

# **THE CONCEPT OF TITHE .**

## **SUBTOPICS TREATED IN THIS LESSON**

- The questions and answers on tithe.....p. 2-10
- Some controversial facts concerning tithing.....p. 10-23

## **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this lesson, the reader should be able to:

- become more knowledgeable about the issue of tithing.
- answer certain questions on tithes in confidence.
- know the main divisions of tithe and the preferred items for tithe in the Old Testament.
- identify and understand the issues concerning the Levites and their priesthood, and how the scripture narrates their duties.
- eliminate the angelic idea about Melchizedek and know why the Bible compares him to Christ.
- consider the priesthood of Christ.
- explain Malachi chapter 3.
- know how to explain why the Bible does not compel the Church to pay tithes this time.
- help cease the false doctrine about tithes.

## **WHY THIS WRITE-UP IS VIEWED TO BE MORE RELIABLE.**

- It is taken from the in-depth knowledge and wisdom of God Almighty.
- It is compiled from authentic sources.
- It is biblically confirmed by most Preachers, Teachers and Evangelists in the Churches of Christ.
- It is able to fit into the filial generations.
- It almost covers every topical issue on tithes.
- It breaks up the yoke of false teachings on tithing.

## **QUESTIONS ON TITHE**

1. What is tithe?
2. When did tithe commence?
3. Who were to give tithe?
4. To whom was the tithe given?
5. How was the tithe given?
6. Why did they give it?
7. Should tithes be given by Christians today?
8. Who is the Priest in power now?
9. What does he say to this human generation?
10. What should we give now?

## **ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS ON TITHE.**

### ***1. What is tithe?***

Tithe is a yearly release of one-tenth of the goods and products of income by an Israelite to the priests of God, and to the nominated citizens among the Children of Israel. God forced and commanded them to do so (Lev. 27:30).

### ***2. When did tithe commence?***

Tithe was first given by Abraham to Melchizedek the priest. Melchizedek was an orphan without any support, but he was the great priest of God of heaven and the king of Salem (Genesis 14:18-20).

### ***3. Who were to give tithe?***

The Israelites were the only citizens to perform the tithe (Lev. 27:32-34). The tithe depended solely on the Levites. The name "Levi" means "to join unto" or "bound"...It is a Hebrew word (Gen 29:34). Levi was one of the twelve sons of Jacob i.e. Israel (Gen 32:24-28), and Leah was his mother (Gen 35:23). Levi was therefore the third born of Jacob. So, every citizen Israel, from twenty years and above, were in charge of giving the tithe, like any other offering (Ex 30:14).

### ***4. To whom was the tithe given?***

The tithe was made and enforced for the Levites especially. Based on biblical confirmation, the priests as the descendants of Levi were to receive

the tithe. Only the men were used as the priests for the Almighty God.

***Why do you think the Levites were the only descendants who qualified to receive the tithe?***

1. The Levites were only chosen by God as the temporal priests of God to Israel among the sons of Israel (Ex 28:1-3, Ex 29:27-35,9-11, Lev 8:1-3,12-13).

2. They were made unique by God and only had the power over the Tabernacle of the congregations (Nm 1:48-53, Nm 18:1-15, Lev 14:19, 1 Chrn 23:26-32).

3. And to make profits out of it (Nm 35:1-8, Dt 18:1-8, Josh 21:1-4, Nm 7:5, Dt 15:27-28, Dt 12:19).

4. God dedicated a special time to give them laws:

i. Not to enter the Tent in God's presence after drinking wine or beer (Lev 10:8-9).

ii. To distinguish between holy and detestable things about the Tent (Lev 10:1-3,10).

iii. To keep safely God's law inside the Covenant Box (Dt 31:24-26).

iv. To take a spiritual bath, and put the robe or belt and the sash around the waist of the Priest to enter the Tent; it must be fastened well (Lev 8:5-8), etc.

5. The disobedient Priests among the Levites were killed.

i. Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron (Lev 10:1-7, Nm 3:1-4, Nm 26:60-61).

ii. Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli (1 Sam 2:34-35, 1 Sam 4:11).

