

# TITHING: WHAT SCRIPTURE REVEALS

by

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Religious deceptions tend to follow a common pattern. The subject is often redefined, and the purpose and function is altered so that it no longer serves its original purpose. Cognitive dissonance is often created, but those who have bought into a false belief system learn to accommodate the cognitive dissonance while suppressing their critical thinking skills out of fear and the phobia indoctrination they have undergone without being consciously aware of the conditioning they have been subjected to.

That prefaced, let us examine tithing as commanded in Scripture, and how tithing has been altered and redefined to suit the purposes of wolves in sheep's clothing.

## **Tithing Defined**

A biblical tithe is defined as being the tenth of the increase of crops and livestock. These things are dependent upon the land, and under the economy of Israel, the land is what produced wealth. If Israel received rain in season, and the weather was favorable, the land produced abundantly, and all prospered. This reflected the blessings of God bestowed upon the people through the land.

If drought struck Israel, and the resultant shortage of food was extant, both people and livestock suffered, and the people did not prosper. There were other factors that could affect the production of food, such as foreign invasions where such forces devoured the produce and livestock of the land as they proceeded, and the ravages of insects and other pests such as mice, locusts and rats that could devastate the land. These things were perceived as God withholding His blessings due to the collective sins of the people.

The Israelites were commanded to tithe of the increase of their produce and livestock. This tithe was used, or distributed, in basically three ways:

1. The tithe was given to the Levites,
2. The tithe was given to the widow, orphan, poor, and foreigner (stranger) that was presumably poor,
3. The tithe was used by the owner of the tithe at the festivals held in Jerusalem.

The post exilic Rabbis, were confused by this division of the tithe, and concluded there were instead three separate tithes. To these Rabbinical teachers of the law, everything had to be spelled out exactly, and the ambiguity of the tithe law as codified did not fit their sensibilities.

These are the same Rabbis that are identified in Scripture as the ones who added their own twists to the law, making many points of law overly burdensome. Is it any wonder therefore that they would conclude there were three tithes, taking up to 30% of the increase of those who grew crops and raised livestock?

When the Scriptures surrounding tithing are examined, these three ways the tithe was allocated and used include the support of the Levites! Were the Levites triple dipping their fellow Israelites?

There was only one tithe. If there were two tithes, or three tithes, then, instead of 10% of one's increase, it was actually 20% or 30%! Imagine your government informing you, as a parallel, that they were going to tax your income at the rate of, say, 15%, but then informed you that you were required to pay three income taxes! You may well complain, and they would respond with, "hey, your tax is only 15%, quit griping!

In this light, look at how a person's tithes were to be handled in the third year:

At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest. — Deut 14:28-29

When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; — Deuteronomy 26:12

In the third year, all of the tithe was to be brought to the gates of whatever city one was near to, and provided to the poor, and also to the Levites who shared in the tithe the other two years.

In many respects, the law was ambiguous when it came to how the person with a tithe was to divide it up. Perhaps this was intentional. A land owner who controlled the basis of nearly all wealth had to decide how generous, or how stingy he was going to be in relation to the Levites and poor of the land. A land owner with much in the way of crops and/or livestock, along with his family, could only consume so much of the tithe of their land at the festivals held in Jerusalem. Those then who had much could give much from that tithe of the land. Those who had little may well could only give little.

In this regard, consider the command not to harvest the corners of one's fields:

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God. — Leviticus 23:22

How far in from the corners did this entail? If the land owner wanted to be generous, he could leave a large corner for example. But also note the purpose of leaving the corners and gleaning was so that the poor of the land could go there and collect food for themselves to eat. So tithing was not the only means whereby the poor attained sustenance. Could this then have been a test designed by God to search out a land owner's heart? The law said to give a portion of his tithe to the poor. How much was left up to the owner of the tithe. How much of the corners of his fields he left for them was also up to him. Merely complying with the law did not reveal the heart of a person; their behaviour outside the confines of the law could.

These then were some of the things that were performed by those who owned land wherein they raised livestock and produce from the ground and their responsibilities in relation to the rest of the people.

In regard to all these instructions, God made this statement, more than once:

Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye

may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. — Deuteronomy 4:1-2

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. — Deuteronomy 12:32

This last citation comes from a chapter in Deuteronomy where God addresses the Israelites in regards to tithes.

So now the logical question that is raised by all this: Why do so many churches, especially the SDA, violate the very law they claim was not to be altered even down to jots and tittles, and to which God specifically commanded in relation to the tithing law that it was to be observed as commanded; that no one was to "add thereto, nor diminish from it?"

Tithes were never commanded of the people based on their income. Only those who had crops and/or livestock tithed.

Jesus had an interesting observation in relation to this sort of behaviour:

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. — Matthew 15:8-9

Is demanding tithes of people based on their wages biblical? No. But they have their excuses; their rationales for altering the same law they claim is unalterable down to jots and tittles as well as the tithing law that was commanded by God not to be added to or anything taken away from. Even a bank robber has his rationale and excuses.

The most common rationale put forth for altering the unalterable is to claim the change in circumstances today.

"There is no Levitical priesthood to give tithes to. We live at a time where we no longer have an agrarian society."

What sort of society did we have in 1888 when the SDA produced their version of the tithing law that they commanded of the members, upon pain of eternal damnation should they not tithe? An agrarian society.

They were not interested in livestock and produce. They were, and still are, interested in money. And they are not interested in you sharing your tithes among the widow and orphan and the poor among you. They want it all. Oh, they may throw a bone to an occasional widow and orphan alright, but it was never the responsibility of the Levites to turn around and give the poor of the tithe they were given; it was up to the individual whose tithe it was.

Stop and ask yourself, what does a wolf want? How would a wolf go about getting it? Would a wolf, disguised as a minister of God, resort to dire warnings of what will happen to you should you fail to tithe of your wages to them? Would they resort to claims of faithlessness on your part?

What rationalization did you fall for that made you end up believing and practicing the commandments of men?

The apostle Paul made his case to the churches in I Corinthians that those who preached the gospel had a right to live of the gospel. They were entitled to support. But was this support through the old covenant law of tithing? No, for Paul does not use tithing as a justification, but rather the command not

to muzzle the ox that treads out the grain as an analogy. Ministers were to be provided for through free will offerings, and not by compulsion. It can be a hard concept for many to understand, but once something is a requirement, then it is no longer done through faith and love. It is done out of fear of retribution.

Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. — Acts 3:1-6

What would have been the circumstances here if the early church were indeed paying tithes of their wages to the ministry? Would Peter have been without gold or silver?

To claim the tithing law changed to accommodate the changing times is hypocrisy. If you level the accusation against other Christians and their faith by demanding they explain how it is they could change the day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday, while changing that same law yourself when it comes to tithing is the greatest expression of hypocrisy. If anything, you are more guilty than those who worship on Sundays, for nowhere in the Scriptures does it say the people were to gather on Sabbaths for the sake of communal worship!

You have demonstrated yourselves to be guilty of the very crimes you charge others with. Even Jesus Christ commanded His followers not to make such condemnative judgments as you do even now. Are you going to continue in your hypocrisies, or are you going to stop and carefully and prayerfully examine yourselves and your beliefs in the light of Scripture?