

The Financial Deception of the Church



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Introduction

This is an essay about tithing—one of the more controversial topics amongst churchgoers and a topic that is often only taught about from the pulpit. It's the right time for the people of the Church to read and understand their Bibles for themselves and to come to an understanding of the truth. Many churches today take a collection and may refer to it as an "offering", "tithes", or even "tithes and offerings".

And while not all churches that take a collection stress a Biblical basis for giving, many do. They will use the Old Testament command for tithing to induce the Believer to give and will stress that "true" tithing is 10% of one's income. Some of the more legalistic churches will insist that the giving is based on 10% of one's gross income rather than net. However, I do *not* believe that tithing is a Biblical principle for today's Believers.



It was a command given as part of "The Law" given to Moses for the Jews and Israel as a nation—The Mosaic Law. It was intended to be applied in a very specific way, for a very specific purpose, and for a very specific time. Its time is past.

In the following, I'll provide a discussion on the topic along with several supporting Biblical passages. By the end of the discussion, you should be able to see that the tithe applies to something very specific but not to money. For at the time the law was given, money existed but is not mentioned in the law. You will also see that the tithe, as part of the Mosaic Law, does not apply to the New Testament Believer in *any* context.

My Challenge to You

There is a deception being played out against the Church today, a deception played in the name of God,



the Law, and obedience. It is a deception that seeks nothing more than financial gain and financial control. In some instances, it goes farther than simply the greed of the speaker and promises financial gain also for those who give. But this deception assures prosperity in a scenario where only the recipients of the money given prosper. The deceivers are the heads of our churches who preach a message of tithing. It is this message, no matter how well-intentioned it is, that is the deception. For those who know better and preach otherwise, the deception is on their heads. For those who do *not* know better, the deception is no less a deception. While not necessarily intentional on the part of the speaker, the deception is the work of Satan.

In both cases, the hearers of the message are deceived, enslaved under the Law, and needlessly impoverished. The deception can lead to them becoming embittered and subject them to disillusionment and anger against God when their finances fail. It can also lead them to falsely believe in a prosperity doctrine when by coincidence or hard work, they receive a financial windfall. The

only thing to do in the face of deception is to study the scriptures and see if these things are true. I doubt the Bereans would have been deceived in this manner, for it was their custom to study and test the teachings:

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. (Acts 17:11) (NIV)

I challenge you, the reader, to do the same.

The Deception

The deception begins with the notions that tithing is (1) a matter of obedience, (2) relevant to monetary matters, and (3) relevant to the New Testament church. Let's look at each piece of this deception a little closer. All three are interwoven throughout the following discussion.

As a matter of obedience, Christian leaders and their adherents will tell you that the Bible tells us to tithe. **For starters, nowhere in the New Testament is there such a command.** Jesus mentions tithing with reference to the Pharisees (Matthew 23:23, Luke 11:42) according to the King James Version. He is telling the Pharisees—those who taught the Law—that in their attempts to be righteous, they keep the Law on tithing but neglect to show judgment, mercy and faith. He tells them they should have done both. The Pharisees kept many Laws in an attempt to be righteous. Keep in mind that this is before the Crucifixion and that Jesus kept the Law as well. One can assume that Jesus would have tithed as well if it applied to him—but it did not.

On the other side of the Cross, that is, after the crucifixion, Paul now tells us that righteousness comes through faith as a matter of grace, and not by keeping the Law (Gal 3:10-13). As a matter of obedience, tithing is part of the Law that we are no longer under. The only way to tithe in obedience is to submit to the Law. After all, there is nothing else one can be obedient to except the Law. But even if one wants to be obedient in this matter, let's go back and look at what Jesus actually said to the Pharisees:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay **tithe** of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (Matthew 23:23) (NIV)

It's Not About Your Money

So here is the first point you must understand. The tithe here is not monetary at all. It is with regard to their crops—in this case, herbs—that the Pharisees are tithing. Well, surely these men had money! Why were they not tithing on their income from any crops they might have sold? Because the tithe law they were being obedient to pertains to plants, crops, fruits and vegetables, flocks, herds, and livestock. The Law never included money or the financial gain from the sale of these items. Here is what the law says:

And all the **tithe** of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD. (Leviticus 27:30) (KJV)

And concerning the **tithe** of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD. (Leviticus 27:32) (KJV)

More importantly, notice what the Law *does not* say. It says nothing about money!

