

THE LAWS OF THE TITHE

According to the Old Testament, priests were provided for by receiving as their 'due' and their 'crop' the following:

1. 'Heave' offerings and 'wave' offerings. A 'heave offering' was meat or food ritually used but not totally consumed. It was cooked meat offered at the time of consecrating a priest and was a peace offering. This was not the tithe.
2. every meat 'offering'
3. every oblation or 'offering' of the people
4. every 'sin' offering
5. every 'trespass' offering
6. every 'first fruit' offering
7. participation in the tithers feast (see below)

Sources: Numbers 18:19-24, Exodus 29:26-28, Leviticus 7:11-15, Numbers 18:8, Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Tithing followed a 3-year cycle. It represented not a 'first fruits' offering, but rather a tithe of the end of the year increase. The tithe was handled in the following manner:

First and Second year tithe

The tither (the person doing the tithing) would bring the increase to a place specifically designated and he himself and his family would eat and enjoy the tithe. It was a feast looked forward to because a man and his family would have at least one good feast a year and include the Levite in it as a guest. It was the Lord's treating the tither and the Levite to a feast of rejoicing. (Deuteronomy 14:22-27)

Third year tithe

The tither had a family tithe feast this year for himself and his household. He saved the entire year's tithe within his own gates, in his own storehouse. At the end of the year, he had an obligation to distribute the entire tithe to Levites, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. They were to eat and be satisfied. The Levite had no set allotment in this, but was to be among those included in the distribution.

(Deuteronomy 14:22-29, 26:12-15)

At one time, during the approximate times of 445-420 B.C., upon coming out of captivity, the Hebrew people elected to return to the Lord and renew the olden ways of priestly worship. This is recorded in 2nd Chronicles 31:1-21 and in Nehemiah 10:35-39. The people were so jubilant that they brought more offerings and gifts than could be used, so Hezekiah commanded the construction of storage chambers in a place called 'the house of the Lord'. This became known as the storehouse and the *custom* of bringing the tithes 'to the storehouse' thus had its beginning. This *custom* was later used to usurp the Law of the Tithe as originally given. The widow, the stranger, and the orphan got left out in the cold.

The tithe was to result in widows, orphans, and strangers being provided for along with the tither and priest enjoying feasts of rejoicing. ***Surely consistency should require that money collected in the name of the law should be distributed according to the provisions of the law.***

I cannot find one scripture in the Bible which directs the tithe to be stored somewhere other than in a man's own quarters except in 2nd Chronicles and Nehemiah where the latter day priests substituted their custom for Moses' original law. This practice of bringing the tithe to the 'church' is a modern day custom that is totally without scriptural or Bible support.

As students of Jesus and Children of God we may follow the spirit of the tithe. No doubt James had reference to materially meeting the needs of others when he wrote:

'Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' (James 1:27)

The only 'law' we are under is the one found below:

'Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.' (Galatians 6:2)

We, as Christians, are to do the 'will of the Father' in all matters. Anyone who so endorses the missions and practices of his church that he cheerfully gives it 10% or more of his earnings is free to do so if he is confident that for him it is the 'will of his heavenly Father'. He will not, however, be keeping the law of the tithe as laid down by Moses, ...unless his is a most unusual church.

It is indeed sad that well meaning pastors preach with the assumption that "Everyone knows that we are suppose to bring our tithe to the church." Across the nation this goes uncontested. How about the widows in the church? Well, they are on their own with their Social Security checks and often unable to pay to have the simplest repairs made around their house while their church hires huge staffs of secretaries, etc. It never dawns on most preachers that care of the widows and strangers is a responsibility of the church. At least it should be if they have the audacity to collect the 'tithe' from their members.

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