- iii. Eli the high priest (1 Sam 4:12-18).
- iv. Aaron and Moses (Ex 2:1, 1 Chrn 6:3, Nm 20:7-13, Nm 20:22-29, Dt 32:50, 34:5), etc.

### ***The Levitical Priests.***

According to the Bible, Priest is the person chosen from the Levites as the man dedicated by God to control, instruct, lead, supervise, and perform every related duty to God about holiness in terms of worship.

The spirit of priesthood started from Aaron and his four sons; Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (Ex 28:40-41).

### ***The duty of every Levite as the priest of God.***

- i. To serve Aaron the priest (Nm 3:5-6).
- ii. To do the work required for the Tent and perform the community duties (Nm 3:7).
- iii. To take charge of all the equipment of the Tent, as the serving duties to Israel (Nm 3:8).

### ***Who were the known Priests of God among the Levites?***

It should be noted here that not all the Levites were priests to God; women and children in the tribe of Levi were not priests. There is a proof that out of the Levites, only 22, 300 people were chosen to be priests to serve God for almost 603,550 Israelites (Nm 1:46). Which means that, 1 priest was to serve for about 27 citizens of Israel... Levi (the 3rd son of Jacob) had three sons; Gershon, Kohath and Merari (1 Chrn 6:1). So Amram, the father of Moses came from the line of Kohath (1 Chrn 6:2). This means

that Aaron, and his brother Moses all came out from Kohath (1 Chr 6:3). From generation to generation, it is clear in the scriptures that many descendants were raised out of Levi (1 Chr 6:20-30), but we are not much interested in that; they were approximately 22,000 (Nm 3:39).

Now, these were the Levites called out by God as His priests to perform the assigned duties:

- i. Aaron and his sons (Nm 3:10).
- ii. Gershon, Kohath and Merari (1 Chr 6:16, Nm 3:17).

### ***The subjected duties of the chosen priests.***

1) After the death of Nadab and Abihu, God called Ithamar and Eleazar to take over the priesthood responsibilities, but **Eleazar** was chosen to be the Chief Priest of all the Levites (Nm 3:4). About this,

- i. Eleazar was in charge of carrying out the duties in the Holy place (Nm 3:32).
- ii. He was to enter the Holy of Holies alone, once in a year to perform the sacrifice of ignorance, as Aaron used to do (Lev 16:2,14-15, Hb 9:3,7).

2) **Gershon** had two sons; Libni and Shimei (1 Chr 6:17, Nm 3:18). Eliasaph son of Lael was the Chief Priest of this clan (Nm 3:24). The total number of males and females one month old or older than that were enrolled to be 7,500 (Nm 3:22). They were to camp on the west behind the Tent (Nm 3:23) to have some various responsibilities about the first part of the Tabernacle (Hb 9:2), summarized below:

- i. They were responsible for the inner and outer covers, together with the curtains of the Tent (Nm 3:25-26, Hb 9:6).

3). **Kohath** had four sons; Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel (1 Chr 6:18, Nm 3:27). The total number of members in this clan was 8,600 (Nm 3:28).

Elizaphan son of Uzziel was the Chief Priest of the clan (Nm 3:30), and they camped on the South side of the Tent (Nm 3:29). About their duties,

i. They were to assist the high priest to take responsibilities of the second veil, which contains the Covenant Box, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils which the priests use in the Holy place (Nm 3:31), and other great things as well (Hb 9:3-5).

4) **Merari** had two sons; Mahli and Mushi (1 Chrn 6:19, Nm 3:33). They multiplied to have 6,200 members (Nm 3:34). Zuriel son of Abihail was their Chief Priest, and were asked to camp on the North side of the Tent (Nm 3:35).

i. They were responsible for everything which was supposed to be performed around the Tent (Nm 3:36-37).

