

Tithing in Today's World

Fred Coulter—October 17, 2009

Today we're going to do some unfinished business in talking about tithes and offerings in today's world, because periodically it's like all doctrines within the Church that people don't agree with. Sooner or later you get a paper about tithing, you get a paper about Sabbath, you get a paper about 'born again,' you get a paper: What about this year for the year of Jesus' return, and so forth.

I want to answer some questions concerning tithing and offerings in today's world, because there are some who will say, 'In the Old Testament they only tithed on what grew, animals and plants and firstfruits, and things like that. So therefore, when you come to the New Testament, Jesus sent 70 out to go evangelize and He said, 'Don't take a provision bag. Don't take anything with you, just the clothes you're wearing, no two coats, and so forth. Don't take a purse. You go into the house if they receive you, and whatever they set before you, you eat.' So that's how it should be run today.' I asked the person who sent in the paper: Okay, detail for me how, in today's world, that can be done. The only answer I got was they should share with you what they have. How do you do that?

Matthew 16:17. "And Jesus answered *and* said to him [Peter] 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood did not reveal *it* to you, but My Father, Who *is* in heaven. And I say also to you, that you are Peter... [you can read the explanation footnote about 'petros' and 'petra' and so forth in *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order*] ...but upon this Rock... [Talking of Himself because He's the Lord God of the Old Testament, and it talks about *the Rock* all through the book of Psalms.] ...upon this Rock I will build My Church, and *the* gates of the grave shall not prevail against it'" (vs 17-18).

Perfect Scriptures against Mormonism, because Joseph Smith got a vision from someone, which was not God, who said the Church died out. Well, Jesus said it isn't going to. Does Jesus expect the Gospel to be preached until the end? *Of course!* He said, 'And this Gospel shall be preached in all the world before the end shall come.' We're going to build from New Testament Scriptures and principles in the Bible about tithing and giving offerings in today's world.

Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came *and* spoke to them, saying, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.... [I want you to remember that, because this will be part of what we're going to include in how to understand it.] ...Therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations.... [That's everywhere in the world. That's why it applies to us and to wherever there is a Church of

God today, that is their number one mission to do.] ...baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.... [That's not a Trinitarian formula. I don't have time to go into that here.] ...Teaching them to observe **all things that I have commanded you**.... [Remember this verse, too, because concerning tithing and offerings, the Lord gave certain commands in different places.] ...And lo, I am with you always, *even* until the completion of the age.' Amen" (vs 18-20).

Are we at the completion of the age? Is the Kingdom of God on earth? *No, it's not!* Therefore, we are bound to preach the Gospel. We are bound to teach everyone everything that Jesus commanded. And we will also see a little later that there are some things that were taught and followed by the apostles in which they made certain decisions that God backed up unto death. So we need to understand that.

So let's come back here to Matthew 22 and let's see what Jesus commanded. Let's also understand something that's very important. During the days of Jesus' ministry, Judea and Galilee were under the Roman Empire; Rome came and conquered all the land. Then they let them work their land, the larger pieces of land as tenants on their previously owned property, which meant that they could not bring a tithe to the temple, because it belonged to Caesar first.

Also, because it was a merchandizing empire, they had money. We'll see money becomes a very important thing. Then they had real money, not like today—we'll talk about today's money a little later on. They had gold; they had silver; they had copper coins. You also have another problem concerning the temple, the priesthood and offerings and tithes, which is this: There were more Jews in what is called the Diaspora, which were all around the Mediterranean—north Mediterranean, south Mediterranean—and all the way into Babylon. How would they bring tithes to the temple? How would they bring offerings to the temple?

Now remember when Ezra came back with the great entourage, what did they give him? *Gold and silver and things like this!* They didn't send him back with herds of animals. Also when he got there, the governor levied a tax on the residents around Judea to provide animals and money for the running of the temple. So when we come down to the time of the Roman Empire in Judea and Galilee, it was a merchandizing empire. And any study of history will show that there was a lot of trading back and forth. There was the money with gold and silver, and so forth.

So, the Pharisees wanted to know how He would teach, and they wanted to catch Him in saying something He shouldn't say.

Matthew 22:15: "Then the Pharisees went and took counsel *as* to how they might entrap Him in His speech.... [Sound like a little politically correct speech police?] (here's what they did): ...And they sent their disciples *along* with the Herodians to Him, saying... [I just love this. I can almost see them doing it.] ...'Master... [Of course, they didn't know He was Master.] ...we know that You are true... [Oh?] ...and *that* You teach the way of God in truth... [Why didn't you obey Him?] ...and *that* You are not concerned about *pleasing* anyone; for You do not respect *the* persons of men.... [set the stage, a political trap] ...Therefore, tell us, what do You think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?'" (vs 15-17).

If you didn't pay tribute to Caesar and if you didn't say it lawful—*it was lawful!* Why? *Because of Roman law*—right? So Roman law was binding upon them as well—isn't that correct? And is it lawful in God's eyes to give tribute? *Yes, it is!*

Even the kings of Israel were granted another tithe, if you read 1-Sam. 8. He said, 'You want a king? I'll give you a king. He's going to take a tithe from everything that you have and he's going to take your sons to be in the army. He's going to take your daughters to be handmaidens and servants in his palaces, and everything like that.' And it ended up with Solomon. You talk about spending. After all that God had given to build the temple, they finished the temple and Solomon got all lifted up in vanity and he taxed, taxed, taxed. When he died the ten northern tribes said, 'Now if you reduce the taxes, we'll stay with you. But if you don't reduce the taxes, we're going on our own.' Well, you know what happened.

