A WORD FITLY SPOKEN



IS TITHING FOR TODAY?

John Avanzini

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by
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Is Tithing for Today?

Tithing is one of the most important things you must do to live the abundant life God has planned for you.

> **"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."**
>
> **Jeremiah 29:11, NIV**

In the Book of Malachi, God tells us how He will supply all the blessings this scripture promises. He will give them to u*s* *from* heaven, *through* the windows of heaven that our tithe has opened.

> **Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing....**
>
> **Malachi 3:10**

It only stands to reason that if tithing will open the windows of heaven, not tithing will close them.

Living under an open heaven makes the difference between a life of abundant blessings and a life of shortage and lack. It makes the difference between having good health or faltering health. It makes the difference between the joy of having your prayers answered or the heartbreak of unanswered prayer. Your decision to tithe, or not to tithe, will either release to you a multitude of benefits, or it will leave you unprotected from the curses that came into the world when Adam and Eve sinned.

When you realize that all of God's many blessings come to you from heaven, you will insist upon having an open heaven.

Pay close attention to what the Apostle James said about the origin of everything good.

> ***Every good gift*** **and** ***every perfect gift*** **is from above, and** ***cometh down from the Father*** **of lights....**
>
> **James 1:17**

This verse says that all the good things are gifts from God, and *they come down*

from heaven. Therefore, it becomes extremely important to keep the windows of heaven wide open, so you will be able to receive all the blessings God has planned for you.

> **"For I know *the plans I have for you,"* declares the Lord....**
>
> **Jeremiah 29:11, NIV**

Before going any further, it is important that I reveal the most sinister plot the devil has ever devised. Satan knows that if you get sufficient money, you will immediately become very dangerous to his kingdom. He also knows that tithing plays a very important part in the fulfillment of God's plan to prosper you. Therefore, he continually raises doubts in the minds of believers about their financial responsibility in the kingdom of God. He conducts an ongoing campaign to confuse believers about whether or not tithing is really for our day.

How easy it would be to teach believers to tithe if it weren't for the misguided

instruction about tithing that constantly circulates through the church. Because of this misinformation, I will have to take some of our time to reestablish the truth about tithing from the Scripture.

Many of those who teach that Christians don't have to tithe, do so because they mistakenly believe tithing is part of the Law of Moses. Then they reason that because our Lord's atonement removed the curse of the law, it must have also removed tithing.

This belief causes them to think a New Testament saint can never come under any form of curse. To explain why this is a wrong conclusion, let's examine a curse that came upon two New Testament saints. Their names were Ananias and Sapphira. The Bible tells us this couple lost their lives over a wrong decision they made about money matters. They lied to the Holy Ghost about an offering they were making, and they died (Acts 5:3-10).

Now here's the question: Did God do something terrible to this couple, or did

Ananias and Sapphira cause their own deaths? The answer to this question is simple. Ananias and Sapphira violated a spiritual principle when they lied to the Holy Ghost. By their own actions, they exposed themselves to the penalty of sin.

... the soul that sinneth, *it shall die.*
Ezekiel 18:4

It was their willful violation of God's established ordinance that brought about their deaths. Read the account as carefully as you can, and you will find that God took no specific action against either of them. They simply collected the wages of sin, which is death.

For the *wages of sin* is death....
Romans 6:23

All Christians will quickly agree that lying to the Holy Ghost is a sin! We also know the penalty for sin is death. God has clearly stated this principle in both the Old and New Testaments.

Liars are sinners, and sinners die. Ananias and Sapphira lied, and *true to*

God's Word, they died. Please keep in mind that the Bible does not give a set amount of time that has to pass after a person commits sin before the penalty of sin takes effect. It may take fifty years, fifty days, or fifty minutes. Or as it was in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, it took less than *50 seconds* for the penalty of sin to become their portion.

When you understand the consequences of sin, it becomes easy to see that God did not curse Ananias and Sapphira. It was their own willful violation of a God-ordained principle that brought the penalty of death upon them. Notice God's Word doesn't change!