- *But **Zadok** who was one of the generations of Levi from the line of Eleazar the High Priest (1 Chrn 6:4-8, Ezk 40:46), had the chance to take over the priesthood duties during the period of the Prophets; I surely mean his descendants (Ezk 44:10-15, Ezk 48:11-15).*
- *The fact is that, the tithes were paid to the Levites to distribute them to the prescribed people in Israel. Now, let me ask these, who are those priests, as we have discussed? Is Ghana the beloved country of God as He spoke of Israel (Hos 11:1), is your pastor part of the priests? You, the one paying, are you a citizen of Israel? Have you returned from bondage in Egypt?...All these show that, Ghanaian pastors have no legal and biblical rights to collect tithes from any Christian! Just go and collect your tithes immediately, he doesn't qualify.*

## ***5. How was the tithe given?***

The tithe was given yearly, and after every three years. Three main precious things which were offered for tithe are; Land, Food, and Money. Money was not to be offered to the Levites as tithe, but it was optional for the self tithe. So if you have ever paid your tithes with money, go and collect it; money was not part, take note. These were the procedures for giving and grouping the tithes;

- a) **Self tithe (yearly)**...(Dt 14:22-26).
- b) **Tithes to the Levites (three years)**...(Dt 14:27, Dt 12:12,19, Nm 18:21-24, Josh 13:14,33, Nm 35:1-8).
- c) **Tithes to foreigners, orphans, and widows (three years)**...( Dt 14:28-29).
- d) **Tithes from the Levites to God Almighty** (Nm 18:25-32).

## ***6. Why did they give it?***

Israel performed the tithe purposely to...

- i. dedicate it as the time to remember their salvation from slavery (Dt 26:1-11).
- ii. feed the Levites, the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows in every Israel community (Dt 26:12-15).
- iii. make the observant greater, with happiness and peace in the residence (Dt 26:16-19).
- iv. receive blessings from God Almighty (Mal 3:7-12, Zech 1:3).

## ***7. Should tithes be given by Christians today?***

**NO!** *Because there is no biblical proof according to the New Testament,*



*which stricts Christians to pay tithes: The tithes were not ordained by God to us. Hence, we declare here that Christians should not pay Tithes.*

By following the scriptures, we can see that after tithe, God again ordained a '**Seventh Year Release**' for the Israelites which affects today's Christians because Christ Himself contributed to it. But as compared to tithe, it was strictly ordered by God to only the citizens of Israel. Let's digest it to the end before we can discuss it biblically as well.

The Seventh Year Release aimed to assist the tithe for almost 1,440 years before Christ was revealed to the world ( Neh 9:13). And about this, it worked sincerely to ensure that the widows, orphans, foreigners and all people in need, are not oppressed in the country (Zech 7:10, Ex 22:21-23, Is 1:17, Jr 7:6-7, Is 1:23). Note here that even the Levites to distribute the offering to the named people were out of the benefiteres. That is why we want to show that,

1. God asked the Israelites to perform the Seventh Year Release (Ex 23:10-11, Dt 15:1-11, Lev 25:1-8, Dt 28:12).
2. The Release was performed willingly (Prv 19:17, Prv 14:31, 17:5, Mt 25:40, Psalm 41:1-3).
3. The Apostles became in charge of it, and taught the other leaders to do the same as it was directed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:32-37, Acts 6:1-7, Acts 11:27-30).
4. Christ has given it to us as regular or periodic release, and not to wait till we count for seven years (Prv 3:28, Eccl 11:1, Gal 2:10, 1 Co 16:1-4, Hb 13:7-16, James 1:26:27).

### ***8. Who is the Priest in power now?***

It is not your pastor or any of the Ghanaian pastors, but Christ. Jesus Christ is the everlasting Priest in power now. He has the power over the Levitical

Priests, because His priesthood did not come from the line of Melchizedek or the Levites, but from the Jews (Hb 7:1-23). That is why He instructs all people to stop paying it, because it is paid to the wrong people (Matt 23:23).

### ***9. What does he say to this human generation?***

Christ says we must listen to Him if we obey Him as the promised one (Lk 24:44-48). Jesus Christ the Holy Everlasting Priest, therefore insists that we must give willingly from our pure hearts (2 Co 9:6-9, Gal 6:7-10, Acts 20:35).

### ***10. What should we give now?***

Christ has instituted 'Offertory' in Christianity as the Holy Ordinance of God Almighty to all Christians this time. This is the order. Out of this that the Lord's Ministers are paid (1 Co 9:14, Gal 6:6), and also the needy, orphans, widows and some disable beings are helped (Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32, 1 Tm 5:3-13). Conclusively, congregational pledges, and other good and biblical ways of raising funds or moneys are allowed in Christianity by Christ our Redeemer (Dt 23:21-23, Eccl 5:1-7, Mal 2:7-9, 2 Co 8:1-15).

