

TITHING IS NOT A CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE  
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## INTRODUCTION

The following essay is a summary of *Should the Church Teach Tithing? A Theologian's Conclusions about a Taboo Doctrine*, [ISBN 978-0-595-15978-9](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780595159789). The book is an expansion of my Ph.D. thesis. I encourage Bible educators to be bold, to open up seminary level research and to promote studies on this subject in the Masters, Doctorate and Ph.D. levels. This doctrine is simply too important to ignore.

In many churches today the doctrine of tithing has reached the level of a modern scandal. While on the one hand most seminary-level textbooks on systematic theology and hermeneutics by theologians omit tithing, on the other hand the practice is quickly becoming a requirement for church membership in the very denominations which insist on solid Bible-based doctrines. Lay persons who question New Covenant

tithing are increasingly criticized and ignored as being troublemakers or weak Christians. Christian leaders should always be open and available to discuss God's Word. Failure suggests doubt and insecurity.

## MODERN TITHING IS BASED ON MANY FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

One major denomination's statement on stewardship is typical. "Tithing is the minimum biblical standard and the beginning point which God has established that must not be replaced or compromised by any other standard." It adds that the tithe is from gross income which is due to the church before taxes.

This essay contrasts the false teachings used to support tithing with God's Word. (Book chapters in parenthesis.)

**POINT #1: CHRISTIAN GIVING PRINCIPLES:  
New Covenant Giving Principles are  
Superior. (Ch. 26, 27)**

*The false teaching is that tithing is a divine mandatory expectation which always must precede free-will giving.*

Christians are commanded to give freely, sacrificially, generously, regularly, joyfully and with the motivation of love for God and man. The following New Covenant free-will principles are found in Second Corinthians 8 and 9: (1) Giving is a "grace." These chapters use the Greek word for "grace" eight times in reference to helping needy saints. (2) Give yourself to God first (8:5). (3) Give yourself to knowing God's will (8:5). (4) Give in response to Christ's gift (8:9; 9:15). (5) Give out of a sincere desire (8:8, 10, 12; 9:7). (6) Do not give because of any commandment (8:8, 10; 9:7). (7) Give beyond your ability (8:3, 11-12). (8) Give to produce equality. This means that those who have more should give more in order to make up for the inability of those who cannot afford to give as much (8:12-14). (9) Give joyfully (8:2). (10) Give because you are growing spiritually (8:3-4, 7). (11) Give because you want to continue growing spiritually (9:8, 10-11). (12) Give because you are hearing the gospel preached (9:13).

**POINT #2: DEFINING TITHE: In God's Word  
the Holy Tithe was Always Only Food from  
Inside Israel! (Chapter 1)**

*The false teaching is that holy biblical tithes include ALL sources of income.*

DEFINITION: True biblical holy tithes were always only food from the holy farms and herds of Israelites who lived inside God's holy land, the national boundary of Israel.

In God's Word *tithe* does not stand alone. Although money existed before tithing, the source of God's holy *tithe* over 1500 years was never money. It was the holy tithe of food and the *increase* was gathered from what God miraculously produced from His holy land and not from man's craft or ability. No tithes could come from Gentiles or unclean pagan lands.

There are 16 verses from 11 chapters and 8 books from Leviticus 27 to Luke 11 which describe the contents of the holy tithe. And those contents never included

money, silver, gold or anything other than food from inside Israel! Yet the incorrect definition of *tithe* is the greatest error being preached about tithing today! [Lev 27:30, 32; Num 18:27-28; Deu 12:17; 14:22-23; 26:12; 2 Chron 31:5-6; Neh 10:37; 13:5; Mal 3:10-11; Matt 23:23; Luke 11:42.](#)

**POINT #3: MONEY: Money was an Essential  
but Non-Tithed Item. (Chapter 1)**

*The false assumption is that food barter usually replaced money.*

One argument to support non-food tithing is that money was not universally available and barter from food was used for most transactions. This argument is neither biblical nor historical. Genesis alone contains *money* in 32 texts and the word occurs 44 times before the holy tithe is described in Leviticus 27. Gold is in [Genesis 2:12](#). The words *jewelry, gold, silver* and *shekel* also appear often from Genesis to Deuteronomy.

