

Are Christians Required to Pay Tithes?

By

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A Dead Priesthood versus a Living Priesthood

The question, “Are Christians required to pay tithes?”, is a question that demands a biblically tenable honest answer! Why commit one-tenth of your income to the ministry? Is it necessary? Is it mandatory and valid under the New Covenant?

Tithing is an issue of controversy in Christianity. Some argue vehemently that with the cessation of the Levitical priesthood the law of tithing established under it has also ceased with it. After all, the relevant text states explicitly: “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” (Lev. 27:30). But in giving the tithes to God Levi was to receive them, “behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation” (Num. 18:21).

Thus without the Levitical priesthood, it seems God will have no use for tithes. So why retain it when the institution it supports is no more; in fact, the law establishing the Levitical priesthood has been changed, thus annulling it:

Heb. 7:12, 18

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

The other side of the argument is that there is an older, ancient, everlasting Priesthood **still** in office to which believers are required to pay tithes.

In between the two extremes are those ministers with no clearly defined theological position on tithing, but simply demand tithes and offerings because the LORD says in the *Prophets*, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house” (Mal. 3:10). Yet to these same people, every other Old Testament law has been abrogated.

Now, what is this older priesthood which by virtue of its endless term of office perpetually validates tithing?

A Superior Priesthood Established by Oath to Last Forever

Earlier we saw briefly how the changing of the priesthood necessitated “a change in the law” (Grk) and “the annulment of the commandment” for its lack of usefulness. What was this law?

The law in question is not the whole law (Torah) of Yah, but the particular law or commandment establishing and/or regulating the Levitical priesthood. In Exodus 28, God told Moses:

1 And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.

2 And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.

3 And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office.

4 And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office.

Yahweh's instruction to Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons as His priests was, in effect, the divine law which instituted the priesthood of the descendants of Levi. Yet not all Levites qualified as officiating priests; only Aaron and his sons were singled out for that office. All other Levites were to be ministerial assistants to Aaron and his sons, the priests ministering before the LORD. We read in Numbers 3:1-9:

1 These also are the generations of Aaron and Moses in the day that the LORD spake with Moses in mount Sinai.

2 And these are the names of the sons of Aaron; Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

3 These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office.

4 And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

6 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.

7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.

8 And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

9 And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

This then was the structure of the Levitical priesthood. High priest Aaron and his sons were to be the core priests, and the larger Levite clan was to play peripheral ministerial roles as their assistants.

As their source of livelihood, God mandated that His tithes (for the earth is His and all the wealth therein, Ps 24:1; 50:10-12) should be given to the Levites to compensate for their exclusion from ‘secular’ work necessitated by their sacerdotal spiritual duties performed on behalf of the entire nation:

Lev 27:30, 32

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.

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.

Num 18:21-23

And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

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 for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

So God has authorized that His tithes of all produce of the land *gained through labour* should be given to the Levites for their upkeep and to compensate for their priestly duties. But now there's an issue of WHOM to receive the tithes on behalf of God (to whom the tithes belong) because now, under the New Covenant, the Levitical Priesthood is no more. It has been changed and abrogated!

Mind you, scripture nowhere says that God Almighty has since renounced His rights to ONE-TENTH of ALL THE PRODUCE AND EARNINGS of His people. “All the tithe of the land” is still His. In fact, He considers the refusal to pay Him His tithes a robbery—and a robbery of the worst kind. An act of robbery against Him, the Almighty Creator, a sacrilegious thievery! He thunders in Malachi:

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.

Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation.

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 (Mal. 3:8-10).

“All the tithe is Mine”, but the people kept back and stole what was not theirs. They went on an armed robbery operation against God and violently stole from Him; they took His tithes by force and forbade Him from complaining too! They answered back, “Wherein have we robbed Thee?” After all, they erroneously and arrogantly thought, ‘I earned the produce by my own sweat and labour. It’s mine and solely mine’. But the One who gives breath to the living and strength and knowledge to produce wealth (Job 12:10; Deut. 8:18; 1 Chron. 29:11-12; Ps 94:10) from His creation, including the ground He created, lays claim to one-tenth of all income or produce. Refusal to give Him His due is a plain act of robbery liable to punishment just as every robbery is punishable!

The punishment for withholding God’s tithe, which amounts to robbing Him of it, is a divine curse! A most tragic fate, if you ask me, to be cursed by the Power who alone is able to undo curses!

So then, it’s quite clear that God still needs to be paid His tithes since it is stated in neither the Old Testament nor New Testament scriptures that the divine commandment on tithes has been annulled. In fact, for all their faults and hypocrisy, the Lord Jesus did not fault the Pharisees for scrupulously paying tithes but said it ought to be done in conjunction with “the weightier matters of the law”:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Matt. 23:23).

Again, the tithing law stands because God has not stopped being the source of all blessings and wealth (1 Tim. 6:17; Jam. 1:17). The question now is WHO receives the tithes on God’s behalf now that the Levitical priesthood has been put out of office.

Has God done with priesthood forever? Is there no longer a priesthood ministering before God on behalf of His people?

The passage which talks about the change of the Levitical priesthood and the annulment of the commandment establishing it has the answer. Located right in the middle of the Letter to the Hebrews, the seventh chapter of the epistle treats one of the important aspects of the theme of the letter, namely the Superiority of the Person and Office of Christ in relation to the Old Covenant order.

Thus the Letter to the Hebrews opens with the superiority of Christ to the Old Testament prophets in His role as the current mouthpiece of God considering that He’s the Son of God

through whom the Father created the universe and who in His nature is also God. This way, Christ is also superior to the angels who are “ministering spirits” in ranking (Heb. 1:1-2:4).

Next, He’s compared to Moses and His superiority shines:

... holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;
2 Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.
3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.
4 For every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God.
5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;
6 But Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Heb. 3:1-6).

By chapter 5, it’s the Priesthood of Christ that is being set against the Levitical/Aaronic priesthood. And the superiority of the former is indisputably distinct! The author of Hebrews, most probably the Apostle Paul, writes:

1 ... every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:
2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.
3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.
4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.
5 So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to day have I begotten Thee.
6 As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
7 Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that he feared;
8 Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered;
9 And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him;
10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:1-10).

In chapter 7, we get to the meat of the discussion—why the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ is particularly superior and why and how it has taken the place of the Levitical priesthood. But the argument goes further back in chapter 6:

God’s promise to Abraham which was guaranteed by an oath is meant to serve as a source of “strong encouragement” to us, “the heirs of promise”, to hold firm “the hope set before

us”, we who have fled to find refuge in Him, in that by two unchangeable things (promise plus oath) it’s impossible for God to lie. Moreover, this hope, which should firmly anchor our souls against all waves of doubts and discouragement, has entered the holy of holies behind the curtain, where our Lord Jesus Christ has entered as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:13-20). This makes the hope of our Christian calling *triple sure*, not only by God’s promise confirmed with an oath by His unfailing Self but also by its presence in the most holy place in heaven, in the care of none other than Yeshua who is our High Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

So, what makes you think your hope in God will fail? As a believer, your hope is secure in the capable hands of Christ, our High Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek, as the last, *definitive* guarantee of all God’s promises to you (Acts 13:32-33; 2 Cor. 1:18-20). The Apostle Paul said of Him, “... I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

But who is this grand priest called Melchizedek in whose “order” (Grk ‘arrangement, fixed succession of rank or character, etc) Christ is High Priest forever?

The answer to this all-important question and what the Melchizedek Priesthood stands for is the subject matter of chapter 7. It begins:

Heb 7:1-8

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;

3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; 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.

The narrative takes us back to Gen. 14 where Abram after heroically routing the armies of four mighty kings, who had overran Sodom and Gomorrah and other neighbouring city-states and plundered them and taken their peoples captive, including Lot his nephew, was met by a venerable personage called Melchizedek, “the priest of the Most High God”:

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 gave him tithes of all.

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion (Gen. 14:18-24).

The identity of this Melchizedek is as controversial as the subject of tithing itself! Some interpreters say he was a God-fearing Canaanite priest who was specially ordained by God to prefigure the Messianic Priesthood of Christ in which He is also King. In Jewish tradition he was Shem whose days overlapped Abraham's and who qualified as the most suitable person of the time to be such a king-priest of the most high God, even "the God of Shem" (Gen. 9:26). To others, however, Melchizedek was a *Christophany*, an appearance of Christ in human society before His actual human birth by the virgin Mary, given that Melchizedek was said to be "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3). Since no normal human can ever be said to be without parents, neither beginning nor end of life, the reasoning is that Melchizedek must be Christ. In fact, the text states explicitly that he is "like the Son of God"! But why "like the Son of God" and not the absolute description of His being the very Son of God if a comparison of types is not being made?

