

A Biblical Study On Tithes

STRONG'S DEFINITIONS -

Tithe:

The First Recorded Tithe In The Bible -

Genesis 14:18-20

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.

What Does This Tell Us:

First, Abram knew what tithing was. Second, in the verses that follow, we find that Abram had vowed to God what He would do if the Lord delivered his enemies into his hand. (vs 22-24)
Third, this is the only place in the Bible that we find a tithe given to someone who is not a

Levite.

Jacob's Vow At Bethel -

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."

What Does This Tell Us:

First, Jacob obviously knew what tithing was. Second, Jacob's tithe rested completely on the condition that God: keep him in this way & give him bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that

he

comes back to his father's house in peace. This was a vow that Jacob made to God. We have to turn to Leviticus 22:18 to see how this is categorized.

Leviticus 22:18

"Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: 'Whatever a man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who brings his offering for any of his vows or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the Lord as a burnt offering—

What Does This Tell Us:

We see that there are two different types of offerings. Those given because of a vow or those given from a freewill. Jacob's tithe obviously falls under that of a vow. When he made his vow there was no command of God for tithing on record just as with Abraham.

The Levitical Tithe -

Leviticus 27:30-33

'And all the tithe of the land *whether* of the seed of the land *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the Lord's. It *is* holy to the Lord. If a man wants at all to redeem *any* of his tithes, he shall add

one-fifth to it. And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord. He shall not inquire whether it is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it; and if he exchanges it at all, then both it and the one exchanged for it shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.'

What Does This Tell Us:

This passage specifically states, "the tithe of the land." It does not say, "the tithe of anything else." It cannot be stretched to include any other thing. Some would say, "But they were an

The Levitical Tithe (Continued) -

What Does This Tell Us (Continued):

agricultural society, so God required that of them." Yes and No. Yes they were very agricultural, but, no, that is not why God required this specifically of them. We read in Exodus 35:30-35 that God had gifted certain people with the "manner of workmanship." They were the ones that built the tabernacle. Do you suppose after they built the tabernacle they became farmers. Never again building and designing things for the people or God? Not so we find our answer in 2 Kings 12.

2 Kings 12:11

work,
builders
Then they gave the money, which had been apportioned, into the hands of those who did the
who had the oversight of the house of the Lord; and they paid it out to the carpenters and
who worked on the house of the Lord,

What Does This Tell Us:

We see here that the Lord was still gifting people with the "manner of workmanship" just as he does today. These men were paid money for their work. Were they required to tithe? Not according to Leviticus. It is interesting to note that the money used for paying these craftsman was collected the same way as in Exodus: census or ransom, assessment, and free will. It does not mention tithes! Why? Because tithes were food from the land.

Back in Leviticus we also see the tithe of the herd or the flock. One might wonder why God chose these two areas: produce and animals as His place to extract His tithe. The answer I believe can be found by realizing our improper view of money. (When I say money I mean the kind we are familiar with at this time [2002] in this country [USA]. I do not mean money based on precious metals or made from precious metals.) Money is simply a medium of exchange, it is not a commodity to be sought after. Produce, herds, and flocks are commodities. Money can become worthless over night, for it has no intrinsic value, that is value in and of itself. The only value it has besides a medium of exchange is quite limited. You could use it to write on or start a fire, but there are other less expensive methods.

I am going to get a bit ahead of myself here but it is worth it. Your talents (gifts), strength, knowledge, and time are all commodities. Could this be why the Lord commands us to seek first His Kingdom with them (Matt. 6:25-34). In exchange for these commodities he promises us food and clothing. No medium of exchange (money) needed. A direct exchange of commodities has taken place.

My point on commodities is interesting to note, however I believe that the Lord seeks only the tithe on animals and produce because it is an establishment of the vow that Jacob (Israel) made

at Bethel. God was visiting it to the children of Israel. Just as Jacob's vow had conditions so does this. When they come into the land they must tithe off of all that the land gives them. Animals fit into this for they are a product of a prosperous land. They were not required to do it until they came into the land.

Again back to Leviticus. Another interesting note here is that it is not the first of the ten cattle that pass under the rod that the Lord requires, but the last. This seems to run havoc with the popular belief of tithes, that it must be taken first. I believe many people have ignorantly confused the first fruits offering with that of the tithe.

