

Is Tithing in Force Under the *NEW* Testament?

Here is an eye-opening article on a much misunderstood subject. Some ask, "Wasn't tithing just for the Jews of a long-dead past?" Others, "Wasn't tithing done away?" Or, "Was it a form of national taxation in ancient Israel?" Or, "Was it to supply material needs to the poor?" Here is the *NEW* Testament teaching. You'll find this article interesting, enlightening, plain!

by Herbert W. Armstrong

HOW SHOULD God's work be financed? Does God have a definite *system*? Is "*tithing*" obligatory in *NEW* Testament times?

Or has God left us to our own devices—for churches to resort to the old-fashioned oyster supper and ice cream socials, or to bazaars, entertainments, dances and church movie shows to raise money?

Or did God perhaps leave it for each one to give what he feels like—if he feels like giving it?

Others ask, "Wasn't tithing just for Jews of a long-dead past?" Or, "Wasn't tithing done away? Wasn't it just part of the ceremonial system introduced by the Old Covenant Law of Moses?"

Others, today, are taught and believe tithing was merely a form of national taxation in the civil government of the one-time nation of Israel. Still others teach that the tithe supplied the material needs of the poor, and was never put into the ministry.

WHAT CONFUSION today! What ignorance of the revealed laws and commands of God!

God Working Out a PURPOSE

Man was placed on earth for a PURPOSE. And always, from the very beginning, God has had on earth a PRIESTHOOD—a ministry representing HIM, making known His revelation, His will to man, carrying out God's mission.

It does cost money to carry on Christ's ministry. And today with super-powered facilities of radio and printing press, of rapid transportation to every part of the world—facilities making it possible to reach vast masses over great distances in short time—the carrying forth of

God's LAST WARNING MESSAGE to a deceived world is a herculean task of gigantic proportions requiring large sums of money.

Did Christ intend His specially selected and called ministers to be directed and controlled by boards of lay church members *not* called of Christ to the ministry? Or did Christ Himself ordain a system providing for His work, leaving His true called ministers, like prophets of old, free to serve God *alone*?

Has not God, in His wisdom, provided for this financing? And in such manner that His true *called* ministers may be free to serve Him *alone*, carrying His Message BOLDLY?

Is there a definite financing plan ordained in the New Testament?

If so, the plan will be revealed in God's Word.

But first, before looking to the *NEW* TESTAMENT TEACHING to see whether or not Christians must "*tithe*," let us make clear just what that word "*tithe*" means.

What the "TITHE" Is

What does God mean by the word "*tithe*"?

It is an old English word, commonly used in England three and four hundred years ago. Today it is seldom used, except in this scriptural connection. This old expression "*tithe*" has been preserved in the Authorized, or King James translation, of the Bible—translated in 1611.

The word "*tithe*" means TENTH. A tithe of anything is the tenth part of it.

It is well known that the nation Israel, during Old Testament times, was required to tithe, that is, pay in one

tenth of income. But the matter of *to whom* each Israelite paid this tenth, *which* tenth was paid, *why* and for *what purpose*, seems to confuse a great many today. But the New Testament teaching for Christians about tithing is understood only by a few.

Christ's Office, NOW!

It is well recognized that the people of Israel, during Old Testament times, were required to pay tithes. That is, one-tenth of income—whether livestock, grain, or money. But the *NEW* Testament teaching on tithing is not generally understood.

Yet the subject is mentioned many places in the New Testament. But, since it is a *priesthood* subject—the financing of Christ's *ministry*—it's well to look first at the priesthood Book—Hebrews.

You hear a great deal of a *crucified* Christ—much preaching *about* a dead Christ. But you hear almost nothing about the *Message* He brought from God, and even less about the function of the resurrected *living* Christ of TODAY!

The Book of Hebrews reveals the Christ of the Twentieth Century—the work and office of our Christ TODAY—Christ the High Priest of God! And it contains GOD'S INSTRUCTION for financing the ministry of Christ! The 7th chapter is the tithing chapter.

Speaking of the Christian HOPE of eternal life (which hope *is* Jesus Christ), we are told, beginning verse 19, chapter 6, this HOPE (Christ) has entered "within the veil"—that is, the very throne of God in heaven—"whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an HIGH PRIEST *for ever*

after the order of Melchisedec."

The NEW Testament Priesthood

Jesus Christ is HIGH PRIEST now. Let's understand it. Jesus of Nazareth came as a *Messenger*, sent from God, bearing a MESSAGE to man. His MESSAGE is His GOSPEL—the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the Good News of the KINGDOM OF GOD.

After finishing His mission as Messenger, Jesus took on Himself the mission of *Saviour*, paying in our stead the penalty of our sins by His death on the cross. But it requires a living Saviour to impart to us the gift of eternal life! So God raised Jesus, by a RESURRECTION.

And thereupon Jesus ascended to heaven, to the very throne of God, where He sat down and continues today as our Everlasting HIGH PRIEST. That is His office, now. Soon He shall assume still another office, returning to earth in all the power and glory of God, as KING of kings—continuing His priesthood office as Lord of lords.

It is in His office as High Priest that Jesus sits as *living Head* of The Church of God, the true Body of Christ in this age. He is High Priest for this and all succeeding ages.

And as High Priest He holds a definite *rank*—a rank that outranks every priestly office—"After the order of Melchisedec"—or, in the plainer English of the Moffatt translation, "with the *rank* of Melchisedec."

