the treasury what he bought, what he sold and what he ate. Three of the references are found in the gospels. Jesus faced the question of tithing. If He had not been a tither this would have been one of the first complaints of the Pharisees. They continually watched His every word and action, seeking to find fault with Him, but they never once pointed to a lack of tithing.

The fact that Jesus Christ was admitted into the homes of the Pharisees for meals is evidence that He was a tither. Luke 11:37 says, “And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat” (NKJV). It was definitely against the vow of a Pharisee to be the host of an outsider. In Luke 18:12, Christ did not offer disapproval to the Pharisee who said, “I give tithes of all that I possess,” (NKJV) nor was He finding fault in his tithe paying. Jesus was condemning his attitude of self-righteousness and egotism.

Again in Matthew 23:23, Jesus says, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin... These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” (KJV) The Lord did not disapprove of tithing, but on the contrary, expressed His approval.

Matthew and Luke both refer to very strong statements by Jesus regarding the legalism of the Pharisees. The teachers of the Law had added all kinds of details to the practice of tithing. In doing so, they turned a beautiful principle into a heavy burden for the people. The Pharisees prided themselves in keeping the letter of the law concerning rituals. However, they failed in keeping the moral laws of love, justice, mercy and faithfulness.

The Pharisees knew that Jesus tithed.

On one occasion during Christ's earthly ministry, a group of Pharisees were looking for a way to get Jesus to incriminate himself with the authorities. They attempted to entangle Christ in His own words. In Matthew 22:16, after a brief statement of insincere flattery, the Pharisees asked Christ something notable in the next verse: "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not" (KJV)? They were obviously baiting Christ, hoping He would say that they should not pay tribute to the Roman occupational government. But Jesus was not that easily fooled. He replied, "'Shew me the tribute money.' And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' They say unto him, 'Caesar's.' Then saith he unto them, 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.' When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way" (Matthew 22:19-22 KJV).

Solomon Taught the Principle of Firstfruits

Notice that Jesus said, "... And unto God the things that are God's." God lays claim to a tenth (tithe) of our earnings. The things we render unto God are tokens of our honor for God. They demonstrate our respect and esteem for Him. Solomon caught the spirit of this principle in Proverbs 3:9-10: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (KJV)

Other References to Tithing

Malachi 3:8 asks the question, "Will a man rob God?" Kind of a thought-provoking question isn't it! In today's language, the question would be, "Are you a thief?" Even if you are a tither, you may still be just 1 percent short of being a thief. Malachi goes on to say in verse 10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." (KJV) In I Corinthians 16:2, Paul says, "Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." (KJV) This was an obvious reference to the tithe. Tithing and revival go hand in hand as seen throughout the Old Testament. Nehemiah, seeing the lack of support of the Levites and the house of God forsaken, contended for the tithe in Nehemiah 13:10-12. God considers giving so important that John 3:16 records, "For God so loved the world, that

he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (KJV)

The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians to pay tithes on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:2). Hebrews 7:5 indicates that the sons of Levi were commanded to collect tithes from the people on a regular basis. Tithing, when practiced by a congregation, will generally be sufficient to meet the needs of the congregation according to II Chronicles 31:10.

Jesus taught His disciples to give. His instruction was, “When you give...” He didn’t say, “if you give.” In Luke 18:22, He urged the rich young ruler to sell all his possessions and give to the poor. Not to tithe of our increase would be to do less than a Pharisee would do. Not only does Malachi 3:10 promise the blessings of tithing, Jesus commanded it.