

## **To the Saints of God at Topeka, Kansas**

**January 21, 2018**

***Mal. 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.***

***Heb. 7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all...***

***(Part 1)***

### **I. Tithing Before the Mosaic Code:**

The first mention of tithing (which means a tenth) in the Bible occurs at Genesis 14:17 and this of course predates even the Mosaic Code. As you will recall, in Genesis 14 Chedorlaomer king of Elam and three other kings made war with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (and others) and during this war, Chedorlaomer captured Lot (Abraham's nephew), his wife, his daughters and everything that pertained to Lot and fled. Abraham learned of it and immediately armed his servants and those in his house (318 souls) and they pursued Chedorlaomer unto Dan. Abraham divided his armed servants (Gill thinks into four) and attacked at night. Josephus adds that many of Chedorlaomer's soldiers were drunk and celebrating. Abraham and his company freed Lot and his house and other prisoners and returned with the spoil. Beloved, this is nothing short of a miracle from and by our God. 318 people is nothing compared to a well-equipped, battle harden army of four kings (with probably tens of thousands of trained troops). Abraham waded into that quagmire without hesitation. He had complete faith in God. We know he had great faith, because the Holy Spirit by Paul reported it to be

so. (Romans 4: 18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.) He knew that the arm of the Lord was not shortened.

*Gen. 14:17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he (Abraham) gave him (Melchizedek) tithes of all.*

Melchizedek was both the king of Salem and a priest of the Most High God and he came out to the valley of Shaveh to meet Abraham and congratulate him on his victory, that he acknowledged was wrought by God, and he brought bread and wine as refreshments to Abraham and his troops (who were tired and battle weary). Beloved, if such a thing were proper, they truly could be called heroes. Melchizedek also blessed Abraham in the name of God and had accurate and correct notions of God as the Most High and possessor of heaven and earth. He gave the glory to God for Abraham's victory (*And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand*).

Matthew Henry: *When we have received some signal mercy from God, it is very fit that **we should express our thankfulness** by some special act of pious charity. God must always have his dues out of our substance, especially when, by any particular providence, he has either preserved or increased it to us. That the tenth of our increase is a very fit proportion to be set apart for the honor of God and the service of his sanctuary.*

Abraham offered this tithe as thankfulness to God recognizing that all things come from God. Abraham knew that this was a miraculous work of God.

*Proverbs 3:9 Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase. 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*

Beloved it is imperative that we be thankful for what God gives us. It is not negotiable!

*Romans 1:21 - Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. There is the penalty for not being thankful!*

*Colossians 3:15 - And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

*Psalm 100:3 - Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. 4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name 5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.*

One of the ways Abraham showed his thankfulness to God was to tithe with a proper heart. Abraham correctly understood that God is the primary cause of all things and that he should pray and give to God what He is entitled to. This is being thankful and grateful. **The proper spirit of the tithe and thankfulness is crucial.** It's the main thing. God does not want the thanks or the tithe if it is a grievous thing or is done out of an obligation of duty, or tradition. If you are recalcitrant toward God's mercy and deliverances, you will not have them for long.

Now, you might say that this story of Abraham and tithing to Melchizedek is Old Testament and has no application to the New Testament church. But, this whole story is retold by Paul in Hebrews.

Heb. 6:17 *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

*Heb. 7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; (a type of Christ) 3 Without father, without mother, without descent (referring to his priesthood – none of his family were priests before him), having neither beginning of days, nor end of life (there is no account of his birth, birthplace, death, etc.); but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. 5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: 6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. 7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. 8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. 9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. 10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.*

**Gill - To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all;** "a tenth part of all," or "out of all"; not of all that he brought back, as Lot's goods, or the king of Sodom's, or any others; only of the spoils of the enemy, as in Hebrews 7:4 which is no proof of any obligation on men to pay tithes now to any order of men; for this was a voluntary act, and not what any law obliged to; it was done but once, and not constantly, or every year; it was out of the spoils of the enemy, and not out of his own substance,

*or of the increase of the earth; nor was it for the maintenance of Melchizedek, as a priest, who also was a king, and was richly provided for; but to testify his gratitude to God, for the victory obtained, and his reverence of, and subjection to the priest of God.*

*Barnes: From this it is evident that the propriety of devoting a tenth part of what was possessed to God, was regarded as a duty before the appointment of the Levitical law. Some expression of this kind is obviously demanded, and piety seems early to have fixed on the tenth part as being no more than a proper proportion to consecrate to the service of religion, for the propriety of the use which the apostle makes of this fact.*

When we tithe, we are not obligated to do so as provided for in the Mosaic Code (which we will get to in a few minutes), but it is to testify our gratitude to God for our increase and for all that God has given us and His reverence and subjection to God. It is a voluntary action, and it seems reasonable and appropriate.

When Jacob was running from Esau for his life, he stopped at a place he called Bethel, but which was also called Luz and he used the stones as a pillow (Genesis 28:11). This is where Jacob saw the ladder from heaven and the angels ascending and descending on it (Genesis 28:12) and the Lord appeared unto him.

*Gen. 28:20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: 22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

So, here is another example, of the patriarchs tithing and which is completely outside of and prior to the time of the Mosaic code.

## II. Tithing in the Mosaic Law

In the Old Testament the Mosaic Law required that the tenth of all produce and of all animals be given to the Lord.

Lev. 27:30 - *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 unto the LORD...** 32 And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.*

This is where we get the notion that the tithe (at least in the Old Testament) was the Lord's. He was entitled to it and to deprive Him of it was to rob him of it.

