



## “TITHING!!”

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- Our **mission** is to *Reach* people in the Name of Jesus; *Disciple* people in the Way of Jesus; *Empower* people in the Service of Jesus.
  - Our **method** is to ensure that everything we do is *Christ Centered; Word Focused; & Ministry Minded*
  - Our **message** is *the Gospel*.
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### Malachi 3:6-12 (NIV)

*“<sup>6</sup> I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. <sup>7</sup> Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ <sup>8</sup> “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup> You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. <sup>10</sup> Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. <sup>11</sup> I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty. <sup>12</sup> “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty.”*

## Prayer

**“Father, open my eyes, so I can see Your truth. Open my ears, so I can hear Your Voice. Open my mind, so I can understand Your Word. And open my heart, so I may receive all that You have for me, that is for me. In Jesus Name, AMEN!”**

## Study

Let me begin by making three statements about tithing:

1. Tithe means “a tenth” – Genesis 28:22 – *“And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”* The word tithe in the Hebrew means **“a tenth.”**
2. The Lord claims the tithe as His – Leviticus 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 to the LORD.”*
3. Obedience in tithing carries a promise read Malachi 3:10.

Please note that I don’t believe for one minute that tithing buys God’s blessing. But I do believe that it opens a door – or better, a *“window”* – of release for God to bless continually and mightily. The concept underlying this practice and promise is found throughout the Bible, but in the book of Malachi, God most pointedly deals with tithing.

There He faces His people with the charge of neglect in the *“covenant”* practice. In this passage, the Lord calls for the return of His people. But when they ask, *“In what way shall we return”* (v. 7), the Lord says something completely foreign to our way of thinking.

- He doesn’t tell them to get on their knees & pray.
- He doesn’t instruct them to read the Bible.
- He doesn’t demand they go to the temple more often.

**Rather, He starts by talking to them about their money – about tithing. Notice that it’s His starting place.**

First, the Lord contrasts His own changelessness with the unfaithfulness of their fathers. Though God created us and promised to sustain us, it is a great difficulty for many of us to give God His portion.

Consider this: before the fall of man, God gave Adam and his wife stewardship over all creation. Genesis 1:27, 28 – *“<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.””*

After this, God said, in effect, *“I only ask one thing of you: that you honor the fact that a certain portion of creation is Mine and Mine alone.”* That’s essentially what God said when He told Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:16-17 – *“<sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.””*

We usually think of that prohibition as only being *“to eat or not to eat.”* But the issue was deeper. It was an issue of recognized rights. It involved man understanding and accepting that a small portion of all he had within his reach was reserved – it belonged to the Lord. The Lord said, *“Everything else is yours, but this is Mine.”*

We are dealing with exactly the same issue when we discuss the tithe – God’s claim on 10% of our income. Again, let’s read Leviticus 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 to the Lord.”*

Of course, we know so well the events at the beginning. Satan came, tempting the man and woman and saying, in effect, *“God knows that if you ever get hold of His portion, too, you’ll be so much better off than you are now.”* (see Genesis 3:5)

How easily we’re persuaded by the supposition that if we can just have what God says is His, we’ll be better off! And the tempter succeeded, with the bottom line being that man tried to take God’s job into his own hands.

*“You will be like God,”* the serpent hissed, and man fell for it. The tragedy is that all of God’s likeness that they needed was already theirs, for God had created them marvelously and miraculously, fully in His image. They didn’t need God’s power, only the blessing of His Person imprinted in their nature. They didn’t need God’s position, only the promise of His provision to sustain their every need. But in Adam and Eve’s pursuit of *“acquiring,”* they took God’s portion, thereby not only losing what they thought they would gain, but what they already had as well.

To see the divine claim on 10% of our income and to surrender it in worship, faithfully, is to find life’s financial starting place and life’s essential beginning point of blessing once we’re in Christ.

### **His Pattern and Blueprint**

All of us understand the concept of a pattern or blueprint. The clothier who designed the clothes you wear had to follow a pattern or the clothing would not fit. It would be too tight in some places, or it would be too loose and would feel uncomfortable in other places if it were not made according to pattern. A building would not be safe, nor would an engine run, if not made according to the blueprint.

It is the same thing with life. We have to start right. His commandments and precepts are blueprints – designs provided so we can build lives that stand strong and tall. The pattern for godliness that God gave Adam included directions on how mankind is to relate to any portion that God says is His.

### **Rob God? How?**

Malachi's message pointed back to the beginning – “*your fathers.*” And so, we've seen how early the issue of man taking God's portion became a problem. Then the prophet asks a strange question: “*Will a man rob God?*” (Malachi 3:8)

It's important here to say the obvious: **God doesn't have a cash-flow problem!** So how is it that the prophet says that the people's not tithing had “*robbed*” Him? A look at the whole text answers the question: God had been robbed of His opportunity to bless His people! God has been robbed of His opportunity not just to bless you but to bless others since you aren't paying the tithe.

That's His heart – His desire. God wants to bless! Notice that when He says that if we'll return, He'll open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing we won't be able to contain, the Lord isn't merely talking about financial benefit. He's talking about all His blessings. The “*windows of heaven*” aren't a bank, but they are the openings from which all life's benedictions flow.

Malachi 3:10 (NIV) – “*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.*”

- When the windows of heaven are open over your home, there is joy and happiness.
- When the windows of heaven are open over your business, there is fruitfulness and prosperity
- When the windows of heaven are open over your mind, there is peace and confidence.
- When the windows of heaven are open over your body and soul, there is health and contentment.