## **SOME CONTROVERSIAL FACTS CONCERNING TITHING.**

### **(1). Abraham tithes to Melchizedek.**

**(a) As narrated somewhere between 1,400 and 1,440 B.C. (Genesis 14:18-20);**

#### ***(i) Who was this Melchizedek?***

**\* King of Salem (Gn 14:18);** 'Salem' is the shortened word for 'Jerusalem'. Melchizedek was a Gentile King and met Abraham who had the promises of God (Gn 12:1-3, 13:15, 15:5, 17:4-8). It is not recorded where exactly in

the Bible the Lord made this Melchizedek the king of Jerusalem, even where the Israelites were not existing.

The kingship of Melchizedek recorded somewhere 1,400 B.C. was not in the known Jerusalem of Israel, the beautiful city (Psalm 48:1-2). It is known that Saul the son of Kish, and of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Sam 9:1-2, 10:1), was the first king of Israel (B.C. 1095-1055). God was the Lord for only Israel (Hosea 11:1). So I think many of us may ask why God chose a king from the Gentiles; this is quite complicated. There is no record of such a reason.

The Jerusalem reigned by Melchizedek is not the same Jerusalem which was known as the city of king David (Matt 5:35) and as set to be in the midst of all nations (Ezek 5:5).

**\* *King of righteousness (Hb 7:2)***; This means that Melchizedek was a righteous king. His righteousness is not recorded in the scriptures and what really qualified him to be the righteous king of God among the Gentile Kings. The only recorded work of this king was when he fed Abraham with bread and wine, and then blessed him (Gn 14:18-19).

He knew what was to be right to serve God-fearing man.

**\* *King of peace (Hb 7:2)***; Being the king of Salem, guaranteed him to be the king of peace. There is no biblical evidence which proves that Melchizedek led his people to war; his service to Abraham even shows that he had peace.

**\* *Priest of the most high God (Hb 7:1)***; The writer here uses the unrecorded beginning and ending of the priesthood of Melchizedek in the life of Abraham as an illustration of the unending priesthood of Jesus (see Hb 5:6, 6:20). Like Jesus, Melchizedek was a priest and king. However, there is no record of his direct appointment by God to be a priest and king. We accept his priesthood and kingship, simply because we read about it in the inspired scriptures.

**\* *Without father, without mother, without genealogy (Hb 7:3)***; This does not mean that Melchizedek was an angel from God to reign on earth, NO! It is not recorded anywhere in the Bible like that. But what it means is that, there is no record of the beginning or ending of the life and priesthood of Melchizedek. He was a Gentile who served as a priest and king in the city of Salem, though he was a priest to all people, including Abraham. Contrary to the necessity of Levitical priests providing their genealogy from Aaron with written records in order to qualify to be priests, Melchizedek was designated a priest directly from God (see Lv 21). In this manner, Jesus was also appointed a priest directly from God.

So do not think that he was an angel; of course, no angel was sent as a king over the Gentiles.

**\* *Having neither beginning of days nor end of life (Hb 7:3)***; The date of birth of Melchizedek is not known; it was not recorded for us.

The Holy Spirit was focussing on the righteous service of this man, but not to trace his background. He was like an actor in a movie who performs his part and leaves the scene with no records.

**\* *Being compared to Christ (Hb 7:3)***; Christ did not sin on earth (1 Pt 2:21-22) but still, the Bible compares Melchizedek to Him. We can believe that Melchizedek sinned, because he was a mortal man (Rm 3:10-12). We can compare him to Christ for the fact that...

- **He lives (Hb 7:8)**; There is no record in the Bible that Melchizedek died, though in reality he did. The writer here uses the lack of information on the beginning and ending of Melchizedek as an illustration of Jesus who had no beginning and lives on into eternity (Hb 5:6). By contrasting the Levitical priests who die in order to give way to priests who follow, Jesus' priesthood lives on. He is the last high priest. Because his priesthood continues, it is greater than the Levitical priesthood.

