

BEWARE THE TITHE TRAP!

(OR)

EXPOSURE OF FALLACIES IN CHURCHES' TEACHING ON TITHING

Preface

Just as every person has a unique fingerprint, everyone, also, has a unique mind. It is this uniqueness that makes us who we are.

Suppose your mental uniqueness created a cure for a dreaded human disease. Would it be your responsibility to your fellow humans to reveal that cure? Should you share that portion of your personal uniqueness with others? Of course you should if you wish to relieve suffering!

When you discover an injustice being done to your fellow humans, is it not your responsibility to expose such injustice? Moses felt he should; Jefferson knew he should; Ghandi determined he should; and Joan of Arc most certainly decided she should. When we see human beings exploited, we have an obligation to let the world know of these wrongs.

However, there is a major difference between revealing a cure for a disease and revealing error that has become established as truth. Making known the first is a pleasure; making known the second requires courage, for those established persons and institutions using others are loath to see any interruption of the cash flow in their pipelines. So it was during the days of slavery in the nineteenth century; so it is today in the twenty-first century! So shall it be when the anticipated fury of certain recipients of the tithe cash flow read this essay and attack its author as scurrilous, vituperative, and blasphemous.

Of course, there may be some innocent preachers, recipients of tithe, who are unaware of the Biblical teachings on the theme of tithe and support of the church, but after reading this study, even these innocent ones shall no longer be able to plead ignorance as their defense. However, it was our Master who said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Matthew 5: 11,12.)

This study is directed to all Christians who wish to know the Biblical teaching on tithing.

TITHING: VERY BIG BUSINESS

(Denominational Greed or Human Need?)

Tithing is a source of massive income for many Christian organizations. Recently, one East-coast conference of a Christian denomination published its tithe income for the year. This conference, with a membership of about 22,500 members, reported an annual tithe income of approximately \$18,000,000.00. That is a per capita tithing average of some \$800.00 per member; but, remember, this average does not include the free-will offerings that these members gave to the local church and the conference in addition to the tithes.

Having sat on the executive committees of two Christian conferences’ for a combined total of approximately fifteen years, I can honestly say that, in my view, each of these conferences gauged its “success” by two numbers: tithe growth and membership growth. Tithe growth and membership growth

were scrutinized almost constantly.

An important third focus was upon capital improvements, the building of churches, especially. The church established a special fund used for lending local churches money to build new buildings and improve older ones. However, in this particular denomination, although the local members pay for the land and building, the conference corporation, not the local members who pay the bills, holds title to the land and buildings and, therefore, owns all church property.

During my volunteer service on these two committees, I cannot recall either conference committee discussing specifically how it could best serve the needs of widows, orphans, and the homeless within its borders. A great deal of emphasis was placed on the operation of hospitals, however. Perhaps the major unspoken reason for giving special attention to hospitals and paying almost no attention to orphanages, homes for widows, and homeless shelters, was because hospitals generate very good income, whereas homes for widows, orphans, and the homeless are likely to be a drain on the church's budget, taking funds from pastors and administrators and reducing funding for the purchase of land and buildings.

You ask, ““Why did you not speak out then?”” Let me assure you that at that time I was not aware of the full Biblical teaching on tithes and its use. Yes, I should have studied this matter for myself and not assumed that the church was teaching me the Biblical gospel. However, upon discovering the truth for myself through Bible study, prayer, and research, I am now attempting to set straight my error of earlier years.

Shall we support denominational greed or human need?

Scope Of This Study

This research will (1) present the Biblical teaching on tithing, its purpose and its use; and will (2) show that any Christian church, using tithing as its economic base, should present this plan as a business practice, not as a theological dogma.

Please note that, except for relevant historical and exegetical information, this writer uses only Biblical sources. The Christian's standard of belief must be scripture, the "law and the testimony," not Pope, prophet, priest, king, committee, church manual, tradition or any other human source. For, ".....if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20.)

Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical references in this study are from the King James Version.

CHAPTER I

TITHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

According to Leviticus 27:32, the tithe is one-tenth of one's increase, one's profit. In Deuteronomy 14:28, the Israelites were told to bring the tithe of the "increase."