Further evidence that this law applied only to edible products from the land can be found in the following passages:

Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the **tithe** of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand: (Deuteronomy 12:17) (KJV)

Thou shalt truly **tithe** all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. (Deuteronomy 14:22) (KJV)

And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the **tithe** of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. (Deuteronomy 14:23) (KJV)

The reference to food is not allegorical at all. Clearly, the tithe is of the produce of the land, whether fruit, vegetable, grain, flock, or herd. One tenth of the increase at harvest and slaughter is God's.

Silver

Does the tithe law *ever* mention money? Yes, it does.

In the passage from Deuteronomy, it specifically mentions silver as a monetary matter. But to be sure we're talking about the law, let's look first at the opening verses of the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy:

1Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.

2For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

3Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.

4These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat,

5The hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois.

6And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat. (Deuteronomy 14:1-6) (KJV)

I trust that the reader recognizes this as part of the Law. We see here passages about clean and unclean foods. There are those who still adhere to this law—the Orthodox Jew and some Moslems. These are the Kosher and Halal laws.

In verse 21, the law says, in part: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." (Deuteronomy 14:21) (KJV). From this restriction, the Kosher laws prohibit cheeseburgers and beef Stroganoff. Meat and dairy are not even remotely mixed lest this law be broken.

Do you follow these laws?

The very next verse gives the beginning of the tithe law. Deuteronomy 14:22-23 (KJV) are quoted above. But it's really Deuteronomy verses 24-26 (KJV) that I'm after for now:

24And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

25Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:

26And thou shalt bestow that money for 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 shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

The passages acknowledge the existence of money even the practice of selling ones goods. It allows the Jew to sell his tithe of the land and to take the proceeds, go to another place, buy his “tithe” equivalent and then to eat it. And this was to be a celebratory process!

Now I could point out that the Law allows for strong drink and make the case for alcohol consumption as never having been outlawed by God—only drunkenness. But there’s already enough for you to absorb with the tithe.

Here’s the same passage from the NIV:

24 But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), 25 then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. 26 Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice.

If God wanted the money, he probably would have said something like the following:

24 But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), 25 **then bring your tithe in the form of silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose.** 26 **Give the silver to the LORD** your God and rejoice. (Hypothetical Version)

But he didn’t.

God could just as easily have said to sell the produce, grain, and animals and to give the money to the Levites, allowing them to buy whatever they wanted. The point is that He didn’t say that. He chose in His Wisdom to have the fruit of the land be given directly to the Levites. It would be up to the Levites what they did with it. We should be careful to not reinterpret the Law simply to satisfy the monetary goals of an organization.

So let me ask you a question: Does the Law mandate the giving of money?

No, it doesn’t.

The Purpose Driven Tithe

The tithe was for a specific purpose. The tithe was intended to provide for the sustenance of the clergy. In this case, the clergy were the Levites—the priests—who had no land inheritance among the tribes:

But the **tithes** of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. (Numbers 18:24) (KJV)

The tithe would have provided food to the people and their families who were busy serving God in full-time ministry. And as can be seen in the passage from Deuteronomy 14:23, the tithe was sometimes meant to be eaten by those who produced it. Those specific passages are not unlike the harvest festivals of more modern times or the original Thanksgiving feast of the Pilgrims.

To suggest today that the tithe is no longer on grain, produce, and livestock is to suggest that in the days of the Law, people did not have money, or that today, no-one farm. No. Clearly not the case!

