

Tithing under the New Covenant

By David Nathan

Scriptures quoted from,
The Holy Bible, New King James Version. Copyright 1982, by
Thomas Nelson, Inc. Unless otherwise indicated.

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International
Version. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible
Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Copyright © David Nathan 2007

PO Box 10758
The Falls
Benoni
1522

First Edition – 2007
First Edition Second Printing – 2009
Second Edition – 2016

ISBN No. 978-1-868462-85-8

Introduction

The question that I am frequently asked by both new as well as older believers is, “is tithing for today?” I would rather answer questions relating to eschatology than to broach this subject. No other subject in the entire Christian doctrine is as contentious as the issue of tithing. Both ministers and laymen alike, have been maliciously maligned by their peers because of their beliefs relating to the tithe if they should disagree with the common status quo. The ignorance and abuse in the church regarding the issue of money has led to financial hardship, break up of families and worst of all, souls forsaking the kingdom in both traditional and fundamental denominations.

It is my prayerful desire in undertaking to write this book, to put the issue of money into its proper biblical perspective. By God’s grace, I believe that we can accurately answer the question regarding the law of the tithe, and giving as a whole, in the new covenant dispensation.

This book is divided into two distinct sections. In the first section we will look at the subject of the tithe in the Old Testament and answer the question regarding its position in the New Testament church.

The second section deals with giving under the New Covenant and is imperative for gaining a biblical perspective of how God wants us to give. To disregard the second section of this book without reading it will leave the reader with an incomplete understanding of half the biblical teaching on the subject.

This book is written to set those under law and bondage free and to give as many as desire to serve the Lord with all they have and are a biblical teaching on the subject of giving.

Chapter One

The Law of the Tithe

The law of the tithe is found in the writings of Moses in the books of Leviticus through to Deuteronomy. Before the Law, tithing was mentioned only twice in the book of Genesis. We will examine those two accounts later in the book. But for now let us concentrate on the law of tithing as given by God to the nation of Israel through Moses.

Tithing as a commandment of God, was given to the nation of Israel through the Mosaic Law. In this chapter, we are going to look at the scriptures relating to the commandment and the reason why Israel was instructed to tithe. The Lord does nothing randomly. Every ordinance given to Israel had a very specific and vital purpose in the daily spiritual and secular life of the nation. Sometimes these ordinances were spiritual only and yet others concerned themselves with the practical secular lives of the nation exclusively. The law of the tithe, and giving as a whole, touched on both the spiritual as well as the secular lives of Israel. Let us begin to examine this law.

“Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting. Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that

among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.' - Numbers 18:21 – 24

We know from scripture that the nation of Israel was divided into twelve tribes. When Israel conquered the land of Canaan and the kingdoms of Moab and Ammon, Moses divided up the land among eleven of the tribes as their inheritance from the Lord. Only the tribe of Levi was not apportioned land as an inheritance. God had chosen the sons of Levi as His priests to perform the sacrifices prescribed by the Law as well as all the other duties relating to the tabernacle and the Law of Moses. They were not given land as an inheritance, by commandment of God, and therefore had no means of deriving an income or owning a portion of land unless they received the tenth prescribed by the Law.

God ordained that only the Levites were permitted to come before the altar to offer sacrifice and offerings. God had forbidden that anyone but a Levite could come near the tabernacle to perform the ritual sacrifices. The penalty for disobeying this statute was death. The other tribes were thus reliant on the Levites to perform the ritual sacrifices required to atone for their own sins and trespasses against God and His Law.

Left without a means of income because of their calling, God commanded that the remaining eleven tribes each give one tenth of their income to the Levitical priests. Thus the eleven tribes, who were given an inheritance, were commanded by

God to support the twelfth tribe who were chosen by Him to minister on their behalf before the Lord.

The tenth, or the tithe as it was known, became the Levites inheritance from which they were entitled to live and buy property for their families. It was Gods will that the tithe of the nation was given them that they may concentrate on their ministry to Israel. The Levites were not only responsible for offering sacrifice and offering but also for teaching Israel the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 33:10) as well as judging disputes (Deuteronomy 17:9) amongst the people.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord, a tenth of the tithe. 'And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress.

'Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the Lord from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the Lord's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest.

'Of all your gifts you shall offer up every heave offering due to the Lord, from all the best of them, the sanctified part of them.' "Therefore you shall say to them: 'When you have lifted up the best of it, then the rest shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the produce of the winepress. 'You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting. - Numbers 18:25-31

The Levites were commanded to take a tenth of the tithes that they would receive and give that tenth part to Aaron and later to his descendants who ministered before the Lord at the tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem.

The tenth that Aaron and his household received from the other Levites would be used for the offerings in the tabernacle. Thus only one tenth of the tithes received from the whole nation was actually used for the offerings and sacrifices required by the law. The rest was given to the Levites as payment for the work that they did judging, teaching and pastoring Gods chosen people.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” - Leviticus 17:11

The sacrifices prescribed by God in the Law were the single most essential element of His covenant with Israel. Without them, Israel’s sins would not be atoned for and the wrath of God would have consumed them. It was therefore crucial that the daily sacrifices were offered to the Lord for Israel’s atonement and that there was never a shortage of those items required. It was the eleven tribes’ responsibility to pay their tithes in order for the Levites to offer sacrifices to appease God’s judgement of their sin and transgressions.

“Moreover the person... who eats the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that belongs to the Lord, that person shall be cut off from his people.” - Leviticus 7:21

Under the Law paying tithes was not an option but rather an irrefutable command. God forbade anyone other than a Levite to offer sacrifices on the altar. A member of any other tribe

could not minister on his own altar and expect the Lord to receive his offering. The word *cut off* used in the above scripture is translated from the Hebrew word *kârath* which means to destroy or consume. The penalty for presumptuously trying to offer sacrifices without going through the Levitical priesthood was death.

Partaking of your own tithe

What we have looked at so far is widely known by many in the church. However, almost all of the church is ignorant concerning the full teaching of the Law regarding the tithe and its application. The following scriptures add insight to the law of the tithe that few have either read in the Old Testament or even considered. These scriptures are seldom if ever taught and yet they give insights into God's Law that help us to understand the tithe and its purpose.

“You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstlings of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all to which you put your hands.

Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in the land.” - Deuteronomy 12:17–19

“You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide,

the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the Lord your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses.

And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.

- Deuteronomy 14:22–26

From these two scriptures we observe two rather unique commandments from the Lord, to Israel, that are not often (if ever) mentioned in the church.

Firstly, the Lord is specifically addressing the eleven “non-Levitical” tribes regarding their tithing. He commands them, saying, *“You may not eat within your gates the tithe...But you may eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God chooses, you...and the Levite...”* (Deuteronomy 12:17-18). God tells Israel that they must partake of their own tithe before Him. In other words, of the ten percent that they were going to tithe, they and their household would eat a portion of it, when they arrived in Jerusalem (Jerusalem is the city where God chose to put His name).

Deuteronomy chapter fourteen confirms this commandment and allows for those Israelites who dwelt far from Jerusalem to exchange their tithes for money, in their villages, before embarking on their journey to the Holy city to pay their tithes. The Lord made allowance for this so as to make their

pilgrimage to Jerusalem possible unrestricted by having to carry heavy loads of produce reaped from their lands.

Once they arrived in the city they could go to the money changers (Matthew 21:12-13) and exchange their money for, *“whatever your heart desires...and...you shall eat there before the Lord your God.”*

We can clearly see from these two scriptures that a portion of the tithe was to be consumed by the people who offered it to the Lord. They would not eat the portion given to the Aaronic priests. Rather before giving the whole tithe to the Levites, they would first take a small portion and use it to buy food that they could eat as a celebration meal for God’s bountiful blessing on their crops and herds. The remainder, which was by far the largest portion, would then be given to the Levites. If we endeavour to understand this commandment with our twenty-first century church mindset, it would sound something like this; “Pastor, I am bringing my tithe of R500.00 to the church, but I am going to use R100.00 of the total amount and take my family out for lunch!” However absurd and contrary to the churches understanding this may appear, it is nevertheless what God commanded Israel. They were to enjoy a part of their tithe as a thanksgiving feast before the Lord in His holy city, Jerusalem.