It is noteworthy that the practice of tithing existed long before Israel's history in Semitic and Indo-Germanic pagan rituals. It was believed that if the gods did not receive their due, they would withhold their favors during the coming year. James Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, 1005.

Also, tithes were not always collected for religious purposes. Tithing was practiced among ancient peoples for "both secular

and religious purposes.....” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, 1127.

Tithing, Required Under the Ceremonial Law

Studying the full scope of tithing as presented in the Bible, one discovers that tithing is first mentioned in Genesis 14: 17-24, where Abraham is described as ““giving”” a voluntary offering of a tenth to Melchizedek, King/priest of Salem. Of course, we ““pay”” an obligation, but we ““give”” a gift because we choose to. There was no law of tithing in the Word of God demanding that Abraham pay Melchizedek tithing on the spoils of war.

(Also, see Chapter III.)

Clearly, tithing was codified in the ceremonial law along with burnt offerings, sacrifices, heave offerings, vows, and the practice of circumcision. (Deuteronomy Chapters 11, 12 ,14, and 26, and Leviticus Chapter 12.) ““Under the Levitical system God ordainedthe tithes.....”” S.D.A. Bible Dictionary, 1127.

Because Abraham ““gave”” tithes to Melchizedek before Moses and the ceremonial laws of Moses’ day, some contend that the practice of tithing is perpetual.

It is true that tithing was a part of the ceremonial codes (Deuteronomy 14:22-29 and 26:12), but the fallacy of this interpretation is immediately observed when one studies the practice of circumcision. Circumcision existed before Moses (Genesis 17:10) and was adopted into the ceremonial codes as was tithing (Exodus 12: 44, 48 and Leviticus 12:3); however, as we see in Colossians 2:16,17, Paul states that Christ’s death made void the ceremonial laws (Hebrews 9: 8-11), including the practice of circumcision (Galatians 5:6; 6:15, and 1 Corinthians

7:19). Therefore, even though circumcision and tithing were practiced before Moses and the ceremonial codes, this practice did not make either of these acts perpetual.

TITHING'S PURPOSE AND USE

Deuteronomy 14 clearly and specifically states the purpose of tithing and how tithes were to be used. The following exegesis of verses 22-29, shows this:

V. 22- The Israelites were commanded to tithe the increase of their crops every year.

V. 23- The farmer and his family were to use the tithe in celebration of and in honor of God, who blessed their labors during the preceding year and who specified the place where the celebration was to take place. They were to tithe their corn, wine, oil, and animals.

Vs. 24-26 - If the designated place of celebration was too far, the farmer and his family were to sell the tithe, turn it into money, take the money, and go to the designated place of celebration. Once there, they were to use the money for themselves, buying ““whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth; and thou shall eat there before the Lord.....and thou shall rejoice , thou, and thine household.””

How long has it been since you heard your priest or pastor use these verses as a basis for his sermon on stewardship and tithing? It is probable that your spiritual leaders have never mentioned these passages publicly for fear that you might detect their lack of intellectual honesty. Are they afraid that you might have a true understanding of how God directed that the tithe be

used during the Levitical period?

V.27- The Levites, who cared for the tabernacle and who served as priests, were to receive some of the tithe (no specific amount is designated), for they were not allowed to own real property, land. However, later, when we study Paul's instruction in the New Testament concerning the priest, we shall see that the priestly system of Moses' day was done away with when Christ became the High Priest of all who believe on Him. Therefore, your pastor or priest does not take the place of the Levitical priest, who slew animal sacrifices and acted as an intermediary between the sinner and God. As we shall see, Paul teaches that Christ's death took the place of animal sacrifices and that after Christ's death, only He, Christ, can serve as mankind's mediator between humans and God. In Matthew 25, we shall see, also, Christ telling us how to give to Him, our High Priest, and how to serve Him, personally.

V.28- At the end of every third year of the sabbatical cycle, the Israelites were to bring a tithe of their increase and store it within their storage facilities.

V.29- Again, the Levites were to receive a portion of this tithe. But, in addition to the Levites, these tithes were to go to satisfy the needs of the strangers (refugees), orphans, and widows, who lived in the villages of the tithers.

Compare this Biblical instruction with that of Ellen White, who wrote, ““One reasons that the tithe may be applied to school purposes. Still others reason that canvassers and colporteurs should be supported from the tithe. But a great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn from the object for which it is to be used—the support of the ministers.”” (Underlining mine),

Testimonies, Vol. 9, 248-249.