... the soul that sinneth, it shall die.
Ezekiel 18:4

The violation of any God-ordained principle always brings the promised penalty. This truth is parallel in the natural realm. For instance, as long as you obey the established principles of aerodynamics, you can safely fly through the sky. However, if

you violate these principles, you will stop flying and crash.

If you violate a principle that carries with it the penalty of death, you will die. If you obey God's principles, you will live. *God doesn't crash airplanes or kill liars.* It is the violation of established principles that brings about these disastrous results.

Not Tithing Carries a Preordained Penalty

> **Ye are *cursed with a curse:* for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.**
>
> **Malachi 3:9**

When God says you are cursed with a curse, He is speaking of the penalty that conies to those who willfully violate His established principle of tithing.

> **... 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.**
>
> **Leviticus 27:30**

God states clearly that a predetermined

penalty comes automatically to those who refuse to give God His portion of the increase. He simply closes heaven over those who don't tithe. In other words, divine protection, as well as promised blessings, come to an abrupt stop.

Adam and Eve Tithed

Now let's answer the question: Is tithing for today? If you carefully study the Bible, you will find that God has always required His people to set aside a portion of their increase (the tithe) for Him. Setting aside this divine portion literally spans all of human history. If you can keep an open mind to the Word of God, you will find the next statement to be among the most important you have ever read.

God expected Adam and Eve to set aside *a portion* of their increase (tithe) for Him.

I can hear someone ask, "Brother John, are you serious? They were tithing all the way back in the Garden of Eden? Don't you think that's taking things just a bit too far?"

Adam and Eve Had Jobs

Contrary to the belief of some, God did not put Adam and Eve in His garden as tourists. They had clearly defined work assignments. They were the caretakers of the garden.

> **The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden *to work it and take care of it.***
>
> **Genesis 2:15, NIV**

It is clear from this verse that God required Adam and Eve to bestow their labor on the trees and plants of the garden.

Are we to assume that God required Adam and Eve to work for free? Certainly not! God paid them generously for their labor. Their wages were the fruit of almost every tree in the garden.

> **... Of every tree of the garden *thou mayest freely eat.***
>
> **Genesis 2:16**

It is important to notice that God claimed a right to a portion of the fruit of

their labors, for He absolutely forbade Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of one particular tree. They had to work hard to care for it. They expended labor on it in the same way they did every other tree in the garden. However, they were not to eat any of its fruit.

> **But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, *thou shalt not eat of it.***
>
> **Genesis 2:17**

Yes, Adam and Eve were to bestow labor on the tree of knowledge of good and evil. However, they were not to eat of it. This account from the Garden of Eden gives more than just a vague suggestion of tithing. God expected Adam and Eve to operate in exactly the same way He expects us to operate with the increase we receive from our labor.

When you have completed working the prescribed number of hours it takes to earn your living, God puts a restriction on a certain portion of the wages you have earned. He says the first 10 percent of your

increase is His. It is the tithe.

I have often heard people say, "The money I earn is *my* money. I worked hard for it. It's *all mine!"* Well, this is only partially true. No doubt you expend your precious time and hard labor earning your wage. However, *if you believe God's Word,* you must admit the Bible says 10 percent of your income belongs to God.

> **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.**
>
> **Leviticus 27:30**

Anyone who carefully reads the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis must conclude that Adam and Eve understood that a portion of all the increase they produced was not theirs. It was set apart for God. This account shows us a perfect picture (type) of what we now call "the tithe."

The First Murder

Not only did the misuse of God's portion

(the tithe) cause a problem in the Garden of Eden, it also caused the trouble that arose between Cain and Abel.

> **And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof....**
>
> **Genesis 4:4**

In this verse, the firstlings of the flock are the newborn ones, or *the increase* of Abel's herds. "The fat thereof" signifies *the best of Abel's increase.* Also notice that Abel immediately brought this portion to the Lord. There was no delay on his part. This is another *picture of the tithe.*

Notice in this same portion of Scripture that Cain allowed time to pass before he finally brought an offering to the Lord.

> **And *in the process of time* it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.**
>
> **Genesis 4:3**

Much time passed before Cain decided how much to give to God. He waited until he had taken care of his own needs before he

brought his offering.