Tithing in the Third Year

You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you. At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates,

may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.” - Deuteronomy 14:27–29

When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow so that they may eat inside your gates and be filled, then you shall say before Lord your God, I have removed the holy tithe out of my house, and also have given them to the Levite, and to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me. I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten. – Deuteronomy 26:12-13

The second commandment that we observe in chapter fourteen of Deuteronomy, is that every third year the tithe did not go to the temple in Jerusalem. Instead, the Israelites were to bring the tithe into the city that was closest to them and it would then be distributed to the poor and the needy within the local community. The Levites that lived within that community would also receive a portion of the tithe as their inheritance due them by the Law of Moses. The Levites would then tithe ten percent of their portion to the sons of Aaron who ministered before the Lord. The sons of Aaron in turn, would use the tithe for the service of the tabernacle and later the temple.

Therefore, in the third year the tithe was shared between the Levites and those who were in need within the community. The purpose of this tithe was to alleviate poverty and give hope to those in need. This was not a second tithe as some

incorrectly teach. The third year represented an instruction from God to deviate from the usual practise of going to Jerusalem with the tithe and to instead give it directly to the Levite and the poor within the cities of Israel.

This observance was a command from God and Israel had to respond by saying, *I have removed the holy tithe out of my house, and also have given them to the Levite, and to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me. I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten.*"

If we applied this aspect of the law of the tithe to our modern church context it could be illustrated as follows. For two years we tithe to our local church, taking a portion each time for a thanksgiving meal. In the third year, we only give the pastor a portion and the rest we give directly to the needy in our community.

To those who believe that we are to still observe the law of the tithe this sounds outrageous and contrary to what we term sound doctrine. Nevertheless, it was a commandment from God to Israel regarding the tithe that was holy to Him. If we believe that the law of the tithe is for today, then is this not how we should administer and practise this law?

Summary

To summarize this chapter, we can conclude the following from the word of God. Firstly, the Levites were to receive the tithes from their brethren as their inheritance, because they were not allotted land in Israel. They were to give ten percent of the tithe that they received to the sons of Aaron who performed the ordained sacrifices before the Lord. God commanded that the Israelites were to eat a portion of their

tithe in Jerusalem and that every third year they were to give the tithe to the Levites and the needy within their local community.

Chapter Two

Understanding the Context of Malachi Chapter Three

Malachi chapter three, verses eight through twelve is the scripture most often read in churches when believers are taught about tithes and offerings. It is therefore vitally important for us to understand its teaching, in its biblical context, if we are to resolve the question of tithing in the New Testament church.

In order to correctly understand Malachi's command on tithing, it is of the utmost importance to understand the historical context in which it was written.

In 586 BC the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem razing it and the Temple to the ground. God had allowed this to happen because of Judah's continual disobedience and sin. In 539 BC, the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon. Two years later in 537 BC, Cyrus king of Persia allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. By 516 BC the Temple was complete, exactly 70 years after Judah's captivity, as prophesied by Jeremiah chapter twenty-five verses eleven and twelve.

For 70 years there had been no sacrifices offered to God. After the rebuilding of the Temple in 516 BC, the sacrificial system was re-introduced. However, Israel had not yet repented of her sins until Nehemiah and the priest Ezra returned to

Jerusalem. These two were responsible for turning Israel back to the law and re-establishing the Levitical priesthood as well as the reintroduction of the tithe.

It is important note that the books of Nehemiah, Ezra and Malachi were written between 440 and 430 BC. Malachi was therefore a contemporary of both Ezra and Nehemiah. The messages contained in his writings coincide with the teachings of his contemporaries which all centre around Israel's return and obedience to the Law.

With this in mind let us look at Malachi 3:8–12;

“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this,” says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” says the Lord of Hosts; and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,” says the Lord of Hosts.”

What makes this portion of scripture unique is that it is the only place in the Bible, where the Lord gave Israel a legitimate command to test Him. The Lord covenants with Israel to bless them so abundantly *that there will not be room enough to receive* if they will bring Him the tithes and the offerings prescribed in the Law.

It must be remembered that the Jews who had returned from exile were not at all familiar with the Law. For almost two

generations they were without priests to teach them and a Temple to sacrifice at. Through the prophets Nehemiah and Malachi, God was instructing this new generation about the importance of the tithe.

God promises Israel that if they would tithe, then He would bless them so abundantly that they would never experience lack but on the contrary they would experience manifold, uncontainable blessings. Furthermore, He also promised them that He would not allow loss or destruction to afflict them. His blessings, provision and protection would be so evident to all that *all nations would call you blessed*.

These same promises of Gods abundant blessing, provision and protection on all our material possessions are taught in churches as a promise for us today.

Nevertheless, there is a reality, not readily admitted to, in the church by those who diligently tithe. This reality is that almost all of those who tithe and give offerings do not experience the blessings that God promised Israel through the prophet Malachi. Once in a while, we hear isolated testimonies of financial blessings, but this is very far from the norm. We know that, *“God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19). If God has promised material blessings beyond our ability to receive them, why does God not honour His word to those who are faithful in tithes and offerings? If God always upholds His word, the problem for lack of financial blessing and protection must lie with us.

But how are we restricting God from opening the windows of heaven upon us? Is it sin or a lack of faith?

The answer is neither. The promises made in Malachi are to Israel and not to the church as a whole. If the promise was to the church, then God would be pouring out material blessings on all those who are faithful in tithes and offerings. Every Christian who is prepared to be honest with themselves, knows that this is not happening. This passage was directly connected to the Mosaic Law and God's covenant with Israel. Failing to understand it in this light will only lead to frustration as the *blessings* continue to be withheld.

“Will a man rob God” is the question the prophet asks. What was being taken from God, must be the response? It was the tithes and the offerings commanded by Moses in the Law. Without the tithes, there could be no sacrifice and therefore no atonement. Leviticus 7:21, *“Moreover the person...who eats the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that belongs to the Lord, that person shall be cut off from his people.”*

The sacrifice *belongs to the Lord*, withholding what is God's is theft. Malachi is telling Israel not to eat their tithes because they belong to God, under the Law of Moses. Without the tithe, the Law could not be administered and Israel would be severed from God's grace. Sacrifice was the very essence of the Law. By not obeying the Law, Israel would be cursed by God in accordance with Deuteronomy chapter twenty-eight. The prophet, Malachi was being used by God as a mouthpiece to bring Israel back into covenant with Himself through the ritual sacrifices.

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse...” What was the storehouse? Nehemiah 10:38 – 39 says, *“And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth*

of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are..."

Nehemiah 12:44, *"And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes..."*

The storehouse was an area in the Temple grounds that housed the tithes of the Levites and the offerings of the people. Because sacrifices were offered continually before the Lord, it was necessary to have a place to store them close to the Temple. If the storehouse was depleted, there would be no offerings and the covenant would be transgressed. Again, we see that the context of this passage refers to adhering to the Law.

The storehouse cannot be spiritually interpreted as the local church because we do not receive forgiveness of sins there, as Israel received atonement at the Temple. Our forgiveness comes through faith in the blood of Jesus. It is unbiblical to make a comparison between the local church and the Temple as is incorrectly been done. We are the church washed in the blood of Jesus who was sacrificed not in the Temple but outside the walls of Jerusalem. The buildings that we meet in do not offer us forgiveness as the Temple in Jerusalem offered Israel atonement. We are not reliant on a priest for our salvation because Jesus our high priest has saved us. Israel however needed both priest and Temple for her salvation.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house." The word *food* in this portion of scripture, is the Hebrew word *tereph* which means, a fragment of meat

or food. It comes from the root word *taraph* meaning something torn. The food referred to here, were the fragments of the animal offered on the altar in the Lord's Temple. In Leviticus chapters one through seven, God instructs Israel about His offerings. Only certain fragments (portions) of the animals were to be laid on the altar as an offering to the Lord. The rest of the animal was apportioned to Aaron and his sons as their food. These specific pieces of cut or torn meat required to be laid on the altar of sacrifice was known as *tereaph*, translated in the bible as food or meat. We know that the Levites gave a tenth of the tithes that they had received to the Aaronic priests. The sons of Aaron would in turn keep the animals with the grain, wine etc. in the storehouses of the Temple. When the prescribed sacrifices were to be offered, they would cut up the animal and offer the appropriate pieces on the altar according to the Law. These pieces are the *tereaph* or *meat* (KJV), *food* (NKJV and NIV) that God required in His house/temple so that He could atone for the sins of Israel.

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the Lord of Hosts; and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,” Says the Lord of Hosts.”