Mortal men received tithes, and since Melchizedek received tithe from Abraham, it truly confirms that he died (Hb 7:8), but his priesthood still

remains in the memories of mankind.

• **He had the right to be the priest of God without being from the Levites;** Only the Levitical priests had the biblical right to receive tithes from the Israelites (Hb 7:5), but Melchizedek who was not a Levite received tithe from Abraham even before the existence of the Levites (Hb 7:6). In the same way, Christ from Judah and not from the Levites (Hb 7:13-14) has been made priest (Hb 7:17). But this time, He has changed the law and the tithe (Hb 7:12,22).

***(ii) (Genesis 14:18-20);***

**\* (vrs 18);** Melchizedek met Abraham and fed him with bread and wine. Abraham did not request anything from this king, but it was voluntarily. The priest did not just feed Abraham with the Word of God, but with the things of the flesh. How many times does your Pastor who claims to qualify to be given a tithe provide you with the things you need in the flesh before?

**\* (vrs 19);** Melchizedek blesses Abraham. This happened before the tithe was given. Many Pastors today ask their members to give tithes based on the incidence, before the Lord can bless them. But it is recorded that Abraham received the blessings of God even before he tithed ( Gn 13:2).

**\* (vrs 20);** Here, Abraham offered the tithe to Melchizedek. Although, Abraham became rich even before he planned to tithe to Melchizedek (Gn 13:2), but he did not use his own goods. All we know from the scripture is that, people tithed according to what they gained after every year (Dt 14:22-26) and three years (Dt 14:27-29). But this Abraham tithed to the priest of God of the goods that he had taken from the kings (Gn 14:16-17); Amraphel, Arioch, Chedorlaomer and Tidal (Gn 14:1-2). This shows that Abraham did not give the tithe simply because he wanted to be blessed, but he was blessed before giving the tithe.

Abraham did not tithe from his own wealth, but the goods gained with

his 318 men (Gn 14:14-15); no amount of money was mentioned.

**(b) As narrated somewhere between A.D 64 and 68 (Hebrews 7:1-28);**

This particular chapter begins the writer's arguments that strike at the very heart of why some Jewish Christians were moving back to the institutional ceremonial structures of Judaism. Simply, the writer summarizes the priesthood of Melchizedek and the Levites and then compares that to the work of the Son of God as the one and only everlasting priest.

**\* (vrs 1-4);** The writer summarizes the event that happened between Melchizedek and Abraham. It simply reveals Melchizedek as the priest of God who had the right to receive tithe from Abraham, as recorded in 'Genesis 14:18-20.'

**\* (vrs 5-10);** It briefly describes how the Levitical priests had the right to receive tithes from the Israelites since the genealogy was traced from the one with the promises, Abraham. It furthers by proving that Melchizedek had tithe from Abraham but was not from the loins of the patriarch. Note that the main idea of this write-up was to bring the recipients' mind to walk by faith in accepting the inspired record that taught the kingship and priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, like the way they accepted Melchizedek by faith.

**\* (vrs 11-28);** These verses compare the priesthood of Melchizedek to that of Christ. The motive behind the conversation is that, Melchizedek was not compelled by God to follow the law and the covenant given to Abraham, just because he was from different genealogy. In the same way, Christ can never accept the tithes of Israel because their priesthood has changed, and hence, the law of tithe has to change ( see vrs 12).

## **The Last High Priest**

Jesus Christ is the last High Priest whose priesthood continues (Hb 5:6).

He is known biblically as

- i. The divine high priest (Hb 10:19-22)
- ii. The incarnational high priest (Hb 8:1-2).
- iii. The salvational high priest ( Hb 5:8).
- iv. The faithful high priest (Jn 14:6).
- v. The approachable high priest (2 Co 3:12-18).
- vi. The sympathetic high priest (Hb 2:17-18).
- vii. The directly-called high priest (Hb 4:14-15).
- viii. The resurrected high priest (Rm 6:4).
- ix. The legal high priest (Hb 6:20).
- x. The better-covenant high priest (Hb 8:6).
- xi. The heavenly high priest (Hb 7:26).
- xii. The offered high priest (Hb 9:11-14).
- xiii. The sanctifying high priest (1 Co 1:2).
- xiv. The redemptive high priest (Rm 3:24).
- xv. The sacrificial high priest (Hb 10:11-14).
- xvi. The blood-offered high priest (Hb 13:20).
- xvii. The only high priest (Hb 1:1-3).
- xviii. The eternal high priest (Hb 7:23-25).
- xix. The unshakable high priest (Eph 2:20-22).