Abram was very rich in silver and gold ([Gen 13:2](#)); money in the form of silver shekels paid for slaves ([Gen 17:12+](#)); Abimelech gave Abraham 1000 pieces of silver ([Gen 20:16](#)); Abraham paid 400 pieces of silver for land ([Gen 23:9-16](#)); Joseph was sold for silver pieces ([Gen 37:28](#)); slaves bought freedom ([Lev 25:47-53](#)). Court fines ([Ex 21 all; 22 all](#)), sanctuary dues ([Ex 30:12+](#)), vows ([Lev 27:3-7](#)), poll taxes ([Num 3:47+](#)), alcoholic drinks ([Deu 14:26](#)) and marriage dowries ([Deu 22:29](#)) included money.

Joseph gave Benjamin 300 pieces of silver ([Gen 45:22](#)). According to [Genesis 47:15-17](#) food was used for barter *only after* money had been spent. Banking and usury laws exist in Leviticus even before tithing. Therefore the argument is false. Yet the holy contents from Leviticus to Luke never include money from non-food products and trades.

**POINT #4: GENESIS 14:20: Abram's Tithe  
to Melchizedek Reflected the Law of the  
Land. (Chapters 2, 3)**

*The false teaching is that Abraham freely gave tithes because it was God's will.*

Scores of reputable secular history books document the existence of spoils of war tithing from Babylon to Egypt before Abraham's time. For the following reasons, Abram's pre-circumcision tithe in [Genesis 14:20](#) cannot

be used as an example for Christians to tithe ([17:5](#)). (1) The Bible does not say that Abram "freely" gave this tithe. (2) Abram's gift was NOT a holy tithe from God's holy land gathered by God's holy people under God's holy Old Covenant. (3) Abram's tithe was clearly only from pagan spoils of war and was required in many nations as the law of the land. (4) In [Numbers 31:21-31](#), God only required 1% of spoils of war as an ordinance. (5) Abram's tithe to the priest-king Melchizedek was a one-time recorded event. (6) Abram's tithe was not from his previously owned personal property. (7) Abram kept nothing for himself; he gave everything back. (8) Abram's tithe is not quoted anywhere in the Bible to endorse tithing from Israel or from the church. (9) [Genesis 14, verse 21](#), is the key text. Since most commentaries explain [verse 21](#) as an example of pagan Arab law, it is contradictory to explain the 90% of [verse 21](#) as pagan, while insisting that the 10% of [verse 20](#) was obedience to God's will. (10) If Abraham is an example for Christians to give 10% to God, then he should also be an example for Christians to give the other 90% to Satan, or to the king of Sodom! (11) As priests themselves, neither Abraham nor Jacob had a Levitical priesthood to support; they probably left food for the poor at their altars to Yahweh.

### POINT #5: NO MINIMUM PRINCIPLE: **Tithing was not a Minimum Requirement from All Israelites. ([Chapter 1](#))**

*The false teaching is that everybody was required to begin their giving level at ten per cent.*

Only those Israelites who earned a livelihood from farming and herding inside holy Israel were required to tithe under the Mosaic Law. Their increase came from God's hand. Those whose increase came from their own crafts and skills were not required to tithe products and money.

### POINT #6: LEVITE ASSISTANTS: **First-Tithes were Received by Servants to the Priests. ([Chapter 4](#))**

*The false teaching is that Old Testament priests received all of the first Levitical tithe.*

The *whole* tithe, the first Levitical tithe, did not go to the priests at all. It was not even the *best* tenth ([Lev 27:33](#)). According to [Numbers 18:21-24](#) and [Nehemiah 10:37b](#), it went to the servants of the priests,

the Levites. And according to [Numbers 18:25-28](#) and [Nehemiah 10:38](#), the Levites gave the *best tenth of this tithe* (1%) to the priests who ministered the sin sacrifices. Priests were expected to give freewill vow offerings –not tithes ([Mal 1:13-14](#)).

### POINT #7: LEVITICAL TITHE-RECIPIENTS COULD NOT OWN PROPERTY. ([Chapter 6](#))

*The false assumption today is that preachers can both receive tithes and also own property.*

In exchange for receiving tithes, both Levites and priests forfeited all rights to permanent land inheritance inside Israel ([Num 18:20-26](#); [Deu 12:12](#); [14:27](#), [29](#); [18:1](#), [2](#); [Josh 13:14](#), [33](#); [14:3](#); [18:7](#); [Eze 44:28](#)). Even if tithes were New Covenant they would first go to the ordinary workers who assist the preachers and maintain the buildings.