Many Christians take this scripture to mean that God will protect their finances and assets if they are faithful in the area of tithes and offerings. Yet, many of those who are faithful still suffer loss through theft, accidents and natural disasters. As we saw earlier in this chapter, God will not lie and if He promises to rebuke the devourer, once our obedience is complete, He will fulfill His word. The reason many suffer loss

is that we cannot appropriate this scripture into our present dispensation for two main reasons.

Firstly, God says, *“and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land.”* He is saying that when Israel tithes in order for the Law to be upheld, He will bless the nation and country of Israel as He had promised in Deuteronomy chapter twenty-eight. The result will be that the nations of the earth will see the supernatural blessings on the land and its people and acknowledge God’s blessings on the nation and call it a *delightful land*.

Secondly, Jesus taught the disciples in Matthew 6:19, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.”* Jesus clearly told the disciples that, thieves stealing earthly treasures and moths and rust destroying were a reality even with regards to their earthly goods. The apostle Paul writing to the church at Corinth writes in 2 Corinthians 11:26, *“...in perils of robbers...in perils in the sea...”*. Paul suffered loss when he was shipwrecked three times and he was aware of the dangers of being robbed on his frequent journeys. As the single most prolific writer of the New Testament, Paul would have known if he could stand on the promises of protection found in Malachi. Neither he nor any of the other New Testament writers refer to God’s promises regarding the tithe found in Malachi nor do they mention tithing as part of the New Covenant Church.

Without trying to belabour the point, we must understand that Malachi is speaking directly to Israel about the tithe in its relation to the Mosaic sacrifices. Without the tithes, Israel could not adhere to the old covenant. The question that we

will ultimately address in this book, is whether or not we are to adhere to the law of the tithe under the new covenant.

Chapter Three

Did Jesus teach Tithing as a New Testament Law?

The Old Testament is very clear regarding the tithe. As we have examined in the previous two chapters, tithing was compulsory for everyone who was under the Law. The same however, cannot be said of the New Testament. The New Testament contains only four references to the word, tithe. One of the references is found in Luke chapter eighteen, verse twelve. It is used by the Lord to illustrate the difference between self-righteousness and humility. Unfortunately, it does not shed any light on the subject of tithing in the New Testament dispensation. In the book of Hebrews, chapter seven, the writer expounds on Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, to whom he paid a tithe of the spoils of war. This passage again, does not give us a clear teaching on the subject of tithing under the New Covenant. We will however examine this portion of scripture in depth in the following chapter.

The Gospels record that Jesus only spoke about the law of the tithe once during His earthly ministry. Both Luke and Matthew's gospels record this single instance, which are the two last remaining references in the New Testament on the subject of tithing.

Luke 11:42, But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of

God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Matthew 23:23, Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone.

In these two verses, Jesus is clearly instructing the Pharisees and scribes to continue paying their tithes in accordance with the Law. He tells them to add justice, mercy and faith to their observances. He was emphasizing to them that the spirit of the Mosaic Law was as important as the letter. The Law was to be obeyed with a heart attitude of justice, mercy and faith. Most Christians believe from the above two scriptures that Jesus is teaching that the law of tithing continues under the New Covenant. They argue that Jesus could have instructed the Pharisees and scribes to stop paying tithes because He was going to usher in a new covenant dispensation. But was Jesus teaching that tithing transcends the covenants and belongs in the New Covenant?

To answer the above question we must understand Jesus' earthly ministry and His teaching regarding the Law. It is His relation to the Law and its fulfilment that many Christians do not understand.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law of the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will be no means pass from the law until all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and

teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. - Matthew 5:17–19

Jesus said that He came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. What did He imply when He said these words? It was necessary for Jesus to adhere and obey all the Law of Moses and to teach others to do the same. If Jesus failed in any of these two areas, He would have disqualified Himself from being the perfect Lamb of God. It was absolutely imperative that He obey all the Law and to uphold all its teachings whilst on earth before His crucifixion. Failure do so would have disqualified Him as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. The Law of God had to be upheld by a man since it was by a man that all were made sinners. Jesus came as a man to fulfil the Laws righteous requirements. It was for this very reason that He fulfilled it and taught others to do the same.

The above scripture does not imply that we are still to observe the Law but rather that the Law and the prophets will remain until they are fulfilled. Jesus fulfilled the Law and the prophets by His life, death and resurrection. Allow me to illustrate this through the word.

When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, and show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." Matthew 8:1–4

Jesus instructed the man healed of leprosy to go show himself to the priests and to offer the gift (or sacrifice) that Moses had commanded Israel to offer under the Law. In Leviticus chapter fourteen, verses one to thirty-two, Moses instructed anyone healed of leprosy to show himself to the priests and to offer a sin offering and a burnt offering to the Lord. Jesus was under the Law whilst on earth, He obeyed the letter of the Law, and was obliged by the Law to send the man to the priests. The reason that we do not offer sacrifices to God when we are healed under the New Covenant, is because we are no longer under the Law, but under grace. If He had not fulfilled the Law and the prophets then He could not have ushered in the New Testament dispensation which we now enjoy, free from the Law.

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do." - Matthew 23:1-3

Jesus commanded His disciples as well as the crowds that followed Him to observe the things that the Pharisees and scribes told them to observe. What would these things have been? Jesus said, *"The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat."* They were responsible to teach Israel how to observe the Law of Moses. What Jesus was saying, is that they were to listen to the teachers of the Law and observe what they were told. Do we therefore obey the Law because Jesus instructed His disciples to do so? Certainly not! We know that He was talking to those under the Law and under the Old Covenant.

When Jesus told the Pharisees to continue tithing, He was speaking to those under the Law. Just as observing the Law and offering sacrifices for healing are part of the Old Covenant, so is the law of tithing. There is not one instruction to the church to tithe in the entire New Testament.

When Jesus said, *“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven,”* He was referring to those under the Law. We can clearly see this when we read the writings of the apostles. The apostles clearly taught the gentile Christians not to observe the Law. If we take the above scripture in the context that many ministers use it in, to justify the law of tithing, then the apostles of all Christians will be least in the kingdom of God. Note the following scriptures.

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” - Acts 15:28–29

“Take them and be purified with them..., and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” - Acts 21:23–24

The apostles in Jerusalem kept part of the Law as a witness to their Jewish brethren. However, when the Gentiles began to convert to the Lord, the early Church faced its first major dilemma. How were the Gentiles to serve God? Some of the Jewish believers said, (Acts 15:5) *"...It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."* Paul and Barnabas, were in complete disagreement with them and went to Jerusalem to discuss this issue with the other apostles and elders. The Holy Spirit instructed them (verse 28) not to lay the burden of the Law on the Gentile Christians. This doctrine or teaching was then documented by the apostles, that the Gentiles were not to observe the Law of Moses. The letter was then given to Paul and Barnabas as proof of the decision reached by the apostles at Jerusalem and shown to the Gentile believers.

In most of his writings, Paul defends this doctrinal stance passionately. The letter to the church of Galatia is an excellent example. Galatians 3:10–13, *"All 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 (NIV). 'But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by faith.' Yet the law is not of faith, but 'The man who does them shall live by them.' Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')."*

Paul tells the Galatians, that those who rely on obeying certain of the Laws whilst leaving the others unobserved are under a curse. He quotes Deuteronomy chapter twenty-seven and verse twenty-six, which says, *"Cursed is everyone who does*

not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law (NIV)." What does this mean in relation to our paying tithes to God? Simply, that if we seek to be justified in our giving by observing the law of tithes and offerings we place ourselves under a curse because, whilst we observe one law we break the other six hundred and twelve. There is a curse according to the Old Covenant for those who do not observe the whole law. We cannot observe one law and leave the others unobserved.

This now presents us with a paradox. Malachi 3 verse 9 says, *"You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation,"* and Paul tells the Galatians that, *"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse."* How are we to understand these two scriptures that appear to be contradicting one another? Simply. Malachi was writing to the nation of Israel, under the law, who were in covenant with God to keep the law, and Galatians was written to Gentile Christians under the new covenant of grace in Jesus. Israel was bound to the law of Moses until the dispensation of grace came through Jesus. They therefore had to tithe according to the law. We the church are no longer under law but under grace. We are commanded not to keep the law but through faith and obedience to Jesus and His word, serve God.