And to suggest that full-time clergy today are the equivalent of the Levites and are therefore due a tithe—is to stretch God’s word out of context. That is, unless they also want to live as the Levites did under the

law. So the next time there is a mold or mildew in your house, call your pastor and ask him to come take a look at it.

47 "If any clothing is contaminated with mildew—any woolen or linen clothing, 48 any woven or knitted material of linen or wool, any leather or anything made of leather- 49 and if the contamination in the clothing, or leather, or woven or knitted material, or any leather article, is greenish or reddish, it is a spreading mildew and must be shown to the priest. 50 The priest is to examine the mildew and isolate the affected article for seven days. 51 On the seventh day he is to examine it, and if the mildew has spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather, whatever its use, it is a destructive mildew; the article is unclean. 52 He must burn up the clothing, or the woven or knitted material of wool or linen, or any leather article that has the contamination in it, because the mildew is destructive; the article must be burned up.

53 "But if, when the priest examines it, the mildew has not spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather article, 54 he shall order that the contaminated article be washed. Then he is to isolate it for another seven days. 55 After the affected article has been washed, the priest is to examine it, and if the mildew has not changed its appearance, even though it has not spread, it is unclean. Burn it with fire, whether the mildew has affected one side or the other. 56 If, when the priest examines it, the mildew has faded after the article has been washed, he is to tear the contaminated part out of the clothing, or the leather, or the woven or knitted material. 57 But if it reappears in the clothing, or in the woven or knitted material, or in the leather article, it is spreading, and whatever has the mildew must be burned with fire. 58 The clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or any leather article that has been washed and is rid of the mildew, must be washed again, and it will be clean."

59 These are the regulations concerning contamination by mildew in woolen or linen clothing, woven or knitted material, or any leather article, for pronouncing them clean or unclean. (Leviticus 13:47-59) (NIV)

It is a safe bet that your pastor will simply tell you to go buy a can of Lysol and to leave him alone. He'd also remind you that we are not under the Law—hopefully. That's when you can ask him why he endorses the second half of that chapter which calls for a tithe. What can he say?

Such pastors use the tithe law continues to wrongly enslave Believers under the Law.

But The Bible Says...

So where in the Bible did the Law release the farmer and incline the investor? It doesn't. Even in the often referenced passage from Malachi, the tithe is on produce and livestock. The passages are preached in support of tithing but not in their entirety. Only in taking verses out of context can today's monetary preaching be supported. And worse, the prosperity doctrine that has enriched the lives of many preachers is found here as well:

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



Even here in the Malachi passages, the reference to food is clear. Not money—no, the tithe was something that could be put in storehouses or barns and eventually eaten. Tithe barns still exist today throughout Germany and England although in fewer numbers than in past centuries. These structures were not banks or vaults, but rather large, airy barns for the collection and storage of food items as referenced in the book of Malachi.

Some fine examples are still standing from the 1400's through the 1700's. Whether the Church used the food for sustenance or to sell to raise funds—or perhaps to feed the poor, the barns exist for one reason: the collection of a tithe of the produce of the land.

In fairness, there are a few other New Testament references to tithes, but they all point to either one who is self-righteous and boasting (Luke 18:12) or are part of Paul's letter to the Hebrews (Heb 7:5-9) and reference back to an historical requirement for tithing. And since the Bible does not contradict itself, we must take



Paul's writing to the Galatians as clearly stating that we are no longer under the Law. As

a New Testament believer, one must separate himself from the requirements of the Old Testament law for the old has passed away. We are to live by the Spirit, through Faith, and by Grace.