### POINT #8: HOLY AND MOST HOLY: **It is Holy to the LORD Does Not Make Tithing an Eternal Moral Principle.**

*The false teaching is that Leviticus 27:30-34 proves that the tithe is an eternal moral principle because it is holy to the LORD.*

The phrases *it is HOLY unto the LORD* and *it is MOST HOLY unto the LORD* are very common in Leviticus. However, almost every other use of these two phrases in Leviticus has long ago been discarded by Christians. These phrases are used to describe all the festivals, the sacrificial offerings, the clean foods, the old covenant priests and the old covenant sanctuary. Especially read [verses 28 and 29 in chapter 27](#).

While the *tithe of the tithe* (1%) which was given to the priests was the *best* of what the Levites received, the tithe which the Levites received was only *one tenth* and not the *best* ([Lev 27:33](#)).

### POINT #9: FIRST-FRUITS: **First-fruits are Not the Same as Tithes. ([Chapter 1](#))**

*The false assumption is that tithes are first-fruits.*

The first-fruit was a very small token amount of the first crop harvest and the first-born was the first offspring of animals. First-fruits and first-born could only come from inside God's holy land of Israel.

The first-fruit was small enough to fit into a hand-held basket ([Deu 26:1-10](#); [Lev 23:17](#); [Num 18:13-17](#); [Neh 12:44](#); [2 Chron 31:5a](#)).

First-fruits and first-born offerings went directly to the Temple and were required to be totally consumed by ministering priests only inside the Temple ([Neh 10:35-37a](#); [Ex 23:19](#); [34:26](#); [Deu 18:4](#)).

The whole Levitical tithe went first to the Levitical cities and portions went to the Temple to feed both Levites and priests who were ministering there in rotation ([Neh 10:37b-39](#); [12:27-29](#), [44-47](#); [Num 18:21-28](#); [2 Chron 31:5b](#)). While the Levites ate only the tithe, the priests could also eat from the first-fruits, first-born offerings and other offerings.

### **POINT #10: FOUR TITHES: There are Four Different Tithes Described in the Bible. (Chapter 7)**

*The false teaching ignores all other tithes and focuses on an incorrect interpretation of the first religious tithe.*

(1) The first religious tithe, called the *Levitical tithe*, had two parts. Again, the whole first tithe was given to the Levites who were only servants to the priests ([Num 18:21-24](#); [Neh 10:37b](#)). The Levites, in turn, gave one tenth of the whole tithe to the priests ([Num 18:25-28](#); [Neh 10:38](#)). (2) According to Deuteronomy 12 and 14, the second religious tithe, called the *feast tithe*, was eaten by worshipers in the streets of Jerusalem during the three yearly festivals ([Deu 12:1-19](#); [14:22-26](#)). (3) And, according to Deuteronomy 14 and 26, a third tithe, called the *poor tithe*, was kept in the towns every third year to feed the poor ([Deu 14:28, 29](#); [26:12, 13](#)). (4) Also, according to [First Samuel 8:14-17](#), the ruler collected the first and best ten per cent for political use. During Jesus' time Rome collected the first ten per cent (10%) of most food and twenty per cent (20%) of fruit crops as its spoils of war. It is dishonest to single out the one religious tithe and ignore the other two important religious tithes.

### **POINT #11: THE POOR: Jesus, Peter, Paul and the Poor Did Not Tithe. (Chapter 9)**

*The false teaching is that everybody in the Old Testament was required to begin their giving to God at the ten per cent level.*

The poor were not required to tithe at all! Neither did the tithe come from the results of man's crafts, hands and skills. Only farmers and herdsmen gathered what God produced as tithe increase. Jesus was a carpenter; Paul was a tentmaker and Peter was a fisherman. None of these occupations qualified as tithe-payers because they did not farm or herd animals for a living. It is, therefore, incorrect to teach that everybody paid a required minimum of a tithe and, therefore, that New Covenant Christians should be required to at least begin at the same minimum as Old Covenant Israelites. This common false assumption is very often repeated and completely ignores the very plain definition of tithe as food gathered from farm increase or herd increase.

The widow's mite is an example of free-will giving and is not an example of tithing. According to Edersheim none of the Temple's chests were for tithes. The poor received money from those chests before leaving the temple.