I have heard ministers tell their congregations that if they do not pay their tithes they are not only under a curse but will also lose their salvation. They argue that robbing God of the tithe makes you a thief and first Corinthians chapter six verses nine and ten tell us that thieves will not inherit the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians, disagrees, (Galatians 2 v 16), *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the*

works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”

We are saved through faith in the finished work of Calvary. The only thing that will cause us to lose our salvation is if we willingly continue to sin against the Lord and reject His love and salvation.

We, as disciples of Jesus are no longer under the Mosaic Law. Galatians clearly confirms this truth, Galatians 3:24–25, *“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”*

Hebrews 8:7–13, *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says (quoting Jeremiah 31:31–34), “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord’, for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” In that He says, “A*

new covenant," He had made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

Tithing belonged to the old covenant dispensation that ended at the resurrection of Jesus. We are now under grace and must give offerings under the New Testament's teaching. We will cover this in the second section of the book.

Chapter Four

Did Abraham and Jacob tithe outside the Law?

Many will agree that we are no longer under the Mosaic Law but will argue that Abraham and Jacob both tithed before the Law was given. If this is true, then the objection that they raise, is that tithing transcends the covenants and therefore it is applicable today. This objection is valid. If Abraham and Jacob both tithed on their income and increase, then tithing must still be valid for us. But, did they pay regular tithes to God as is often believed and taught?

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine: he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he gave him a tithe of all.”

- Genesis 14:18–20

The Bible records that Abram only tithed once in his entire life. This one occasion occurred when he had returned from battle with the spoils of war and met Melchizedek (Genesis 14:1-24). The king of Sodom offered all the spoils of the battle to Abraham but he refused to take any except the portion he tithed (verse 20). It is important to note that Abram did not tithe on his own possessions but tithed a tenth of the spoils he

had taken after he defeated the five kings who had taken Lot, his nephew captive (verse 16). The balance of the spoils he gave to the king of Sodom and refused to keep any part of it for himself. Abram's "tithe" was a once off offering which did not come from his own resources as was required by Law. The tithe is to be made up of a tenth of all our increase that God has given to us. The goods that Abraham brought back belonged to the peoples of Sodom and were not his own. According to the rules of war that existed at that time he was entitled to the goods but according to God's moral law (Sabbath year and the Jubilee) they were to be returned.

If Abraham only tithed once, then why did he tithe to Melchizidek?"

Who is Melchizidek king of Salem that Abraham met on his return from rescuing his nephew Lot? His name comes from two Hebrew words, namely *melech* – king and *tsedek* – righteousness, translated as King of Righteousness. Who is this King of Righteousness that is a priest of God some six hundred and fifty years before the Levitical priesthood is established? Who is He who ruled over Salem the ancient name of the city of Jerusalem (Psalm 76:2) where God had put His name?

In order to know who this person is, we need to first understand His title. He is called King of Salem which is another name of the city of Jerusalem. It was in the city of Jerusalem that God chose to place His name (1 Kings 11:36) both as a dwelling place for His Spirit, between the Cherubim above the mercy seat of the Ark in the Holy of Holies within the heart of the Temple.

The Lord also placed His name in the topography of the landscape, as Jerusalem is sighted on three hills forming the

Hebrew letter ש (Shin). Shin is symbolic of the Trinity with each of the three branches representing one member of the Godhead.

But you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you, lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God. (Deuteronomy 20:17-18) According to Scripture, the Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem (Joshua 15:63) up until the time they were defeated by King David (2 Samuel 5:6-7). They were accused by God of wickedness and serving foreign gods, for which they were to be destroyed. The only nation to inhabit Jerusalem before the Jews were the Jebusites. If Melchizedek was a human king as well as being a priest he would have taught the Jebusites (his people) to worship the only true God – Jehovah.

But Melchizedek could not possibly have been their king as the Bible reveals that when Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac his son they went to the land of Moriah (Genesis 22:2) and onto a specific mountain that God showed him. This mountain is the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, *now Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah* (2 Chronicles 3:1).

If Abraham attempted to sacrifice his son in the middle of a city ruled over by Melchizedek, how come no one tried to stop him? The answer to this question is strikingly obvious, Melchizedek was not a human king ruling over the then physical city of Jerusalem. No one was there besides Abraham and Isaac. There was no city, Moriah was a wilderness which

was uninhabited and would remain so until it was inhabited by the Jebusites many years later.

Melchizedek was and is the spiritual king over the heavenly city of Jerusalem as revealed in Hebrews 12:22-24, *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels... to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.*

Salem is also Hebrew for *peace* or *peaceful*. Therefore, Melchizedek could also be known as King of Peace. Isaiah 9:6 tells us that the coming Messiah would be called the *Prince of Peace*.

We have seen that His name means King of Righteousness. Who is righteous but God? According to the prophet Jeremiah, the Messiah of the Jews was called *the branch of righteousness* (Jeremiah 23:6 & 33:15). The writer of Hebrews says, *but unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom* (Hebrews 1:8). The sceptre is a symbol of royal power, rule and authority. The symbol of Jesus rule and kingdom is the sceptre of righteousness. As King, His realm is symbolised by righteousness. It can then be said that Jesus is the King over the kingdom of righteousness, or put differently, He is the King of Righteousness.

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace.” Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither

beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the Law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; But he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. No beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." -

Hebrews 7:1-10

Once we understand that Melchizedek was Jesus pre-incarnate, we can better understand why He appeared to Abraham to receive a tenth of the spoils. The writer of Hebrews, gives us insight into this event. He says that, "*Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.*" What the writer of Hebrews is teaching, is that in order for the Levites to receive tithes from their brethren under the Law, they first had to pay tithes directly to God. The writer of Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is teaching the church concerning the connection between Abraham's only tithe and the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. He in no way, even remotely, suggests that the tithe had to do with anything

outside of the Law of Moses. On the contrary, he explains that, had Abraham not tithed to Jesus/Melchizedek then the Levites would be unable to receive tithes from their brethren. If the Levites could not receive tithes, then there would be no Law because the Law is dependent on sacrifice and offering for its own fulfilment. If there had been no Law then Jesus would not have come to fulfil the Law, and you and I would be lost for eternity.

This event does not prove that tithing transcends the Law. Rather, it proves, with the evidence found in the New Testament book of Hebrews, that tithing is undeniably linked to the Mosaic Law from which we have now been released through faith in Jesus.

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, promised the Lord that he would give God a tenth of all that God would give him if God would return him safely to the land of Canaan, Genesis 28:20–22. *“Then Jacob made a vow saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”*

True to his old character which he possessed prior to his encounter with God when he wrestled with Him by the Jabbok river, Jacob tries to make a deal with God. Jacob was notorious for his crafty trickery, deceit and cunning. If we look at the above scripture we can see that Jacob does not acknowledge God as his God on the basis of the dream that he had just had, but rather makes a deal with God. If God would look after him and prosper him then he would acknowledge

God as his God. Jacob was wanting God to prove Himself as his protector and provider before he would acknowledge Him as Lord. That is not a covenant with God but rather a testing or a fleece that he lays out.

The Bible does not record that Jacob ever honoured his vow to the Lord. When God commands him to go live at Bethel many years later (Genesis 35:1–15), the scriptures tell us that he built an altar and poured out a drink offering to the Lord on it but makes no record of him ever tithing. Why not? Because the Levitical priesthood had not yet been established, Jacob could not give his tenth to God. How was he to do it? Jesus had appeared to his grandfather once in order to receive a tithe. Yet when God appeared to Jacob in Genesis 32:22–32, he did not give Him a tithe or offering of anything. After living more than fourteen years in exile, he returns to Canaan to face his brother Esau, whom he had betrayed. Jacob prepares an elaborate gift for him which comprises 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 female camels, 30 young camel colts, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys and 10 foals. (Genesis 32:13–14). Jacob blessed his brother with a great gift but never gave God a tithe.

All the patriarch's offered the Lord sacrifices and burnt offerings prior to the Law being given, yet we do not say that sacrifices transcend the Law. The tithe was an integral part of the Law of Moses, without it the Law could never be observed.

Abraham's tithe was ordained by God in order that his offspring, the Levites, could receive tithes from their brethren and thus administer the Law.

We are now living under a new dispensation, where the subject of money and giving are addressed in a new and better covenant. We are no longer under the law of the tithe and can never be held accountable to God for not keeping it. This does not give us permission to become covetous and cease giving to the work of God and the poor. On the contrary we need to learn what the new testament teaches about money and giving in order for us to become obedient to the Lord. Do not stop reading just because you have come to understand that you are free from the law of tithing. To do so would leave you without understanding and accountable to God. Let us move on into New Testament giving.