Notice that when God accepted Abel's offering, Cain became furious and killed Abel. This feud over God's right to His portion of the increase is still with us today. It rages between those who give God the firstfruits, and those who merely give God some of their leftovers.

Abraham Was a Tither

God's portion was first called "the tithe" in the Bible when Abraham returned from the battle of the kings (Genesis 14:14-20). As Melchizedek met him, the Bible says *Abraham tithed* from all the spoils he had taken in battle.

> **.. . And he [Abraham] gave him [Melchizedek] tithes of all.**
>
> **Genesis 14:20**

It is important to notice this took place many hundreds of years before God gave the law to Moses. This account is proof positive that God expected 10 percent of the increase long before Moses incorporated the tithe

into the law.

Ten Percent Is the Bible-Ordained Amount

We must be careful not to draw the conclusion that someone just arbitrarily chose 10 percent as the amount of the tithe. Strong's Concordance tells us the Hebrew word for tithe is *mah as ayr. The* definition is "a tenth." When you compare the following two verses, it becomes evident the Bible defines the tithe as 10 percent.

> **And he [Abraham] gave him [Melchizedek] *tithes* of all.**
>
> **Genesis 14:20**

> **Now consider how great this man [Melchizedek] was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave *the tenth* of the spoils.**
>
> **Hebrews 7:4**

In both of these verses, the writers are describing *the same event.* In one case, Moses speaks of Abraham's tithing. He says Abraham gave Melchizedek *tithes* of all.

When describing the same event, the writer of Hebrews says Abraham gave Melchizedek the *tenth* of the spoils. One verse uses the word *tithe,* the other uses the word *tenth.* This clearly reveals from Scripture the exact amount of the tithe. It is 10 percent.

Israel Tithed on the Holy Land

In passing, it is interesting to note that before the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, God told them to give all the wealth of Jericho to Him.

> **... all the silver and gold and the utensils of bronze and iron will be dedicated to the Lord, and must be brought into his treasury.**
>
> **Joshua 6:19, TLB**

Once again we see God receiving His portion first, a picture or type of the tithe.

The Tithe Was Incorporated Into the Mosaic Law

A tenth of the produce of the land,

whether grain or fruit, is the Lord's, and is holy. If anyone wants to buy back this fruit or grain, he must add a fifth to its value. And the Lord owns every tenth animal of your herds and flocks and other domestic animals, as they pass by for counting. The tenth given to the Lord shall not be selected on the basis of whether it is good or bad, and there shall be no substitutions; for if there is any change made, then both the original and the substitution shall belong to the Lord, and may not be bought back!"

These are the commandments the Lord gave to Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

Leviticus 27:30-34, TLB

Please note these scriptures did not institute tithing, for it had been in practice for many years. This part of the Mosaic Law is simply reiterating tithing in greater detail.

Jesus Endorsed Tithing

Jesus makes it clear in the New Testament that He didn't go about speaking His own doctrine, but He spoke *the doctrine of God.*

Jesus answered them [the Jews], and said, *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

John 7:16

Therefore, we know that everything Jesus spoke came directly to Him from the Father. With this in mind, pay close attention to what Jesus had to say about tithing.

... woe upon you, Pharisees, and you other religious leaders—hypocrites! For you tithe down to the last mint leaf in your garden, but ignore the important things—justice and mercy and faith. *Yes, you should tithe,* but you shouldn't leave the more important things undone.

Matthew 23:23, TLB

Jesus told the religious leaders they should obey the law, which included justice, mercy and faith. However, in this portion of Scripture, Jesus also told them *He was not doing away with the tithe,* for He was careful to emphasize that *tithing was required* by God.

... Yes, you should tithe....