She also taught that tithes should not be used to help the poor. (Counsels of Stewardship, 103.) Why does Ms. White not support Biblical instruction to use the tithe for supplying the needs of widows, orphans, and refugees? More will be said about this point when Matthew, Chapter 25, is analyzed, later.

THE SECOND TITHE HOAX

Some have claimed that Deuteronomy 14, is speaking about a second tithe, not a first tithe. Studying this claim, immediately the objective, thinking person finds it hollow. First, nowhere in the Bible can this author find the phrase ““second tithe”” even though he has looked at all pertinent entries in Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance. This phrase is a man-made concoction that tries, unsuccessfully, to explain away very clear instructions concerning tithing in the Mosaic period. Second, if this passage were talking about a second tithe, why would Moses remind the reader twice in verses 27 and 29, not to forget the Levite, who would received from the first tithe. Therefore, receiving from the first tithe, the Levite would not need a portion of the so-called second tithe. Deuteronomy 14 is talking about tithe, the first and only tithe. Third, if denominations really believe the second tithe hoax, why do they not make a place on their offering envelopes for the donor to request that his tithe be given as either a first or a second tithe? Therefore, the Bible speaks of offerings and tithe, not ““second tithe.”” The second tithe ploy serves as a smoke screen whose result is confusion, not clarification.

WHAT ARE YOUR CHURCH’S PRIORITIES?

Now, let’s do a quick review of how well your church is

fulfilling the needs of widows, orphans, and the homeless. How many church-supported homes for widows are available in your community? How many church-supported orphanages are operating in your community? How many church-supported shelters for the homeless are operating in your community? If you answered, “None,” to each of these questions, why are no such facilities available?

On the other hand, how many churches are actively operating in your community? Many, no doubt! How many of these have salaried spiritual leaders? Perhaps 99.9% have salaried pastors, bishops, or elders.

Could it be that many Christian churches are operating almost no widows' homes, orphanages, or homeless shelters in our communities because most of the funding going to the denominational headquarters is being absorbed (1) for payments on new buildings and (2) by church leaders enjoying very comfortable salaries, attractive homes, late-model cars, and bonuses for travel and educational expenses?

If the above three paragraphs describe your community and church, isn't it time to review the priorities that God has laid down in Deuteronomy 14 and Matthew 25?

When the Israelites followed the instructions in Deuteronomy 14: (1) using the tithes for celebrating God's benevolence to the tither and his family, and (2) providing for the Levites and other needy persons, the tither was assured of God's blessing upon him and his labor.

What are your church's priorities? Shall we support denominational greed or human need?

MALACHIAH'S TEACHING ABOUT TITHING

Before leaving the matter of tithing in the Old Testament, let us study the book of Malachiah, for it is on this book that ““Christian spiritual leaders”” often base their teachings on Christian stewardship.

No doubt you have sat through sermons on tithing and been told by the preacher or priest that if you do not ““pay”” your tithe to the particular denomination that the speaker is representing, you are ““robbing God.”” Let's study the book of Malachiah to see what the prophet is really saying.

Chapter one begins when God assures Israel that He loves them. Then in Vs.6-8, God states: ““It is you O priests, who show contempt for my name.”” The priests ask, ““How have we shown contempt for your name?”” (NIV). God replies, ““You place defiled food on my altar”” by bringing blind animals, crippled and sick animals. (V.9) He repeats this charge in V.13. God warns that He will ““not accept such inferior sacrifices, sacrifices that are hurt, crippled, and sick.....”” (New Century Version.) Again in V. 14, God warns that He will refuse these inferior sacrifices.

In Chapter 2, God addresses the priests again, telling them that *they have taught the nation to do wrong*. This wrong, no doubt, included the priests' neglecting to emphasize to the people the importance of (1) assuring justice in courts and (2) the importance of tithing and offering unblemished sacrifices to God. (Vs. 7-9.)