Tithing under the New Covenant

Section 2

Giving in the New Testament – Introduction

After reading the first section of this book, many will be relieved that they are no longer bound to give a tithe to God. They think that it is now acceptable to God to drop a few Rands into the offering basket without feeling guilty or under condemnation. For the most part they are right, for *“there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”* However, the scripture continues, *“who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”* (Romans 8:1–2). Is the church truly walking in the Spirit when it comes to giving or are we very much in the flesh?

The reason that money is an issue in the body of Christ, is that it is addressed more than any other subject in the western church. *“Money answers everything”*, writes Solomon in Ecclesiastes 10 verse 19 and denying that will only reveal our own ignorance and lack of true spiritual insight. With unlimited funds, many more churches could be built, ministers trained and sent out, the poor would receive assistance and the church as a whole would grow. Finances are as essential in the new dispensation as they were in the old. However, God does not instruct us how much or how little to give, but leaves it up to us to decide. Paul tells the Roman church that those who walk according to the Spirit are free from condemnation. However, the vast majority of the church is still in the flesh, not unlike the Corinthian church, even though the gifts of the Spirit are being manifested today. Ministers, in

their frustration to get the church to give, are dealing with the fruit of the problem by teaching on giving but never get to the root, which lies deep within the heart of man.

We cannot make givers out of those who are covetous, no matter how hard we try. In this section of the book are going to look at how and what the early church gave, and the teachings of the apostles on the subject of money and giving.

Chapter Five

Charity in the Early Church

“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” - Acts 2:44-45

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common...Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.” - Acts 4:32-37

Right back in its infancy, the early church was consumed with a spirit of generosity. Those who were rich sold their possessions and brought the money to the apostles who in turn used it to meet the needs of the community. The benevolence of the early church was so abundant that there was no one within the congregation who lacked anything.

What inspired the early Christians to be so generous? They knew that they were not under the Law but under grace. Yet they did not withhold their possessions from the body of Christ, but rather, those who sold land and houses gave all, one hundred percent, to the apostles.

The answer to their generosity lies within the above text. Acts 4:32-37, *“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the*

things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common."

They knew that all that they were, and all that they had, belonged to God. Unlike so many in the church today, they had not asked Jesus into their lives, instead, they had fully surrendered their lives and their possessions, in faith, and gave them to Him. They understood the meaning of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6 verse 20, *"For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."*

They knew that the moment they surrendered their lives to Christ, they and all they had belonged to Him. If what they possessed belonged to God, then they could freely give as much to the Lord as He moved them to give.

It is difficult for most Christians to give ten percent of their own money to God, but how difficult is it for you or I to give someone else's money to God? That should not be difficult at all because we will not experience loss ourselves. It is the other person who will suffer loss. Yet that is exactly how we give under the new covenant (not that we actually suffer loss). If all that I have belongs to God, then when I give, I am not giving anything to God that belongs to me, I am just giving back to God that which already belongs to Him. We as Christians must understand that we give all to the Lord in order to be saved. Jesus does not just want to come into your life, He wants full Lordship (ownership) of all you are and all you have.

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. – Mark 8:34. The modern church no longer understands the requirements for salvation as taught by Jesus. We believe that our cross represents

persecution that we might suffer for Jesus. However, when Jesus taught that we must take up our cross He meant it in light of what it represented in His day. Those condemned to death by crucifixion had to carry the instrument of their execution, namely a cross, to the place of execution. Taking up your cross meant that you were walking to your death. Jesus taught, that those who wanted to serve and follow Him must first be willing to deny their own desires and ambitions. Once they were willing to do so they were ready to take up the cross and die to themselves and surrender all to Him. This is salvation, a life for a life. Jesus died to save us and so in turn we must die to self in order that we can be saved. If you have never died to your fleshly desires and your carnal ambitions, you will never have experienced true salvation.

Allow the Holy Spirit to minister the following scriptures to your heart,

“He died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

- 2 Corinthians 5:15

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

- Galatians 2:20

“And you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”

- 1 Corinthians 3:23

“For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.

- Romans 14:8

The Lord clearly teaches through His word that we belong to Him. Therefore, our money and possessions are His also. From the day we were saved, we never gave anything to the Lord that did not already belong to Him as part of our covenant relationship.

Chapter Six

Ananias and Sapphira's Sin

Even though all we have belongs to God, He still allows us the choice of how much we decide to give.

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.’” Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last... Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, ‘Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?’ And she said, ‘Yes, for so much.’ Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.’ Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last...” - Acts 5:1-10

What was Ananias and Sapphira's sin? Peter said that they had both agreed to lie to the Holy Spirit. But, how had they lied? They had sold a possession and told Peter that the amount they had laid at his feet was the total proceeds of the sale. However, verse two tells us that they kept back part of

the sale for themselves. Peter tells Ananias, that after the possession was sold, the money was his to do with as he liked, *“And after it was sold, was it not in your control?”* Ananias was free to give as much or as little as he and his wife desired, after all the money was in their control. (Peter did not say that they were to first pay a tithe on the money, then afterwards they could decide what else to give).

They sinned, in that they gave grudgingly and with a deceitful heart. They did not want to give all the proceeds to God and they had a right not to, according to Peter. They begrudged giving God all, otherwise they would not have tried to cover up their deceit by lying when confronted. However, they wanted the rest of the church to think that they were giving all to the Lord. Lying to the church is the same as lying to God because Jesus is head of the church, which is His body. Had they said, that they only wanted to give a portion of the proceeds to the Lord, they would not have been struck down by Him. The irony is that they probably would have been blessed if their heart attitude were right.

Do we in the church give to God with deceit in our heart like Ananias and Sapphira? Although I do not know of anyone who has committed the same sin as them, I know for a fact that a large percentage of Christians give to God with a deceitful heart. Many are unaware that they are doing this (hence God’s grace), they are only giving as they have been erroneously taught. Let me explain.

Galatians 6:7-8, *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit, will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”* It is time the

church realizes that God will not be deceived by our carnal attitude to giving. Paul talking about money and giving says that, *“he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption.”* How do we sow to the flesh when we give money to the work of the Lord? To answer this question let us look at what the word teaches.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators... nor covetous,.... will inherit the kingdom of God.”- 1 Corinthians 6:9–10

“But know this, that in the last day’s perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money..., lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, and having a form of godliness but denying its power. - 2 Timothy 3:1-5

The distressing reality in our time, is that the spirit of this world has not only entered our churches but has been given a vigorous voice from many pulpits.

There is a teaching called, naming your seed as an example. According to this teaching, we are not to “just throw our money into the offering basket” when it comes round. Rather, we are to tell God what we expect to reap as a harvest from the “seed” we have sown. The teaching expounds that our money is a seed and a seed that is sown will always produce a harvest. We then need to tell God what harvest we want, whether it is a new car, money, a new job etc. God of course will then give us what we have asked for because He does not want us to “just throw money into the offering”, but be blessed in our giving.

I have searched the scriptures trying to find just one verse that even remotely teaches this doctrine. Not surprisingly, I have

not found one verse to support this teaching. On the contrary, I have found many that contradict it. This teaching has no root or foundation in the word of God because it is birthed deep in the carnal, unregenerate heart of man. Its every teaching is contrary to the word of God because its motive is the gratification of the flesh and not the extension of the kingdom of God.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit, will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” - Galatians 6:7-8,

When we give money to God for any other reason than wanting to see His work extended and others blessed through our giving, without thought of any self-enrichment for ourselves, we will be sowing to the flesh. When I put money into the offering and tell God what return I want on my seed, I am giving in order to receive for myself and for my needs. Even though others will be blessed by what you put in, just like others were blessed by Ananias and Sapphira’s money, God rejects your offering because it was not given from the spirit but rather from the flesh. The flesh only seeks after its own desires and needs. When you give to get, you are not concerned about blessing anyone else. You are merely using opportunity to sow into your own life. You are sowing to the flesh and the word says, *“For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit, will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”* God is not going to honour your giving when you give in the flesh. *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, not indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” - Romans 8:7-8*

When you name your seed, you are giving according to the flesh, seeking a blessing for yourself. God will not bless that which displeases Him. We must learn to give in the spirit. *“God is not mocked,”* He looks into the very core of your heart and discerns every motive, attitude and desire when you give. He cannot be deceived even though we try to justify our motives before Him.