A possible explanation is that Christ as Melchizedek was not yet revealed to the world as the Son of God in the flesh in His manifestations to the ancients as in the New Testament (John 1:14). Moreover, the name Melchizedek meaning "King of righteousness" is a title that only truly befits and belongs to Christ, who is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 23:6; 33:16). What mere mortal, apart from the grace of God working in him and Christ living in him, can ascribe to himself righteousness and acknowledged so by God, let alone claim to be its king? Only Christ qualifies to be called the King of righteousness and of peace (Isa. 9:6; 26:12; 54:10).

What clinches it all, of course, is that He is without parents or descent; neither beginning nor end of life, a description which, in effect, says He has always existed and is, in fact, self-existing! The scripture doesn't even suggest he was created, a situation that would imply his having a beginning. The text is clear Melchizedek is eternally self-existent. And who apart

from the Father God can be described as such except Jesus Christ? Melchizedek and Christ are one and the same!

So that settles it? Not really.

Opponents of the Christological interpretation of the identity of Melchizedek as a manifestation of Christ like to point out that the Greek expression translated “like the Son of God” doesn’t say he was the Son of God but ‘made like’, i.e. ‘a facsimile’, a ‘copy’; thus it does not mean the actual person but rather someone ‘similar to’. Furthermore, in the Greek, they argue, the phrase “without descent” is actually “without recorded genealogy”, meaning the Melchizedek priesthood, unlike the Levitical priesthood (Ezra 2:62) it’s being contrasted with, has no known genealogical records of its priestly lineage. Lastly, it’s argued that the endless life ascribed to Melchizedek is actually in respect of his priestly function, not his person. In other words, it’s the priesthood of Melchizedek now under Christ that is eternal. Thus the significance of Melchizedek only lies in the fact that he was a type of Christ, our eternal High Priest, not Christ Himself. Otherwise, Christ would have had two incarnations, first as king-priest Melchizedek reigning over a visible, delineated territory (the city-state of Salem, later Jerusalem, Ps. 76:2) over a considerable period of time, instead of a brief *theophany*; and second as the Son of God in human form born by the virgin Mary (Miriam). Yet scripture teaches only one incarnation.

So who really was Melchizedek? The latter explanation seems quite convoluted to me! It seems far-fetched to me to equate *endless life* with endless priesthood if the person who constitutes the endless priesthood has no endless life himself!

Anyway, the Melchizedek Priesthood is now indisputably the eternal Priesthood of Christ. And it was to this priesthood that Abraham on returning from “the slaughter of the kings” gave tithes of all the war booty he brought with him. The priestly elements of ‘bread and wine’ which Melchizedek brought forth foreshadowed the unleavened bread and the fresh “fruit of the vine” which Christ would use to represent the New Covenant ratified with His broken body and shed blood (Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 22:14-20). And He blessed Abraham as God’s representative on earth and by that same position received tithes from Abraham on God’s behalf. In recognition and expectation of God’s bountiful reward for the tithes he gave Him, Abraham refused the king of Sodom’s offer of compensatory reward, saying “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’” (Gen. 14:22-23 ESV). Because God would make Abraham rich as He surely did (Gen. 24:1, 35).

Abraham did not give the tithes to Melchizedek on a whim; he understood it as a duty to God commanded in His law. In reaffirming the everlasting Abrahamic covenant with Isaac, God Himself testified of Abraham’s life of faith and obedience:

3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

5 Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws (Gen. 26:3-5).

Tithing was one of the laws of God Abraham kept *before the time of Moses*, and he knew it to unleash blessings from God. Hence he refused to accept riches from men; his tithes to God through Melchizedek were the gateway to God's infinite largesse!

As the Letter of Hebrews makes us understand, Abraham is long gone, but Melchizedek lives on for He remains a priest perpetually. After his encounter with Abraham, this mystery figure, who intrudes into the Genesis narrative and exits as suddenly, is heard of no more until we encounter him in Ps 110 where the Spirit of God inspires King David to write: "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek'".

Who is this priest solemnly being installed as "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"?

It's the *Adonai* seated on the right hand of Yahweh in heaven:

1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

2 The LORD shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth.

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

5 The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath (Ps. 110:1-5).

The Melchizedek Priesthood is no ordinary priesthood; the High Priest is our Lord on high! But why a divine oath in affirming it, an oath never to be revoked? What changes will it bring? What effects will it have? What has made the Melchizedek Priesthood so imperative to warrant a divine oath guaranteeing its irrevocable perpetuity?

We find the answer briefly in verse 11 of Hebrews chapter 7, the central idea of the passage: The inability of the Levitical priesthood to make people perfect –i.e. to truly sanctify and save them—has necessitated the re-installation of the priesthood of Melchizedek in its place. And it's no surprise: the inferiority of the former clearly shows in all points of comparison

between the two priesthoods. The Melchizedek Priesthood is far superior to Aaron's by all standards—and that goes all the way back to their very origins.

First are the *persons* of their original, prototypical high priests. Humanly speaking, High Priest Melchizedek is peerless; He has no equal among men. He's in the mould of "the Son of God" and thus "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (v. 3). His titles translate as "the King of righteousness and the King of peace". As clear evidence of the towering height of His Person, great father Abraham, the great grandfather of Levi, the progenitor of the Levitical priests, was blessed by Him, in so far as "the lesser is blessed by the greater" (vv. 1,7).

But as is His Person so His priestly office—it's vastly superior in comparison. Again, the measure is the homage father Abraham paid Him when he gave Him tithes of all his plunder while, again, Levi, the progenitor of the 'rival' Levitical priesthood, was yet in his loins to be born in due time (v. 4).

The same cannot be said of the Levitical priesthood. Unlike the Melchizedek Priesthood, it is made up of ordinary men with known ancestry and *finite* life. Moreover, they through their great grandfather Abraham acknowledged the superior priestly office of Melchizedek. How? They paid tithes to Him through Abraham when they did not yet exist as a lineage of priests or even yet born into the world. That is to say, when Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, Levi, then in his body, by extension, also tithed to Him. The later recipient of God's tithes from his fellow Israelites was himself a 'tither' to the greater priest Melchizedek (vv. 5-10).

The whole act has profound spiritual significance:

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.

Melchizedek is no member of the priesthood authorized in the law to take tithes from the people, yet He received tithes from Abraham who "had the promises" and blessed him. If as great as Abraham was he was blessed by Melchizedek, that could only mean the 'blessor' was of a uniquely superior rank, the principle generally being that "the lesser is blessed by the superior".

Meanwhile, it has been established that the Levitical priesthood is not the only priesthood in the Bible which takes tithes; the example of Abraham, the ancestor of both the tithe-taking Levites and the tithe-paying Israelites, paying tithes to Melchizedek clearly shows that the Melchizedek Priesthood also takes tithes. Yet the fact that both priesthoods receive tithes does not mean that they are of the same kind or on the same level. They are poles apart in terms of their life spans and, by implication, their terms of office as priests: “In the one case [Levitical priesthood] tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case [Melchizedek Priesthood], by one of whom it is testified that He lives” (v. 8 *ESV*).

Got it?

Because Melchizedek is an eternal Priest—and lives even now—He still receives tithes today and will forever receive them! In other words, He’s eternally entitled to receive tithes because both His life and priesthood do not expire! How clear! Yet some insist tithing is not a New Covenant obligation. They had better say Melchizedek is inadmissible as the High Priest of the New Covenant of which He’s the mediator (Heb. 8:8) because He still receives tithes, a supposedly abolished Old Covenant commandment, today!

What is dead now and was *technically and spiritually dead then* and therefore disqualified from receiving tithes is the Levitical priesthood which, although was in existence as of the writing of the Letter to the Hebrews about 63 AD, had since been superseded by the restored Melchizedek priesthood of Christ. It was put out of office the very day Christ shed His blood on the stake, and the veil in the Temple partitioning the holy place from the most holy place was supernaturally torn from *top to bottom* (Matt. 27: 50-51). That was when He entered the true holy of holies in heaven itself and presented Himself before the Father with the blood tokens of our redemption (Heb. 9:12-14, 24). All along the Spirit of God had anticipated this grand feat of true redemption by the blood of the Lamb of God, even High Priest Melchizedek, when He forbade the Aaronic high priests from entering the holy of holies of the earthly tabernacle except once a year:

Heb. 9:1-8

1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.
2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people [see Lev. 16].

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST OF ALL WAS NOT YET MADE MANIFEST, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.

Now, the good news is, “the way into the holiest of all”, once closed and restricted, has appeared and been opened. The “way” is the shed blood of Jesus:

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,
20 By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;
21 And having an high priest over the house of God;
22 Let us draw near [into the holiest] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Heb. 10:19-22).