In Chapter 3, God clearly identifies why He is upset. What is the problem? Again, the priests are keeping the good, healthy

sacrifices for themselves and are giving the blind, sick, and crippled animals as sacrifices to God and as gifts to the needy, who are to share in a portion of the tithes. God condemns the priests, for in Chapter 3: 5, He states: ““I will testify against those who.....cheat widows and orphans. And I will testify against those who are unfair to foreigners.”” (New Century Version.) Note that, along with the Levites, these three needy groups are the same groups that are identified as those who are to be recipients of the tithes in Deuteronomy, Chapter 14.

Therefore, the problem is with the priests, the priests who are greedy and deprive God of the best sacrifices and the needy of quality food, that is brought as tithes by farmers.

Chapter 3:8 asks: ““Will a man rob God?”” The priests want to know how they have robbed God. God answers, ““In tithes and offerings.”” The reason for God’s displeasure is beyond dispute; the Priests have kept the best for themselves! The priests are robbers! Verse 9 suggests that not only had the priests robbed God, but they had also robbed the ““whole nation”” by causing God to withhold blessings from all the people. In addition, the people, seeing the priests keeping the best for themselves and imitating the greed of their priests, apparently had brought inferior animals to God, also.

Therefore, it is clear that God is not speaking to the question of completely withholding of tithes and offerings; He is speaking to those who keep the best animals for themselves rather than offering these to God and giving them to the poor.

Therefore, to whom is God speaking? He is speaking to the priests and others who robbed God and the poor by keeping the best animals for themselves. (Emphasis mine.) By example, the

priests taught the people to be greedy. So, the next time your pastor or priest reads Malachi 3:8 and points his finger at you and the rest of the congregation, remember the context of this passage. It is very likely that you should be pointing your finger at him!

When any spiritual leader distorts Biblical instruction for personal benefit, God's finger of accusation is pointed toward that spiritual leader, not the congregation which he is purporting to lead in God's ways. (Malachi 2:8.)

CHAPTER II

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON TITHING

SUPPORT OF MINISTERS BEFORE THE CROSS

Matthew mentions tithing in Chapter 23:23. Christ reproved Jewish leaders for being ultra-exact when tithing such plants as mint and anise, while ignoring the “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” The Pharisees, whom Christ was addressing, were at this time still under the ceremonial laws, for Christ's death had not yet done away with these codes. We shall study this point further when we come to the writings of Paul.

Also, there is no Biblical record that Christ or His disciples ever accepted tithes for themselves. As we saw in Deuteronomy 14, tithing was considered an opportunity for the farmer (laborer) to celebrate and give thanks to God for His blessings. The celebration was between the producer and God.

However, as much of the New Testament records, both Christ and His followers did give of themselves extensively by caring for the poor, hungry, ill, and other needy ones.

How did Christ survive? Being a carpenter (Luke 6:3) and the son of a carpenter, He probably worked with His hands; we do know that Jesus was financed through free-will gifts from friends. (Luke 8:3.) Again, Christ did endorse accepting gifts from friends, for in Matthew 10 and Luke 10, He sent out disciples, telling them to take only the clothes they were wearing, and stating that ““a worker should be given the things he needs.”” (New Century Version.) In John 4: 35-36, Christ observed that a part of the reward for serving Him is the joy of seeing souls accept salvation through Him.

Accepting gifts, free-will offerings, is very different, of course, from requiring a regular salary and bonuses from a congregation's tithe. When accepting free-will gifts one says, ““If you can afford to give me something to help sustain me in my Christian work, and if I need assistance, I shall accept such gratuities. However, if you can't help support me, I have faith that God will provide; therefore, by the grace of Christ, I will continue my service to you!”” A perfect example of giving and receiving gratuitous service is

found in Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus told His followers to go and do as did the Samaritan, helping anyone in need and not expecting a reward for such service of love.

The non-apostolic practice of hiring a spiritual leader appears to be rooted in the Catholic concept that there must be a human mediator between man and God, and that mediator is the Priest, not Christ. Paul plainly states that there is one mediator, Jesus. (I

Timothy 2:5.) Fortunately, when the Protestant reformers came out of the Catholic Church, they did reject the doctrine of having a human priest as mediator between man and God; unfortunately, however, they did not reject the paying of salaries to ministers to expound scripture. Alexander Campbell says it well: ““To employ men to preach in a Christian congregation is a satire upon that congregation which employs them..... That any man is to be paid for preaching.....I believe to be a relic of popery.”” (1830, cited in ““Examiner,”” Sept. 1993.) There is no New Testament record that Jesus or His disciples accepted salaries and bonuses for their labor. Are they not our models? Shall we support denominational greed or human need?