It does not matter if those who preach this false doctrine seem convincing because of their apparent “god-given wealth.” If what they teach contradicts the letter and the Spirit of God’s word, they are in error and you must reject their teaching without ceasing to love them and pray for them.

The purpose of the above example is not to criticize any individual minister or even denomination. It is purely given as a means to illustrate how easily we can be deceived to give with an impure heart.

Chapter Seven

Prosperity – a Barometer of the Spirit

Many ministers teach that financial prosperity is God's desire for all believers. Millions are spent annually by Christians on books, tapes and seminars, on how to gain financial success. Some preachers even use God's financial blessings as a tool for evangelism. They tell the unsaved to come to Jesus so that He can bless them financially. The result of this unbalanced emphasis on God's financial blessing is that our finances become a direct indication of our spiritual growth. If we struggle financially, it is because we are in sin or do not have sufficient faith. But is this what the Bible teaches?

Many know the account of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, in Matthew 19:16-22. He asked Jesus what he needed to do in order to receive eternal life. After telling Jesus that he had kept the commandments from his birth, Jesus says to him, *"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."*

Having wealth is not God's desire for everyone. Here this young man wanted to serve Jesus but the price of discipleship was giving up his wealth. He loved his possessions and lifestyle more than he loved God and was therefore unable to pay the price to serve Jesus.

Christians must understand that God is more interested in their eternal future than in their temporary comforts. We have lost sight of the purpose of God's salvation. We no longer set our minds and hearts on things that are above, instead we look at the world's pleasures and believe that as Kings Kids, we of all people, should be enjoying them. But what does God say?

Romans 8:29, *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed into the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren"*

God did not save us so that we could be rich. He saved us so that He could mould us into the image of Jesus our Saviour. Everything that God wants to do in our lives, He does for one purpose only, and that is to transform us into the image of Jesus.

When Jesus entered His Father's presence at His resurrection, He presented His own blood on the altar of Heaven, as proof of our redemption. But Jesus also did something else that the Gentile church does not often understand or realise. He offered Himself as the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20) to God. In Leviticus 23:9-13, Moses commanded Israel regarding the feast of the firstfruits. They would take a portion of their crop to the priests who would offer it to the Lord as a wave offering. It was a thanksgiving offering for God's abundant provision. The sheaf or portion they presented to the Lord, represented the entire harvest for which they were giving thanks.

When Jesus stood before the Father as the firstfruits, He was declaring that He was the representation of those who would follow. He was saying that those who would follow would be

like Him in character (NB not in position, power and authority). Because He is the firstfruits we will be made like Him in nature and spirit. This is God's purpose in the life of every believer. He is at work in us to transform us by His Spirit into the image of our Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18). What an awesome privilege that God would want us as His sons and daughters.

God wants to take the world out of His people so that He can transform us into His children but the church is teaching that the things of the world are our inheritance. No, being transformed into the image of Jesus and possessing eternity is our inheritance.

Why do we seek gold on earth when we will be walking on it for eternity?

The Bible does not teach that God wants us all to be materially rich. Poverty was a reality in the early church, yet it was not shunned. The greatest teacher of Christian doctrine, the apostle Paul, experienced poverty often.

"Even to the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten and homeless." - 1 Corinthians 4:11

Paul wrote First Corinthians whilst in Ephesus, he was not imprisoned which might have accounted for his material situation, had he been. On the contrary, Paul was in the mission field planting the Ephesian church.

"But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God; in much patience, in tributions, in needs..., as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." - 2 Corinthians 6:4-10

Paul recorded for eternity, that as an apostle of Jesus he suffered lack on many occasions. He was poorly clothed, homeless and often had needs. If material wealth was a measure of spiritual growth, then the apostle Paul was of all Christians, the most spiritually bankrupt.

The most profound, yet prophetic teaching for the church in this hour, on this subject, is found in the book of Revelation, *“And to the angel of the church of Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: “I know your works, tribulation and poverty (but you are rich);... Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* - Revelation 2:8-11

Of the seven churches addressed by the Lord in Revelation, only two churches were not rebuked by Him for being either compromising, filled with false doctrine, spiritually dead or lukewarm. The church at Smyrna was one of them. The Lord acknowledged their material poverty but insists that they were indeed rich. True riches for the Christian are not measured by material possessions but are measured in terms of spiritual conformity to the Lord and His word. Their works for the Lord had been done with a heart full of love for the Lord, unlike the church of Ephesus. Their doctrine had been pure and uncompromising, unlike the churches of Pergamos, Thyatira and Sardis. Even though their doctrine was not faulted by the Lord, they were still materially poor. If material prosperity is a promise to the New Testament church, then

surely the church of Smyrna, of all the churches, would not have been poor. Yet Jesus calls them rich.

Now compare the materially poor church with the materially wealthy church of Laodicea,

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked – “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments that you might be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me...”

- Revelation 3:14-22

Jesus rebukes the Laodicean church because they were lukewarm in heart. Their compromised condition arose because they trusted in the security of their material goods. Laodocia was a rich city situated on a major trade route to the East. It was not only a banking and trading centre but also produced fine black woollen garments which were coveted all over the Roman Empire. The medical school produced an eye salve which was exported all over the known world. Materially they lacked nothing, but spiritually Jesus calls them wretched,

miserable, poor, blind and naked. The Lord does not have a problem with Christians being rich materially but He does have a problem with the rich who are spiritually bankrupt. The Laodicean church is exactly like many churches and ministers today. They have all the outward trappings but are void of the Spirit of God. Instead of the Lord's anointing, they are full of hype. In place of true worship, they have entertainment. They preach financial blessing and independence in place of spiritual brokenness and dependence on the Lord and His word. Yet Jesus urges them to repent and exchange their material riches for true riches. He counsels them to anoint their eyes so that they can see the deception that they are in and repent. I pray that the church today will realize that we have been blinded by the prosperity message and that we will see that we have ceased seeking after God's true riches.

Jesus concludes His message to the Laodiceans by saying, *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."* For all their error He still loved them and gave them an opportunity to repent. That is the nature of our Lord, who is calling us in the church today to repent of our obsession with money. Will we turn and begin to seek after true riches? The Lord is not standing at the door of the unsaved. He is standing at the door of the Christian church desiring to be invited back in. Will we let Him in to be Lord of our lives and our churches, or will we continue to blindly seek after "His financial blessings", and be spewed from His presence for eternity?

"...Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" - James 2:5.

Chapter Eight

Seeking after True Riches

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?... Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ Or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

- Matthew 6:19-33

When Jesus spoke of true riches, He never spoke of money. He cautions His disciples to accumulate for themselves riches in heaven and not to accumulate wealth on earth. He warns that earthly wealth is subject to decay and theft, whereas true riches will not suffer loss for eternity. Are we as Christians really desiring to lay up treasure in heaven? Or are we using Christianity as a means of material gain? I have met many

Christians who came to Jesus because they were led to believe that they would prosper financially. The only Christians that prospered were the ones preaching the message.

Paul warns against those who preach this message and want to live the material lifestyles of this world. *“...who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* 1 Timothy 6:5-10

Take heed to Paul’s message. He says that those who preach godliness as a means of gain are to be avoided. Yet many of the most popular Christian ministers base their teachings on this false premise. Instead of avoiding these ministers we flock to listen to their misguided teaching. Is it any wonder that the church today is weak and powerless? We claim that we are in revival when in reality we are in decline. Paul warns that, *“those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”* Whether they admit it or not, most Charismatic and Pentecostal Christians desire to be materially rich because they believe that it is part of the Lord’s salvation.

But the Bible admonishes us not to desire after worldly wealth, claiming that those who do so will fall *“into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”* Is that what we really want. Have we not seen enough reproach brought on the kingdom of our Lord by those who have fallen in their pursuit of money? The world does not believe the message of preachers anymore because it is no different from their New Age inspired motivational guru’s who are also telling them that they have the power to get wealth. We are to be the light of the world and yet many in the church are falling into the pit of darkness in their pursuit of money.

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” I must reiterate what I said earlier in the book, and that is that wealth in itself is not the problem.