“*The windows of heaven*” are the Bible's words to describe the source from which God blesses, and that's what God delights to bring about. God's request for our tithe isn't an appeal from a hard-pressed deity suffering for cash. It's a request that we not deprive Him of blessing us in very real ways. It's also a request that we not deprive Him of blessing others with the money we give. He's calling us to order our finances on the earth side of things in a way that lines up with the release of special graces waiting to be poured out from the heaven side of things. **Tithing starts right – by aligning us under the place where the blessings of God are released: Heaven's windows.**

**But the decision to tithe is ours!**

Just as surely as the Lord Jesus Christ knocks at the doors of our hearts & says, “*If you’ll open the door, I’ll come in, and you’ll be saved,*” we have that choice. And having received Him as Savior, we can stop there or move ahead as His disciples. The wisest & most sensitive of us choose growing in Him, making Him Lord in our life’s daily matters. And nothing says, “**Yes, Lord,**” any clearer than our obedience and our worship with our tithe.

When I let go, when I give, when I release, I make room for life and abundance to flow into my life according to God’s order. If I hesitate to start tithing because I’m worried about how I’m going to make it, and in my effort to make ends meet I violate the Lord’s first principle of giving, am I succumbing to a deception luring me to put myself in God’s place? Am I saying that I am better able to make things work out than God is?

Some still raise an age-old question: “***Isn’t tithing only in the Old Testament?***”

The idea in this expressed doubt is that tithing is part of the law and therefore has no meaning to NT believers. This resistance usually projects the notion that teaching tithing will deprive a Christian of his/her “***liberty***” or move a believer “***into law and out of grace.***”

Jesus Himself addressed the issue of tithing. It’s recorded in two NT books – Matthew & Luke.

Jesus was dealing with the Pharisees – a tough breed of religionists who were looking for every way they could to attend to the letter of the law without attending to its spiritual demands. Read Matthew 23:23 (Also is found in Luke 11:42).

The “***woe***” on these religious hypocrites was not for their tithing, but for their neglect of “***weightier matters***” – justice, mercy and faith. Now, the Pharisees were attending to the letter of the law in the presenting of their tithes, and it wasn’t just a matter of bringing one bushel of wheat out of every ten. They were even weighing out the tithe of the tiniest spices – mint & cumin!

If tithing was unimportant to the Savior, if it was meaningless to maintain within the new order He was bringing, then as a part of emphasizing that new order He could well have said, “***Take care of justice and mercy, and quit bothering with tithing – mint, cumin or anything else!***” But instead Jesus says, “***These you ought to have done***” – referring to their tithing – “***without leaving the others undone***” – referring to their attitudes.

He uses the word “*ought*”. When we acknowledge that something “*ought to be*”, we are appealing to a higher order – to the divine will. We are saying, “*There are certain laws that should not be violated.*” With this “*ought*,” Jesus is saying of the practice of tithing, “*This is a precept that ought not to be violated.*” By the affirmation of Jesus our Lord Himself, tithing is thereby made a timeless practice, as important to New Testament believers as to Old.

In tracing the footsteps of Abraham, we find that Scripture says of him: “*And he gave him [Melchizedek] a tithe of all.*” (Genesis 14:20) Abraham is revealed as a man who learned the pathway to promise before the law was ever given! Tithing was established in the Scripture before the Law of Moses. It precedes and transcends the Mosaic code as a principle built into the fabric of the human order of things.

### **Rebuking the Devourer**

To cap off the grand truth of the tithe, God makes an incredible promise. As a part of His response to our worshipping Him through the faith-exercise of tithes and offerings, He says, “*I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes.*” (Malachi 3:11) It’s another evidence of the fact that how we deal with our money is a spiritual issue touching all of life. These words reveal that when we obey in the material realm, it impacts the spiritual realm.

Who is “*the devourer*”? Jesus taught us that we have a common enemy whose animosity is leveled toward all mankind.

John 10:10 – “*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*”

1 Peter 5:8 – “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*”

The thief advances with viciousness and in terms of our finances, devours in some of the most obvious ways. Breakdowns. Repairs needed. An unexplainable onslaught of illness. Pandemic Viruses. Investments go sour. Money owed us isn’t paid. The devourer often comes in any or all such things that eat up – or devour – our resources.

Now God doesn’t promise that we’ll never have a car breakdown or that mechanical things will never wear out if we tithe. Neither is tithing a formula guarantee that we’ll never have to get flu shots or weather the storm of pandemic viral threat, but the Lord does say, “*These things aren’t going to eat you up!*”

As we learn the liberty of full, free, let-go obedience to the Lord and His ways, we have an overcoming promise. God says He still makes it His mission to rebuke the oppressive forces that chew up our finances and cause reversal in our situations.

**Tithing holds no magic promise of trial-free living, but tithing does have a share in the promise that when we face trials of any kind, we have reason to expect God to come against the advances of our adversary.**

### **Coronavirus/COVID-19**

There is a devourer seeking to curse, to swallow up, to eat through and spit out, if you please; and whether we like it or not, choosing not to tithe is to choose to step out from under God's umbrella of blessing.

Without His protection, you and I are far more vulnerable to life's "*rain*" of circumstances – however mild or fierce.

So, the Lord calls us to "*prove Him,*" to give him the opportunity to pour out blessings on us that we cannot contain. He says that "*He will open the windows of heaven and rebuke the devourer,*" (vv. 10-11).

The first is a promise of abundance, and the other is a promise of victory over the adversary. When I/we voluntarily give at least 10% of our budget into His Kingdom church mission, I'm saying/we're saying, "*I can 'see' His ability to create enough to make my budget run with less than the unbeliever claims he/she needs.*"

**To God be the Glory. To God be the Praise!**

**Pastor King**