Matthew 23:23, TLB

For many years I believed these few words were the last time the subject of tithing appeared in Scripture. I had heard Bible teachers say there was no record of anyone tithing in the New Testament. I held this opinion until the Holy Spirit brought a certain portion of Scripture to my attention. The author of Hebrews wrote the verse I speak of *thirty-five years* after the death of Christ, *which puts tithing well into the New Testament Church age.*

In Hebrews 7 we find the account of Abraham giving tithes to Melchizedek (Genesis 14). The writer begins by explaining who Melchizedek is. Then he makes a significant statement. He tells us that *New Testament saints were paying tithes* at the time he was writing his epistle to the Hebrews (AD 65). Look carefully at the following verse.

> **And *here* men that die receive tithes; but *there* he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.**
>
> **Hebrews 7:8**

It is important to understand two words the writer uses in this portion of Scripture. They are the words *here* and *there.* The word *here* is the Greek word *hode* (#5602). Strong's Concordance tells us it means *"here, (in) this place."* The writer is telling us people were tithing in his presence at the very moment he was writing this statement. Let me paraphrase the verse. *"Here, in this place* that I am now standing and *at this very moment* while I am writing, *men who die are receiving tithes from the people."*

According to several widely accepted authorities on the dating of Scripture, the author of Hebrews wrote this portion of the book approximately thirty-five years after the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. By this we know it was a common practice for Christians to pay tithes in early New Testament churches.

I also want to focus attention on the word *there.* In Strong's Concordance of the Greek New Testament, it is the word *ekei* (#1563). It means "at another time and in

another place."

With this understanding of these two words, let me paraphrase Hebrews 7:8 again. "And here, in AD 65, on the spot where I am standing, men who die are receiving tithes. (It is happening now in my presence.) But in that long ago, ancient time, in another place, He (Melchizedek) received tithes of whom we have witness that He still lives."

According to this verse, we have a biblical account of the Christian church receiving tithes well into the church age. Add to this knowledge the promise that God never changes, and it becomes irrefutable that tithes are definitely for today.

> **Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.**
>
> **Hebrews 13:8**

It is a shame that even with all this proof that tithing is for our day, it remains one of the most violated of God's ordinances. Religious surveys tell us that only about 18 to 20 percent of church members in America are faithfully tithing on their increase. This

statistic is a terrible indictment against the end-time church.

However, the saddest thing about this violation is that non-tithing Christians are cheating themselves, the lost people of this world, as well as God Himself out of a blessing.

First, non-tithing Christians lose their blessings because heaven closes over their lives, and they cannot receive the physical, financial, and spiritual benefits God has set aside for them. The lost souls of this world also lose, because without all of God's children tithing, the Church cannot fully accomplish His plan to evangelize the entire earth.

> **... how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them unless someone sends him? ...**
>
> **Romans 10:14,15, TLB**

Everyone knows it takes money to send the gospel throughout the world.

There is also a great loss to God Himself when Christians don't tithe. Please note that I am not speaking of financial loss, for God is not suffering shortage because of delinquent tithes.

> **For every beast of the forest is mine [God's], and the cattle upon a thousand hills.**
>
> **. . . the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.**
>
> **Psalm 50:10,12**

The tragedy God suffers when Christians don't tithe is that He loses the opportunity to bless them.

> **... It is more blessed to give than to receive.**
>
> **Acts 20:35**

Yes, you are reading correctly. Non-tithers close heaven, thereby robbing God of the privilege of blessing them. They also rob God of the benefit of saving many lost souls who will never hear the gospel, and then never get saved.

Please don't miss the importance of the

following statement. It doesn't matter how righteous your life may be or how much Scripture you may have committed to memory. If you are a non-tither, the Bible says you are forfeiting your right to walk under an open heaven.

Tithing is so important to you, the lost, and God Himself, that He openly invites you to *put Him to the test,* and make Him prove to you that He will open the windows of heaven and pour out His blessings.

> **Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and *prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts,* if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it**
>
> **Malachi 3:10**

At this point something else becomes very obvious. If you refuse to tithe, you are putting God to the test to prove to you that *He will close heaven over your life* and withhold His blessings from you.