So here we have. We're dealing in money, real money, not today's money. Verse 18: "But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said, 'Why do you tempt Me, *you* hypocrites?... [That's a nice, friendly, politically correct answer—isn't it?] ...Show Me the tribute coin.' And they brought to Him a silver coin. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription *is on* this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render then the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God'" (vs 18-21).

He's talking about money here—isn't He? And since in the Diaspora they could not bring their tithes in the form of animals and produce, they did what we find in Deut.14. This was the decision that the rabbis made: 'If the way be too far for you, you sell your oxen and the produce, and turn it into money and come to the place where I chose to put My name and there you keep the Feast and rejoice.'

So they took that and said, 'If you're in the Diaspora, it would cost way too much to ship it in here, if you could ship it in here, and you can't carry it because it's more than you can take with you, and besides you can't drive cattle or herds of goats, helter-skelter wherever you want to drive them, so turn it into money and bring it to the temple.' We need to realize that in this time there were a lot of businessmen.

Let's come over here to Luke 21 and let's see what do you do about money. It's very interesting what Jesus said. Now according to the latest paper that I read, Jesus should have turned it down. It said you don't tithe on money—gold and silver and so forth—you can give offerings. The question was asked: Why would I bring this and how many are involved? *It's being spread in different areas*, and so I decided to bring this to answer the question in a different way than I have before.

Luke 21:1: "When He looked up, He saw the rich men tossing their offerings into the treasury." Did they collect money at the temple? *Yes!* It says offerings, but could you distinguish between the offerings or whether the money they were putting in there was actually an equivalent to a tithe or not? *No!*

"Then He also saw a certain poor widow drop in two small coins.... [Those are two small mites. I've got a picture of those copper mites in the *Harmony of the Gospels*—very little coins.] ...And He said, 'Of a truth, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all *of them*'" (vs 2-3). I think this is interesting, because we have those who are widows and widowers and are on limited incomes and they give their offerings. It's difficult for them in their circumstances to give offerings, where we know for sure, and I found this out years ago when I was processing all the mail, that those that I knew did not believe in tithing, they never even sent offerings. They gave nothing. So generally that has been true to form.

Now, here's this widow and I wonder how many of the Jews were giving nothing to the temple. "For all these have from their abundance cast into the offerings to God; but she, out of her poverty, did put *in* all the livelihood that she had" (v 4). I'm sure that was the livelihood for her immediate future, not everything for the rest of her life. Otherwise, how could she live, because she was a widow?

Let's look at some other things concerning tithing and how the Pharisees did things and what they did and how they cavorted themselves, and so forth. Let's come to Luke 11:42, and someone is going to say when I read this, 'See, this is tithing of small physical things that are grown.' *That is true!* So why did Jesus pick this out and bring this out?

Luke 11:42: “But woe to you, Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every herb, but you pass over the judgment and the love of God.... [There has to be *judgment* as well as love—correct? And in the account in Matt. 23, it says ‘faith and mercy.’] ...It is obligatory *for you* to do these things, and not set aside those *lesser things*.” ***He made it very clear to them that tithing was required!***

How do you do it when there is money? *Well, it's easy to figure a tenth from money*—isn't it? If you have ten coins, you go every tenth one, put it in. You would follow the same example of counting the herd. You don't put the first one in, you put the tenth one in. So there are many principles that we can follow here.

Let's come to Romans 12 and we'll talk a little bit about *giving*. How are we to give? So I bring this to those of you who say, ‘Well, we don't have to tithe.’ What should you do then? ‘Well, we should give.’ I've never heard anyone say we should give nothing, but I've seen a lot of people who give nothing. This is not an advertisement for you to send money, but this is something to let you think about, to help you make you make a choice of what you need to do before God.

Let's show what is the important thing that we are to do in building the character of God. Romans 12:1: “I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice... [If you give nothing, are you sacrificing? *No!*] ...Holy *and* well pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service.” Or as the *King James* says, ‘your reasonable service.’ Then he lists out what are the spiritual services and the reasonable services. All right, let's go through that.

Verse 2: “Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind in order that you may prove what *is* well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God. For I say through the grace that was given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think with sound-mindedness, as God has divided to each one a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function; Likewise, we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another” (vs 2-5). I thought we certainly had that exemplified with the Feast this year, every place that we got the reports.

“But each one has different gifts according to the grace that is given to us—whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the measure of faith. Or service, *let us tend* to service; or the one who is teaching, *let him tend* to teaching; Or the one who is encouraging, *let him tend* to encouragement; the one who is giving, *let it be* with generosity; the one who

is taking the lead, *let it be* with diligence; the one who is showing mercy, *let it be* with cheerfulness” (vs 6-8). So, he does mention giving with generosity. Now you can take that one Scripture, go back and read about what does it say how you are to help someone who is poor, someone who is in need, someone who comes to you and asks. Well, Jesus said, ‘You shall give to him in an abundant manner.’ How then should you give to God? So there is the principle of giving.

