

## UNDERSTANDING TITHING (PART 2)

Last week we began discussion on Understanding Tithing. We saw the two regimes of tithe in the Bible. The first regime is the Abrahamic regime. The second regime is the regime of the Law - Law of Moses or Ten Commandments. We examined how tithing came about in the Bible and the reasons Abraham and the Israelites gave tithe. We also looked at the three types of tithe under the Law of Moses - sacred tithe, vacation tithe, social security tithe. And we saw the reason Christians cannot pay tithe according to the dictates of the Law. We're not under the Law.

If you've not read Understanding Tithing (Part 1), please go to

<http://myilluminate.com>

In this part, we'll be looking at a few frequently asked questions (FAQs) and suppositions about tithing. This approach will give us practical insight.

"If I don't pay my tithe will I go to hell?" The answer is no. Tithe has nothing to do with salvation. You were saved by grace. It's a gift from God, it's not based on works. "Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"Is it compulsory I pay tithe?" It's really up to you. The only regime of tithe you can follow as a Christian is Abrahamic or elective tithing. There's no compulsory giving in the New Testament. When Paul was writing the Corinthians about relief offering, he said, "I want each one of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving." (2 Corinthians 9:7 MSG) That's the spirit of giving in the New Testament.

"Why do I need to tithe?" The study of Abraham's and Jacob's tithing is important in this regard. For Abraham tithing was an act of worship – an acknowledgement of the fact that his achievements were facilitated by God. (Genesis 14:19, 20) He wasn't a self-made man, he was God-made. He also tithed to acknowledge God as Possessor and Creator of heaven and earth. (Genesis 14:19b) His tithing was private worship.

Jacob on the other hand tithed for protection and prosperity. When he was fleeing from his brother Esau, he made a private covenant with God: "Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, and if I return safely to my father's home, then the Lord will certainly be my God. And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshipping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me.'" (Genesis 28:20-22) So Jacob committed to tithing on the basis of protection and prosperity; but he also incorporated Abraham's rationale – recognising the fact his prosperity came from God and that God is the Possessor of the heavens and the

earth – “I will present to God a tenth of everything HE GIVES ME,” he said. (Genesis 28:22) And so the four bases of Christian tithing are:

- 1). Acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty and authority in worship (Gen.14:19-20)
- 2). Acknowledgement of grace (Gen. 14:19-20)
- 3). As covenant of protection (Gen. 28:20-22)
- 4). As covenant of prosperity (Gen. 28:20-22)

And to the extent that Jacob came up with his own rationale for tithing, it follows that one can initiate a private tithing covenant with God based on proprietary terms. Elective tithing is a private covenant with God.

“Didn’t Abraham tithe just once?” We can’t know. All we can conclude is that there’s one RECORDED instance of Abraham tithing. God incorporated that instance in the Bible to establish the wider implication enumerated in Hebrews 7 – the superiority of Order of Melchizedek to the Levitical Order, hence superiority of regime of grace to the regime of the Law. The whole essence of Genesis 14 is the pointer to Jesus as our high priest forever after the Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 8:1). Jacob’s words on the other hand suggests continuous tithing: “I will present to God a tenth of EVERYTHING HE GIVES ME,” he said. (Genesis 28:22)

“But Jesus never taught tithing.” He did actually! See Matthew 23:23. The regime of the Law was still in operation when Jesus was on earth. The people were paying tithe. Jesus operated under the Law. It’s why his parents presented him in the temple (Luke 2:22-24); it’s why he ate the Passover. (Matthew 26:17-21) In Matthew 23:23, we find Jesus trying to correct the distortion of the relationship between tithing and critical basics of the Law by the Pharisees. (Cf. Luke 11:42) The regime of tithing under the Law was operational while Jesus was on earth. He himself came to fulfil the Law. (Matthew 5:17)

“But why didn’t the apostles teach about tithing?” The writer of Hebrews (Paul) did. And he went very deep. Cf. Hebrews 7 & 8. Besides, the early church didn’t have a problem with giving. They saw beyond 10%. They gave their all in many instances. (Acts 4:34-37) They even gave their lives. Many were martyred. (Hebrews 11:36-37) These were not the type who quibbled over money. And those who got too smart for God got their comeuppance. Remember Ananias and Sapphira? (Acts 5:1-11)

“If you say tithing came before the Law and so we should pay tithe, didn’t animal sacrifice also come before the Law; how come we don’t do animal sacrifice?” Jesus has been sacrificed once and for all. No more animal sacrifice. (Hebrews 10) Jesus is both our sacrificial lamb and sin offering. (Hebrews 10, 1 Peter 1:18,19) We access the sacrifice through communion.

“Why can’t I give my tithe to orphans and widows as Deuteronomy 14:28 says?” That is a reference to the third tithe under the Law. There are three types of tithe under the Law – sacred tithe (Numbers 18:24), vacation tithe (Deuteronomy 14:22-27), social security tithe (Deuteronomy 14:28). You’re not under the Law. (Romans 6:14)

You'll heap a curse on yourself if you subject yourself to the system of tithing under the Law. (Galatians 3:10) In Abrahamic or elective tithing, there's no provision for giving your tithe to orphans and widows. That is not saying however that orphans and widows should be neglected. That's wrong. The Bible calls caring for orphans and widows pure religion. (James 1:27) Make extra budgetary provision for people in need.

"Who do I pay my tithe to?" Jesus is your High Priest. (Hebrews 4:14) He expresses himself through the institution of the church, his body. So pay your tithe to your local assembly. To use an Old Testament analogy, that's God's storehouse. (Malachi 3:10)

"Don't I need to monitor the use of my tithe? What if it's wrongly used?" As long as it remains yours you haven't given it. If you give tithe, it's no longer yours. Perhaps we can find wisdom in this statement by Jesus: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over." (John 12:24) Let your seed die so it can germinate with new life. If you're not pleased with the corporate governance of your local assembly, go to another church rather than get into offences. You're not a monitoring spirit.

"But people paid tithe with agricultural produce in the Old Testament; why can't I pay with chicken for instance?" Well, if you're a farmer and your church has a poultry and don't mind, perhaps you can. But you're not under the Law, remember! Besides, the global economy is not denominated in produce, it's denominated in money. You're not paid in vegetables at the end of the month, are you? Even under certain circumstances in the Old Testament produce tithe was convertible to money. (Deuteronomy 14:26) Money answers all things. (Ecclesiastes 10:19) Denominate your tithe in money.

"Do I pay or give tithe?" Semantics. If you send it online or by wire is it pay, give, wire, transmit or transfer?

So here's a summary of the whole thing: (1) Abrahamic tithing is a private covenant between a believer and his God. (2) Abrahamic tithing is elective, not compulsory. There's no compulsory giving in the New Testament. (3) As a general rule you should be rich towards God. (Luke 12:21) (4) Tithe can be paid as an act of faith, an act of worship, as a basis of prosperity, for protection, as acknowledgement of grace, or acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God. (5) You can come up with a personal rationale for tithing, like Jacob.

Look out for Understanding Tithing (Part 3) next Sunday.

If you'll like to receive Jesus into your life please pray this prayer: "Father I acknowledge that I am a sinner, that Jesus died for me, that you raised him from the

dead. Father please forgive me. I accept Jesus today as my Lord and my Saviour. Amen.”

To read and download FREE copies of Understanding Tithing (Part 1 & 2), please go to <http://myilluminate.com/>

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