

Storehouse Tithing

1) How did tithing begin?

- a. Tithing began well before the time of Moses. Recall in Genesis 4 that Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord. Abel offered his with a proper attitude and Cain did not. Thus Abel's was accepted. We find Abraham giving an offering to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:20. Eason's Bible Dictionary states: "The first Mosaic law on this subject is recorded in Lev. 27:30–32. Subsequent legislation regulated the destination of the tithes (Num. 18:21–24, 26–28; Deut. 12:5, 6, 11, 17; 14:22, 23). The paying of the tithes was an important part of the Jewish religious worship. In the days of Hezekiah one of the first results of the reformation of religion was the eagerness with which the people brought in their tithes (2 Chr. 31:5, 6). The neglect of this duty was sternly rebuked by the prophets (Amos 4:4; Mal. 3:8–10).¹ Harper's Bible Dictionary also points out that the practice of tithing could be used for nonsacral purposes as well. He states that "Tithing was very common throughout the ancient Near East, especially in Mesopotamia where Neo-Babylonian texts from the sixth century B.C. discuss the collection of tithes as a means of supporting a sanctuary. Other documents indicate that tithing could serve nonsacral purposes as well. Fourteenth-century B.C. tablets from Ugarit portray the tithe as a royal tax the king collected and distributed to his officials. The Seleucid kings of Syria likewise viewed the tithe as a source for royal income (1 Macc. 10:31; 11:35), whereas Jews at that time viewed it as a sacral tax (1 Macc. 3:49)."²

2) Were there multiple tithes?

- a. According to the Levitical law, every Jew was required to pay 3 tithes on his personal property: 1) support for the Levites, 2) use of the temple and feasts, 3) for the poor.³ The question, then, quickly arises as to which tithe was necessary then and which tithe is necessary right now. Achtemeier, perhaps answers this well in stating "Reconstructing a clear picture of the nature and function of tithing in biblical times is extremely difficult due to the conflicting accounts concerning tithes in the biblical traditions and the problems in identifying the dates and provenance of the texts. Apparently, tithing was understood and practiced differently at different times and localities throughout the Biblical period. Most biblical texts concerning the tithe agree that it serves some sacral purpose and presuppose that it was mandatory, but they differ as to how it was expended and by whom."⁴ So it appears as if the practice of tithing has always been required by God but how the tithe was used or where it was apportioned to depended on the situation in which it was collected.

3) What about right now... What is a Biblical tithe?

- a. Let's pretext this question with a quick review of the birth of the Christian church. First, Christ was born, lived, and died so that we may have life (John 1, 3:16). Christ established a new covenant between God and man. He didn't come to destroy the law, but to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17). In this new covenant, Christ established the church which is the 'bride of Christ' (John 3:29, Rev. 19:7). Paul was appointed by God to spread the Gospel to the gentiles (Acts 9:15) and as he did this he organized Christian churches in each of the cities who responded to the Gospel message (examples throughout Acts). Upon this organization of new believers into individual churches based on location, Paul instructed them to gather regularly so that they will remain strong in their faith. Thus the temple, which was once a centrally located structure, where all Israelites would gather for worship was to be multiplied into many places of worship for the large number of Christian churches that Paul planted in different cities. It seems obvious that the tithes that were given to the original temple in Jerusalem would now be given to the temples (Christian churches) in each of the cities. This idea is further supported by Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church to put aside their tithes each week so the church would be ready to give when Paul came to collect the offering which was gathered as a ministry to the church in Judea (1 Cor. 16:1-4). This is to be done by each person according to his means (Acts 11:29). Paul makes the connection between tithing to the central temple according to OT law and tithing to the NT church in 1

¹M.G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897).

²Paul J. Achtemeier, Publishers Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Includes Index., 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 1078.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Achtemeier, Harper's Dictionary.

Cor. 9:12-18. Here he teaches that those who proclaim the Gospel, or in our day those who have surrendered to a call to full time ministry, should be supported by the church. So in conclusion, the believers in the NT church bring their tithes and offerings into the church at which they worship to 1) fund the ministries that the church as a whole is a part of as Paul and the 1st century churches did in their ministry to the church in Judea and 2) To support their pastors who have surrendered their lives to full time ministry and thus cannot support themselves through secular work.

Also, remember: “Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor. 9:7.