So, if you don't believe in tithing, we're going to see that you join the ranks of Corinthians, because Paul made a mistake. He thought he could inspire them to give if he would not ask for any tithes and offerings. We will see he admitted that that was a mistake. Let's see what Paul had the authority to do. I've gone over this in previous sermons, but if you want a full documented series on tithing—*The Principles of Tithing*—we have it, so you can write in for that. Let's get the full background and the full setting of it, so we understand what it's saying.

1-Corinthians 9:1: “Am I not an apostle?... [There were those who were saying, ‘Well, we've got these other apostles and we like their messages better. Yes, these wonderful false prophets that we really love.’ He talks about that in 2-Cor. 11.] ...Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, without a doubt I am to you. For you are the certification of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who are examining me is this” (vs 1-3).

They were examining and questioning why didn't Paul take tithes and offerings like the false apostles. Remember, they said they were Hebrews. I just imagine some of those false apostles were former Levites and they were coming along and saying, ‘Well you have to tithe to us because it says in the Old Testament that you are to tithe to the Levite.’ And what could they say. So he approaches it this way, notice how he does it, very carefully.

“Do we not have a right to eat and to drink?... [*Of course!*] ...Do we not have a right to take with us a sister, a wife, as also the other apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas... [Peter was married. All Catholics, pay attention.] ...Or I only and Barnabas, do we not have a right to refrain from working?” (vs 4-6). He had the right to do it, but he didn't do it, because he didn't want it to look as though he was taking from them. Now sometimes you can do things and you think, ‘Well, that's good. I'll inspire them to do it.’ But I don't think that when he started out to do that, he understood how carnal they were. Because remember, the book of 1-Cor. exposes the carnality of that church.

Verse 7: “Does anyone at any time serve as a soldier at his own expense? Does anyone plant a vineyard and not eat the fruit of it? Or does anyone shepherd a flock and not eat *the meat* and milk from the flock.... [*Of course not!*] ...Am I saying these things merely from a human point of view? Or does not the law say the same things?... [He's referring to the Law of Moses.] (notice how he builds this up): ...For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox that is treading out corn.’....” (vs 7-9).

Now what is that? That is the least you can do—isn't that true? They even found when you feed the oxen, which are treading out the corn or grinding the corn, that if you feed them they work harder and do better and produce more. If you don't, they don't produce like they should. *So there's a living principle.*

“...Is it because God is concerned for oxen?... [I want you to see how he interprets Scripture, which if I did this off-handedly, someone would surely raise a very vociferous protest.] ...Or does He not certainly say *this* for our sakes?... [That was written for the sake of the apostles and those preaching the Gospel.] ...For our sakes it was written, so that the one who plows might plow in hope, and the one who threshes the corn in hope might be partaker of his hope.... [Now that he's explained that, he gives the conclusion here]: ...If we have sown to you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your physical things?” (vs 9-11). Whatever they may be. Is money a physical thing? *Yes!* Grain, produce, clothing, physical things? *Yes!*

Verse 12: “If others participate in this authority over you... [We're going to see this authority was given to the apostles over the people and even the false apostles were taking this authority to themselves.] ...much more surely *should* not we?... [That is Paul and Barnabas and Timothy and Silas, etc.] ...Nevertheless, we have not used this authority... [not saying that it doesn't exist] ...but we have endured all things, so that we might not hinder the Gospel of Christ.”

Then he gives the authority and he gives the command of the Lord. Now let's examine this very carefully, v 13. “Don't you know that those who are laboring in the sacred things of the temple live *of the things* of the temple... [What are the sacred things? *The offerings of animals, the offerings of money, etc.*] ...and those who are ministering at the altar are partakers with the altar?”

What else did they bring? *It's the tithe*—correct? Now notice v 14, which you do not find in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. “In the same way also, the Lord did command... [Now this is a command. Remember Jesus said, ‘*Observe all*

things that I have commanded you.’] ...the Lord did command that those who preach the Gospel are to live of the Gospel.” So someone will say, ‘Yeah, when they come into your house, feed them?’

- How did they get to your house?
- How are they going to leave your house?
- How are they going to get back to their house?

You need to answer that question.

So there's a command. Notice what he covers—all the way from not muzzling the ox to partakers of what you plant and what you sow, to laboring in the sacred things—and is not preaching the Gospel laboring in the sacred things. They live of the things of the temple; they live of the things of the altar.

“In the same way also, the Lord did command that those who preach the Gospel are to live of the Gospel” (v 14). The temporary command, if you go to someone's house, as it was in Matt. 10 and Luke 10, that was a temporary one-time trip. Paul did not say, ‘We have authority to come in your house and you're to feed us.’ To live of the Gospel. No, we're going to see, did that involve money? *Yes.*

Verse 15: “But I have not used any of these things. And I have not written these things in order that this might *now* be done to me. For *it would* be better for me to die rather than to have anyone make my boasting void. For though I preach the gospel, there is no *reason* for me to boast because an obligation has been laid upon me. And woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel!” (vs 15-16). He did this so that he would not abuse his authority. This turned out to be a real mistake and we will see that he asked them to forgive him for not doing so.