It is also wrong to teach that the poor in Israel were required to pay tithes. In fact, they actually received tithes! Much of the second festival tithe and all of a special third-year tithe went to the poor! Many laws exempted the poor from abuse and expensive sacrifices which they could not afford ([Lev 14:21](#); [25:6, 25-28, 35, 36](#); [27:8](#); [Deu 12:1-19](#); [14:23, 28, 29](#); [15:7, 8, 11](#); [24:12, 14, 15, 19, 20](#); [26:11-13](#); [Mal 3:5](#); [Matt 12:1, 2](#); [Mark 2:23, 24](#); [Luke 2:22-24](#); [6:1, 2](#); [2 Cor 8:12-14](#); [1 Tim 5:8](#); [Jas. 1:27](#)).

### **POINT #12: TAXES: Tithes were Also Used as Political Taxes. (Chapter 10)**

*The false teaching is that tithes are never comparable to taxes or taxation.*

In the Hebrew economy, the tithe was used in a totally different manner than it is preached today. Once again, those Levites who received the whole tithe were not even ministers or priests—they were only servants to the priests! [Numbers chapter 3](#) describes the Levites as carpenters, metal workers, leather-craftsmen and artists who maintained the small sanctuary. And, according to [First Chronicles, chapters 23 to 26](#), during the time of King David and King Solomon, the Levites were still skilled craftsmen who performed and/or approved all work in the Temple: 24, 000 worked in the Temple as builders and supervisors; 6,000 were officials and judges; 4,000 were guards and 4,000 were musicians. As political

representatives of the king, Levites used their tithe income to serve as officials, judges, tax collectors, treasurers, temple guards, musicians, bakers, singers and professional soldiers ([1 Chron 12:23, 26; 23:2-5; 26:29-32; 27:5](#)). It is obvious why these examples of using biblical tithe-income are never used as examples in the church today.

Tithes never stimulated Old Covenant Levites or priests to establish a single mission outreach or encourage a single Gentile to become an Israelite ([Ex 23:32; 34:12, 15; Deu 7:2](#)). Old Covenant tithing was motivated and mandated by Law, not love. In fact, during most of Israel's history the prophets were God's primary spokesmen – and not the tithe-receiving Levites and priests. Tithing failed! See [Hebrews 7:12-19](#).

### POINT #13: LEVITICAL CITIES: **Levitical Tithes were Usually Taken to the Levitical Cities. (Chapter 12)**

*False teachers want us to think that all tithes were formerly taken to the Temple and should now be taken to the "church storehouse" building.*

[Nehemiah 10:37b](#) and [Second Chronicles 31:15-19](#) make it clear that the people were to bring the tithes to the Levitical cities where 98% of the Levites and priests needed them for food (also [Num 18:21-24](#)). And [Nehemiah 10:38](#) makes it clear that normally only Levites and priests had the task of bringing weekly tithes into the Temple (also [Num 18:24-28](#)).

The *whole* tithe NEVER went to the Temple! According to [Numbers 35](#), [Joshua 20, 21](#) and [First Chronicles 6](#), Levites and priests lived on borrowed land where they farmed and raised (tithed) animals. (Also [2nd Chron 11:13-14; Neh 12:27-29; 13:10; Mal 1:14.](#))

### POINT #14: MALACHI: **Malachi 3 is the Most Abused Tithing Text in the Bible. (Ch. 13a, 13b)**

*The false teaching about tithes from Malachi 3 ignores important Bible facts.*

A. CONTEXT: Malachi is Old Covenant and is never quoted in the New Covenant to validate tithing ([Lev 27:34; Neh 10:28-29; Mal 3:7; 4:4](#)).

B. CONTEXT: In [Malachi 3:10-11](#) tithes are still only food 1000 years after [Leviticus 27](#).

C. LAW: Malachi's audience had willingly reaffirmed the Old Covenant ([Neh 10:28-29](#)). The blessings and curses of tithing are identical to and inseparable from those of the entire Mosaic Law. The rain in [Deuteronomy 28:12, 23-24](#) and [Leviticus 26:1-4](#) is only obtained by obedience to all [600+ commandments](#). [Galatians 3:10](#) (quoting [Deu 27:26](#)) "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Trying to earn God's blessings through tithing only brought curses for failure to keep all of the law. See also [Galatians 3:19](#).

D. PRIEST-THIEVES: Beginning in [1:6](#) "you" in Malachi always refers to the dishonest priests and not the people (also [2:1-10; 2:13 to 3:1-5](#)): "Even this whole nation of you—priests" ([3:9](#)). In [1:13-14](#) the priests had stolen tithed animals vowed to God. In [Nehemiah 13:5-10](#) priests had stolen the Levites' portion of the tithe. God's curses on the priests are ignored by most tithe-teachers ([1:14; 2:2 and 3:2-4](#)).