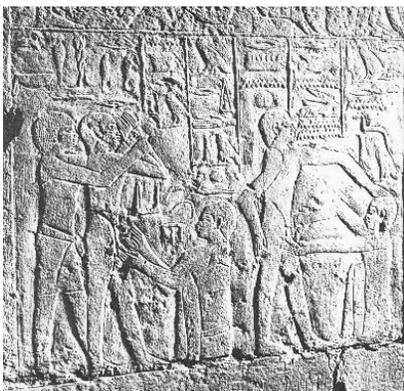
Here is what Paul says: (Galatians 4:10-13) (NIV)

10All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith" 12The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 13Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

He goes on to say: (Galatians 5:1-6) (NIV)

1It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. 2Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. 6For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Judaisers



In this instance, Paul is talking about circumcision, but the real issue in Galatia was the Jews who had come up from Jerusalem and who were trying to get the new Believers, formerly Gentiles, to adopt the Law in addition to the Gospel. They're called Judaisers. There issue was that it was all well and good that the gentiles believed in Jesus, but they also felt that becoming a Jew and following the Law was required. They were trying to get the men of Galatia to submit to the law of circumcision.

Paul indicates that in this case, circumcision under the Law is wrong and that if anyone accepted the one law, they would put themselves under the curse of the entire Law. But Paul says these Judaisers were wrong and that we are free. He was so incensed over their

argument that he nicely suggested that they should start with themselves and cut everything off!

11 Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves! (Galatians 5:11-12) (NIV)

That's quite some outrage Paul had over their attempts to put Believers under the Law. I share in his outrage although I am in no way comparable to Paul.

Today, for those who try to put us under the Law regarding tithing, I say they are wrong. The clergy today are just as wrong now as Paul says these people from Jerusalem were then. And if we are no longer under the Law, there is nothing about tithing for us to obey.

Test These Things

Now, if you want to test the value of this law, plant a garden one spring and take in one tenth of your increase on a Sunday morning. Present it to your pastor as a tithe offering and see how welcome it is. Insist that it is Biblical and show him the passages from Leviticus that he may have quoted a time or two. For many of us, we would see the produce placed out on a table in the hallway for all to partake of—the pastor doesn't necessarily want it. The church leadership needs your money, not your produce.

Biblical Wealth

So what is the deception? The deception is that Believers today are under an obligation to give ten percent of their financial income to the Church. However, as stated and pointed out by scripture, the tithe is not monetary at all. Those who tithed in the days of the Law of Moses were told to give of fruits, grains, livestock, herds, etc. It is a certainty that they had wealth of some type, perhaps even proceeds from the sale of extra crops. To suppose that the people did not have money makes no sense. We know that in the book of Ruth, Boaz was a wealthy landowner. David was wealthy, as was his son Solomon. The Bible tells us:

23 King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. 24 The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. 25 Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules. (1 Kings 10:23-25)



The kings would have maintained their wealth from tributes paid to them, military conquests, and from taxes on the people. We also know that the Children of Israel received gold and silver as they left Egypt. What a world it would have been in those days if people did not have some form of money! Yet, the tithe law given at the time said nothing about money.

Proverbs tells us of the noble wife (New International Version) who considers some land and buys it with her earning (31:6). The concept of money, buying, and selling has been around a long time. If God wanted a tithe on the income, I believe the Law would have been inclusive of income and wealth from the time the Law was first given.

And don't be deceived into thinking God *needs* our money:

9 I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, 10 for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. 12 If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. (Psalm 50:9-12) (NIV)

Lastly, there is a deception with regard to Malachi that the person who tithes will be blessed beyond imagination if he gives. The passages are taken out of context, have nothing to do with money, and do not promise financial prosperity. It is a portion of the Prosperity Doctrine that preys on the poor and destitute. Sadly it seems the only ones who profit are those who are fleecing their flocks through this deception.

Church Expenses

Wait a minute, you say... what about the financial needs of the Church? Ministry? Salaries? Electricity? Gas? Mortgages?

As for today's expenses of the Church, it is for the members of the Church to provide for those needs but keep in mind that Jesus did not establish a building with bylaws, committees, and utility bills. The Kingdom that He established is not of this world and is not confined to the trappings created by men.