TITHING AND THE SUPPORT OF MINISTERS

AFTER THE CROSS

Now, we shall study whether or not tithing is commanded after Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for the sins of those who believe on Him.

When Christ was crucified, the veil of the temple was torn, signaling that the Ceremonial codes (laws) had come to an end. Paul addresses this issue by pointing out that Ceremonial requirements such as ““meat”” and ““drink”” offerings, ““holy days,”” and Ceremonial ““sabbaths”” were made of no avail after the death of Christ, the supreme Sacrifice. (Colossians 2: 16,17 and Hebrews 9: 8-11.)

Because tithing was a part of the Ceremonial code and because that code was done away with by the death, the sacrifice, of Christ, would not the tithing requirements be abolished, also? Yes. Consistency (as with the integrity of the 4th

commandment,) intellectual honesty, and logic demand no less. (Deuteronomy 12: 1,6.)

Tithing, along with circumcision, ceremonial washings, animal sacrifices, etc., were abolished by the supreme sacrifice of Jesus. (Galatians 5: 6; 6:15; and 1 Corinthians 7:19.)

Because Paul is second only to Christ in influence in the New Testament and because Paul was a devout follower of Christ, Paul's example is a safe model for the Christian.

First, there is no Biblical record that Paul accepted tithes for himself. In fact, he boasts to the Corinthians that he made the gospel free to them, “without charge.” (1 Corinthians 9:18.) Does he have a right to expect reward for his service to the Christians? Oh yes, he has this right to expect pay in exchange for his service (Vs 13,) but he states: “I have used none of these things.....” (rights to receive pay for preaching and serving others as a Christian.) (1 Corinthians 9: 15.) How many times have you heard a minister preach beyond verse 14? Few, if any, I suspect! Why do they stop with verse 14? Could it be because Paul, in verses 15-18, explains why he will accept no pay in exchange for his Christian service? Paul's reward is the joy he receives by serving others willingly in the name of Christ.(V.18.) Put in other words, Paul notes that he deserves no credit for preaching the gospel. However, he does take pride in serving free of charge, and the basis for this pride he will not give up by accepting compensation. (See footnote, Oxford Annotated Bible on 1 Corinthians 9:15-27.)

At this point, we must digress a bit to study a statement by Paul that is frequently misread because it is taken out of the context of Paul's other relevant pronouncements that he will not accept

a salary for his service. We just read in 1 Corinthians that Paul will not accept pay for his Christian service. Writing in 2 Corinthians 11, Paul again approaches the issue of whether or not he has accepted pay for his service in the name of Christ. In Verse 8, Paul writes: “I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.” (New Oxford Annotated Bible.) The King James Version uses the word “wages” rather than “support,” and some superficial readers latch on to “wages,” and say, “Ah, ha, Paul did accept wages for his service.”

Going to the Greek, we discover that the word used for “support” in some translations and “wages” in the King James Version, was *opsonion*, “rations, food,” a derivative of *optos*, having to do with that which is “cooked.” Therefore, Paul was accepting cooked food as a kindness from friends.

Consequently, the word “support” is preferable for the following reasons:

a. Paul stated clearly in 1 Corinthians that he gave

the gospel free of charge. Why would he, here, go against such a previous clearly stated position? “Support” is consistent with Paul’s other pronouncements.

b. If he accepted wages that he deserved, why

would he tell the Corinthians that he “robbed”

other churches so that he might serve them?

Using hyperbole, Paul was chiding the

Corinthians for not giving their fair-share in

support of spreading the gospel. Accepting wages that one earns is not robbery! He accepted gifts, not wages. Paul accepted free-will gifts (support) without accepting pay in return for Christian service. As we have seen, accepting gifts is in harmony with what Christ did.

C. The meaning of the Greek word *opsonion*,

having to do with cooked food, fits the other statements of Paul, indicating that he would accept free-will gifts, as Christ did, but that he would not accept a salary for his labors. Again, consistency and logic favor ““support.””

Therefore, if anyone explaining this text tries to make Paul contradict himself or initiate a teaching that Paul himself clearly rejected, one may question the knowledge or motives of such a self-styled ““spiritual leader.””