We have no reason to shrink from entering the most holy place in heaven, God’s throne room. The blood of Yeshua is our means of access, a way which is fresh and ever viable (living) and specially set apart for us. What is more, we have our High Priest in Christ. All that is expected of us is a sincere heart (attitude) of faith stemming from heartfelt repentance manifesting itself in a sanctified life.

The priesthood in office now and forever is the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ, and He receives tithes even today! Unless, of course, you believe it’s also out of office just like the Levitical priesthood which was literally put out of office in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and burnt down the temple —some 40 years after it was spiritually abolished in 31 AD when Christ offered Himself up at Calvary! The prophet Daniel was right on target in his 70 weeks’ prophecy:

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate (Dan. 9:26-27).

With the destruction of “the city and the sanctuary”, the Levitical priesthood went into a terminal coma until it succumbed to death eventually. The cessation of its telltale rituals tells the whole story. Because there’s no temple, there are no serving priests, and because there are no priests the temple sacrifices and oblations have come to a grinding halt!

Only the Melchizedek Priesthood remains in office. And for good reason. The Levitical priesthood fell short of the true function of the priestly office, which is to cleanse the people of their sins and put them in right standing with God. Its failure in this main task of the priesthood necessitated that a different priesthood arise to deal with the deficiency. The perfect answer was the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ:

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? (v. 11).

What then happens to the Levitical priesthood? Since the two cannot coexist, the inferior has to go, only it did not come into office without the backing of divine law:

Heb 7:12-19

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

13 For He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17 For He testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

20 And inasmuch as not without an oath He was made priest:

21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

One came by divine fiat; the other came by divine oath. On the basis of the divine instruction given to Moses to institute the Levitical priesthood, Christ could not qualify as a priest, much less a high priest, since He did not belong to the tribe of Levi but Judah. But the priesthood badly needed to be changed, yet that could not be without the changing of the divine regulation establishing it. So what did God do? Instead of the usual format of divine law or declaration, He used *the superior instrument of an oath* to establish the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ as an eternal priesthood to supersede both the Levitical priesthood and the law backing it.

The decisive 'edge' Melchizedek has over the Levi in their modes of establishment lies in the irrevocable vow God has solemnly made never to change or abolish it. It's practically an acknowledgement of the eternity of the person of the installed priest—He's "made after the power of an endless life"!

Furthermore, the oath not only implies the annulment of the prior law establishing the Levitical priesthood for its weakness and worthlessness and ineffectiveness but also "the bringing in of a better hope", a hope which translates into being able to draw closer to God (vv. 18-19). Now, what has enabled Christ to do all this? It's the irrevocable oath. It's by it that Christ has become the guarantee of a better covenant (vv. 20-22).

The commandment regulating the Levitical priesthood and its rituals and sacrifices is described as weak, worthless and ineffective because it could not bring about true redemption and hence true reconciliation with God. For it could not remove sin and thereby make the sinner perfect:

Heb 10:1-4

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

God commanded it for only one reason—for its symbolic significance. The law of animal sacrifices was simply meant to point forward to the perfect once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ. It was meant to be our school master to Christ so that we will be justified by faith in His blood (Gal. 3:24-25). "It made nothing perfect".

But Christ does take away sin; He does make perfect:

Heb 10:8-14

Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

9 Then said He, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

12 But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

13 From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.

14 For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Not only because of the superior quality of His blood in terms of its purity and human life equivalence (life sacrificed on behalf of the same kind, instead of an animal's) but also because He abides a priest forever!

This certainly could not be said of the Levitical priesthood. They were an army of priests, but death curtailed the priesthood of each one of them one by one:

Heb 7:23-25

And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Straightaway, the endless life of Melchizedek, Christ, gives His priesthood an added advantage; He's able to do a thorough job of saving all who come to God through Him because He lives forever to intercede for them. Death dare not interfere!

And He's perfect in His nature too, unlike the Aaronic priests who were stained with their own sins let alone their congregations:

Heb 7:26-28

For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Clothed with impeccable heavenly holiness, Jesus is fit to be our high priest; He's the kind of high priest we need. The oath consecrating the Son as an eternal priest in place of the mortal, sinful Levitical priesthood is certainly justified.

Christ is the High Priest we need; He meets our needs adequately (see Heb. 2:16-18; 4:15). Surely, He's worthy of our loyalty and homage. And what a better way to do this than to follow the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:16), by tithing to Melchizedek just as he did?

We need to bear in mind that, since the time of Abraham to date, Melchizedek still receives tithes. That is the incontrovertible testimony of the scriptures. He hasn't changed. He's the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). It was He who on receiving tithes from Abraham "blessed him that had the promises" (Heb. 7:6).

Now, who are the current heirs of the promise? You and me if we truly belong to Christ:

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29).

The sense of the scripture is plain: if we are true believers in Christ, then we are Abraham's spiritual children and that makes us heirs to the same promises God made to Abraham (cp Gen. 12:2-3). But what actually proves our Abrahamic heritage? What is the PROOF that we are the children of Abraham?

The doing of "the works of Abraham"! Jesus rebuked the apostate Jews of His time: "... If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). Similarly, John the Baptist dressed down the sanctimonious Pharisees:

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire (Matt. 3:8-10).

The qualification is not biological connection as some spiritually barren Jews erroneously thought. Neither is it even mere faith (intellectual assent) without deeds (Jam. 2:17-23). What qualifies one as a child of Abraham is to do his works! It's to produce the same fruits of righteousness he produced.

Tithe payment was one of them—and that to Melchizedek who is Christ. Now, will we have his promises but not his works which includes tithing to Melchizedek?

The Almighty will not find this acceptable and He knew neither would Abraham. In Gen. 26 He renewed the Abrahamic covenant with Isaac with a reminder of his father's works of obedience:

2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;
5 BECAUSE THAT ABRAHAM OBEYED MY VOICE, AND KEPT MY CHARGE, MY COMMANDMENTS, MY STATUTES, AND MY LAWS (Gen. 26:2-5).

Earlier in Gen. 18 the LORD decided against withholding His intended punitive action against Sodom and Gomorrah from Abraham because He knew his heart and He knew he would bring up his children in the fear of the LORD:

17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;
18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?
19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:17-19).

The “way of the LORD” corresponds to “My voice ... My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” in Genesis 26. Thus, in effect, “the works of Abraham” are the commandments of God which he obeyed as evidence of his faith (see Heb. 11:8).

If only we are his children, his works are still the works we must do, which really is all about keeping the commandments and laws of God. That is how we look up to Abraham as our father:

Isa 51:1-2
1 Hearken to Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.
2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

What does the text say? It’s only the followers of righteousness that God considers to be the children of Abraham and so says to them, “Look unto Abraham your father”. It therefore follows that to “follow after righteousness” is to do “the works of Abraham”. Once this is done, the promised blessings are sure to follow—“for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him”.

The promises are the same, and the works are the same. God’s righteous standards do not vary from one generation of Abraham’s descendants to another. The same set of divine laws and commandments were originally given to Israel on Mount Sinai - the ceremonial laws of the Levitical priesthood only being added later as a temporary measure (Gal. 3:19) - and it’s the same laws that have been put in our hearts and minds as New Covenant believers under the priesthood of Melchizedek, Christ:

Jer. 7:21-23

21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:

23 But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

Heb. 8:10-11

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people:

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.

As far as the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ is concerned, tithing is still valid, for scripture insists, He who “it’s witnessed that He liveth” (forever) receives them. Moreover, He did not come to destroy the law or the prophets but to “fill to the brim”, to “abundantly furnish” it (Grk) and to “magnify” it, and He says until heaven (the sky) and earth pass away not the least stroke of a letter will pass away from the law of God (Matt. 5:17-18; Isa. 42:21).

Clearly then, we cannot accept His priesthood without accepting tithing, a divinely commanded obligation which goes with it and which father Abraham dutifully performed as an example to us, the present heirs of the promises. And the word says, “He blessed him that had the promises”. The blessedness of tithe payment to Melchizedek should never be discounted if we seek the same blessing Abraham received from Melchizedek on giving Him a “tenth of all”. This Melchizedek is Christ our High Priest, and He still receives tithes.

Now the big question is, how do we get the tithes to Him? Where is He anyway?

Melchizedek Ministers in the heavenly Sanctuary

In Hebrews 8 the Apostle Paul enlarges on a divine command given to Moses in passing while receiving instructions from God on the building of the tabernacle, its dimensions, its accoutrements and sections and functions. The command—repeated twice—states simply:

According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount (Ex. 25:9, 40)

Behind the divine words lay a great mystery only unveiled in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The pattern shown to Moses on Mount Sinai was that of the heavenly tabernacle. This meant the Levitical priesthood represented by the duplicate earthly tabernacle was a pale shadow of the original priesthood in heaven (for if there were no priesthood in heaven, there would certainly be no tabernacle in heaven):

1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

4 For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law [which made the descendants of Levi priests]:

5 Who serve unto THE EXAMPLE AND SHADOW OF HEAVENLY THINGS, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou MAKE ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN shewed to thee in the mount.