Gill: *[whether] of the seed of the land, [or] of the fruit of the tree, [is] the Lord's: is to be given to him as an acknowledgment of his being the proprietor of the land, and that all the increase of it is owing to his blessing, and therefore is given in way of gratitude to him... [it is] holy unto the Lord; the first tithe was eaten by the priests and Levites only, and the other before the Lord in Jerusalem only, and that by clean persons.*

The general idea was that a tenth part of the produce and tenth part of the increase of the flock was to be given by every Israelite to the servants of the sanctuary (Levites) and to the hospitable meals provided on the festivals for the poor and needy.

Numbers 18:23 *But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. 24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.*

*Deut. 14:22 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year-by-year. 23 And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.*

We know, there came a time when the Israelites had departed from tithing and were withholding the tithe from the Lord and the Lord was angry with them.

*Mal 3:7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? 8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The Israelites were keeping back (or holding back) from tithing on their increase (in the harvest and livestock) to the priests and Levites, his ministers, which was due to them. He says that this is robbing Him. Consider Ananias and Sapphira.

*Acts 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Ananias and Sapphira end-up dead beloved. They had a greedy and covetous plan.

**Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them.** Beloved, this is not a one-time infraction. This is not an exception, this is the rule. The Israelites were notorious and determined to not

follow the ordinances and commandments of God and it goes way back. Their departure from God was early, long, and continual.

***Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?*** The posture of the Israelites is: *How should we return? We do not have anything to repent of!* With disdain and disgust they continue on in their rebellion and utterly fail to acknowledge their own sin and disobedience.

*Why do I have to repent, why do I have to ask for forgiveness if (I'm not) making mistakes?* Donald Trump (You may note that he will not even use the word sin.)

There is a standup routine from Richard Pryor from the 70's about how something got broken. The parent says *Who broke this?* Richard Pryor as the child says... *Okay. I gonna tell ya, okay. First, okay I gonna tell you. I wasn't in here. Remember, you told me not to run, so I wasn't running. It may have looked like I was running, but I wasn't really running. But it was kind of like I was running. My legs was moving real fast, but I wasn't running. I was in the kitchen, okay. Then, I was in here and it was broken. Uh-huh, that thing was broke...before I was born. That's what happened.*

Said another way, when Isaiah was a tender and precious child of three or so, his mom would say *that is naughty* and then she would explain to him for what he had done and why that was naughty. *He had flushed the deodorant down the toilet... covered himself with five pounds of flour, hid his sister's shoe, or whatever it was.* And he would reply "No!" (and stomping his little foot) would say "Zay-Zay is *awwl nice, awwl day, ebbi day!*"

You can respect that soul that admits their sin and asks for forgiveness, but for someone that insists they have done no wrong, it is hard to take it for anything other than pure arrogance and depravity. When it is a little child, you can explain that, but not with these Israelites – it was exceedingly sinful.

**Gill: But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.**

*That is, they robbed God in not giving the tithes, and not offering sacrifices, according as the law required: but it may be objected, that the Jews in Christ's time did pay tithes, even of all things; yea, of more than the law required, Matthew 23:23 Luke 18:12 to which it may be replied, that though they gave tithes, yet it was "with an evil eye," as Aben Ezra says; grudgingly, and not cheerfully, and with an evil intention; not to show their gratitude to God, and their acknowledgment of him as their Lord, from whom they had their all, but in order to merit at his hands.*

Beloved, it is God's money. When you do not give him what is His - You are embezzling what is rightfully God's. You have flagrantly and daringly robbed what God provided to you and for you.

*Matthew Henry - Man, who depends upon God, and derives his all from Him, will he rob Him that is his benefactor? This is ungrateful, unjust, and unkind, indeed; and it is very unwise thus to provoke Him from whom ... judgment proceeds. Will a man do violence to God? Will a man straighten him? They plead Not Guilty, and put God upon the proof of it. Robbing God is a heinous crime and it is made even worse when those who are guilty of it are not willing to own themselves guilty. They rob God... they rob Him of His honour, rob Him of that which is devoted to Him, to be employed in his service, rob Him of themselves, ... and give him not his dues out of their estates.*

It is somewhat like sharecropping. The land owner allows you to live and work his land, and when the harvest comes in you agree to pay him a certain percentage of the harvest. Except now, you don't want to pay him what is his? Or would you give the unusable scraps to him?

*Matthew Henry – [The tithe was important]. Out of these the priests and Levites had maintenance for themselves and their families; but they (the people) detained (or retained) them, defrauded the priests of them, would not pay their tithes, or not in full, or not of the best; they brought not the offerings which God required, or brought the torn, and lame, and sick, which were not fit for use. Thus, effectively shutting down the temple, the Levites scattered to find work for a living.*

*Malachi 3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*

*10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

Matthew Henry: *They were all guilty of this sin, even the whole nation, as if they were in confederacy against God, and all combined to rob him of his dues and to stand by one another in it when they had done. For this they were cursed with a curse, Malachi 3:9. God punished them with famine and scarcity, through unseasonable weather, or insects that ate up the fruits of the earth. "You are cursed with a curse for robbing me, and yet you go on to do it." Note, It is a great aggravation of sin when men persist in it notwithstanding the rebukes of Providence which they are under for it. Nay, it should seem, because God had punished them with scarcity of bread, they made that a pretense for robbing him — that now, being impoverished, they could not afford to bring their tithes and offerings, but must save them, that they might have bread for their families.*

I love you all. Amen