Verse 18: “What then is my reward? That in preaching the Gospel, I may make the Gospel of Christ without expense, so that I may not abuse my authority in the Gospel.... [We do that with what we send to people, in the same way.] ...For although I am not under bondage to anyone, I have made myself a servant to all, so that I might gain the more” (vs 18-19).

Now let's see some of things that he admitted here. He talks about being burdensome, but let's see his intentions here. 2-Corinthians 1:20: “For whatever promises of God *there are*, in Him *is* the yes, and in Him the Amen, with glory to God by us. But He Who establishes us with you in Christ, and Who has anointed us, *is* God, Who has also sealed us and has given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. But I call upon God to bear witness of my intentions, that in order to spare you I did not come to Corinth—not that we exercise lordship over your faith, but because we are working with you *to*

increase your joy. For you stand by faith” (vs 20-24). *He expected them to be partakers of this in faith.*

Let's come to 2-Corinthians 6:11: “O you Corinthians! Our mouths have been opened to you, and our hearts have been enlarged *toward you*. You are not suppressed by us, but you are restricted in your own hearts.... [I want you to think about that, because this shows the attitude. What is he talking about as we go through here? *Restricted in your own hearts*, spiritually and every aspect of living by the Gospel.] ...Now in return *for our ministry to you* (I am speaking to you as to children), you should also enlarge *your hearts toward us*” (vs 11-13). Then he's talking about helping them to preach the Gospel by giving to them. We'll see this in just a little bit.

Then he shows other ways that they were restricted in their hearts. “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common? And what fellowship *does* light *have* with darkness? And what union *does* Christ *have* with Belial? Or what part *does* a believer *have* with an unbeliever? And what agreement *is there between* a temple of God and idols? For you are a temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (vs 14-16). So that's a tremendous thing. He wanted them to understand the whole purpose and meaning of conversion and receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 17: “‘Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,’ says *the* Lord, ‘and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you; And I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says *the* Lord Almighty” (vs 17-18). Now that tells us an awful lot—doesn't it? Remember: restricted in heart; you should open your hearts.

Let's see what he's talking about, 2-Corinthians 11:7: “Now did I commit sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the Gospel of God to you freely?... [He wanted to humble himself and apparently he made a strong assertion to God that he wouldn't take anything from them. He wanted them to give it voluntarily, but they didn't do it.] ...I robbed other churches... [Taking from them. How did they support him? *With money!* When he would travel, he had to have money to travel on those ships.] ...I robbed other churches, **receiving wages from them** for ministering to you” (vs 7-8). And some people say, ‘Well, Fred, you ought not collect tithes.’ My answer to them is, ‘I collect it on behalf of the Church and for God. It's God's money and I take a wage, just like the Apostle Paul did.’ *Same thing!*

Verse 9: “And when I was present with you and in need, I was not a burden to anyone... [Now that's important to understand, not a burden to anyone.] ...(for the brethren who came from Macedonia fully supplied my needs); for I kept myself, and will *continue* to keep myself, from being burdensome to you in anything. *As the Truth* of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I don't love you? God knows *I do*. But what I am doing, I will do, so that I may cut off *any* occasion from those who are desiring an occasion; so that in the things they boast of, **they** also may be found even as we *are*.... [Why does he mention ‘they’?] ...For such are false apostles—deceitful workers...” (vs 9-13). Those were the others taking tithes and offerings from them and Paul didn't want to take anything from them to show the difference in his ministry. Now let's see that this turned out to be a mistake and he admitted it.

2-Corinthians 12:7: “But in order that I might not be exalted by the abundance of the revelations, *there* was given to me a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me, so that I might not be exalted. I besought the Lord three times for this, that it might depart from me; but He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you; for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, most gladly will I boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For this reason, I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong. I have become a fool in this boasting. You have forced me *to do so*, when I ought to have been commended by you. For in no way was I inferior to those highly exalted *so-called* apostles—even if I am nothing” (vs 7-11).

“Indeed, the signs of an apostle were demonstrated *by me* in all patience, in signs and wonders and miracles among you. **For in what way was it that you were inferior to the other churches, except that I myself did not burden you?** Forgive me this wrong?” (vs 12-13). So Paul admitted that it was wrong.

(go to the next track)

We know there was a change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, but we also know that both covenants go back to Abraham. Paul addresses the question here in Hebrews 7:1: “For this Melchisedec, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, Who met Abraham *as he was* returning and from *his* slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, And to Whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all...” (vs 1-2).

What did they take as spoil? What do you think if you're a raiding army that you're going to

take as spoil? The heaviest thing you might take in addition to people may be sacks of grain, but you don't want to take very much of that, because you can plunder that almost anywhere you would want to go. So what did they have more of than anything else? Probably gold, silver, jewelry, precious clothing, and things like that. Under the covenant given to Israel, the spoil of any war went to God, because He was the One Who led them in battle. So rather than give a spoil, Abraham gave a tenth part of the returned spoil to God for giving him the victory. He did not have to do that, but he did showing that Abraham went above and beyond.

Now then it talks about the sons of Levi, 4: "But consider how great this one *was* to Whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. For on the one hand, those from among the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood are commanded by the law to collect tithes from the people—that is, from their brethren—even though they are all descended from Abraham. But on the other hand, He Who was not descended from them received tithes from Abraham, and blessed him who had the promises. Now it is beyond all doubt *that* the inferior *one* is blessed by the superior one. And in the first case, men who die receive tithes; but in the other case, *He received tithes of Whom it is* witnessed that He lives forever" (vs 4-8).