There are many reasons God's children

fail to tithe. Some have followed after erroneous teaching. Some have failed to recognize the scriptural importance of tithing. Still others have been ignorant of the many benefits that come from tithing. Finally, some fail to tithe because of *the fear of insufficiency.*

Regardless of your reason for not tithing in the past, God wants you to know that forgiveness, as well as total restoration of all the blessings, are available to those who desire it. God graciously extends an open invitation to the non-tither to return to Him (start tithing).

> **Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. *Return unto me, and I will return unto you,* saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, *Wherein shall we return?***
>
> **Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? *In tithes and offerings.***
>
> **Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and *prove me now herewith,***

saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Malachi 3:7,8,10

No sincere seeker of biblical truth can read the scriptures in this book and honestly say God doesn't expect every Christian to tithe. I have shown you a multitude of verses that prove tithing is definitely for today.

- I have shown you that Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat from one of the trees in the garden. This tree was symbolic of their tithe.
- We also found that Abraham tithed hundreds of years before the Mosaic Law, which made tithing independent of the law.
- We saw that tithing was then incorporated into the Law.
- I showed you that Jesus personally endorsed tithing.
- In the Book of Hebrews, we saw the record of the early New Testament Church

tithing.

With this abundant supply of biblical witnesses, a proper decision about tithing should be easy for any Bible believer to make. It comes down to a simple choice. Either you obey God's Word and give a tenth of all your increase, or you decide to disobey God's Word and not tithe.

I hope you have always been a tither. If you haven't, I hope the information in this book will cause you to start faithfully tithing so the windows of heaven will open over your life and the lives of your loved ones.

> **Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if 1 will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.**
>
> **And I will rebuke the devourer for your sokes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.**
>
> **And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith**

the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:10-12

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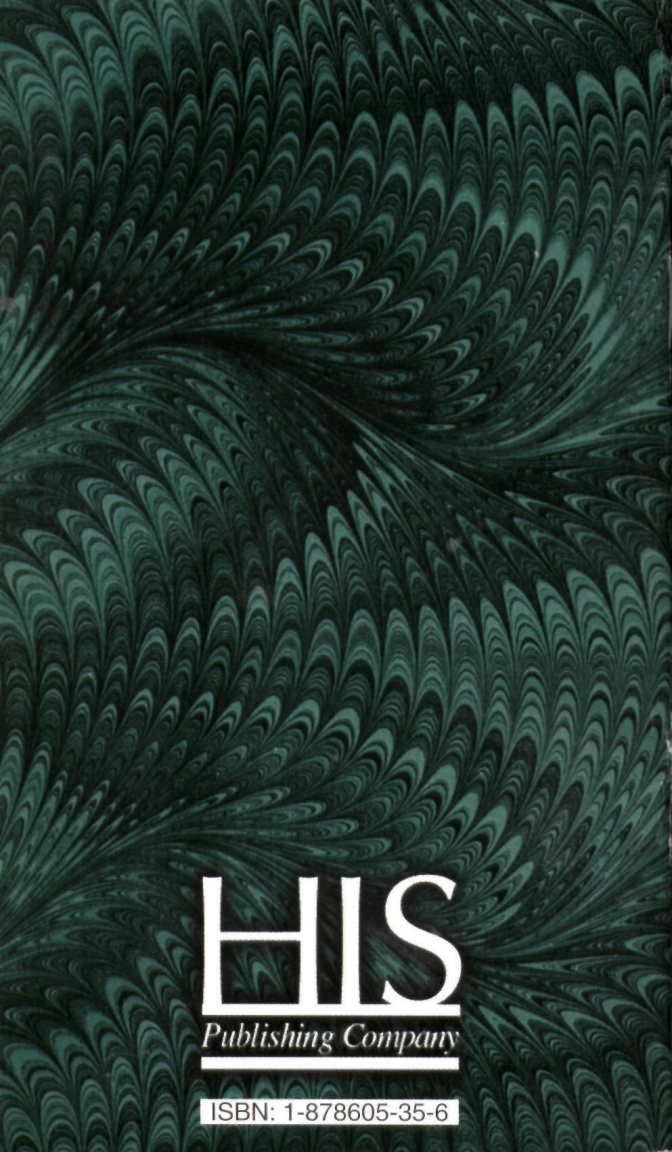
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