6 But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises (Heb. 8:1-6).

Our High Priest, Melchizedek, Christ, who meets our needs perfectly, ministers in the heavenly sanctuary (Holy of Holies), located within “the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man”.

Exactly what “tabernacle” means as a biblical terminology is open to several layers of interpretation, all equally valid. The literal sense is, of course, the tabernacle God asked Moses to build in the wilderness “according to the pattern showed thee in the mount”. The purpose of the tabernacle, as disclosed to Moses, was to house the Presence of Yahweh among His people (Ex. 29:42-46; cp 25:22). Fast-forward to the New Testament, and the word tabernacle takes on a new spiritual meaning, also with varying shades of its own.

In the New Testament, tabernacle is, first, the bodily presence of the divine Son of God among men (the Word made flesh, who is God manifest in the flesh):

And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and of truth (John 1:14 Literal Translation of the Holy Bible LITV).

And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in flesh, was justified in Spirit, was seen by angels, was proclaimed among nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16 LITV).

The second understanding of tabernacle in the context of the New Testament scriptures is that believers' bodies are the temple of God's Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; Eph. 2:20-22; 2 cor. 5:1-5; 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5). But so far, this is still not the whole truth of the mystery of the tabernacle in the divine scheme of things.

The tabernacle in its highest sense represents the *broken body* of Christ through which we have access to God and of which we are members or body parts:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,
By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say,
His flesh (Heb. 10:19-20).

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular (1 Cor. 12:27; also Eph. 5:30).

Still, the New Testament testimony about the tabernacle is not all about its spiritual, metaphorical significance. It also attests to its being a replica of the heavenly tabernacle, and this is the straightforward sense in which it's used in Hebrews chapter 8. High Priest Melchizedek, Christ, ministers in "the true tabernacle [in heaven], which the Lord pitched, and not man [Moses]". And it is the model from which the earthly tabernacle was copied.

It's most likely that, like the apostle John, Moses was allowed to view the true tabernacle in heaven in the form of a vision while on Mount Sinai with Yah. Both were "in the Spirit" and therefore could gain access into the holy presence of God:

Rev. 4:1-2

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

Ex 34:27-28

And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Deut 10:10

And I stayed in the mount, according to the first time, forty days and forty nights; and the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also, and the LORD would not destroy thee (see also Ex. 24:16-18).

In the biblical text, it's plain that Moses was specifically allowed to see the heavenly tabernacle while on Mount Sinai with God (Acts 7:44), but for John it formed part of his long vision on Patmos island in which he went on a virtual tour of heaven. This explains why references to the "tabernacle" occur somewhat naturally in the course of his narrative, except in one instance where he reported *seeing* it:

Rev 13:6

And he [the antichrist] opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

Rev 15:5

And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened (cp. Rev. 11:19).

Rev 21:3

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.

The tabernacle of God in heaven, even "the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven", is where Christ ministers as High Priest Melchizedek; it is where His priesthood is 'headquartered'. This not only makes His tabernacle the pattern for the earthly tabernacle but also makes His heavenly Priesthood the pattern for the earthly Levitical priesthood. Thus, again, we see that it's the Melchizedek Priesthood that is older and eternal than its inferior copy, "for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

And, indeed, the Levitical priesthood was only a temporary carnal arrangement that would operate "until the time of reformation":

Heb. 9:6-15

6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

8 The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them UNTIL THE TIME OF REFORMATION.

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building [creation];

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15 And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

The Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ is the true Priesthood, able to make people truly perfect and holy by the PERFECT BLOOD. It's inferior to none! This is the priesthood of heavenly origin, the eternal priesthood under which Melchizedek has always ministered in heaven. If so, how could He be human if not the divine Son of God?

In the Garden of Eden, Adam was a king-priest in his pre-fall state, the evidence being his display of knowledge in naming all the animals and exercising authority over creation (Gen. 2:19-20; Ps. 8:4-9; Mal. 2:7). But when he fell, he himself stood in need of a priest – a mediator between God and man, an office which truly and exclusively belong to Jesus, “the only Mediator” (1 Tim 2:5).

So, how was Adam's need of a priest met? It was fulfilled in crude form when God killed (sacrificed) animals and used their skins as a covering for Adam and his wife Eve (Gen. 3:21). It was a symbolic enactment of the atonement to come when “the seed” of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent and atone for their sins (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 2:14-15). Now, who was this God-Priest who out of compassion for the error and sin of Adam (Heb. 5:1-2) shed blood to symbolize a covering for sin? Not possibly the Father God, for no man, in the aftermath of the Adamic fall, has ever heard His voice or seen His shape (John 5:37; 6:46; cp John 1:18).

The God-Priest who clothed Adam and Eve in animal skins (Gen. 3:21) was the Christ, the eternal King-Priest in the order of Melchizedek! Except that His sin offering *at that time* was a prefigurement. He truly began to function as a High Priest only *after* He shed His own blood to atone for and to cleanse us of our sins. Yet He was “foreordained” from the

foundation of the world as our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek just as He was also foreordained from the foundation of the world as the flawless Lamb of God who would shed His blood to redeem us at a definite point in salvation history (1 Pet 1:18-20; John 1:29, 36; Heb. 9:26; cp Rev. 13:8; Eph. 1:4, 2:10). If Christ were not so ordained as a priest, He would not be an eternal priest, not only because His priesthood would have a definite beginning with its ‘eternity’ ‘starting’ from the time of His ascension to heaven, but also because His priesthood would not have eternal relevance, the permanent effects of which transcend the New Testament era and apply retrospectively as well to the Old Testament saints who in faith shed the blood of sacrificial animals to represent His holy precious blood to be shed someday. Apostle Paul beautifully sets out the concept in Rom. 3:23-26:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24 and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins.
26 It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (ESV; see also Heb. 9:15).

The use of animal blood as a sacrifice for sin could not truly bring about justification (divine declaration of one as righteous) but, left with no alternative, the old saints sacrificed the animals anyway. Surprisingly God accepted and overlooked their sins, not because there was any inherent merit in the blood of the animals to atone for their sins but because He projected Himself to the day when Christ would bring about true redemption by His blood. This way, God was justified (righteous) in “passing over the former sins”, meaning He didn’t just pretend the sins were forgiven when it wasn’t so in reality; He overlooked and forgave the sins because someday Christ would truly make this possible—just as it’s today! This was why at His death, God publicly displayed Christ—‘SET HIM’ FORTH (Grk)—as a propitiation for sin by His blood. The pure blood of Jesus shed for sin is the testimony to God’s righteousness in forgiving people of their sins, past and present.

Truly then, Christ was ordained from the beginning as the High Priest of the Melchizedek Priesthood because, as apostle Yakub (James) puts it, “known unto God are all His works from the beginning” (Acts 15:18). Indeed those works were finished from the foundation of the world (Heb. 4:3).

Significantly, Melchizedek is the first priest mentioned by name in the Bible as well as the last. The Melchizedek Priesthood is the alpha and omega of all priesthood (Rev. 1:8).

He is the first to receive tithes and the last to be proclaimed as still worthy to receive tithes because He lives forever as our eternal High Priest. Since His priesthood does not end, He is eternally entitled to receive tithes!

But still the question remains to be answered: how does Melchizedek get the tithes due Him from His congregation which is the church on earth? Since a tithe is something physical and tangible – the tenth of an increase or income – how does it get to Him in the spiritual world in heaven?

To find an answer this question, we need to find an answer to the equally important question of how Melchizedek ministering in the spiritual heavenly sanctuary actually ministers to us as our High Priest in the physical world. Does His *heavenly* priesthood impact on His congregation on *earth* at all? If it does, by what means does He, as High Priest, offer the “gifts” of His priestly office to His congregation on earth? (Heb. 8:3).

Melchizedek Channels the Gifts and Blessings of His Priesthood through His Representatives on Earth

Melchizedek ministers in heaven, but He is not far removed His congregation. He is spiritually with His people wherever they are and at all times:

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

... And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:20).

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks [churches, v. 20] [was] One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a [priestly] garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle (Rev. 1:13; 2:1).

It has been further underlined in the above scriptures that Melchizedek is an eternal high priest to His people because He lives forever, and He is with them in spirit at all times wherever they may be.