"And in one sense, Levi, who receives tithes... [Because the temple was still standing.] ...also gave tithes through Abraham; For he was still in his forefather's loins when Melchisedec met him.... [You figure that for doctrine. That also shows ministers are to tithe.] ...Therefore, if perfection was indeed *possible* through the Levitical priesthood—for *the* law *that* the people had received was *based* on it—what further need *was there for* another priest to arise according to the order of Melchisedec, and not to be named after the order of Aaron? For since the priesthood has changed, it is obligatory that a change of the law also take place" (vs 9-12).

Now people like to come in and say, 'Oh, that means that Jesus changed the law.' What law are we talking about? *The law of tithing!* Also what are we also talking about? *The whole Old Covenant vs the whole New Covenant!* But it's talking about the law of tithing all the way through. Is that not correct? Why would it all of a sudden change, the topic? 'A change of the law also takes place.' Where do we find the change of that law take place? *1-Cor. 9*—don't we? And who changed it? *The Lord changed it!* Anyone want to argue with that? Does Jesus—Who was Lord God of the Old Testament and Lord of the New Testament—not have the right to change it? And in changing it, did He eliminate it? *No! He only changed to whom it went to!*

1-Corinthians 9:13: "Don't you know... [And that is don't you understand or realize.] ...that those who are laboring in the sacred things of the temple live *of the things* of the temple, *and* those who are ministering at the altar are partakers with the altar?... [That includes everything—doesn't it?] ...In the same way also, the Lord did command... [What did He command? In the same way that those were at the temple and ministering the altar receive tithes and offerings and the animals for sacrifices, when they were available:] ...the Lord did command that those who preach the Gospel are to live of the Gospel" (vs 13-14).

When you are living in a society that is merchandizing society and you're dealing in money, how do you participate in those physical things? What would you use as a guide on how much to give? Well, how did God give the instructions to the priesthood and the Levites? *You are to give a tenth!* That was the command—wasn't it?

Did we not see the change in the command in 1-Cor. 9? So, let's read Hebrews 7:12, again: "For since the priesthood has changed... [Christ is now the High Priest.] ...it is obligatory *that* a change of *the* law also take place." And to whom did He command it to be given? *To the apostles and those who are preaching the Gospel*—correct? Is that not what He did? when you put those two Scriptures together? Can we read it any other way? *No!*

Let's see something else, 1-Timothy 3:1: "Faithful *is* the saying, 'If any man aspires to *be* an overseer, he desires a good work.' Now then, it is obligatory *that* the overseer be blameless, *the* husband of one wife, vigilant, serious-minded, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching; Not given to much wine, not a bully, not greedy for selfish gain; but kind, not a quarreler, not a lover of money" (vs 1-3). Why? *Because the ministry dealt in money*, that's why.

Now let's see another admonition here, 1-Timothy 6:3: "If anyone teaches any different doctrine, and does not adhere to sound words, *even those* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine *that is* according to Godliness." Did we just not read some of the sound words of Christ? We have to adhere to the teachings. We're going to see some other things and I'm going to surprise you with some of the other things that we find that the Church practiced that God backed up under the pain of death.

It says if someone does that: "He is proud and knows nothing. Rather, he has a morbid attraction to questions and disputes over words, from which come envy, arguments, blasphemy, wicked suspicions, vain reasonings of men who have been corrupted in *their* minds, and *are* destitute of the truth—*men* who believe that gain is godliness. From

such withdraw *yourself*.... [What kind of gain is he talking about?] ...But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, *and it is* evident that neither do we have the power to carry anything out *of the world*.... [The pharaohs never learned that lesson.] ...But having food and clothing, we should be satisfied with these” (vs 4-8).

And basically, the wages that I take are for that very thing. And I dare say that if people would compare income tax returns, we take far less than a lot of people in the Church make, because we're trying to follow what is here. We're not burdening ourselves down with it. Now we have to wise as serpents and harmless as doves and when the good days were coming, we made provisions for the bad days, for the church as well as ourselves. But we were not greedy of gain.

Now notice, v 9: “For those who desire to become rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which cause men to sink into destruction and perdition. For... [Here's the conclusion of it]: ...the love of money is a root of all evils; *by* which some, *while* striving after *riches*, were seduced from the faith, and have impaled themselves with many sorrows” (vs 9-10). Now that's very descriptive in the Greek. And if you know what impalement really meant, that is very powerful indeed.

Now let's look at what Peter wrote here. So everywhere in the New Testament we see that they are dealing in money. 1-Peter 5:1: “*The* elders who *are* among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed; Feed the flock of God that is among you... [How do you feed the flock? *You teach, you preach!* What do we do today? *We produce booklets, books, CDs, tapes and in this case, even the Bible.*] ...Feed the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain...” (vs 1-2).