## (2) Jacob promises to tithe to God (Genesis 28:20-22).

These verses speak of the commitment made by Jacob to return to God a tenth of those blessings that would come his way by the blessing of God.

Here, we shall consider the three verses one after the other [from the International King James Version, IKJV] in depth to understand fully the actions of Jacob.

*\* (vrs 20); Then 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 clothes to put on,*

We surely know that the uncompleted statement made by Jacob was completed according to verses 21 and 22. This happened when Jacob was journeying from Gerar (Gn 26:1,6,17) to Padan-aran/Haran (Gn 27:43, 28:2,10). Jacob made a solemn promise to God on certain conditions:

*\* (vrs 21); "So that I come again to my father's house in peace, then will the LORD be my God.*

The Lord provided Jacob with food and clothes, and also brought him back to Isaac's house peacefully (Gn 33:10-11, Gn 35:27). With these, Jacob kept his promise and made the Lord his God (Gn 33:20; Ex 3:15).

*\* (vrs 22); "And this stone that I have set for a pillar will be God's house. And of all that You will give me I will give a tenth to You."*

This is the greatest vow ever made by Jacob, but he was not able to keep it. Jacob vowed to give a tenth of everything he was blessed with:

- He set up the stone he used for a pillow and anointed it with oil to memorialize the location (Gn 28:18); God confirmed it (Gn 31:13).
- He changed the name from Luz to Bethel (Gn 28:19); God confirmed it to be the house of which Jacob vowed to set up (Gn 35:1,6-7).



- He vowed to give the Lord his tithes when He sees him through and brings him to Isaac's house. The Lord brought him back peacefully (Gn 35:27), but Jacob never paid the tithes. It is not recorded anywhere that Jacob fulfilled his tithing promises. And God did not hold him responsible and He did not ask or punish him for not paying the tithes.

This means that the tithe as the solemn promise of Jacob was not tolerated by God; it was not stipulated. Otherwise, the Lord would have charged him according to 'Dt 23:21-23 and Eccl 5:4-7.'

### **(3) Tithing, according to prophet Malachi (Malachi 3:1-12)**

The book of Malachi was dedicated to the Levites (the priests of God) as stated in '*Mal 2:1*.' This book is in relation to the book of Leviticus, which was written to the Levites containing the laws, regulations and ordinances.

Malachi was making reference to the law of tithe which was given through the priests to the Israelites for about 864 years, written in Deuteronomy (1,400 B.C. - 536 B.C). So get the understanding well that the law of tithe became weak and therefore, had to be strengthened by God.

Malachi is well recognized from the name *Malachiyah*, meaning "the messenger of the Lord." Malachi's name defines the nature of his prophecy in reference to the messenger of the Lord that would be sent before the coming of the Messiah. In fact, the word "messenger" refers to three different individuals in the book:

- i. It first refers to **Malachi** himself as the messenger who delivered this message to Israel (Mal 1:1).
- ii. The second messenger is a reference to **John the Baptist** who would announce the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3, Mt 11:14, 17:10-13, Mt 3:3, Mal 4:5-6).
- iii. The third messenger is a reference to the **Messiah, the Christ** (Jn 1:45,

Isaiah 9:6, Mt 16:13-17).

## **The book of Malachi, the meaning in brief.**

**Chapter 1:** Was written to direct the Levitical priests about how to perform holy sacrifices to God. The book was written to those who had returned from the captivity in 536 B.C., and offering sacrifices at the alter (1:7-10).

The audience who seemed to have lived under Medo-Persian control, diverted from the offering of God. But God sent prophet Malachi to rebuke them of the religious leadership (1:6-2:9).

**Chapter 2:** Every commandment written here was directed to only the priests (2:1), who were living in the period where Israel was led by Zerubbabel from the exiles to reclaim their homeland possessions in the land of Palestine.