I am not saying that we should not give to the support of the Church. But what I would suggest is that the mandate in the modern Church to give ten percent is not Biblical and is therefore wrong. And the stipulation for "modern" Church is appropriate. Remember, even into the medieval era in Europe, the Church accepted that tithing was at least in part pertaining to produce.



Salaries

Paul believed that he had the right to make a living from preaching the Gospel. I agree. Who am I to disagree with Paul?

But look at what he says:

7Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? 8Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain."^[a] Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?

Paul is clearly asserting his right to take something from the congregation for his living expenses. The support he claims a right to could be food, lodging, money, or whatever meets his needs.

But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. 13Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

Even having that right, he elected not to exercise it.

15But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast. 16Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. 18What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it. (1 Corinthians 9:7-18) (NIV)

Here is a pastor among pastors who would rather preach out of the love for the Gospel than to burden anyone with a commandment to give that they may receive. He is compelled to preach whether anyone gives to him or not.

Early Examples

The members of the Church are to give to the needs of the Body. We see this principal in practice in the New Testament and specifically in the book of Acts:

44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (Acts 2:44-45) (NIV)

What a powerful image. These people didn't adhere to a law of one tenth—they gave as needed, taking what they had to sell it if necessary to help others. The only force at work here is love, against which Paul also tells us there is no law. Later in Chapter 4, we see something else interesting that has changed:

36Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), 37sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:36-37) (NIV)

Wow! A Levite who owns land! More remarkable is that he sells it and gives the money to the Church. Not a tenth, but the whole of it. His giving was to meet a need, not to meet a quota or a percentage.

But the Church likes to use this example in trying to reinforce the tithe. The argument says that we should give 10% because in the early Church, there were those who gave all they had. So why isn't it taught today that the tithe is 100%? For one, because these early Christians weren't tithing. Besides that, there could be no Biblical basis for saying one should give 100%. And because these same tithe advocates would never give all of what they have. No, they're comfortable backing off from 100% down to 10%. And they're comfortable saying that 10% is *good enough*.



Back to the Bible: In the very next chapter, we read the story of Ananias and Sapphira who end up losing their lives over money. This is another point over which there are false teachings so let's examine this closely. They owned some land and wanted to dispose of it. For whatever reason, perhaps to appear generous and have their names in the local news, they too sold their property and brought the money to Peter and the apostles.

The difference is that this couple conspired to hold back a part of the money and then claim that the amount given was all of the money. For this deception, they died. They lost their lives not because they didn't give 100 percent or even 10 percent, but rather because they lied about it. Peter even says:

"3...Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." (Acts 5:3-4) (NIV)

And to Sapphira:

9Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." (Acts 5:9) (NIV)

Ananias and his wife were free to keep the land. Having sold it, they were free to keep all of the proceeds. How could this be if tithing was still in practice? The simple answer is that tithing was no longer in practice, at least, not among Believers.

The tithe went to the Jews or more specifically, the Levites. This tribal division and priestly order means nothing now that the High Priest, Jesus, had already come. Even though the early Church had to have new ways to survive and grow, how absurd it would have been to say that once it had its footing, it should go back to the old Jewish ways to include tithing.

Eventually, however, that's just what the Church did. The basis for the modern tithe remains the law of the tithe from Leviticus with out-of-context and obtuse references to Abraham giving a tithe to a king and to early Believers giving all they had.

Reform

The later Church, specifically, the Catholic Church, had other ways to get money from people and at times, it was through taxes, the selling of indulgences, or penance being paid for in the form of gold or silver. They also imposed a tithe. Few today would accept church taxes, pay for indulgences, or pay penance—why tithe?

The leader of the Protestant Reformation agreed that the Law of Moses means nothing to the Believer:

“But the other commandments of Moses, which are not [implanted in all men] by nature, the Gentiles do not hold. Nor do these pertain to the Gentiles, such as the tithe and others equally fine which I wish we had too. Now this is the first thing that I ought to see in Moses, namely, the commandments to which I am not bound except insofar as they are [implanted in everyone] by nature [and written in everyone's heart].”