That's what happens in *too many* cases. And is that not what happened with the Worldwide Church of God? They strove after riches, they gave men salaries into the six figures and even some who were evangelists were arguing with the one who was supposed to be the apostle as to ‘why that person over there got a six-figure salary higher than mine.’ When obviously, he thought himself was more important and had been in there longer. Look at what happened. *Dishonest gain!*

Why, they took that which should have been given to widows and used it for fuel expenses to fly the ‘so-called apostle’ around the world. “...not in fondness of dishonest gain...” (v 2). So you tie that in with 1-Peter 3, we have the same thing. How

should we handle the money of God? *Full accountability!* We do that. It's right there in black and white. Every year we send you an annual report.

Here's another sin that goes along with it, because it's true if there were any questions that came out, here's what happened. “Not as exercising lordship over *your* possessions... [And that's how they treated the brethren—as possessions, as sources of money. They would spend it wildly on many different things. I can verify that's true, because I checked them out. That's one of the reasons I resigned.] ...but *by* being example to the flock of *God*” (v 3).

Let's look at something else that the Church did, that the apostles did, having to do with money that was above and beyond tithing. This ties in with two things:

1. sell your possessions and give all
2. let your ‘yes’ be *yes* and your ‘no’ be *no*

Let's see something that's important and then we will see that God did bind their decision to do this.

Acts 4:32: “And the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.” Now, this is not communism—for those who say this is communism—because they were all gathered there in Jerusalem, rather than from the countries they were in. They had everything in common.

Verse 33: “And with great power the apostles testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. For neither was anyone among them in want; for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold *them*... [cash] ...and brought the amounts of those things that were sold, and laid *the money* at the feet of the apostles; and distribution was made to each one according to his need” (vs 33-35).

Now notice, this is very important: “And Joses, who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles (which is, being interpreted, ‘son of consolation’), a Levite... [Now he could have claimed tithes—couldn't he? being a Levite. *Yes, he could have!*] ...born in the country of Cyprus, Had land; and he sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet” (vs 36-37). Now this tells you what? *The authority of the apostles was over that of the Levites*—correct? How else can you read it?

Now notice how God backed this up. Now, you think about it today. If a minister would say, ‘Sell your house. Send it all into me and God will provide for you.’ Think of the uproar. I would not have papers written about tithing, I would probably have bulldozers coming after me. Let's see how God backed this up.

Acts 5:1: "Now a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a possession, And kept back *part* of the price *for* himself..." Because they said, 'Whatever it sells for, we'll give. So they sold it for more than what they had figured. What are we dealing with here right now? We dealt with the thing, 'Sell all that you have and give it.' Now we're dealing with another one added on top of that, which is this: Let your 'yes' be *yes* and your 'no' be *no*. Isn't that right? *Yes!*

"...And kept back *part* of the price *for* himself, his wife also being aware of *it*; and he brought a certain portion *and* laid *it* at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why did Satan fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *part* of the price of the estate? Before it was sold, was it not yours? And after you sold it, was it *not* in your own authority? Why did you contrive this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God'" (vs 2-4). You need to think about that in your tithes and your offerings and things like this.

"And when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and expired; and great fear came upon all those who heard these things. Then the young men wound him up, and carried *him* out and buried *him*. [Then his wife comes.] ...Now it came to pass about three hours later *that* his wife also came in, not knowing what had taken place. And Peter said to her, 'Tell me if you sold the estate for so much?' And she said, 'Yes, for so much.' Then Peter said to her, 'Why *is it* that you agreed together to tempt the Spirit of *the* Lord? Behold, the feet of those who buried your husband *are* at the door, and they shall carry you out.' And she immediately fell down at his feet and expired. And the young men came in and found her dead; and they carried *her* out *and* buried *her* by her husband. Then great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard these things" (vs 5-11). I guess so! Did God back it up? *Yes, He did!*

How do you tithe in today's world? Where we started out was Matt. 28, 'Preach the Gospel in all the world. Teach all nations'—right? 'I'm with you to the completion of the age.'

- Have we arrived at the completion of the age? *No!*
- Did God also give the prophecy in Dan. 12 that 'at the time of the end knowledge shall increase and many shall go to and fro?' *Yes!*
- Did God not also know that in the end time the society would not be an agrarian society, but it would be a mercantile society? *Yes!*
- How do we tithe today?

1. none of you here have farms

I only think one or two people that I know of in the Church do have farms.

2. you don't have money

What do I mean by that? *You don't have any gold or silver that you exchange when you buy and sell*—is that not correct? What do you have? We've covered this in the things that we've done on economics. *You have paper, which is claimed to be money*. That's the medium of exchange—is that not correct? *Yes!* You also have digital money in the forms of checks. And with that digital money—it's really not digital money, it is digital funds, I would put it that way—you write your own check for whatever amount based upon what you supposedly have in the bank—is that not correct? *Yes!*

What should we do then? Say, 'Okay, we can't collect tithes on everything? We can't give this because it's not real money and we can't give the money that we have that's printed because those are fiat money scripts in whatever country you happen to be in. In American it says, 'This Federal Reserve note is good for all debts public and private.' But that's not money.

- Therefore, since we have no money, since it's all digital and we have credit cards and things like that, which then adds into the mix, and so forth,
- Therefore, we should not tithe at all because none of those items are specifically declared in the Bible as tithe-able.
- Therefore, we should not preach the Gospel, we should not mail anything to you, we should not make CDs or tapes. We should not send you any letters, because you're not dealing with real money.

That's the logic of the paper that I read recently. Now then, because Jesus said:

1. preach the Gospel
Is that not correct? *Yes!*
2. we're to preach it in all the world until He returns.