I know many wealthy Christians who love the Lord and are humble. They give abundantly to the Lord and seek no recognition for their giving. Money is not the problem. The love of money and the desire to be rich are the problems, according to the Lord. The love of money is a fruit of the flesh and as Paul writes in Romans 7:18, *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells....”* I have had Christians tell me that God has put a desire in their hearts to be rich so that they can give to Him. God will not put a desire in your heart that contradicts His word. If God wants you to be rich in order to sow into His kingdom, then He would give you the ability to create the wealth and not a desire for the wealth. In Deuteronomy chapter eight verse eighteen, God says that He gave Israel the ability to get wealth in order for

His covenant to be established. There is no excuse for Christians who love money and desire to be rich. They are deceiving themselves.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” – Matthew 6:21 &24. Jesus tells us that we cannot love God and love money at the same time. The love of money leaves no room in our hearts to love God. Why is the church so weak today? Because too many Christians are pursuing earthly treasures and so few are yearning after God and His true riches.

The prosperity message and its desire for worldly wealth is as old as the church itself. The prosperity teachers say that they did not invent the message, but as servants of God, they are merely reviving it. They indeed speak the truth. 2 *“For we are not, as so many, peddling (adulterating for gain) the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.” - Corinthians 2:17.*

The apostle Paul had to deal with and distance himself from the prosperity preachers in his day. Was his doctrine wrong and theirs right?

Chapter Nine

God's Covenant of Provision

In the last three chapters, I have dealt with incorrect doctrines and heart attitudes regarding money in the church. As I have mentioned earlier in this book, God does not object to wealth so long as our attitude towards money does not hinder His purpose in our lives.

God has not promised every Christian abundant wealth under the new covenant but He has covenanted with us to meet our every need. Every Christian can trust God for their basic needs because he has promised to meet them if we are obedient to our responsibility in our covenant relationship with Him.

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ...Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” - Matthew 6:25-33

Jesus tells us that the Father knows that we have need of the basic necessities of life. He instructs His disciples not to focus on these needs like the Gentiles do, but rather to seek after

God's kingdom and His righteousness. Jesus is telling His church that, unlike the Gentiles, we have a covenant with God through His blood. The Gentiles were without God. They had no covenant with the God of Israel and could not trust or hope in God to provide for them. They were restricted to their own labour and effort for their provision. We who are born again have come into covenant with the Father through Jesus. Jesus encouraged us to rest on the Father's faithfulness to His covenant obligations. The Father will provide your needs. This is a promise from God the Father through His Son, Jesus. All you and I need be concerned about is, are we seeking His kingdom and His righteousness? Seek after these things and God will provide your every need. He is faithful, do not worry about your needs, have faith, God will make good His word.

God covenants to meet our needs if we covenant to make His kingdom and righteousness our life's priority. We are urged, not to be like unbelievers who, because they do not have a relationship with the risen Saviour, continually worry about material things. Allow Jesus and His kingdom to consume you, put God first in your life, seek after the Lord and then rest in His promised provision for you.

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 4:19,

God is able and willing to meet our needs. But He is unwilling to entertain our covetous desires for wealth. Unless we begin to live in the spirit, we will be consumed with the things of the flesh and in so doing, miss the bigger picture. Note Luke's account of Matthew chapter six, *“But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the*

kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is there your heart will be also."

These words of Jesus, put this whole message in context. He says that, *"it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* The Father desires us to inherit His kingdom. Romans chapter eight teaches that in, and with Jesus, we have become heirs of God. But we are heirs of a heavenly kingdom that has no part in this present world. We are in this world but not of this world. We are of the kingdom of God. Our treasures are laid up in God's kingdom and we will enjoy them when we enter eternity.

Jesus then goes on to show us how to lay up treasure in His kingdom, *"Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail."* Jesus tells us that the key to laying up treasure in heaven is to give alms. Now what are *alms*? The Greek word for *alms* is, *eleemosune*. It comes from the root word meaning, "compassionateness" and is translated, *alms* or *deeds*. By giving money and showing compassion to the poor and to those that have needs, we lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven. Our giving should not be limited to money or to the materially poor although this is an essential part of our faith. We must also give our talents to the Lord, our love to our neighbour, our ministry gifts to the body and our lives for His kingdom. In so doing we will be providing for ourselves *"money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail."*

Can we see how true treasures differ from the prosperity message. Jesus says give, they say receive. He says give to the poor, they say give to our ministries. He says show compassion on the poor, they deride the poor for having weak faith.

You have previously been taught that the only place in scripture that you may test God regarding money is in Malachi chapter three verse ten.

Jesus does not give us a test in Matthew 6:33 (*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you*). This is a covenant promise. God has promised to meet your needs if you covenant to seek His kingdom and righteousness first. Obey the Lord and you will never have to be concerned about your material needs again. He is faithful to provide if we are faithful in our obedience to Him.

Chapter Ten

To Whom Should We Give

Now that we understand what the Bible says about laying up treasure in heaven and about the tithe in the new covenant, how much are we then to give and to whom, in this dispensation? We will answer the question of, how much, in chapter eleven.

I believe that the only correct answer to this question is to be found in God's word. We have already seen that the early church gave to the poor and to the needy in their community, and we should do the same.

The Bible also teaches that we should give to our needy brethren in the Lord who are not in our community. *“And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabus and Saul.”* - Acts 11:27-30

Agabus, foretold of a great famine that would severely affect the brethren in Judea. Paul and Barnabus then rallied the Gentile church together and encouraged them to send aid to their brethren in Judea. This aid or gift as it is called in the

scriptures was referred to often in the writings of Paul. Many of the scriptures we use when we take up an offering, refer to this gift. 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 is just one example that is used for taking up a tithe when it in fact refers to giving to fellow Christians. *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.”* - 1 Corinthians 16:1-3

Second Corinthians chapters eight and nine deal with this gift for the saints. We can conclude that giving to needy brethren outside our own community is biblically correct.

The Bible also instructs us to give to Christian workers. The church today has lost sight of the five-fold ministry. In the early church money was laid up at the apostles' feet. The apostles then distributed to those who had needs. In the modern church, money is given to a financial board and very little is given to those who have needs, especially those in the five-fold ministry. Local pastors are supported by their congregations, which is correct. But what of the evangelist, teacher, prophet and apostle? Where does their income come from? I have seen many ministers with strong teaching and evangelical gifts having to seek secular employment because they were not supported by the body. They could not effectively minister their gifts and as a result, the church has been the poorer. The church cannot and is not growing on the pastors' gift alone. We need the full five-fold ministry if the church is to become strong and mature. The scriptures encourage us to give to all the five fold ministers and not just

to the pastors. In order for some evangelists to survive, as an example, they have begun to take up offerings at outreaches amongst the unsaved which I believe is unscriptural. The apostle Paul's ministry should be our example rather.

"If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ...Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me...What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel." - 1 Corinthians 9:11-18

I believe that Paul's ministry should be the church's example for our present time. Even though Paul had a scriptural right to receive material blessings from the Corinthian church, he chose not to exercise that right. He explains why he made that decision, *"but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ... That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge."*

When Paul arrived at Corinth there were no other Christians there. He found employment with a Jewish tent maker named Aquila and began to make converts to Christ, first among the Jews and then among the Gentiles. He spent one and a half years in Corinth teaching these young Christians the word of God. Paul's priority was to make disciples of the Corinthians by teaching them God's word. He wanted to lay a spiritual foundation in the new believers in order to establish them in

the Lord. As he says in his letter to the church, *“I endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.”* He did not introduce the subject of money to these young Christians because he knew that it would hinder them from receiving the gospel. Instead he worked and received support from the Macedonian church (2 Corinthians 11:9) to sustain him whilst in Corinth. He did this so as not to be a burden to the Corinthians and in so doing hinder the gospel.

Many young Christians and the unsaved get offended with the church because of the emphasis it puts on money. Most churches teach new believers about giving before they address the more important issues, such as putting to death the old man and becoming a new creation in Christ. It is just like putting the cart before the horse. Ministers need to have the spiritual insight that Paul had. He knew that when people came to the Lord, they had to learn how to put to death the old man who was crucified with Jesus. The old man is our carnal flesh, which by nature is covetous and self-seeking. Our flesh has no desire to give but only to receive. The bible makes the analogy between a new Christian and a baby. Both are in no position to give, they depend on others for their sustenance and care. Parents understand this in the natural but in the spiritual we are very ignorant.