(Source: <http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/LutherMoses.htm>)

Sadly, following the Reformation, many new Protestant churches had a better way to raise money and had no objection to putting Believers back under the Law. This “better way” is what we have today in the form of pulpit-mandated tithing.

Freedom

You must learn, understand, and believe that as a New Testament Believer, we are free from the Law. We should give as we are led by the Holy Spirit to do, giving in generosity and love. We should give out of a joyful and thankful spirit, not out of compulsion—whether from man or the Law.

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV) says:

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

And Timothy 6:18 (NIV) tells us:

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”

There is a better way. It is the Believer's freedom—freedom from the Law and a life under Grace. We should examine our hearts and our circumstances and give what we are led by the Spirit to give.

In the case of the widow—another often misquoted and abused story to induce sacrificial giving—what she gave was all that she had. Some churches use that to say that we should give until it hurts. Others fall back on “it is more blessed to give than to receive” to suggest that we should give until it feels good. But they all stress giving in some form or another.

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'(Acts 20:35) (NIV)

Look closely at the passage and it talks about giving to help others and not necessarily giving to a church so that a new wing can be built, or so that a new sound system can be installed—or so that the pastor can buy a new house, car, or gold ring!

Even Paul, who is speaking here, notes that he took no payment during his ministry:

33I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. (Acts 20-33-34) (NIV)

Freedom Means You Are Free



If you want to still tithe, I cannot stop you. You are free to do as you choose, whether you choose to tithe, give an offering, or to keep your money to yourself. What I have tried to do here is to present an argument based on scripture, intended to free you from bondage to the Law, while calling to your attention the need to support the work of a Bible-based church. The argument is here for you to examine with appropriate scriptural references. You can and should examine them for yourself.

What this essay stresses is to be free from the Law. It does not say “do not give”, but rather that you should be free and as generous as you can be in your giving. Adopt this truth and be free in your spirit to live free as Christ intended you to. Do not let guilt and doubt or the judgment of others pull you back into the Law or you will be just like the Galatians who wanted to be circumcised so as to be “Jewish”.

Do not rely on what you have always been told, what you have always done, or what tradition tells you to do. And do not rely solely on what I say here. Seek the truth and then stay strong in that truth.

Not everyone is ready for this message. If you are, then great! But understand that others may not be where you are. They may not want to admit having been fooled by men into believing this deception. Others may become angry with God and lose what little relationship they have. Be careful not to put such a stumbling block in the way of a fellow Believer.



Ultimately, if you decide to stop “tithing” on your income, it may feel uncomfortable at first. It is not the Holy Spirit convicting you. It’s the pull of something that once held you in bondage and is trying to pull you back. Compare it to an addiction that one tries to break—it can be a strong force. It can also make you feel guilty or fearful. The feelings will pass.

In whatever you decide, let no-one judge you on whether you eat meat, keep holy days, or in what you give. It is a matter between you and God. But it should be in accordance with the truth He has provided us.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. (Colossians 2:16) (NIV)

Additional Thoughts on Tithing

One day my wife and I were discussing tithing and we came up with as many categories of tithing philosophies as we could:

- Those who don't give anything to a church
- Those who give something from time to time as an "offering"
- Those who "tithe" but don't adhere to a 10%-definition for it
- Those who "tithe" 10% on their *net* income
- Those who "tithe" 10% on their *gross* income

The thing we found interesting is that these are not just individual views—some of these represent church views on the issue. Not all churches push tithing as a 10% monetary matter and only the more legalistic ones seem to quibble over net and gross. And some will tell you that if you have to ask whether it should be net or gross, that your heart is in the wrong place about giving.

A few years ago, I think it was 2006, the Southern Baptist church we used to attend had a "Got Faith" campaign during which the congregation was challenged to tithe and to test God's faithfulness in blessing the giver. The challenge came with a money-back guarantee. I don't know if anyone claimed the rebate, but I would have to ask today whether that church had its heart in the wrong place about giving.