Not only did Paul accept gifts and courtesies from friends; he also labored with his hands. Apparently he was a skillful tentmaker. (Acts 1:31.) When did you last see your pastor using his hands to earn money for supporting himself and his service to others? In 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13, Paul states that he worked night and day, that he did not eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, and that his practice of supporting himself is an example for others. He reiterates the same point in 1 Corinthians 11: 1: ““Imitate me as I imitate Christ.””

Paul is propounding a productive, satisfying, joyful method of Christian service, volunteerism! For a spiritual leader to make a

leap from this position of volunteerism and declare that Paul endorses tithing for preachers' salaries and bonuses, is adequate reason for that leader to be considered uninformed or deceitful!

Remember this fact! After the cross, there is no Biblical record that either Paul or the other apostles of Jesus accepted tithes or paid tithes.

Paul agrees with Christ that spiritual workers should accept gifts. In Acts 18, Paul is described as living with Aquila and Priscilla as the three engage in tent-making. Paul is also befriended by Justus, a believer in God, and by other disciples who welcomed him.

There is no hint in scripture that Jesus or Paul taught that a preacher should receive salaries and bonuses to explain the Bible.

Shall we support denominational greed or human need?

CHAPTER III

GIVING TO YOUR HIGH PRIEST

We have seen that the Ceremonial system of the Old Testament was abolished when Christ died for the sins of mankind.

Abolished with that system were earthly priests, animal sacrifices, ceremonial washings, circumcision, tithing, and other such requirements.

With His personal sacrifice of His life, Christ, of the tribe of Judah, became our High Priest. In Hebrews 7, Paul is pointing out that earthly priests died and had to be replaced by other priests, but Melchizedek, King of peace (V 2,) and eternal (to whom Abraham “gave” tithes,) is a foreshadowing of the high

priest, the Messiah, the Christ, who is eternal and the efficacy of whose sacrifice is eternal. Verse 5, states that the descendants of Levi who became priests, were given a commandment in the Ceremonial Law to receive a tenth of the increase of the farmers. However, as we have seen, the ceremonial law was abolished by the sacrifice of Christ. Verse 18 states: ““For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before.....(the commandment to pay priests from tithe to continue offering sacrifices,) and V.25 reads, ““Wherefore he (Christ) is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him.....”” Verse 24 states that Christ continues forever as an unchangeable Priest. (The margin to v. 24 reads: ““or hath a priesthood that does not pass to another.””) No preacher can be of the order of Melchizedek unless he is ““holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, without descent having neither beginning of days or end of life.”” (See Hebrews 7.) Further, Hebrews 8:1 and 6, identify Christ as our High Priest, who sits on the right hand of God, serving as our mediator before God.

How do we give to our High Priest, Christ? Do we give to Him by sending our money to the central conference of our denomination for salaries of administrators and preachers? Do we give to our Priest by sending money to our favorite TV or radio minister? Do we give to our Priest by paying it to our local church for a salary and bonuses for our pastor?

Christ is very clear when telling us how we can give to Him, our Priest. Matthew 25: 34-46 is precise and graphic. Christ is telling about His second coming, saying that He will separate the sheep from the goats, the righteous from the wicked. The sheep He will set on His right hand and welcome into the kingdom. Then Christ explains why He will accept the saved: I

was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me water; I was a stranger (homeless), and you took me in; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was in prison, and you visited me.

Then the righteous shall ask, ““When did we do these things for you?”” Christ responds in V.40: ““Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”” The needy are the brothers and sisters of Christ; when we help His siblings, we help Him!

So, how do we give to our High Priest? We give to Him by filling the needs of His brothers and sisters, His sons and daughters, His creations.

Therefore, we do not give to Christ by sending tithes to a central office where the funds are accepted by non-Levites and used for salaries, bonuses, and buildings!

Please observe that supporting the needy through free-will offerings does not mean that one gives less than he would under the Levitical tithing plan. One may give much more! Also, we need to remember that under Moses and much of the time thereafter, the church was the government; therefore, when people contributed to the church, they were also contributing to their government. Today, of course, the church and government are separate in the United States and in some other countries. It has been estimated that approximately 45% of the average American’s income goes to federal, state, and local governments for taxes. If religionists contribute an additional 15% (10% for tithes and 05% percent for charitable purposes,) they are giving up 60% of their income to the state and church.