The Numerical Tithe -

Numbers 18:21,24,26,28

“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.”

“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 18:21,24,26,28 Continued

“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 your tithe.’”

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

What Does This Tell Us:

This gives us a purpose for the tithe that was listed in Leviticus. It tells us that the tithe is for the Levites, because they have no inheritance in the land. They must then rely on God to bless the people in order for them to eat and be clothed. They must also perform their duty of instructing the people or else the people will turn away from God and not tithe and the Levites will directly suffer from it. It is a system of checks and balances, so to speak. It also introduces a new tithe. That is the tithe of tithe that goes to the priests, Aaron specifically. Again, we do not see anything else besides, produce and animals being included in the tithe.

The Plunder Of The Midianites -

Numbers 31:28, 30

500,” “And levy a tribute (tax) for the Lord on the men of war who went out to battle: one of every

“And from the children of Israel's half you shall take one of every 50,”

What Does This Tell Us:

This passage is very interesting in relation to Abram (Abraham) back in Genesis 14. I say that because many people use Abram's tithe as their example to show that tithing includes more than the fruit of the land and that it is still here today because Jesus is of the priesthood of Melchizedek as it says in Hebrews 7. Their minds are occupied with money and they look

at all Scripture accordingly. We see here that after the tithe was instituted as a command (at the time of Abram and Jacob it was not commanded, instead they had made a vow to God which we have already covered) God did not require it of this plunder (increase). Instead he called for a tribute of 0.2% from those who actually took it and of 2% from those who stayed back. This is nowhere near a tithe amount.

The Tithing Principles of Deuteronomy -

Deuteronomy 14:22-29

“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 firstborn 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 will 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. You shall not forsake (neglect) 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.”

What Does This Tell Us:

Many things can be gleaned from this passage. First, it must be noted again that only produce and animals are included in the tithe. Second, it seems as though in verse 23 it says that they are to, “tithe of the first born of the herds and flocks.” Not so for in Deuteronomy 15:19-23 we see that all of the firstborn are to be eaten not just a tenth.

And according to Leviticus 27 the tenth of the herd or flock is the Lord’s. Does this mean that once one passes under the rod is it exempt from passing under again? I do not believe so. It does not say a tenth of the increase of the herd or the flock. I believe if in 2000 you have 10 cows and they all have 10 new calves (6 male, 4 female), the 6 male are offered as the firstborn the 4

females

are counted under the rod making 14, a tithe of 1. You now have 13 cows. In 2001 your 13 each have 1 calf (7 males, 6 female). The 3 new cows all had males that are sacrificed to God leaving

10

that are counted under the rod making 23, a tithe of 2. You now have 21 (4 males, 19 females). Understandably you needed at least one male originally for the cows to conceive, but you get the picture. Notice that the firstborn is not reset every year. It is only the first born male, all other

males

after that are counted under the rod. So in Deuteronomy we see the inclusion of the command to set apart the first born. We however can not conclude that it is only a tenth of the first born or that the tithe of the herd and the flock from Leviticus is voided.

Deuteronomy 18:1-4

“The priests, the Levites— all the tribe of Levi— shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and His portion. Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the Lord is their inheritance, as He said to them. And this

shall

grain

be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether *it is* bull or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. The first fruits of your
and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him."

What Does This Tell Us:

It reminds us that only produce and animals are included in the gifts to the priests and Levites. Only those things that come as a direct blessing from the land which the Lord has given them. It is the food and clothing from the land, just as Jacob (Israel) asked God for in his vow.

Deuteronomy 26:1-2,11-12

"And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you *as* an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and put *it* in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. So you shall rejoice in every good *thing* which the Lord your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who *is* among you. 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 within your gates and be filled,"

What Does This Tell Us:

The beginning of this passage is the same passage we find in Leviticus 23:9-14. It is speaking of the first fruits, which we know is not the tithe. This is especially true in this passage as we see the difference in the presentation of each. Again we do not see the tithe or even the first fruits for that matter stretched to include anything other than produce and animals. Direct blessings of the land which God has given them. Here we also see that the tithe was to be stored up for the Levite, stranger, orphan, and widow in the third year. It is not a separate tithe but a separate purpose.