E. LEVITICAL CITIES: The Levitical cities must be included in a correct interpretation of [Malachi 3:10](#) and they are not. Most tithe-recipients (98%) lived outside of Jerusalem.

F. TWENTY-FOUR COURSES: The 24 courses of Levites and priests must be included in a correct interpretation of [Malachi 3](#) and they are not. Normally only 2% of the total Levite and priest work force served at the temple one week at a time. Subtract wives, males under the age of 30 and daughters. Therefore 2% did not require all the tithe. See [1 Chron 23-26](#); see also [28:13, 21; 2 Chron 8:14; 23:8; 31:2, 15-19; 35:4, 5, 10; Ezra 6:18; Neh 11:19, 30; 12:24; 13:9, 10; Luke 1:5](#).

G. [NEHEMIAH 10:37b-39](#) is the key to understanding [Malachi 3:10](#). The people were commanded to bring their tithes, not to the temple, but to the nearby Levitical cities. [Verse 38](#) says that the priests were with the Levites in the Levitical cities when they received the tithes.

H. STOREHOUSE: According to [Nehemiah 13:5, 9](#) the "storehouse" in the Temple was only several rooms. The real "storehouses" were in the Levitical cities per [Nehemiah 10:37b](#). Only the Levites and priests normally brought tithes to the Temple ([10:38](#)). Two rooms in the Temple were far too small to contain the tithe from the entire nation and 98% of the Levites and priests lived too far away to eat from them ([1 Kg 6:6](#)).

Therefore, [Malachi 3:10's](#) "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse" only makes contextual sense if it is only commanding dishonest priests to replace the tithes they had removed from it or had failed to bring to it.

While the 3:10 of the Law in Malachi is so important to tithe-teachers they ignore the 3:10 of the Gospel in [Galatians](#) and [2nd Corinthians](#). Perhaps those wanting to enforce the [3:10 Law of Malachi](#) should also enforce the [3:10 Law of Numbers](#). They share the same context.

**POINT #15: MATTHEW 23:23: The New Covenant Does Not Teach Tithing. (Ch. 14, 16, 25)**

*The false teaching is that Jesus taught tithing in Matthew 23:23 which (they say) is clearly in the New Testament.*

The New Covenant did not begin at the birth of Jesus, but at his death ([Gal 3:19, 24, 25; 4:4, 5](#)). Tithing is not taught to the church after the cross! When Jesus discussed tithing in [Matthew 23:23](#), "you" referred to "you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" who had made the Law a burden. Jesus endorsed and supported Old Covenant law until the cross. (Note "matters of the law" in [23:23](#)). In [Matthew 23:2 and 3](#) (the context of [23:23](#)) Jesus told his Jewish followers to obey the scribes and Pharisees "because they sit in Moses' seat." Yet He did not (and could not) command Gentiles whom He healed to present themselves to the priests and obey the Law of Moses (compare [Matt 5:23-24 and 8:4](#)). And churches do not collect tithes from garden herbs as [Jesus commanded](#).

There is not a single New Testament Bible text which teaches tithing after the cross! [Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35](#) are not examples of tithing to support church leaders. According to [2:46](#) the Jewish Christians continued to worship in the Temple. And according to [2:44 and 4:33, 34](#) church leaders shared what they received equally with all church members. (This is not done today).

Finally [Acts 21:20-25](#) proves that Jewish Christians were still zealously observing all of the Mosaic Law 30 years later—and that must include tithing—otherwise they would not have been allowed inside the Temple to worship. Therefore, any tithes collected by the early Jewish Christians were given to the Temple system and not to support the church.

**POINT #16: PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS: Old Covenant Priests were Replaced by All-Believer-Priests. (Ch. 20, 21)**

*The false teaching is that New Covenant elders and pastors are continuing where the Old Covenant priests left off and are due the tithe.*

Compare [Exodus 19:5-6 with First Peter 2: 9-10](#). Before the incident of the golden calves, God had intended for every Israelite to become a priest and tithing would have never been enacted. Priests did not tithe but received one tenth of the first tithe ([Num 18:26-28; Neh 10:37, 38](#)).