Therefore, it is clear that the amount left for the worker is 40% of income; whereas, the Hebrews in Moses' day had approximately 60-75% of their income left for personal use. Perhaps many contemporary citizens and church-goers are not as avaricious as they are at times accused of being by some political and church leaders.

Today, after the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we give to our High Priest by caring for the needy. Is your church more interested in the needy or in buying land and constructing buildings that will satisfy the egos of church leaders, leaders who argue that constructing new buildings demonstrates “spiritual progress”? No where does Christ equate constructing buildings with spiritual progress. He says that He measures spiritual progress by how well we care for the widows, orphans, homeless, naked, hungry, imprisoned, and thirsty.

Using Christ's measure of success, how well is your church doing? How well are you doing? Shall we support denominational greed or human need?

CHAPTER IV

INCONSISTENCIES IN CHURCHES' POSITION

After all the persuasive evidence presented above, some churches still hold that although the Ceremonial Law has been annulled, the tithing portion of that law is still in force. Although this is clearly a fallacious position, for the sake of discussing this point, let's grant, for a moment, that assertion.

If the tithing portion of the Ceremonial Law is still binding, why do not the churches that take this position also practice the

following related ceremonial regulations””

a. The Levitical priests could not own real estate.

Do these churches also prohibit ministers from owning property?

b. Deuteronomy 14, clearly specifies that a portion

of the tithe was to go to the producer (farmer and his family,) orphans, homeless and widows. Have you ever heard a pastor tell you, the producer, to use a portion of the tithes for yourself and your family and to give a portion to the needy? Contrary to these instructions, some religious leaders teach that the tithe should be used for the support of ministers only.

c. We studied earlier how, In Malachi’’s day, the

Priests were greedy, taking the best of the offerings for themselves and giving the second-rate offerings to God and the poor. Today, is God still condemning pastors who require very comfortable salaries and bonuses, while Christ’ s needy in the community go without necessities of life?

d. For the Christian to equate the function of the

minister of today with the function of the priest

of the time of Moses, is glaringly fallacious. The

Old Testament priests offered sacrifices and

served as mediators between the people and God;

today, ministers do not offer sacrifices and do not

serve as mediators on behalf of the people. As

we have seen, Christ, and Christ only, is our eternal Mediator, who sits on the right hand of God, offering His death on the cross, to the Father, for the covering of our sins.

e. Only the priests from the tribe of Levi could accept tithes. Is your pastor from the tribe of Levi? (See Numbers 3.)

f. The church teaches that income from any source should be tithed, but Leviticus 27 states that seeds of the land and fruit of the tree are to be tithed. This principle exempted fishermen, lumbermen, hired-hands, weavers, etc. Therefore, the contemporary Christian church reveals its dedication to making money rather than teaching and preaching the true word of God.

Shall we support denominational greed or human need?

CHAPTER V

A TRUE-TO-LIFE PARABLE

The April day was sunny, and the breeze was warm as Pastor Smith, a Protestant, was driving his shiny, new Mercury to the local golf course for a few swings at the ball with Brother Brown, the Head Deacon, before their church board meeting in three hours.

This was to be an important board meeting. The two main items on the agenda would be (1) finding funding for a new addition to the church (situated on Riverside Drive) and (2) discussing how to discipline another deacon. The deacon to be disciplined was sending many of his monetary gifts to local charitable organizations, including the Salvation Army, instead of sending them to the church's conference headquarters for salaries, and instead of supporting the local church's building program. Pastor Smith and Deacon Brown wanted to “compare notes”

before the board meeting, and doing so over a game of golf would afford the ““perfect”” opportunity.

Strauss waltzes floated softly from the car’s CD player as the Pastor rounded the curve that led into the parking lot of the lush golf course.

At that moment, Pastor Smith’s car phone rang. Picking it up and saying, ““Hello,”” he heard a woman on the other end, in a choking, weak voice, identify herself as a homeless, traveling mother, trying to get from Charlotte to Baltimore, where she and her three-year old daughter would stay with friends until she could find work. Her 1981 Honda had radiator problems. She had only \$38.00 left, and fixing the radiator would cost \$74.39. She wondered if the Pastor’s church could give her some assistance in helping to get the radiator fixed.