In Deuteronomy 12:1-28 we see the command of where to offer tithes and offerings. It is to be at the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name. In verse 6 we see the list of what is to be offered at this place, "burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, heave offerings, vowed offerings, freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks." This again clarifies for us that the tithe of the herds and the flocks is different from the firstborn of the herds and flocks as we discussed previously. Another interesting note is that it speaks of all of these as being eaten. No money.

Hezekiah's Return To The Law -

2 Chronicles 31:2, 4-7, 12

And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites according to their divisions, each man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and peace offerings, to serve, to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the camp of the Lord. Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support (the portion

due)

for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the Lord. As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the

Lord their God they laid in heaps. In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month. Then they faithfully brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things; Cononiah the Levite had charge of them, and Shimei his brother *was* the next.

What Does This Tell Us:

When Hezekiah took over as king from his father Ahaz, Israel had fallen far from its previous glory. It had taken on the practices of those around it instead of continuing to follow the Law of God. The reign of Hezekiah ended all that. He began to reform the country and re-instituted the commandments of God. From temple worship and the passover to the offerings and tithes, Hezekiah sought after His God. In this passage we see Hezekiah commanding the people to keep the Laws of God that we have previously discussed. They bring in their first fruits, firstborn, tithes, and offerings. In verse 5 we see that they brought in, “the tithes of everything.” Let us be careful we do not read more into this than what is specifically listed above this

statement

and below it. For us to read more into this would be the same as our federal government reading more into, “provide for the general welfare” while disregarding the enumerated list of powers they are given. Let us not assume as we are prone to do that “everything” includes anymore than the produce and animals it says they brought.

Nehemiah’s Return to the Law -

Nehemiah 10:28-39

What Does This Tell Us:

Read out of context verse 32 could cause some problems. However, with a cross reference Bible it is easily recognized as the Ransom or Census money from Exodus 30. The rest of this passage is strikingly familiar to that of Hezekiah. It is a return to the Law and Commandments of God that we have previously discussed. In Nehemiah 12:44 we see that there were people appointed to be in charge of the storehouses which held the offerings and tithes. By looking back at 2 Chronicles 31:11 we see that these storehouses (rooms) were built in the house of the Lord. This is interesting to note for the reason that many people today teach that the tithes and offerings of the Old Testament can be given to any Christian ministry and not a church. They are misguided on many fronts, a quick remedy being a thorough searching of the scriptures just as Hezekiah and Nehemiah had done. In Nehemiah 13 we see that the people has forsaken the house of God and the Levites had gone back to their fields. Nehemiah quickly reinstates the practice of tithing in verse 12 so that the Levites may continue in their service to God.

The Prophecy of Amos -

Amos 4:4-5

“Come to Bethel and transgress, At Gilgal multiply transgression; Bring your sacrifices every morning, Your tithes every three days (years). Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, Proclaim *and* announce the freewill offerings; For this you love, *You* children of Israel!” Says the Lord God.

What Does This Tell Us:

Interesting to note Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam in Israel, both just before the reign of Hezekiah which we have discussed. The children of Israel are being reprimanded and called back to the Law of God.

The Prophecy of Malachi -

Malachi 3:8-10

“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 try 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.*”

What Does This Tell Us:

This passage is the favorite of many modern day tithe proponents (myself formerly included). However if we know that Malachi was a contemporary of Nehemiah then this fits in with what we read in Nehemiah. The people were coming back from Babylon to reestablish Jerusalem.

They

had left Babylon but Babylon had not left them. They were continuing to break the Law of God. We still do not see any new inclusions from what has already been covered before. The tithe, offerings, and the storehouse are the same commands as before.

says,

In verse 11 we see an interesting blessing from God that has been highly misrepresented. It

says,

“I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground.” We charismatics', even those of us holding to a preterist view of Revelation can make some very amazing spiritual stretches with scripture. This verse correlates back to Amos 4:9 where God

the

“I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, Your vineyards, Your fig trees, And your olive trees, The locust devoured *them*; Yet you have not returned to Me.” Says

of

Lord. The devourer in Malachi is the same devourer in Amos, this we can know by what is said

the devourer in Malachi. “So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground.” The very thing God told them He commanded the locust to do in Amos. Despite popular opinion we see that the devourer is the locust and not the devil.

The Woe of Matthew and Luke -

Matthew 23:23

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, 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.”

