

## The Tithe, The Whole Tithe, And Nothing But the Tithe

Hebrews 7:1-28

Many Christians practice the giving of tithes as a vital part of their stewardship of money. I want to look at the significance the New Testament gives to tithing and how it is different than tithing under the Mosaic Covenant.

The Book of Hebrews sets the tithe in a context that is quite different than the understanding that many in Bible times had and many still have today.

Our text describes two distinct systems under which tithes were given and received.

To understand these two systems and their impact on Christians, it is important that we look at the scriptural context.

### A New Order of Priesthood

The book of Hebrews is an amazing book as to what it reveals to us

*(Heb 5:6) "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."*

*(Heb 5:7-9) During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

*(Heb 6:19-20) We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

### Melchizedek

We are introduced to the person named Melchizedek in Genesis chapter 14.

Abraham paid tithes to this king/priest as an acknowledgement of divine help in winning a great military battle against humanly insurmountable odds.

The giving and receiving of tithes is therefore something that was introduced over 400 years before the Mosaic Law.

Therefore, tithing transcends the law.

Tithing was not "only" in the Law it was "also" in the Law.

It is important to make this distinction in order to understand that the practice of tithing is also a part of New Testament worship.

Apart from the prophecy in Psalms 110, the name Melchizedek does not appear again until we see it in the Book of Hebrews.

In this book Jesus is declared to be a priest of the order of Melchizedek and as such he replaced the Old Testament order of priests.

Some believe that the Melchizedek of Genesis 14 was an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ since he did not have beginning of days or end of life.

The Bible isn't entirely clear about this.

The important thing to know is that the Melchizedek order of priesthood is very special, one that is eternal, is supremely effective, and Jesus is a priest of this order.

### Old Ideas and Practices Die Hard

The Books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews were addressed primarily to Jews who had become Christians.

Though they rejoiced in their new salvation, it was hard for them to let go of the idea that the former covenant of the Law had given way to the new covenant of grace in Christ.

This was more than an ideological or intellectual struggle.

Some taught that the Old Testament practices of law and worship as instituted under the Mosaic covenant, must still be adhered to by the church.

Ideas such as circumcising Gentile believers were taught and practiced.

This in effect made the observance of Old Testament Jewish rites a pre-condition to becoming a Christian and receiving the grace of God.

Those who taught these doctrines were called Judaizers.

The force with which the Bible condemned them is demonstrated in (Gal 1:6-9)

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I*

*say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

It is hard to let go of old beliefs and old ways and replace them with those that are fresh and new.

Human tendency is to unite the old with the new, not replace the old with the new.

However, **there are times in our lives when we must let go of the past in order to embrace the present.**

\*When it comes to sin, we need to take it a step farther to the point where we renounce the past. Just as it was difficult for Jewish worshipers to leave practices they greatly valued, it is often difficult today for people to let go of values, beliefs or things that keep them from Christ.

**This is why books like the Book of Hebrews were written.**

They demonstrate that it is both necessary and abundantly worthwhile to embrace Christ and the new covenant He offers.

**The main theme of the Book of Hebrews is the preeminence of Jesus Christ.**

The book declares him to be supreme in both His person and His function.

As a superior person He is therefore a superior priest.

As a superior priest, He therefore mediated a better covenant

The full effects these truths are designed to have on us are difficult to comprehend.

It is not easy to accept that nothing is demanded of us for payment for our sins.

It takes a real step of faith to believe that we have unhindered access to God and to the benefits of the new covenant, solely on the merits of Christ.

However, it is true.

Through His death Jesus Christ atoned for all our sins and now we can freely function in the power of his endless life, all on the basis of grace.

This is the magnificent truth of the gospel!

And, it is new and different from anything mankind has ever experienced.

**The Practice of the Tithe under the New Covenant**

As the following verses demonstrate, **the word "better" is a key word in understanding the Book of Hebrews.**

*Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a **better** covenant. (Heb 7:22)*

*But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which He is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on **better** promises. (Heb 8:6)*

*It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with **better** sacrifices than these. (Heb 9:22)*

**The Jews practiced tithing under the law.**

As chapter 7 points out, priests from the tribe of Levi collected tithes from God's people.

People were required by the Mosaic Law to tithe not only as a part of worship but also as a form of taxation by which certain societal needs were funded.

**The Book of Hebrews teaches us that under the new covenant we do not tithe as a matter of law.**

**Instead, we tithe as a matter of worship to Christ.**

Notice our main text again. (Heb 7:8)

In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.

**This gives a whole new meaning to the tithe.**

It is quite possible to pay tithes out of fear of breaking God's laws and being judged for doing so.

To do so is to understand the tithe as being a matter of law only.

This is legalistic and confining and it is not what the New Testament teaches.

The New Testament teaches that the one who receives tithes today is Christ, who is a new order of priest, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

**When you bring your tithes to the church you are doing something much more than helping the church meet its budget.**

\*\*Think about people in this church who's lives would be different if it weren't for tithers making this place possible.....

God designed the church to be the manifestation of His kingdom on earth.

Christ is the head of the church.

When you bring your tithes to the church you are not merely giving them to the pastor, the Board, or to a denomination we give them to provide a place of life

\*\*\*\*\*Think about where this church is and where it is going.....

The church is the Body of Christ, an institution born of God, not of man.

Through the church, we tithe to Christ.

What a wonderful act of worship!

What a wonderful, divinely appointed way to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord of our material world!

Tithing is a beautiful ordinance borne in the grace of God!

In the Book of 2 Corinthians, Paul gave instructions to the church regarding an offering he was receiving for the purpose of helping churches in Macedonia that were in need.

Paul exhorted them to give generously. He said: (2 Cor 8:7) - *But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also.*

Believers and non-believers alike often show generosity when it comes to giving.

People give to many charitable causes solely on the basis of compassion for those who are in need.

In declaring the giving of money to be a work of grace, Paul defines the Christian premise for giving to be something much more than responding to a need.

He made it a part of the covenant of grace.

In the instance we read about in the Book of 2 Corinthians, Paul was talking about the collecting of an offering and not the collection of tithes.

Since everything we as New Testament believers do is based on the “better” covenant mediated for us by Jesus our Lord, the act of giving, whether it be of tithes or offerings, springs from the well of grace.

If you are having a struggle giving tithes and offerings it is perfectly right for you to ask our Lord for his grace in this area of your life.

Paul set forth the basis for making such a request when he said: (1 Cor 8:9) - *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

Hebrews teaches us that under the Old Covenant it was both necessary and good to pay tithes.

Even though the Old Covenant was unable to make a person righteous, God, nevertheless, promised to bless those who tithed.

Now that we have a new covenant in Christ we have greater promises and greater blessings.

Therefore, the blessing of giving in the covenant of grace to Jesus who is the giver of grace, brings measureless blessings to the one who gives.

Therefore, let us worship the Lord with our tithes and offerings!

Amen!