Yet this is just one level of His spiritual engagement with His people. Another level is that He works through His specially chosen vessels to make available to His congregation His spiritual gifts and blessings in a more tangible way. In other words, Melchizedek has representatives on earth whom He has given special spiritual gifts and abilities “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”:

Eph 4:11-13

11 And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:7-13).

He gave some. These are a special class within the church; they are Christ's full-time ministers charged with mainly spiritual duties mandated by Christ and carried out on His behalf. As His direct representatives who carry out the work of His ministry on earth, High Priest Melchizedek says the material needs of His full-time ministers should be taken care of by His congregation. Now, since the congregation is obliged to pay Him tithes, doesn't He have the right to ask that His tithes be paid THROUGH His ministers THROUGH whom He ministers to the church?

It was about this special group of dedicated, fulltime ministers performing the functions of His priesthood as teachers, apostles and pastors, etc, that He said after His resurrection:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you (John 20:21; cp 17:18).

The *sent ones* are on the same mission God sent His Son to do on earth – i.e. to preach the gospel to the lost and reconcile them to God – because Christ has delegated that responsibility to them. So then, they are the EXTENSION of the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ on earth, who act for Him and on His behalf as His special representatives *through* whom He ministers to people. If so, is it asking too much if He says His tithes should be passed to Him through these special representatives of His?

The PROOF of His having sent them is not only the word preached but also the supernatural signs and wonders accompanying the preaching of the gospel to indicate that He's spiritually with them and, in fact, WORKING through them:

Mark 16:20

20 And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Heb 2:3-4

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?

Rom 15:18-19

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,
19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

1 Cor. 2:4-5

4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Without the SUPERNATURAL AUTHENTICATION of a minister's message and work as Christ's own WORK with the heavenly signs and miracles of healing, etc, you have every reason to be reluctant to pass your tithes through that minister to High Priest Melchizedek, Christ. The tithes will surely not get to Him because He does not work through him. This, however, is no excuse to duck out of tithe payment. So long as Melchizedek remains your High Priest you owe it as a duty to Him to pay tithes. He has not said the tenth of your income is now yours; He says "all the tithe is Mine".

The right thing to do therefore is to find His true representatives through whom to channel the tithes. For the truth equally is that as long as He remains a priest forever He has and will always have true ministers ministering to His people under His heavenly priesthood. But how do you find them?

Here are two clues to help you in your search: the true ministers preach the full Gospel including obedience to the Law of God which He came not to pull down but to fulfill (i.e. fill to the brim, to endorse) and they preach with signs and wonders following:

Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion (Isa. 8:18).

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20).

Once you identify such category of true ministers (for BY THEIR FRUITS YOU SHALL KNOW THEM, Matt. 7:15-20), pay God's tithes to them, and it will get to Melchizedek, because now you have evidence of Him working through them.

Tithing Reaffirmed in the Gospel

The first important truth, of course, is that the head of the ministry of the Gospel is Melchizedek, Christ, who, because He has an eternal priesthood, still receives tithes. The second important truth relating to tithing under the New Covenant is that Christ demands

that His fulltime ministers be taken care of the same way the Levitical priests of the Old Covenant were taken care of. The reference is undoubtedly to tithes and offerings.

Interestingly, the Lord makes the case for the provision of the material needs of His fulltime ministers by the lay members of His congregation by invoking the same moral argument He used in directing the Israelites to pay tithes to the Levites: Just as it is the responsibility of the Levites to see to the spiritual welfare of the nation so it's the responsibility of the nation to also see to the material welfare of the Levites. It's a fair division of labour with the result that neither group is short-changed in either spiritual blessings or material blessings. Equity prevails:

And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, FOR THE SERVICE WHICH THEY SERVE, EVEN THE SERVICE OF THE TABERNACLE OF THE CONGREGATION (Num. 18:21).

And unto the sons of Levi, lo! I have given all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance,-the allotted portion FOR THEIR LABORIOUS WORK WHICH,THEY ARE PERFORMING, THE LABORIOUS WORK OF THE TENT OF MEETING (*Rotherham's Emphasized Bible*).

The Lord carries the principle over into the New Testament, teaching through the apostle Paul that His fulltime ministers have physical and social needs which must be met by the lay brethren as their moral and spiritual responsibility towards the ministers who provide them spiritual riches.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul asks in response to unnamed critics who not only questioned his apostolic credentials but also—arising from that criticism—his right to receive financial support (1 Cor. 9:1-3) from the Corinthian church:

1 Cor. 9:4-6

4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

The answer to the above questions is a resounding “yes” in each case: they had right to financial support to pay for such essentials as food and drink, and like the rest of the apostles, including the half-brothers of the Lord Jesus, he and Barnabas each had right to take a sister to wife. In fact, the norm, rather than the exception, was that Paul and Barnabas as fulltime ministers should NOT have been engaged in any secular work alongside their ministerial work as Paul did as a tent maker (Acts 18:3; 20:33-34). Although he makes known his reasons for this, the laid-down rule was that God's fulltime ministers, such as the

apostles, be freed from all encumbrances so that they would devote themselves “continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

The apostle then draws support from natural justice at work in everyday life experiences and the law of God itself to hammer home his point that it’s the binding the obligation of the congregation to take care of the material needs of the ministers of God who have “sowed to them spiritual things”. He argues, for example, that it’s not the norm for the soldier who fights for his nation to pay himself; neither is it expected of the farmer who plants the seed to deny himself enjoyment of the harvest. It’s only reasonable, he stresses, that the one who labours for the benefit of another is adequately compensated by the benefiting party. He asks in a robust manner:

1 Cor. 9:7-11

7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

8 Say I these things as a man [using human reasoning or common sense]? or saith not the law the same also?

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

10 Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

Then he hesitates: “If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ” (v. 12). The “others” are the other apostles and fulltime ministers of the gospel who, in accordance with the principle of reciprocity, received financial support from the Corinthians *as a right*. Therefore as their spiritual father who first preached to them and brought them to Christ (1 Cor. 4:15), the apostle Paul certainly had GREATER rights to financial support from the Corinthian church, but he waived those rights for a peculiar reason peculiar to the Corinthian church—he didn’t want to “hinder the gospel of Christ”.

What was ordinarily meant to further the cause of the gospel was in the specific case of the Corinthian church a threat. Paul didn’t want to be FALSELY accused of extortion! He says in 2 Cor. 11:7-11:

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted [had need], I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

Apostle Paul had lack while attending to the work of the ministry in Corinth, but he refrained from seeking help from the Corinthian church members who were the direct beneficiaries of his spiritual services at that particular point in time because of and in avoidance of the likely uninformed, unfounded criticism of some in the church! The Corinthian church, as the two Pauline weighty letters which bear their name indicate, was something of a problem church, made up of carnal-minded, divisive elements and SUPERCILIOUS LOUD-MOUTHED CRITICS (1 Cor. 3:1-4; 1:10-13, 20-21; 3:18-21; 4; 2 Cor. 10:10-16) who possibly out of envy of the apostle Paul – and to get for themselves the material benefits of his dedicated spiritual work – accused him of using the ministry as a cover for extortion and mercenary pursuits! But the apostle, who denounced ministers who considered religion as a means of financial gain (1 Tim. 6:5-6), dismissed the malicious criticisms against him and rather pointed to his critics and detractors – many of them his fellow Jews who considered themselves ministers of a higher spiritual calibre – as the ones truly guilty of extortion and spiritual fraud. He continues his self-defence in 2 Cor. 11:

12 And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do.

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little.

17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool.

18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast.

19 For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves!

20 For you bear it if SOMEONE MAKES SLAVES OF YOU, OR DEVOURS [i.e. defrauds] YOU, OR TAKES ADVANTAGE OF YOU, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.

21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone else dares to boast of--I am speaking as a fool--I also dare to boast of that.

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I.

23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.

24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;

26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;

27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches (*English Standard Version ESV*).

The apostle bared his soul! He was overwhelmed by the unjustified criticisms leveled against him by persons who were, by contrast, deceivers and spiritual neophytes seeking undeserved glory in addition to being greedy exploiters!

Paul would not insist on his right of support in such a hostile environment where to do so would invite verbal attacks and opprobrium. The last thing he wanted was to give his detractors a reason—rightly or wrongly—to harm the cause of the gospel (2 Cor. 6:3). Thus the church in Corinth was the only church where Paul *as a rule applicable to only that church* declined their support:

2 Cor. 12:11-18

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

In comparison with the other churches, the Corinthian church was not inferior in spiritual blessings because Paul did not withhold from them, as in those assemblies, any spiritual gift,

knowledge and grace deposited in him as a competent apostle of Christ. Indeed, all “the signs of an apostle were wrought among [them] in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds”. The only difference between the church in Corinth and the other churches was that Paul declined to receive support from the former, and even extended this to his co-workers sent there to minister. But that was no cause for spiritual joy. So he says to them, “Forgive me this wrong”! Why? Because by failing to support the ministry materially, the Corinthians were robbing themselves of a spiritual privilege and a blessing. The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary observes rightly: “His declining support from the Corinthians might be regarded as the denial to them of a privilege, and a mark of their spiritual inferiority, and of his looking on them with less confidence and love (compare [2Co_11:9](#), [2Co_11:11](#))”.