Is that not correct? *Yes!*

So what has the Church decided when down through the years passed before us it became more and more of a mercantile society moving away from real money of silver and gold?

Let's come to Acts 15; this is what the Churches have done and that's why we have written in the *Beliefs of the Christian Biblical Church of God* booklet and also in the *Beliefs and Doctrines of the New Testament Church* (Appendix M), the principle of tithing. What did the Church do here concerning the problem of circumcision and how did

they figure it out and make the decision? Now please, don't someone say, 'Oh, Fred Coulter's making a decision on his own.' *No!* I'm looking at what all the Churches of God have done before we came along, which God has blessed and prospered in those things. Now let's see what happened here, after they got done explaining everything to them. This was a big deal. Circumcision was a bigger deal than tithes and offerings, and especially for Gentiles, because they could not become a proselyte in the synagogue without being circumcised. And that's what the Pharisees were saying they could not become members of the church without being circumcised. So this was a big decision to make. Notice, *they didn't vote on it*. James gave his answer.

Acts 15:13: "And after they were silent, James answered *and* said, 'Men, Brethren, listen to me.... ['We'll have a role call and we'll take up a vote.'] (he said): ...Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles to take out a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written..." (vs 13-15). I want you to read what Scripture he quoted. This is the exact same principle that Paul said that muzzling the ox was written for the apostles.

Now if I would have made a decision or compared Scripture that way, I'm sure that I would receive quite a 'come-uppance' from a lot of people saying, 'How dare you do that.' Well, look what they did here. Notice they didn't refer to any Scripture in the Old Testament, especially Deut. 10, which says, 'Circumcise the foreskin of your heart.' Did they? *No!*

What did he refer to? "After these things, I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which has fallen; and its ruins I will build again, and will set it up; So that the residue of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My name is called, says *the* Lord, Who does all these things" (vs 16-17).

How does that undo circumcision? It does from this point of view. *You have to understand what they were thinking*. What was the tabernacle of David? *That was the tent where David put the ark* when he brought it back out from Kirjath-jearim. And he didn't put it in the temple in Gibeon. He brought it to his house and there he had a special tabernacle made to put the Ark of the Covenant in. This was a type of Christians having direct access to God the Father. Just like David had direct access to God.

Let's come back to Psalm 63; this will show you how David approached God—which is what? A fore-type of the New Testament Church having what? *Direct access to God the Father in heaven above, the Holy of Holies in heaven—right?—through the veil, through Christ!*

Psalm 63:1: "O God, You are my God, earnestly I will seek You! My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You, as in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." Circumcision is not the question here. *It's your relationship with God!* That's Paul told the Jews that 'if you don't worship God in Spirit and in Truth, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision and the Gentiles who are not circumcised that keep the righteousness of the law, are accepted of God and you're rejected.' On the basis of what? *The tabernacle of David!*

Now notice, v 2: "To see Your power and Your glory—as I have seen You in the sanctuary." How did he see it in the sanctuary? *Because he would come before the sanctuary where the Ark of the Covenant was* and he would sing psalms and hymns, and apparently God revealed Himself somewhat to David, so he could say, 'I have seen you in the sanctuary.' So this must have been part of the reasoning here that was taking place.

Come back here to Acts 15:7; let's show that it talks about God Who knows the heart. "And after much discussion had taken place, Peter stood up and said to them, 'Men, brethren, you know that from *the* early days, God made *the* choice among us *that* by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.... [that began with Cornelius] ...And God, Who knows the heart, bore witness to them *by* giving them the Holy Spirit, even as *He did* to us. And made no difference between us and them, and has purified their hearts through the faith'" (vs 7-9).

That's why there need not be any physical circumcision. Did physical circumcision change the heart? *No!* What changed the heart? *The Spirit of God!* And if the Spirit of God changes the heart, then there doesn't need to be the physical circumcision. So this is how they made the decision.

What did the Churches of God and the elders do in conference together when they came across the problem originally, how do we support the Church? They decided by tithing a tenth of your income, be it money, be it digital money, be it checks, or whatever it may be. Did God bless that? *Yes!* Someone's surely going to say, 'Well, God will bless them because of other things.'

But specifically God says here in Malachi 3:6: "For I *am* the LORD, I change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.... [*God changes not!* Who gave the imposition of the tithe? *God did!* What did He give it upon? *The preponderance of the things that they were growing in an agricultural society—correct?* Could the Church then, in conference make a decision based upon this, 'Therefore, I the Lord, I change not?'] (Let's see what He's talking about): ...From the days of your fathers, you have gone away from My

statutes... [And is not tithing one of the statutes?] ...and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you,' says the LORD of hosts. 'But you say. 'In what way shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me. But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings!'" (vs 6-8).