What Does This Tell Us:

Aha, some might say, “the tithe is still there in the New Testament.” Yes, it is, but what is it made up of? Herbs, produce of the field. These hypocrites made certain their outward compliance was to the smallest of the produce. Yet inside they had rebellious hearts. Still nothing has changed. Produce to the Levites. Luke 11:42 is his version of this same passage. Luke 18:9-14 is the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. He states in verse 12, “I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” First, Jesus condemns this man for the same reasons as the hypocrites in our previous verses. Outward compliance and inward rebellion. This is not someone to imitate. Second, he says he gives a tithe of all and he fasts twice a week.

Neither of these are found in the Law of God. He has made a righteousness of his own.

Hebrews is the last place where tithes are mentioned in the Bible. We have previously discussed this section briefly and I will once again summarize it here. The author of Hebrews is simply retelling the story of Abram and Melchizedek to prove that Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Psalms. He also speaks of the Levites as those who accept the tithes for the people of Israel. He uses all this to show the superiority of Jesus and the new covenant to that of the old. It does not state that the tithes are now to be given to anyone else. The tithe had one purpose, that was to sustain the Levites in their labor for the Lord in the tabernacle (temple), and in 70AD that purpose ended.

Now What Do We Do -

Romans 15:25-28

But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

What Does This Tell Us:

First, Paul never mentions anything about the tithe and why would he. He knew full well that the legal use for the tithe was to be eaten at the temple yearly and then every three years stored up for the Levites, stranger, orphan, and widow within your gates. Notice the poor were not included in the tithe unless it was a stranger, orphan or widow. Here in Romans, Paul says specifically a gift was given for the poor from those in Macedonia and Achaia. Who are those in these places? Well the Corinthians are from Achaia so did Paul mention this in his letter to them? Yes in 1

Corinthians

16 verses 1-4 we find this very thing.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

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. But if it is fitting with that I go also, they will go with me.

What Does This Tell Us:

Paul mentions that he told the Galatians to do this as well. Do we find this in his letter to them? I believe we do in Galatians 2:1-10. In this passage Paul speaks of the work of some to get the Gentiles circumcised and under the law. However the collection of the Apostles told Paul that circumcision was unnecessary and that only:

Galatians 2:10

They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

What Does This Tell Us:

Let's wrap up all these loose ends, shall we? Paul has told the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians

and to set aside a gift and remember the poor in Jerusalem, that Paul himself was eager to do. The question to be asked is why are there these poor in Jerusalem that everyone is so eager to help what do they need help with? Our answer is found in Acts 11:27-30

Acts 11:27-30

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 Claudias 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 Barnabas and Saul (Paul.)

What Does This Tell Us:

This is what Paul was telling the Galatians about, which he told the Corinthians about, and finally the Romans. There was a famine in the land and their brothers in the Lord needed help. There is a lot of room for the imagination here because we don't know: 1)What was given to help them. 2)Why the Gentiles did not seem to be affected by this famine as much. One can only imagine that those in Jerusalem depended more on the agricultural sector than the Gentiles did. Also whether they gave food, clothing, or money is of little consequence as it is not a tithe or any other offering, but a gift between brothers. Interesting to note is that they only asked for help for those of the faith, not those outside.

1 Corinthians 9:6-14

Or *is it* only Barnabas and I *who* have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a *mere* man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. 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. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings* of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

What Does This Tell Us:

We have quite a bit to study here. First, we see here that Paul quotes the law of Moses to prove his point. What does this mean about the ox and the muzzle? Simply this: the ox would not be muzzled while he worked so that he could eat some of the grain as he plowed it. Just as Paul notes and we saw that the priests and Levites were able to eat from the sacrifices of the children of Israel. Second, we must discover what this right (sowing spiritual and reaping material) Paul says he has over them and that he mentioned was their duty in Romans as well. We see in verse 14 that those who preach the gospel shall live from the gospel. This is cross referenced to 1 Timothy 5:18 which reiterates the law concerning the ox and the Lord's decree in Matthew 10:10 that the laborer is worthy of his wage. Is is also cross referenced to Galatians 6:6

Galatians 6:6

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

What Does This Tell Us:

Simply put: the law of sowing and reaping. Finally, it is interesting to note that Paul did not exercise this right to material compensation for his spiritual labor. Instead he worked with his own hands to support himself and those who were with him (Acts 18:3;20:33). A far cry from the majority of “church leaders” of today (author included).

determined
by the stirring of the Holy Spirit in the heart of those who received.