And who is Melchisedec? This is one of the intriguing mysteries of the Bible! Suffice it to say here, Melchisedec was the High Priest of God during patriarchal times. And Christ occupies the same office now, holding the same rank.

But the Mosaic dispensation was a purely materialistic, fleshly dispensation. The GOSPEL was not preached in Israel, nor did their ministry carry it to other nations. Israelites formed a *flesh-born* congregation, not a Spirit-begotten church. The ministry consisted of rituals, carnal (fleshly) ordinances, substitute animal sacrifices and burnt offerings. This required of the priests much hard physical labor.

During those years a different priesthood of *lower rank* was in office—mere human rank, vastly inferior to the spirit-

ual and divine rank of Melchisedec and of Christ. The priests were of the tribe of Levi. It was called the Levitical Priesthood.

A Tithe-Receiving Priesthood

Yet this lower-level priesthood had to be financed. God's financing Plan from dim antiquity, thru the Melchisedec Priesthood, was the tithing system. This system was *continued* thru the years of the Levitical Priesthood.

Now coming to the seventh chapter of Hebrews, God's financing plan is explained. Notice the comparison between the two tithe-receiving priesthoods.

First read the first five verses, Hebrews, chapter 7: "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; *to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all . . . abideth a priest continually*. Now consider how great this man was, *unto whom even Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils*. And verily they that are the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, *have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the LAW.*"

Let's understand it. This vital passage of Scripture begins to *compare* the two priesthoods. Notice, back in patriarchal times, TITHING was God's system for financing His ministry. Melchisedec was High Priest. The patriarch Abraham, it is written, knew and kept God's commandments, His statutes and laws (Gen. 26:5). And he paid tithes to the High Priest!

Then the statement is made in this passage that, during that dispensation from Moses until Christ, the priests of that time, the Levites, took tithes from the people BY LAW. It was a LAW, started in the beginning, *continued* thru the Mosaic dispensation.

Tithing, then, did not start with Moses!

It is God's system for financing His ministry, which BEGAN from the BEGINNING—from the dim antiquity of patriarchal times. It was a LAW. It did not start with Moses, it was merely *continued* on THRU the Mosaic period!

Tithing a LAW from Dim Antiquity

Many excuse themselves from tithing

today on the false impression tithing pertained to the Mosaic period *only*. They think it was for Israel, *alone*. And that illusion has brought a CURSE on this whole nation!

The Old Covenant is gone—that's true. But its ending could not take away what it did not *bring!* Tithing was God's law hundreds of years before the Old Covenant started.

TITHING is revealed as *God's system* for financing His earthly ministry. *Prior* to the Levitical Priesthood and the Mosaic dispensation, the ministry was under Melchisedec. And we see that ministry, from the beginning, was financed by the tithing system.

Melchisedec, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life . . . abideth a priest *continually*" (Heb. 7:3). Yes, He was High Priest *from the beginning!* Even from Adam! And the ancient patriarchs from Adam down thru Abraham, Jacob, and on to Moses, financed this ministry of God on earth by the TITHING system!

Merely CONTINUED in Israel

Since tithing is God's permanent, continuous financing system, it had to *continue* thru the Mosaic dispensation. During that period when the Levites were the ministers, their work and labors had to be financed. But when the priesthood was changed, God did not change his financing system. The Levites "had a commandment to take *tithes* of the people according to the LAW."

And notice, the very *subject* of this seventh chapter of Hebrews is the TITHING LAW!

Now continuing the seventh of Hebrews, the teaching concerns *which* of the two priesthoods—Melchisedec, or Levitical—is superior, to determine *which* priesthood should receive tithes, NOW!

Christians of Paul's day did not need to be instructed that TITHING is an obligatory and permanent law of God. But they *did* need much teaching to make clear to them that the Old Covenant was dead—the Levitical Priesthood changed and replaced by that of Jesus Christ—the *Melchisedec Priesthood restored!* The only question was as to *which* priesthood tithes were to be paid.

(Please continue on page 15)

TITHING

(Continued from page 6)

To make this point plain, Paul proceeds to show the Melchisedec Priesthood is superior—has precedence *now*.

Notice the Scripture: "Now consider *how great* this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils . . . But he whose descent is not counted from them (the Levites), *received tithes* of Abraham, and blessed him (Abraham) that had the promises. And without all contradiction the *less* (Abraham) is blessed of the *better* (Melchisedec) . . . And as I may so say, Levi also, who received tithes, *paid* tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" (verses 4-9).

The Melchisedec Priesthood is greater—superior! It has precedence! And it is again in force as God's Priesthood, under Christ! It, too, needs to be financed! Now notice the conclusion:

"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also in the LAW" (verse 12).

A NEW Testament LAW!

It does not say the law was abolished. The change in priesthoods makes necessary a CHANGE *in* the law. What law was thus CHANGED? The very law this chapter is instructing New Testament Christians about—the TITHING LAW! "The sons of Levi have a *commandment* to take TITHES . . . *according to the law*" (verse 5).

So tithing, far from being abolished, is NEW TESTAMENT LAW! But, the priesthood being changed to that of Jesus Christ—the Melchisedec Priesthood restored—that tithing law is also changed of necessity, so as to become God's system for financing the ministry of Jesus Christ!

Actually, the law is merely restored *as it was from the beginning!*

How plain! Tithing is God's *law*—His system for financing His great work today; it's commanded, *now!*

To be continued