So what did the Church do? *The Church and the elders made the decision*—which is carried on in all the Churches of God today—that *the monies that you have, whatever it may be, in whatever form it may be, that you tithe on it and give offerings*. Now, someone's going to say, 'Well, I'm on social security and welfare. I don't have much to give.' Do you thank God for what you have? Do you give an offering? *Of course, you should!* If you make so much money, should you tithe? *Yes, you should!* God says, 'If not, you're robbing Me.' 'Well, Fred Coulter's using that to beat us up over the head to get more money.' *No, I'm preaching the Word of God!*

Now notice what happens, v 9: "You are cursed with a curse; for you are robbing Me, *even* this whole nation.... [Boy, you can sure say that today—right?] ...Bring all the tithes into the treasure house, so that there may be food in My house. And prove Me now with this..." (vs 9-10). In other words God says, 'Prove Me.' This is the only thing in which He says, 'Prove Me.' The reason is because tithing is a proof on you, whether you love God and want to carry out the things in your part to help preach the Gospel and get things to the world, regardless of what church you're in.

Like I said before, we're not in competition with any of the other Churches of God. We hope and pray that they will all come to the point that they preach the Gospel the way they need to, repent of the sins they need to repent of, that all the brethren will come out of their Laodicean thieving ways and give to God.

This is not to beat anyone over the head, but we are confronted with choices everyday—are we not? Is not this part of it? *Yes, it is!* "Bring all the tithes into the treasure house, so that there may be food in My house..." (v 10). How is the Gospel going to be preached and what is the house of God today? *The House of God is the Church of God!* The Church of God is to what? *Preach the Gospel! Feed the flock!* How can that be done unless there are tithes and offerings? You tell me how it's going to be done. 'Well, we will give.' All right, what is the command if you give? *Be liberal!* What does that mean? *Put your money where your mouth is!* I don't say this to intimidate anyone or put anyone down. That's just the way it is.

"And prove Me now with this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'to see if I will not surely open the

windows of heaven for you, and pour out a blessing for you, until *there is not enough room to receive it*" (vs 10).

Now here's a promise: "And **I will rebuke the devourer** for your sakes..." *The devourer* can be anything. When they had crops, it could be against the crops. The devourer could be those who take money from you and you shouldn't be giving it to them. I even know of one widow who would give \$5 a month and she would spend \$700 trying to win the Reader's Digest lottery on magazines.

"...and it shall not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field,' says the LORD of hosts" (v 11). Likewise with everything we have. Do you have a job? I will have to say this, of those in the Church that I know, we probably have less than one percent unemployment. Why? *Because of this right here!*

Let's see how far this goes. "...nor shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And all nations shall call you blessed; for you shall be a delightful land,' says the LORD of hosts" (vs 11-12). Or we will be a delightful Church. Very interesting. Notice the answer here. 'Lord, that's too much for you to require of me. And who do you think Your ministers are to do this?'

"Your words have been all too strong against Me,' says the LORD. 'Yet you say, "What have we spoken *so strongly* against You?" You have said, "It is vain to serve God... [How's He talking about serving in here? *In tithes and offerings!* or in any other way, as a matter of fact.] ...and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?... [and that's what happened] ...And now we are calling the arrogant blessed. Yea, they that work wickedness are built up, they even tempt God, and are delivered.'" Then those fearing the LORD spoke together, *each* man to his neighbor. And the LORD listened and heard...." (vs 13-16). Remember, *God knows*.

- I don't know your heart, *but God does!*
- I don't know your intentions, *but God does!*
- I don't know who you talk to and what you say, *but God does!*

"...And a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the LORD, and for those who thought upon His name.... [This is not talking about Old Testament people. This is talking about New Testament people.] ...'And they shall be Mine,' says the LORD of hosts, 'in the day that I will make up My own special jewels.... [And what are those special jewels put into? Paul called it a crown of life. So that's talking about New Testament

reward.] ...And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.' Then you shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God, and the one who does not serve Him" (vs 16-18).

It's just like I asked the question concerning *forgiveness*—the same thing applies here. How can a person say, 'God forgive me all my sins, but that guy over there I'm never going to forgive.' What did Jesus say? 'If you don't forgive them their sins, neither will God forgive you your sins.'

So you can take the same principle and you can apply it to anything. You can apply it to tithes and offerings. 'Well, I want God to give me all the blessings, but I don't want to give anything back to God, because I don't see in the New Testament where it says you shall tithe on your digital funds'; whatever it may be.

Now I know there are going to be some people be hot under the collar. Be hot under the collar, **but take it up with God!** *That's how we have tithing and offering in today's world!*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 16:17-18
- 2) Matthew 28:18-20
- 3) Matthew 22:15-22
- 4) Luke 21:1-4
- 5) Luke 11:42
- 6) Romans 12:1-8
- 7) 1-Corinthians 9:1-16, 18-19
- 8) 2-Corinthians 1:20-24
- 9) 2-Corinthians 6:11-18
- 10) 2-Corinthians 11:7-13
- 11) 2-Corinthians 12:8-13
- 12) Hebrews 7:1-2, 4-12
- 13) 1-Corinthians 9:13-14
- 14) Hebrews 7:12
- 15) 1-Timothy 3:1-3
- 16) 1-Timothy 6:3-10
- 17) 1-Peter 5:1-3
- 18) Acts 4:32-37
- 19) Acts 5:1-11
- 20) Acts 15:13-17
- 21) Psalm 63:1-2
- 22) Acts 15:7-9
- 23) Malachi 3:6-18

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1-Samuel 8
- Deuteronomy 14
- Matthew 23; 10
- Luke 10
- 1-Peter 3
- Daniel 12
- Deuteronomy 10

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Sermon Series: *The Principles of Tithing*

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