The function and purpose of Old Covenant priests were replaced, not by elders and pastors, but by the priesthood of every believer. Like other ordinances of the Law, tithing was only a temporary shadow until Christ ([Eph 2:14-16; Col 2:13-17; Heb 7:18; 10:1](#)). In the New Covenant every believer is a priest to God ([1 Pet 2:9-10; Rev 1:6; 5:10](#)). And, as a priest, every believer offers sacrifices to God ([Heb 4:16; 10:19-22; 13:15, 16](#)). Therefore, every ordinance which had previously applied to the old priesthood was blotted out at the cross. Since Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi, even He was disqualified. Thus the original temporary purpose of tithing no longer exists ([Heb 7:12-19; Gal 3:19, 24-25; 2 Cor 3:10-18](#)).

**POINT #17: CHURCH ASSEMBLY: The New Covenant Church is Neither a Building nor a Storehouse. (Ch. 13, 23)**

*The false teaching is that Christian buildings called "churches," "tabernacles" or "temples" replaced the OT Temple as God's dwelling places.*

God's Word never describes New Covenant churches as literal "tabernacles," "temples" or "buildings" in which God dwells! God's church, God's dwelling place, is within the believers. Believers do not "go to church"—believers "assemble to worship." Also, since OT priests did not pay tithes, then tithing cannot logically continue. Therefore it is wrong to call a building "God's storehouse" for tithes. ([1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19-20; Eph 1:22-23; 2:21; 4:12-16; Rev 3:12](#)). For "storehouse" compare [1 Corinthians 16:2 with 2 Corinthians 12:14 and Acts 20:17, 32-35](#). For several centuries after Calvary Christians did not even have their own buildings (to call storehouses) because Christianity was an outlaw religion.

**POINT #18 BETTER PRINCIPLES: The Church Grows by Using Better New Covenant Principles. ([Ch. 17, 19, 27](#))**

*The false teaching implies that principles of grace giving are not as good as Old Covenant principles of giving.*

Under the New Covenant: (1) According to [Galatians 5:16-23](#), there is no physical law which controls the fruits of the Holy Spirit. (2) [Second Corinthians 3:10](#) says that the Old Covenant has "no glory" when compared to the "surpassing" glory and liberty of the Holy Spirit. (3) [Hebrews 7](#) is the only post-Calvary mention of tithing and it is an explanation of why the Levitical priesthood must be replaced by Christ's priesthood because it was weak and unprofitable. Study Hebrews 7 and follow the progression from [verse 5 to verse 12 to verse 19](#). (4) The manner in which tithing is taught today reflects a failure of the church to believe and act on the far better principles of love, grace and faith. Mandatory giving principles cannot, has not and will not prosper the church more than principles guided by love for Christ and lost souls ([2 Cor 8:7-8](#)).

**POINT #19: PAUL PREFERRED SELF-SUPPORT. ([Chapters 22, 28](#))**

*The false teaching is that Paul taught and practiced tithing.*

As a Jewish rabbi, Paul was among those who insisted on working to support himself ([Acts 18:3; 1 Thes 2:9-10; 2 Thes 3:8-14](#)). While Paul does not condemn those who are able to receive full-time support, neither does he teach that full-time support is the mandatory will of God for advancing the gospel ([1 Cor 9:12](#)). In fact, twice, in [Acts 20:29-35](#) and also in [2 Corinthians 12:14](#), Paul actually encouraged church elders to work to support needy believers inside the church.

For Paul, *living of the gospel* meant *living by gospel principles of faith, love and grace* ([1 Cor 9:14](#)). While Paul realized that he had a *right* to some support, he concluded that his *liberty*, or freedom to preach unhindered was more important in order to fulfill his calling from God ([1 Cor 9:12, 15; 2 Cor 11:7-13; 12:13-14; 1 Thes 2:5-6](#)). While working as a tent-maker, Paul accepted limited support but boasted that his pay, or salary, was that he could preach the gospel for free,

without being a burden to others ([1 Cor 9:16-19](#)). Most young preachers today do not want to follow this example given by Paul.

**POINT #20: TITHING DID NOT BECOME A LAW IN THE CHURCH UNTIL A. D. 777. ([Chapters 22, 29, 30](#))**

*The false teaching is that the historical church has always taught tithing.*

The earliest Christian assemblies patterned themselves after the Jewish synagogues which were led by rabbis who, like Paul, refused to gain a profit from preaching and teaching God's Word. There are many books on Jewish social life which explain this in great detail.