Ministers need to teach young Christians to be conformed to the Lord by the Holy Spirit before they can expect them to give willingly and without compulsion. Only when the fruit of the Spirit is manifest in our hearts, will we be in a position to give freely. The first fruit of the Spirit according to Galatians 5:22-23 is love. The Greek word used in this passage is *agapē*. It is directly translated as benevolence, and is also used as charity,

charitable and love. Benevolence, according to the English dictionary, is explained as a “*desire of doing good, to be charitable, kind and helpful.*” The Old King James Bible translates agapē, as “charity”. We can then conclude that one of the fruits of the Spirit is the desire to give and to be benevolent.

Is it not ironic that the prosperity message caters for the covetous flesh, whereas the gospel appeals to the spirit. When we allow God’s agapē, to manifest in our lives we will become givers without having to be encouraged Sunday after Sunday.

I believe that Christians need to support ministers who are birthing new works, evangelists, missionaries, as well as the other five fold ministers. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10:7-8, *Freely you have received, freely give.* Ministers are to share the gospel without charge (without taking up offerings) amongst the unsaved and new converts. At the same time, they should be supported, financially by the rest of the body.

“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.” -

3 John 5-7

It was customary in the early church to provide for itinerate ministers and to send them on their journey with provisions. Here, the apostle John encourages the believers to send these ministers on their way in *a manner worthy of God.* God’s manner is one of liberality and charity. The reason that John encourages the church to give to these brethren is because when they minister, they minister *taking nothing from the*

Gentiles. In the early church it was the believers who supported all in the five-fold ministry and we should do the same.

Chapter Eleven

How much should we give

As I have mentioned before, the New Testament does not give us an indication of how much to give to the Lord's work. There are some in the body who are in a position to give much more than they are currently giving. And there are some who are not in a position to give much at all.

For the latter, the word teaches to provide first for their own families. *But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*" - 1 Timothy 5:8

For those who have little, God commands you to first take care of your own families needs. The bible does not say tithe first then take care of your own household, rather it teaches that not meeting your families needs first, makes you worse than an unbeliever and says that you have denied the faith. Remember that in the early church the needs of the poor in the body were a priority. Meeting those needs today should be just as important. Before we embark on refurbishing and building programs, let us first meet the needs of the poor within our churches.

"And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been give to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." - Galatians 2:9-10

Meeting the needs of your own household is not an excuse to stop giving to the Lord if you are in a position to do so. Do not think that you can now justify buying a bigger house or a new car, and then tell God that you are not in a position to give because you are meeting your families needs first. I want to reiterate, that God is not mocked. He knows our hearts and our motives. Lying to God and holding back from Him when you are in a position to give is sin. Remember, God is not mocked, what a man sows, that he will reap. Do not lie to God, you will reap the fruits for eternity.

To the rich, God says, *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.”* - 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Many of those who are in a position to give more do not, and they will be accountable to God. The rich are encouraged to be *ready to give* and *willing to share*. If you are in a position to give beyond the ten percent of the old covenant and liberally like the early church, then you must search your heart and ask God what He requires you to give. There are those who will be required by God to give more than ten percent, others less and some will have God’s peace to give ten percent but not under law, but rather under grace.

Each of us should ask God to place on our hearts how much we should give and to whom. If your local church is yielded to the Lord in the matter of finances as outlined in this book then they will already be sowing to the poor as well as missionaries and other itinerant ministries.

Money is acknowledged by the Lord as an excellent servant for His kingdom. *“...For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings (NIV). He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to you the true riches.”* - Luke 16:8-11

Jesus exhorts us to use worldly wealth to make friends or converts for His kingdom. Money spent on extending the kingdom of God is an eternal investment. Use your money for God’s purposes and you will be faithful in what God considers to be least. In God’s eyes, money is not true riches. He commands us to be faithful in our stewardship with unrighteous mammon, money, so that He can entrust us with the true riches of His kingdom which are spiritual gifts, callings and most importantly the fruit of the Spirit.

I want to briefly touch on the ministry of giving in this chapter. We are all called to give to the work of the Lord but some are called into the office of the giver. The bible clearly differentiates between all Christians who are encouraged to give and the office of the giver.

Take careful note of the following scripture. *“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophesy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or*

ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality...” - Romans 12:4-8

Paul explains that the church is one body made up of a multitude of members who have different spiritual gifts given them by the Lord. He encourages us to use our own gifts in proportion to our faith. He begins to list a few of these gifts and includes the gift of giving. The word gift, in this passage is the Greek word charisma, which refers to a spiritual qualification or faculty. By implication, it is a God ordained ability to function in a certain spiritual office. Just as the teacher teaches God’s word by divine ability, so too, those who are called into the office of the giver are able to create wealth by God’s grace in order to sow in to the kingdom. It is not difficult to ascertain if this is your calling or not. Those who are called into this office have an ability to both create wealth and a desire to give much of it into the work of the ministry. Many make the mistake of assuming that rich Christians are automatically called into this office. Many of the wealthy Christians I have met are extremely covetous and they are the first to breathe a sigh of relief when I tell them that the law of the tithe is not for our dispensation. However, these same Christians get very nervous when I start teaching how the early Christians gave far more than ten percent to God.

In conclusion, the person who is called to the office of the giver will firstly have a desire to give abundantly to the Lord and secondly, will have a divine ability to create wealth.

Just because God has ordained an office of the giver, it does not then excuse every Christian from giving liberally to the Lord. We are all called by the Lord to give according to our

own ability. There is no set amount to giving in the new testament. We are instructed to give as we have been prospered by the Lord (1 Corinthians 16:2). For each of us that will differ.

Ask the Lord to lay on your heart how much He wants you to give to your local church and any other ministries that you are stirred in your spirit to support. And at all times be ready to give to the poor and needy both in and outside of the church. Be willing to give and your giving will *come up for a memorial before God* (Acts10:4).

Chapter Twelve

Our Attitude and Giving

The most important aspect of our giving to the Lord, is not what visibly goes into the offering but rather what goes on in our hearts when we give. Mark, in his gospel records in chapter twelve, that Jesus sat in the treasury of the Temple and watched how and what the people gave. The Lord is interested in the heart of the giver as well as the gift.

“Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your bountiful gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:5-8

Paul’s teaching on giving to the Corinthians is filled with valuable, sound doctrine on the subject. Firstly, he urges that their giving should not be done as a grudging obligation. (The word *grudging* can also be translated from the Greek as covetous.) He adds that we should not give out of compulsion or of necessity but rather as a matter of generosity as we have

purposed in our hearts. Paul is teaching, that our giving must be rooted in a heart that is generous and desirous to give. The first fruit of the Spirit is charity, and must be the motivation for all our giving. God has no respect for the gift given by those who give unwillingly or give out of compulsion.

It is a sad truth today that many ministers do not take up an offering from their congregations, but in their frustration to get the church to give, they exact an offering. Many sermons on giving, compel the church to give whereas the Bible teaches in 1 Corinthians 16:2 that we should come to church having already decided what to give. Even though I can empathize with ministers because of their frustration with the covetous spirit of many Christians, it does not give us the right to exact money from our congregations in order to meet our budgets. Ministers need to start preaching God's word without fear or compromise and allow the Holy Spirit to take the word and change the hearts of the congregation. There is one common thread in every revival that has occurred throughout the history of the church. The most important fruits of revival are of course, reverence, repentance, holiness, the manifest fruit of the spirit in believers and a love for His word. Yet in every revival, there has always been an abundance for every good work. We do not need to preach about money, we need to preach the full council of the word of God. After thirty odd years of the prosperity message, almost all of the church have not entered into overwhelming financial blessing. Many churches are battling financially and pastors have to take secular jobs to support their families. The shocking truth is not because Christians have no money to give, but rather that we are too covetous to part with "our" money.

“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” There is a spiritual law on giving that transcends the covenants, unlike the tithe. It is the law of sowing and reaping. The Bible says that when we sow bountifully we will also reap bountifully. Our sowing is not just what we give, but the attitude of the heart in our giving. As I mentioned earlier in this book, our heart motive in our giving must be to bless those that will receive without thought of our own blessing.

Although God does bless us financially at times, our true return on our giving will be laid up for us in heaven to enjoy for eternity.

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” God is able to prosper us so that we can give to every good work. God is looking for those who will give from a willing heart to see others blessed, those who do not desire riches and the material wealth of this dying world. God wants us to be givers. He is able to prosper us. Are we willing to be conformed into the image of Jesus and to serve the body from the sufficiency that God is able to give?