Some of the priests were setting the wrong example by marrying foreign women (2:11), which was a problem that existed during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The book, therefore, would have been written sometime during the 5th Century B.C. when this problem was prevalent among the returnees.

**Chapter 3:** This is the chapter which proves that God planned to change the Levitical priests to prepare the way for the coming of the one and only Perfect Priest as Jesus Christ (Isaiah 57:14, Mt 3:11-13). Here, God rebuked the priests and the whole Israelites that they have robbed Him (3:8), and for that reason, the Messiah Himself will come to set everything right (Hb 7:26-28).

**Chapter 4:** This spoke about the day or the time when the promised Messiah would come to the World. It declared that, He had to come but unless the Messenger prepares the way before Him (4:5). Whilst He was

not in the World that time, the people of Israel were supposed to continue holding fast the Sinai laws (4:4), because the book would have to be closed for about 400 years before the mighty revelation of the Messiah.

### **Now on Malachi 3, concerning tithing.**

#### **( Malachi 3:1-12).**

**\* (vrs 1-6);** In short, these verses were given to show how the Messiah would be given to the world to put things right, concerning the law and the offerings of Israel (see verse 3).

There are two other things I would like to highlight here;

- **'My Messenger'** as in the 1st verse was in reference to the coming of John the Baptist (Mk 1:2-3).

- **'Even the Messenger'** and **'The Lord'** both refer to the incarnate Lord Jesus, the Messenger of the new covenant (Jr 31:31-34, Gal 3:17, Hb 9:7-13). He is the Mediator of the new covenant (Hb 12:24). He came to ratify the new covenant with His blood offering (Mt 26:28, Hb 13:20). Jesus was the revelation of the mystery of God (Eph 3:1-5).

**\* (vrs 7);** *"Even from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me and I will return to you," says the LORD of armies. "But you said, 'How will we return?'"*

God was making reference to the patriarchs and the ancestors of Israel who went astray and obeyed not His commandments (Acts 7:51). God knew it clearly that, even if those who had the Sinai law and lived right with Him without being captives, were not able to obey His ordinances, then those who had just returned from captivity can surely deviate from His laws and offerings. So He ordained them to return to Him, through repentance which is more than a change of mind and sorrow for sin. God wanted the returnees to change in behavior, and return to obedience, as He

proceeded in (vrs 8).

**\* (vrs 8);** *"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me, But you say, 'How have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings.*

Now God has made the point very clear here. God witnessed how He was robbed in tithes and offerings. The 'tithes' in this context do not refer to all the four(4) main divisions of tithe, but only three(3). God was not worried with the Self tithe (Dt 14:22-26), but the tithes to the Levites (Dt 14:27); to foreigners, orphans and widows (Dt 14:28-29); and from the Levites to God Almighty (Nm 18:25-32, Hb 7:9). God was robbed in these three tithes. The 'robbing' does not mean 'stealing,' but it is a term to describe how cruel the Israelites cheated the Lord who rescued them from captivity.

Apart from the tithes God spoke of the 'offerings' which Israel was not making them right with Him. God gave many sacrificial laws concerning how they should go about the offerings (Lv 6:1-13). The offerings may include grain offerings (Lv 2:1-16, 6:14-23), fellowship offerings (Lv 3:1-16, 7:11-38), offerings for unintentional sins (Lv 5:14-19, 7:1-10), religious/burnt offerings (Nm 15:1-31), and some other great offerings (Nm 28:1-30, 29:1-40). All these offerings were in collaboration with the named tithes. So if Christ says He has taken us from this kind of darkness (Col 1:12-13) and the law or the Sinai law (Rm 6:14, 7:6, Rm 8:1-2), why do we still follow the tithes? If people claim to have had the tithes as a binding law to Christians, they must also bind themselves to all the named offerings (Acts 15:10-11). If they can't offer the sacrifices simply because Christ has removed them and nailed them to the cross (Col 2:14), they must also understand not to pay the tithes.

**\* (vrs 9);** *"You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.*

The Israelites were consuming the offerings on themselves, rather than bringing the tithes to the temple for the priests, and for that reason,

God cursed them. Biblically, it was a curse of drought, which happened during the days of Haggai.