1 Corinthians 16:17

I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied.

2 Corinthians 11:9

And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep *myself*.

What Does This Tell Us:

We have seen previously that Paul spoke to the Corinthians about helping their poor brethren in Jerusalem due to the famine. We also know that he has not required material compensation for his spiritual seed that he has given them. Here we see that the Lord used the brethren from Macedonia (specifically those in verse 1 Cor. 16:17) to supply Paul’s needs at this time.

2 Corinthians 8 & 9

What Does This Tell Us:

interesting
money
These chapters are simply expansions on the gifts to the saints in Jerusalem because of the famine that we read about in Acts. All of the talk of cheerful giving and God supplying and multiplying the seed they have sown has to do with this gift for their fellow brethren. An note is in Romans 8:13-15. These were abounding and because of this they were to help those who were without. But Paul says, “that their abundance also may supply your lack.” It was a two way street. How many “tv evangelists” or “famous brethren” have you heard ask for in their time of need? Have they ever offered to help you in your time of need. They should!

2 Corinthians 11:7-8

Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches (groups of believers), taking wages *from them* to minister to you.

What Does This Tell Us:

Paul reiterates here how he did not exercise his right to reap material things from them for his spiritual labor. Here though he states how he “robbed” other churches. How did he rob them? He took from them material things while giving spiritual labor to someone else.

Ephesians 4:28

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

What Does This Tell Us:

It reinforces the call to help our brethren in need. It also informs us that we are to work in order to have a gift to give. Is that why you work? It should be one of a couple reasons. The other

being

to provide for your own family.

Philippians 4:10-11, 14-19

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

What Does This Tell Us:

The Philippians are from the area of Macedonia and we know the Corinthians are from Achaia. These are the churches Paul talked about in his letter to the Corinthians, the ones he “robbed” from. Paul however goes on to say it is well and good that they share with him concerning giving and receiving. This seems to coincide with what we have previously read about the brothers giving to those in need and in turn when they are in need to be taken care of. Again, so far we have only seen two examples of giving in the New Testament letters. The first being support for the brothers in need and the second being the material compensation of those who have spiritually blessed us. Neither place requires a certain amount or percentage, but rather that each give according to his own abundance.

1 Thessalonians 2:5

For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness (pretext for greed)— God *is* witness.

What Does This Tell Us:

Paul states here that he did not use the gospel as means for gain. He didn't come to them as a minister of the gospel with the purpose of getting money but to help them grow.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing.

What Does This Tell Us:

Paul is commanding them to work to support themselves and we know Ephesians the other

reason

is to help a brother in need. Let's use this time to clarify “in need.” Anything outside the brothers control that has hindered him from working or in the case of agriculture, caused his work to be

unfruitful (famine & drought.) The brethren are to work to support themselves when they can.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

What Does This Tell Us:

Once again Paul tells of how he had the authority to require material compensation for spiritual labor, but that he did not do it because he wanted give an example of how they were to follow him.

This calls to question, is the gifting of pastor, teacher, apostle, prophet, and evangelist a job/position or is it a ministry to be performed in addition to a job. Paul seems to give us an example of the latter to follow, but that is another study.

1 Timothy 5:16

If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve (give aid to) them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve (give aid to) those who are really widows.

What Does This Tell Us:

Paul is telling Timothy that only those who are without family and older than 60 should be given aid by the church. This would seem to coincide with the command to help a brethren in need.

Those

who are over 60 and have no family would seem to have a hard time providing for themselves. This is not a command that reinstates the tithe by any means but a continuation of God's providence for the widows through a new means. Note these widows must also trust in God and continue in supplication and prayer night and day.

1 Timothy 5:17-18

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

What Does This Tell Us:

First we need to know what an elder is.

Titus 1:5-9

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop (overseer, elder) must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

What Does This Tell Us:

Wow! What a plate full. We see here that to be an elder is no simple task or position to be taken lightly. It also seems to indicate that only men (those directly responsible to God for their families) can be elders. Another interesting note is that what we call pastors are actually

just elders with the gift of pastoring. This goes a long way to answer our question above about whether or not pastor is a position or a gifting. I believe an elder is a position and a pastor is a gifting. Nevertheless, in 1 Timothy we are told that an elder is worthy of double honor. This goes with the continuing command to materially compensate those who spiritually labor on your behalf, according to your own abundance.