When it came to material support for the apostolic ministry of Paul, Corinth was the odd one out among the churches of God founded by him. The model church in this respect was the church in Philippi, a city of Macedonia. They supplied liberally the needs of Paul and even extended their generosity to “the poor saints at Jerusalem” then in the grip of a severe famine (see Acts 11:28-30; 24:17). They were motivated by an understanding that their material supplies were a kind of payment for the spiritual things they received from the ministry. They saw themselves as indebted to the Jewish ministers of God whose labours and sacrifices had brought them truth and salvation in Christ. The apostle Paul wrote of them in Romans chapter 15:

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

In his Letter to the Philippians, he heaps praises and blessings on them for their unending benevolence:

Phil. 4:10-19

10 But I rejoiced in *the* Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me has flourished again. Although you indeed did think, but you lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak according to need, for I have learned to be content in whatever state I am.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. In everything and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

14 Yet you did well in sharing my troubles.

15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as regards giving and receiving, except you alone.

16 For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again to my necessity.

17 I do not say this because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But I have all, and abound. I have been filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things which you sent, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (MKJV).

This was the spirit the Corinthians lacked—giving to the ministry out of a sense of duty and yet willingly and un-begrudgingly! Ironically, it was their lack of such understanding that would prompt Paul to elaborate on the tithing principle of financial giving to God’s work. And he made it clear it was not just a matter of moral obligation but an ORDINANCE OF THE LORD; that is, an order or rule made by God. Thus he continues his argument from the spiritual angle:

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

EVEN SO hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:13-14).

The dispensation has changed and so has the priesthood together with its sacrificial rites, but the prescribed livelihood for the ministers of the old is the SAME for the ministers of the new. And what did the former ministers live on, if not TITHES and OFFERINGS which formed the contributions of the people?

The Lord Jesus has ordained the SAME for His ministers serving under His Melchizedek priesthood which *still* receives tithes. Just as He ordained that the Levitical priests should live off the tithes and offerings of the Israelites who worshipped at the temple (see Deut. 18:1-5; 2 Chron. 31:4-12; Neh. 10:37-38; 12:44), so He has ordained that His ministers who preach the gospel are entitled to tithes and offerings from the beneficiaries of the gospel -- believers and converts to His Gospel (see Matt. 10:9-10; Luke 22:35).

Here’s the plain truth that tithes and offerings have not been abrogated under the New Covenant Priesthood of Melchizedek. It’s a living priesthood permanently in office, unlike the dead Levitical priesthood which has been put out of office. Moreover, Melchizedek the Christ affirms that tithing “should not be left done” but be done along with “the weightier matters of the law” such as “justice, mercy and faith” (Matt. 23:23).

The only reason why Paul didn't exercise his right to demand tithes and offerings from the Corinthian church was that he wanted to avoid unjustified criticism and calumny by a people whose spiritual understanding was suspect and who bore him ill will. So he restates his explanation:

But I have used none of these things [my rights to tithes and offerings]: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! (1 Cor. 9:15-16).

The preaching of the gospel was an all-important responsibility, and he would preach it with or without support from the Corinthian brethren. And indeed he would rather forgo their support. Nevertheless, his exhortations and rebukes were not in vain. The Corinthians eventually did come round to an understanding of the value of giving to the Lord's cause (2 Cor. 8:8-11). Yet not to Paul personally but to the "poor saints at Jerusalem" and presumably other needy saints elsewhere. The apostle would still not let them provide his personal needs. And knowing their history, he, as a precaution, asked them to choose some of their own people to accompany the supplies to whichever place they were destined for so they could witness the distribution and report back accordingly! (1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:18-21).

Altogether then, we see the apostle Paul strongly endorsing the tithing principle which was defined in clear terms when God in instituting the Levitical priesthood to operate temporarily authorized that His tithes be given to them. That he didn't use the word 'tithe' doesn't mean he didn't speak to the principle. His repeated references to his *right* of support from the congregation (KJV "power") *take away the element voluntary giving and replace it with an element of obligation* on the part of the congregation to give. Now, what Biblical law of giving makes it obligatory for people to give to God or His ministers apart from the law of tithes?

Rather than disowning it, the New Testament scriptures make a strong case for continued tithing under the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ. Its continued legitimacy derives from the principle arising from itself and repeated over and over in the New Testament that spiritual service must be compensated for. So then, God would never do away with the law of tithes as long as He has ministers on earth to carry out His spiritual work among and on behalf of His people. The tithes, which He owns by right as the Creator and the Possessor of heaven and earth, are their "wages" so to speak. And it's to be seen as part of the honour due to them as God's ministers. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

It's clear by the analogy with the treading ox and the still clearer reference to the labourer's "reward" that the "double honour" meant here is in the context of financial giving or remuneration, although in 1 Thessalonians it's a call to courteous behaviour towards the elder (1 Thess. 5:12-13). In Galatians the apostle further instructs:

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches (Gal. 6:6 EMTV).

Share in all good things with the one teaching you spiritual truth! This surely places greater obligation on us not only to tithe regularly and faithfully but also to offer bountifully and readily from the bottom of hearts as the Lord blesses us. If we are to offer even our bodies as "a living sacrifice to God", is it a great thing if we part with some of our earthly goods in support of the devoted minister giving us spiritual riches of timeless value? This was what motivated the early church to give unstintingly to God, laying them at "the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:33-37). Their very lives and everything they possessed was the Lord's. (See 1 Cor.6:19).

How to Pay Tithes

Now that it has been established that Christ, who is High Priest Melchizedek, still receives tithes and that these tithes should be given to His true ministers along with offerings for their material wellbeing, what needs to be further established is how to go about the actual payment of the tithes.

First is the 'spiritual environment' in which tithes should be paid and second, the mode of the payment itself.

Christ reproached the Pharisees not for obeying the law of tithes but for their shallow, showy approach to tithe payment such that it did not stem from true heartfelt repentance and righteousness:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Matt. 23:23).

The self-righteous Pharisees tithed strictly on each and every increase of the field; they paid attention to the minutiae of the tithing law (all the little details thereof), but all of this was divorced from the *inward virtues* God demanded of His people by His law: "justice, mercy, and faith". The Pharisees were more interested in the *outward works* or fruits, including tithe payment, which people could see and perhaps commend them for (see Matt. 6:1-4),

but Christ said such an approach was wrong. Thus it was not the act of tithe payment by the Pharisees which Christ denounced but the spirit in which they did it.

In other words, follow “justice, mercy and faith” and faithfully pay your tithes on top—*don’t leave it undone!* Otherwise you may as well not tithe; your tithes are ‘defiled’ because the source (yourself) is not yet consecrated to the will of God. Your motives cannot be pure because your heart is not pure, and God has seen it (Ps. 50:16-17). Your tithes are unacceptable to Him, since it’s only “the pure in heart” that shall see God (Matt. 5:8). That’s why the first apostles and missionaries of Christ preached the gospel free, “taking nothing from the Gentiles” among whom they preached (3 John 1:7). They relied solely on the contributions (tithes and offerings) of truly repentant believers whose hearts were right with God and who made decent money through honest labour to qualify to give to the holy cause of the gospel.

God does not place a premium on earthly riches but on converted hearts devoted to His will. Therefore, He expects His people to give their tithes and offerings as part of a holistic, WHOLEHEARTED obedience to His will; otherwise the giving is reduced to a showy religious act motivated by neither love for God nor by faith which is sin (Rom. 14:23). Self-glory is the object.

But once we have met the initial requirement of true godliness welling from our inner selves, how should we actually pay our tithes?

The original establishes the precedent. Father Abraham’s tithe payment to Melchizedek set the pattern for us as to the correct way to tithe to Melchizedek.

In the first recorded act of tithe payment in the Bible, it’s said that Abram gave Melchizedek, the Priest of the Most High God, “tithes of all” (Gen. 14:20). But what “all”?