According to Deuteronomy 27:26, God warned Israel by cursing them this way, *"Cursed is he who does not confirm all the words of this law to do them." And all the people will say, "Amen."* (Gal 3:10).

The word 'You' is not referring to 'you, as a Christian,' but rather defines the statement, 'You, Israelites.' Moses spoke of this same issue in 'Dt 5:1-5.'

*\* (vrs 10); "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of armies, "If I will not open to you the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing on you so that there will not be room enough to receive it.*

This command was given to the Israelites who were holding back to themselves the Lord's tithes.

The storehouse refers to the house of God where the priests lived to reaffirm the Sinai law and the other laws to Israel, as in the days of prophet Eli (1 Sam 1:9,17). The storehouse does not refer to the pockets or temples of these known Pastors. Now the question is, where is the storehouse? Is it the mission houses, or the Pastors' accounts, the temples of the congregations, or the one in Israel? It is absolutely NOT. This verse says the storehouse is 'God's house,' and God's house is now the human body, the temple (1 Co 3:16-17, 6:19-20, Acts 7:44-50). So where should we take the food? And note this that the 'food' is not 'money.' Food is food and should not be replaced with any amount of money.

God again said, *"test Me with this,"* with what? The tithes of food. This statement even shows that God was still ruling His people under the Sinai law of the Old Testament. Israel was allowed to tempt God with tithes. But the scripture says *"tempt not your God"* (Dt 6:16, Mt 4:7, Acts 15:10).

Note this too; the windows of heaven and the blessings: 'The windows of heaven' explains how the rain was held back by God due to their sins, in

order to generate repentance (compare it to Gn 7:11-12). God wanted them to give in their poverty so He may first bless them with rain for their crops, as in the period of prophet Elijah (I Kings 17:1-7, James 5:17-18).

God would have used different ways to bless His people. But because He wanted to restore the ordinance of tithes, He chose to bless them instead through tithing. That does not mean that one needs to tithe before he or she can be blessed. Just take a critical look at 'Matthew 5:1-11,' how God can distribute blessings by heart. The fact is, don't let people deceive you to pay tithes before you can be blessed.

**\* (vrs 11-12);** We can finally summarize these two verses. God promised not to punish them again by delivering them again to their enemies. He once again aimed to make His people unique, as it was, in the ancient days (Esther 3:8).

#### **(4) Jesus spoke about tithing (Matthew 23:23).**

It reads *"Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith." These you should have done without neglecting the others.*

**\* The Scribes;** They were those who copied out documents, especially those employed to do these before printing was invented. Here, a Scribe is an ancient Jewish record-keeper or later, a professional theologian and jurist. The Scribes were known to be part of the Israelites.

**\* The Pharisees;** It is believed that the Pharisees originated among the Jews after the Babylonian captivity. By the time of Jesus, the Pharisees had developed and maintained an elite religious group that was separate among the Jews. Their religious and political influence grew throughout the intertestamental period. The Pharisees were the most powerful and influential religious sect in Judaism.

**\* *The Scribes and Pharisees, also gave tithes;*** According to 'Mt 23:23,' these two groups paid tithes as instituted in the Old Testament. Tithing, according to them was the only thing to please God with, so they did not know how to serve God well in righteousness (see verses 24 and 25).

**\* *The weightier matters were neglected;*** Christ who lived under the Sinai law (Gal 4:4) before giving us His law (1 Co 9:21, Rm 8:2), weighed the tithes spiritually (and not specifically the tithes of only the Scribes and Pharisees). Based on the way He narrated the issue means that Righteousness is far weightier than the tithes.

**\* *Christ summarizes the whole matter;*** Christ has given us the spirit of Love (Mt 22:34-40, Rm 13:8-10), which is weightier than the tithes in terms of righteousness.

You know what? The Scribes and Pharisees were insulted because they had the tithes as the only way to God. Christ is the way (Jn 14:6). Do not pay tithes, or else you would be insulted at the Heaven gate by Christ (Mt 7:21-24) that you have deviated from the truth (2 Pt 2:20-22, 1 Jn 2:21).

**THANK YOU ALL. GREETINGS TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST (ROMANS 16:16).**

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