Then one day I thought about today's Jews. What do they believe? What do they teach and what do they do? I'm not suggesting that the Jewish teachings and practices are appropriate for the Christian, but then again, who was the law originally given to? It was written in Hebrew—who better to go to for an understanding than the Jews?

As I researched the 21st Century Jewish view on tithing, I found something interesting. The following information is taken from the 2010-2011 rate chart on the Beth Israel Congregation's web site. As a member of the Congregation, one is subject to membership dues. The synagogue is located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Something should jump out at you as you look at this:



Your Household Income	Suggested Dues Pledge for Beth Israel Congregation (2%)	Required United Synagogue Dues
<\$10,000 – \$20,000	as able and up to \$225	*
\$21,000 – \$30,000	\$420-\$600	**
\$31,000-\$40,000	\$620 – \$800	+ \$69.50
\$41,000-\$50,000	\$820 – \$1,000	+ \$69.50
\$51,000-\$60,000	\$1,020 – \$1,200	+ \$69.50
\$61,000-\$80,000	\$1,220 – \$1,600	+ \$69.50
\$81,000-\$100,000	\$1,620 – \$2,000	+ \$69.50
\$101,000-\$125,000	\$2,020 – \$2,500	+ \$69.50
\$126,000-\$150,000	\$2,520 – \$3,000	+ \$69.50
\$176,000-\$200,000	\$3,020 – \$3,500	+ \$69.50
\$201,000-\$225,000	\$3,520 – \$4,000	+ \$69.50
\$226,000-\$250,000	\$4,020 – \$4,500	+ \$69.50
\$251,000-\$275,000	\$4,520 – \$5,000	+ \$69.50
\$276,000-\$300,000+	\$5,520 – \$6,000+	+ \$69.50

* No United Synagogue dues are assessed for BIC dues pledges up to \$190.

** \$34.75 United Synagogue dues are assessed for BIC dues pledges from \$190-\$499; Deducted from first payment. \$69.50 United Synagogue dues are assessed for BIC dues pledges of \$500+. Deducted from first payment. (Source: <http://www.bethisrael-aa.org/membership.php?page=dues>)

Other Voices

<http://www.awildernessvoice.com/RethinkTithe1.html>

<http://www.second8thweek.org/content.php?id=55>

<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5624>

<http://www.gotquestions.org/tithing-Christian.html>

<http://www.midnightministries.com/tithing.htm>

<http://www.askelm.com/tithing/thi003.htm>

<http://www.setfreetogive.com/b85.htm>

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Offering Plate: <http://www.theroot.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/large-image/collection%20plate.jpg>

Time Magazine: <http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20060918,00.html>

First Tithe Barn: http://gallery.nen.gov.uk/gallery_images/0808/0000/1188/tithe_barn_2_mid.jpg

Second Tithe Barn: http://www.weymouth-pictures.co.uk/dor/sth/abb/tit/TitheBarn3_010504.jpg

Third Tithe Barn: <http://www.digitalplan.co.uk/360/images/tithe%20barn.jpg>

Circumcision Hieroglyph: <http://www.ancient-wisdom.co.uk/Images/countries/Egyptian%20pics/circumcision1.jpg>

Ancient Coins: http://www.ancientresource.com/images/roman/romancoins/romancoins20_2.jpg

Electric Meter: http://www.think-energy.net/electric_meter_ge.jpg

For Sale by Owner: http://www.sxc.hu/pic/m/a/a5/a51media/313291_for_sale_sign.jpg

Broken Chain: <http://www.relatemag.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/the-broken-chain1.jpg>

Paper Dolls: http://oneyearbibleimages.com/break_free.jpg

Beth Israel Congregation: <http://www.bethisrael-aa.org/about.php>

Beth Jacob Synagogue: <http://www.bethjacobvt.org/building/buildingphotos.html>