Clearing his throat and trying to buy a few seconds, he explained that he was in his car and was on his way to an important appointment with the Head Deacon of his church. He asked her to call back tomorrow when he would have more time to discuss the matter with her and to check the church’s welfare fund to see if there were any money in the budget for this type need.

Explaining that she needed to get the car fixed today because she had no money for a motel, the tired, perplexed traveler then thanked him for his time.

Meanwhile, across town and on the seamy side of the tracks, a Salvation Army volunteer worker was fixing a broken glass in the office of the gray, weather-beaten warehouse that was being used for their headquarters.

His phone rang; he picked it up, and the same stranded lady on

the other end again explained her situation and her need. The Salvation Army volunteer promised that he would be right over with money for the necessary repairs, pick up her and the child, bring them to the warehouse for a meal, and give them opportunity to freshen up before continuing on their trip.

Which of these Christians and which two religious organizations will receive Christ's blessings when He comes to separate the sheep from the goats? Which organization is giving to Christ, the Christian's High Priest?

Shall we support the greedy denomination or the needy?

REVIEW OF FACTS

We have seen from the Bible that:

a. Tithing was required under the Levitical Law.

b. The tithe, ten percent, was to be on the increase of one's income.

c. The tithe was to be used for celebrating God as well as for the support of the Levites, the homeless, the fatherless, and the widows.

d. At times, the priests would abuse the tithing system by keeping the best for themselves, while caring little for the needy.

e. After the sacrifice of Christ for mankind's sins, the Ceremonial Law, including the practice of circumcision and tithing, was annulled.

f. Paul, the apostles, and Christ, Himself, accepted free-will gifts and support from friends.

g. There is no Biblical record that Paul, the apostles, or Christ ever accepted tithes, paid tithes, or were sustained by tithes.

h. The sacrificial system, with its priests who offered sacrifices, was supplanted by Christ, our High Priest, sitting on the right hand of God, and serving as our mediator before the Father.

1. Christ tells us that if we want to be counted among the righteous at His second coming, we must serve the needs of His children, the poor, the hungry, the naked, the homeless, and the imprisoned.

Unfortunately, many Christian churches have decided that they : (1) will flaunt Paul's instruction, (2) pay their pastors salaries and bonuses from money raised through a dead, distorted tithing scheme, and (3) ignore the self-supporting physical labor and volunteerism of Christ and Paul as models for the modern Christian pastor and church.

In addition, by continuing to practice tithing of the Ceremonial Law, churches tacitly accept a dead ceremonial requirement and, by so doing, reject the blood and priesthood of Jesus, our only Savior and Mediator.

For church leaders to distort scripture for egocentric purposes, is inexcusable both intellectually and morally. Such action is especially indefensible by those leaders who pledge to lead their flocks into truth and right as the Bible teaches truth and right!

Whether you are a payer or receiver of tithe, what will you do with truth? Your answer to that question will, no doubt, have eternal consequences!

May God give you strength to stand for truth as you determine to feed His needy sheep, to follow His Word, and to be counted among His children at His second coming!

A CONCLUDING PARABLE

Not long ago a pastor and Christ were walking down an isolated street in your home town.

Sitting in the doorway of an abandoned store, a boy of about

seven, in rags, dirty, and with wide, blue-saucer-eyes, peered up at the pastor and Christ. The child's tasseled blonde hair was matted; both of his dirty sneakers were worn out. His sockless toes peered out the holes of both shoes.

The pastor, glancing at Christ, asked, "Why do you allow this? Why don't you do something about this little urchin?"

Taking the pastor by the arm, Christ stopped, looked him directly in the eye and replied, "I did do something; I created you and your parishioners."

THE FINAL QUESTION

Will you and your church continue to count spiritual success in terms of membership growth, buildings, and tithe increase for even higher pastoral salaries, or will you and your church provide for that little urchin?

Remember, it was our Master who called that little boy His brother! What will you do with your Savior's brother? What will you do with that child? Finally, what will you do with Christ?

BEWARE THE TITHE TRAP!

(OR)

EXPOSURE OF FALLACIES IN CHURCHES' TEACHING ON TITHING

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