The “all” refers to all the goods the invaders plundered from Sodom and the neighbouring kingdoms and which Abraham recovered from them (vv. 11-12, 16). Thus the goods, in turn, became Abraham’s booty which as the rules of war dictated was rightfully his, as his compensation, etc. It was of this booty that Abraham “gave a tenth part of all” to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:2). That is to say, *he gave a tenth part of each of the different categories of the spoils of war to Melchizedek.* Thus of clothing a tenth, of gold a tenth, of silver a tenth, of grain a tenth and of cattle the same. And that after the feeding expense of the army and other operational costs had been taken care of but before any other incidental deductions. When the king of Sodom asked Abraham to take the rest of the goods after he had given the “tenth part of all” to Melchizedek, he declined the offer but then indicated that the young men who constituted his victorious army had “eaten” a portion of the goods in the course of the war *prior* to his giving the tithes to Melchizedek. However, he was yet to give Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, his allies, their portions which he would have taken out of his own post-tithe portion had he not refused it:

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion (Gen. 14:21-24).

Thus Abraham tithed on his increase or profit which is what remains after one's operating expenses but before any other deductions are made. He knew the correct way to tithe to God. As "the friend of God", he must have surely been taught by God to tithe correctly to Him (Jam. 2:23; John 15:14-15). Abraham tithed as God specified:

Lev 27:30-32

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.

31 And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof.

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.

Deut 14:22

22 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.

"All the tithe" which belonged to God and was due Him was in practice a tenth of "the increase" of the field, that is, a tenth of what actually came in from the field minus what the farm hands had eaten or taken away as their wages (see Ruth 2:14-18). In simple terms, it's 'income' (that which has 'come in'). *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary* defines "increase" translated from the Hebrew word *t^ebû'âh* (#8393) as "income, that is, produce (literally or figuratively): - fruit, gain, increase, revenue".

The *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines *increase* as "growth: increment: addition to the original stock: profit: produce: progeny (arch.)" p. 663. For *income* it gives this definition "... that which comes in: profit, or interest from anything: revenue" (p. 662).

Similarly, the *Chambers Encyclopedic English Dictionary* defines *income* as "money received over a period of time as payment for work, etc or as interest or profit from shares or investment [from Middle English *income*, that which has come in]" (p. 632).

Thus "income" is what has 'come in' or been received after operating expenses have been paid but before taxes and one's living expenses have been taken out. This is what is 'tithable' or subject to tithe payment. This was how Abraham tithed.

And how Jacob intended to tithe in response to the fulfilment of Yahweh's covenantal promise to bless him:

Gen. 28:20-22

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.

He would give him a tithe of every material blessing that would come to him if God fulfilled His promise to him. He would tithe on his total income—give Him tithes of everything that would come to him through the work of his hands! It was both an act of worship and the fulfilment of his side of the covenant between God and himself. The covenant sprung from and was in fact a renewal of the everlasting covenant God made with Grandfather Abraham (Gen. 17). As Jacob slept at night on his way to his uncle Laban in Haran to escape Esau's wrath, Yahweh revealed Himself to him and spoke to him in a dream:

Gen 28:12-17

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. [cp John 1:51].

13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

It was at this point when Jacob startled out of his sleep that he made his vow to God to give Him "a tenth of all" He would bless him with if He indeed fulfilled His promise to provide his needs and protect him.

Giving a tithe of all his *increase* to Yahweh was the logical thing to do since Jacob's first response to the fulfilment of Yahweh's promise would be to recognize Him as his God (Elohim).

With Yahweh as his God, it was appropriate that Jacob paid tithes to Him both as an act of worship and the fulfilment of his contractual pledge to honour God for keeping faith with him. Like Abraham, then, Jacob recognized tithing as a legitimate form of divine worship as well as a religious duty performed in return for the goodness and favour of Yahweh.

But more importantly, God sees tithes the same way. Having fulfilled His promise to Jacob and blessed him tremendously over a period of over twenty years, He called on him to redeem his vow:

Gen 35:1-7

35:1 And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

3 And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

4 And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem

5 And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

6 So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him.

7 And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

Jacob fully redeemed his pledge:

1. He ordered his household to make a clean break with pagan gods by ridding themselves of their idols, which included the earring-amulets in their ears, because Yahweh was now his God.
2. He used Yahweh's tithes to build an altar to Him in acknowledgment of His faithfulness to him: He answered him in the day of distress and was with him wherever he went.

The faithfulness of Yahweh made a deep impression on Jacob all his life, and he never once spared the opportunity to acknowledge it to the LORD Himself as well as to others. In Genesis 32, he prayed to the LORD:

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands (vv. 9-10; see also Gen. 48:16).

From practically zero to “two bands” (camps or companies) of possessions! This was the tangible testimony to God’s faithfulness to Jacob. He not only protected him but also ensured that he was fabulously blessed as He promised him. Laban, Jacob’s boss, who happened to be his uncle and later his father-in-law, “changed his wages ten times”, but Yahweh still did not fail to make good his promise to bless Jacob. He miraculously turned over Laban’s livestock to Jacob by causing the cattle and the sheep to give birth to a preponderance of offspring with streaks and speckles in their skins which constituted Jacob’s agreed wages for tending Laban’s flock (Gen. 30:25-26). As Jacob contemplated returning home, he summoned his two wives, Leah and Rachel, to the field for a tete-a-tete:

Gen 31:4-13

4 And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock,

5 And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.

6 And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

8 If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked.

9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.

10 And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

11 And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

13 I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred (also vv. 38-42).

“The God of Bethel” never abandoned Jacob. He stayed with him with all His miracle power and ensured that he was blessed despite all odds.

This is the God who reminds of Jacob his promise (made in response to His own promise) in Genesis 35. He never fails, and He expects those whom He blesses in fulfilment of His promises to them to tithe to Him. To this day, He still expects His people to tithe to Him because He will never cease blessing them in fulfilment of His promises.

Jacob in pledging to give “a tenth of all” He would give him intended to follow the precedent set by Abraham when he tithed to Melchizedek. He planned to tithe on all his increase, i.e. every blessing that would ‘come in’ to him. He would tithe on what was his profit (wages) from looking after Laban’s flock which involved replacing Laban’s cattle stolen or killed by predators with his own (Gen. 31:38-40).

Clearly then, apart from the operating costs and losses incurred in the course of the productive effort, what is ACTUALLY GAINED—ALL ONE’S EARNINGS—is not subject to any other deductions until the tenth part of it is given to the LORD. In other words, a tenth of ALL the gain or profit must be given to Yahweh before we take out our living expenses like food and clothing and routine expenses like school fees and even tax. God has graciously given us 90% of our income to take care of all these.

While God commands us to pay our taxes (Rom. 13:1-7), we are not to do so at the expense of our tithe payment to Him or short-change Him while doing so. We must render to God His due as well as Caesar his due. When the Jewish leaders of His day sent unscrupulous men to ensnare Jesus in His words with the question, ‘Is it lawful to pay taxes to the Roman government’ His reply, a gem of heavenly wisdom, was an endorsement of tax payment but not at the expense of God:

Luke 20:21-26

21 And they asked Him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?

23 But He perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Shew Me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.

25 And He said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at His answer, and held their peace.

Compared to human governments, God is the senior; in fact, He is the “Possessor of heaven and earth” and “the governor among the nations” (Gen. 14:19; Ps 22:28). His portion of one-tenth should be given to Him first. To Him belongs “the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all” (1 Chron. 29:11-12). He deserves the first by right.

Second and Third Tithes

In addition to the regular tithe payment to His priests, God commanded the Israelites to pay a second tithe every year and a third tithe every three years. What do New Covenant believers make of these additional tithes?

A study of the relevant scriptures reveals that the payment of these tithes revolved around Israel's pilgrimage feasts (Deut. 16:16; Ex. 34:23), particularly Passover, and their moral and spiritual obligation to share their wealth with the poor:

Deut 14:22-29

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.

24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

25 Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:

26 And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

27 And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee.

28 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:

29 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. (See also Deut. 12:5-12).

Since God had already commanded Israel to give their tithes to the priests for the service they performed at the tabernacle (Num. 18:21-24), this would clearly be another or 'second' tithe which they were to spend on themselves in worshipping and rejoicing before Yahweh at the feast in Jerusalem. That is to say, they were to set aside *another one-tenth* of their increase year after year after they had tithed to the priests as a regular practice and use it to rejoice and enjoy themselves before the Lord for two consecutive years. It was a festival tithe, so to speak. In the third year, however, this same 'second tithe' was to be shared with the (local) Levites, the stranger, the fatherless and the widows within one's own community.

Gill's Exposition on the Entire Bible notes:

Deuteronomy 14:22

“Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed,.... This was a different tithe from that which was made and given to the Levites, and out of which a tithe was taken and given to the priests, and which they only ate of; but this, as appears by the following verse, was what the owners themselves ate of, and so the tithing was left to be made by them themselves, and which they were to be sure to make, and to make it truly and faithfully” (e-Sword).

Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible explains further:

Deuteronomy 14:22

“Thou shalt truly tithe - Meaning the second tithe which themselves were to eat, Deu_14:23, for there was a first tithe that was given to the Levites, out of which they paid a tenth part to the priests, Num_18:24-28; Neh_10:37, Neh_10:38. Then of that which remained, the owners separated a second tithe, which they ate before the Lord the first and second year; and in the third year it was given to the Levites and to the poor, Deu_14:28, Deu_14:29. In the fourth and fifth years it was eaten again by the owners, and in the sixth year was given to the poor. The seventh year was a Sabbath to the land, and then all things were common, Exo_23:10, Exo_23:11” (e-Sword).

In Deut. 26 God repeats the instruction with emphasis on ‘the second tithe’ being given to the Levite and the vulnerable in the third year as made plain in the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Tanakh):

(Deut. 26:12) And when thou shalt have completed all the tithings of thy fruits in the third year, thou shalt give the second tenth to the Levite, and stranger, and fatherless, and widow; and they shall eat it in thy cities, and be merry.

(Deut. 26:13) And thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have fully collected the holy things out of my house, and I have given them to the Levite, and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow, according to all commands which thou didst command me: I did not transgress Thy command, and I did not forget it (*Brenton’s English Septuagint*, e-Sword).

Thus the ‘third tithe’ was not really a third tenth arising out of another one-tenth of what remained after “the second tenth” had been set aside. It was the same second tithe put to a different use—for the local Levite and the socially disadvantaged.

The second tithe was never meant to be given to the ministry, but it was nevertheless holy. It establishes the principle of setting aside a portion of one’s resources to spend on one’s self in the worship and service of the Lord. Yahweh calls it a “tithe” because the whole portion—ideally a tenth of the remaining nine-tenth of our income—is dedicated to a holy cause, to worshipping and rejoicing before Him. God is the reason for the spending; the spending is in His interests and not on our personal pleasures and interests. The purpose has made the spending holy.

The principle of the second tithe is not alien to the New Testament. When we spend on ourselves in the service of the Lord, even if not at a solemn assembly, the money or resource so expended is holy to God. It's a tithe. While the feasts are no longer mandatory in Christ whom they foreshadowed (Col. 2:16-17), the principle of the second tithe remains. We need to set aside resources to spend on ourselves in the service and interests of God. And we need to care for the poor. The Lord Jesus said the poor would always be with us (Matt. 26:11; John 12:8). He wants us to keep the poor in mind (see Gal. 2:10). Prov. 19:17 says, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him again". In Gal. 6:9-10, we read: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith".

In short, the second tithe teaches us that we are under obligation to spend on ourselves in the worship and service of the Lord just as we are also obliged to devote a portion of our wealth to the welfare of the poor. God made it a law so we will come to see both as a spiritual duty.

Free-will Offerings & Tithes

As tithes are usually tied in with offerings, we will briefly look at the Biblical practice of free-will offerings and note how they essentially differ from tithes. With tithes, God as the Creator and the source of all wealth claims one-tenth of 'our' incomes, declaring it holy and set apart for Him. With offerings, such is not the case; it's voluntary giving to the Lord from the heart (2 Cor. 9:6-7). However, it should be generous (not necessarily anything above one-tenth, as some teach) in proportion to one's income (Deut. 16:17) and befit the status of the divine Father. He is a Great King (Mal. 1:6-14; Deut. 17:1).

As the LORD dictated instructions to Moses on Mount Sinai regarding the construction of the tabernacle, He told him:

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering (Ex. 25:2).

It turned out that the Israelites gave to the LORD so generously that they were formally restrained from giving out any more:

Ex 35:20-29

And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses.
21 And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

22 And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the LORD.

23 And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought them.

24 Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the LORD's offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it.

25 And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen.

26 And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair.

27 And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate;

28 And spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense.

29 The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

Ex 36:2-7

2 And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it:

3 And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.

4 And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made;

5 And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make.

6 And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

7 For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

Here comes another difference between tithes and offerings. While tithes are used to maintain God's ministers, offerings are mainly used for what we might call 'church projects', like putting up a place of meeting or buying missionary vehicles.

Offerings are a form of honour to God:

Prov. 3:9

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

Ps 50:14

Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High.

Like tithes, there is a divine promise of blessing for our offerings to God.

The only Time God says “Prove Me in This”!

One common defence of tithe-paying believers is that “it works”. That is, their businesses flourish and they are blessed as a result of tithe payment.

Of course, tithing works because God said it will work! The only time in the entire Bible where God challenges His people to put Him to the test is in respect of tithes and offerings. He put His integrity on the line, saying He would certainly not fail to bless His people if they faithfully brought the tithes and offerings to His house. Otherwise, they were cursed:

Mal. 3:7-12

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.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

God does not regard lightly any of His ordinances, not least tithes and offerings. Sadly, the people picked and chose and thereby departed from Him when they neglected the divine ordinance of tithes and offering.

So He urged them to “return” to Him by pointing out the gravity of their departure from His ordinances of tithes and offerings. They stood accused as robbers! And they were no ordinary robbers but robbers of God’s tithes and offerings which did not belong to them. Yet they seemed unperturbed that the Almighty would accuse them of the crime of robbery: “wherein have we robbed Thee?” they answered back. The people appeared to be saying God had no right to be complaining of their robbing Him. Nevertheless, God insisted they had robbed Him and His judgment was that they were “cursed” (see Matt. 25:41).

The remedy was to return to Him by bringing all the tithes, and He would fulfill His part. It was a guaranteed pledge, He indicated, with His personal integrity at stake! If He failed to bless them in return for their faithful giving in tithes and offerings, He would prove a liar and His credentials as a faithful God called into question. He was personally challenging His people to use tithe payment as a test of His faithfulness to keep His word. God meant business. He could not break His own word and thereby injure His reputation; He has magnified His word above all His name (Ps 138:2). His honour is in His faithfulness to His word. And here, His specific word of honour is His promise to “pour out a blessing” on us if we faithfully bring Him His tithes and offerings.

He will not and cannot fail to deliver on this promise. He says “prove Me now herewith”; put Me to the test by bringing to My house all the tithes and offerings and see “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”.

The God of all the earth will pour out so copious a blessing that it will overflow and outstrip your storage facilities! He will exceed your expectations by giving you a bumper return on your heavenly investment in tithes and offerings. It’s a matter of faith. Do you trust God to make good His word or not?

But what does He mean by opening you “the windows of heaven”?

He means He will open doors of favour and opportunities for you. Notice what the Lord says in Luke 6:38 about how God gives back to generous givers:

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

The Sovereign God is the Rewarder, but He will use “men” to actualize the reward. He will inspire them to create opportunities and situations of advantage for you; He will cause them to give back to you in generous excess of what you gave. He will put you in touch with the relevant movers and shakers by making your paths cross! He alone wields the power to acquire wealth:

But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day (Deut. 8:18).

The way of man is not in himself but Yah who directs his steps (Ps 37:23; Jer. 10:23); He’s able to guide your steps to a place of abundance (Ps 66:12; Isa. 48:17).

And how will He “rebuke the devourer”?

The “devourer” is the destroyer, the pests which eat up the crop; it’s the risk factor in your particular line of business, the threats to your business. God will rebuke that! He will stop the threats from inflicting harm on your business. He will order a halt to their destructive operations. And Satan the greatest destroyer is not excluded. He did it for Job. He protected his business from both physical and spiritual threats and attacks so much so that the devil was exasperated:

Job 1:6-10

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

Solid, ‘airtight’ protection around the clock. “He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps 121:4). You can trust Him with your business and indeed your very life. His promise to open to you the windows of heaven will surely come to pass if you faithfully bring to His house all the tithes and offerings due Him. And the blessing will be enjoyable:

The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it (Prov. 10:22).

In the case of Jacob, it took twenty years for God to fulfill His promise to him. God’s promise will not come to pass overnight, but it certainly cannot fail. Your part is to do His will first in tithes and offerings and you shall receive the promise (Heb. 10:36).

God still blesses tithe payers as He did in the past because He has not abrogated His law of tithes. Melchizedek, His Priest forever, still receives tithes from the children of Abraham who have the promises. Unless, of course, Melchizedek (Christ) is not your High Priest and you are not a child of Abraham who has to be blessed by the “greater” Melchizedek!

If you are a true spiritual child of Abraham, however, tithe payment to Melchizedek through His Spirit-empowered representatives is an obligation of honour. It’s one way of literally laying up your treasures in heaven where Melchizedek ministers (Matt. 6:19-21), as opposed to heaping them on the earth (Jam. 5:1-5), in return for His bountiful reward of blessing both in this life and in the age to come (3 John 1:2). Amen!

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