From Christ's death until Christianity became a legally recognized religion almost 300 years later, the majority of great church leaders took self-imposed vows of poverty. *This is historically documented!* They took Jesus' words to the rich young ruler in [Luke 18:22](#) literally "*sell all that you have, give it to the poor, and follow me.*" Most church historians agree that these early church leaders for at least the first 200 years worked for a living and were self-supporting. A Christian leader could not tell a Roman census-taker that he was a full-time preacher of an *outlaw* religion.

Clement of Rome (c95), Justin Martyr (c150), Irenaeus (c150-200) and Tertullian (c150-220) all opposed tithing as a strictly Jewish tradition. The *Didache* (c150-200) condemns traveling apostles who stay longer than three days and ask for money. And travelers who decided to remain with them were required to learn a trade. These early opponents of tithing are not quoted by tithe-teachers.

Cyprian (200-258) tried unsuccessfully to impose tithing in Carthage, North Africa around A. D. 250. At his conversion Cyprian gave away great wealth to the poor and lived under a vow of poverty. His idea of tithing included equal re-distribution to the poor. And—we must remember—his ideas of tithing were not adopted.

When tithe-teachers quote Ambrose, Chrysostom and Augustine as *church fathers* they conveniently leave out the first 200 years of church history. Even after Christianity became legal in the fourth century many of the greatest spiritual leaders took vows of deep poverty and preferred to live unmarried lives in monasteries. If

these tithe-teachers are quoted, then the church should also be told what kind of lives they usually led.

While disagreeing with their own theologians, most church historians write that tithing did not become a legally enforced doctrine in the church for over 700 years after the cross. According to the very best sources it took over 500 years before a local church Council of Macon in France, in the year 585, tried *unsuccessfully* to enforce tithing on its members. It was not until the year 777 that Charlemagne legally allowed the church to collect tithes. That is the history of tithing found in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Encyclopedia Americana* and the *Roman Catholic Encyclopedia*.

### POINT #21. HERMENEUTICS

Tithe-teachers use their own blended *pick-and-choose* principles which are extremely inconsistent. They reject the basic Covenant principles of Calvin which discard tithing as part of the worship statutes. They also reject basic Dispensation principles which discard the entire Mosaic Law unless it is repeated to the Church in terms of grace. They attempt to teach that the whole Law is still in effect in order to include tithing and then discard almost everything except tithing. While quoting [Matthew 5:17-18](#) they ignore [5:19](#) and the context of [5:20-48](#), which is an illustration of the whole law. Yet [5:17-18](#) demands either all of the Law of Moses or none of it in the Old Covenant context. The tithe-teachers blended compromise is a modern scandal of God's Word. (Chapters 18, 26, 30)

### CONCLUSION

Tithing failed national Israel and it has also failed the Church ([Heb 7:12-19](#)). Churches showcase success stories but fail to mention the testimonies of those who have tithed for generations without escaping poverty. Today the very lowest income class pays the largest percentage to charity. Yet most remain in poverty. Meanwhile many atheists become wealthy by simply following principles of money management which also makes many tithers successful. Neither the lottery, nor the tithe is a magic get-rich-quick answer to replace education, determination and hard work. If [Malachi 3:10](#) really worked for New Covenant Christians, millions of poor tithing Christians would have escaped poverty and would have become the wealthiest group of people in the world instead of remaining the poorest group. There is no evidence that the vast majority of poor *tithe-payers* are

ever blessed financially *merely because* they tithe. The Old Covenant blessings are not New Covenant blessings ([Heb 7:18-19; 8:6-8, 13](#)).

In God's Word, *tithe* does not stand alone. It is the *tithe of FOOD*. The HOLY biblical tithe was very narrowly defined and limited by God Himself. True biblical tithes were always: (1) only food, (2) only from the farms and herds, (3) of only Israelites, (4) who only lived inside God's Holy Land, the national boundary of Israel, (5) only under Old Covenant terms and (6) the increase could only be gathered from what God produced.

Therefore, (1) non-food items could not be tithed; (2) clean wild game animals and fish could not be tithed; (3) non-Israelites could not tithe; (4) food from outside God's holy land of Israel could not be tithed; (5) legitimate tithing did not occur when there was no Levitical priesthood; and (6) tithes did not come from what man's hands created, produced or caught by hunting and fishing.

I invite church leaders into an open discussion of this subject. The careful and prayer-full study of God's Word is essential for church growth. May God bless you in that study.

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