1 Timothy 6:8

And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

What Does This Tell Us:

If you read this scripture in context you know that Paul is speaking of those who teach opposite of what Paul is telling Timothy to teach. You also will see that these same men are using the gospel for monetary gain and that they are covetous without content. Paul is exhorting Timothy to act differently from these men and to be content with his basic needs met.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. *Let them* do good, that they 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 on eternal life.

What Does This Teach Us:

First, it must be noted that Paul is not saying these people can buy their way into heaven. He is however giving practical advice to the theological point he brought up earlier in the chapter

about

the love of money. Second, we see here again that Paul is commanding them to give to those who spiritually labor for their benefit and to share with their brothers in need.

Titus 3:13-14

Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

What Does This Tell Us:

Paul is once again commanding the church to help their brothers in need.

Hebrews 13:16

But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

What Does This Tell Us:

The author of Hebrews continues the commands we have previously discussed.

James 1:27

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

What Does This Tell Us:

James speaks of that which Paul did in 1 Timothy regarding widows. James also adds the position of orphan to the list. God in His divine providence gives the church the command to help those who are orphans and widows. No mention of the tithe. Interesting note is that at this time the tithe would still have been going in to support the Levites, strangers, orphans, and widows as was commanded in the Old Testament. Why the need for the church to help

them as well? Probably because those widows and orphans who were Christians would not have been supported any longer by the tithe of the temple due to their beliefs. Nevertheless, God had a plan as He still does to support them.

James 2:15-16

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled.,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?

What Does This Tell Us:

James again reiterates the command to help a brother in need. Remember it is always help for a “brethren” one who follows after God, not just anyone. Again notice the need being that of food and clothing.

1 Peter 5:2

Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

What Does This Tell Us:

Peter is reminding the elders of the church in that area what they are to do and why. We see here that they are admonished not to use the right they have to be compensated materially for their spiritual labor as a means of dishonest gain but to labor willingly.

1 John 3:17

But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

What Does This Tell Us:

Here John equates disobedience to the command to help our brothers in need to not having the love of God. It is a sobering message for those unwilling to give to their needy brothers.

3 John 1:5-8

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. We therefore ought to receive (support) such, that we may become fellow workers of the truth.

What Does This Tell Us:

John is exhorting Gaius his brother in the Lord for his generosity to the brethren and the stranger. We see now that God has included all of those who were once taken care of by the tithe of the children of Israel. Those who minister, the widow, the orphan, and now the stranger are all to be taken care of by the faithful servants of God from each according to his abundance. Again, these are only those who are of the brotherhood, not just anyone. Also, the word receive which also means support is interesting, especially in this context because it applies to the strangers. Those of the brotherhood passing through. This is hospitality and was a requirement of an elder in Titus.

The Conclusion -

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The problem we face in the modern era is that the church of God has been turned into an inseparable from the buildings that contain it, as it was up until the resurrection of Jesus and even more so with the destruction of the temple. The church is supposed to be a group of people “living stones” as Peter says. When the church is a group of people, some in need, some in abundance, some that teach, and some that are taught, these giving principles in the letters of the New Testament will work very well. However, when the church becomes a pastor, his staff (or a board) and a building these principles of giving will not work and therefore another method of support must be sought, like the requirement to tithe. The church is families (even if that family consists of only one person) that meet together as a whole on a weekly basis. Why? Because God commands it in Hebrews 10 and 1 Corinthians 12 for our benefit, so that we can grow and change (iron sharpening iron).

With this mindset the building is not the focal point it is a place to meet and the pastor is not necessarily a job or position but a gifting, recognized by the whole group. We are also then to help those in need of our brethren, especially the stranger, widow, and orphan.

It is the authors hope that this study was both informative and enlightening to the reader. I do not wish to create dissension but ask those who disagree to state their case based solely on the Word of God. Believing that this cannot be done the writer has come to the conclusion that:

- 1) The tithe passed away with the Levitical system as did the offerings and feasts.
- 2) We are now to support our brothers in need especially the widow, orphan, and stranger.
- 3) We are encouraged to materially compensate those who labor spiritually on our behalf.

All Scriptures taken from the New King James Bible.