**IS TITHING IN THE CHURCH A SIN?**

This piece is not a full treatment of the subject of tithes and offerings in Scriptures or under the Law of Moses. Rather, this is written to address the very hasty and misleading conclusion that tithing in the church is a sin.

**YES, WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES!**

It is perfectly true and consistent with scriptures that we who are under Christ are not under the Law of Moses [1Co 9:21]. The basic implication of this is that we are not subject to the laws and commands and requirements of the Law of Moses.

We are, for example, not bound in any way to observe the feasts of the Law, such as, the Passover, unleavened bread, tabernacles, atonement, etc. The very simple reasoning behind this is that a man is not bound to keep a law he is not under. For example, no one in Nigeria will be arrested for not driving on the left side of the road as it is done in Britain.

**YES, WE ARE NOT BOUND TO GIVE THE TITHES AND OFFERINGS OF THE LAW**

Since we are not under the Law then it is for a fact that we are not under the Law’s command to give tithes and offerings.

The giving of tithes and other various offerings *(the tithe is itself an offering)*, was commanded by God under the Law of Moses and with detailed regulations. Neither Jesus nor the apostles commanded the church to give tithes and other offerings. Therefore, since we are not under the Law of Moses and are not bound to its commands and regulations, there should be no argument about it—we are not bound to pay the tithes and offerings commanded by the Law. *(Please, take note that offerings are included.)*

**IS TITHING OR THE GIVING OF OFFERINGS IN THE CHURCH THEN A SIN?**

Of course, it isn’t.

Was it a sin for Abraham to have given his tithe to Melchizedek since we do not read anywhere that he was commanded to give a tithe?

All because something was not commanded you does not necessarily make it a sin for you to do it or to do something similar to it. We must realize that there are many commands of the Law that we practice in the church which right away tells you that all because a command was not directly given to you, doesn’t make it a sin to do it or to apply it in a proper manner.

**COMMANDS OF THE LAW IN THE CHURCH**

**HONOURING FATHER AND MOTHER**

If tithing is wrong all because it was not commanded us and there is no temple, etc., then we can also say that honouring father and mother is wrong because the command was not given to us but to Israelites under the Law of Moses.

In fact, the promise of this command is “that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you”. [Exo 20:12] God was speaking to the Israelites and the land he was speaking of was the promised land of Canaan which is definitely not Nigeria, or USA or England, or any other land belonging to the vast majority of non-Jewish believers.

Since the command was not given to us and its promise is definitely not for us, are we not, therefore, free to dishonour our parents? Of course not. Were the apostles wrong who restated this command to the church? Of course not.

This is just one doctrine out of many in the New Testament drawn directly from the Law of Moses. We have others such as those on loving [Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; Col 3:14; 1Ti 1:5; Jas 2:8], marriage [Rom 7:2; 1Co 7:39], the silence of women in the churches [1Co 14:34], remuneration of the servants of God in the church [1Co 9:7-10] *(which we are partly dealing with here)*, etc.

**THE LAW IS GOD’S WORD**

I really wish we get this point that the Law, and indeed, all of the Old Testament—Genesis to Malachi, is God’s word. If we understand this and understand that God does not change, we will understand, as the apostles did, that the Law is absolutely authoritative in dictating to us how we are to live as God’s people. So much false doctrines arise from not properly acknowledging that the Law is God’s word and that it is only as a covenant that Jesus abolished it and not as God’s word.

Jesus’ death definitely changed certain things, and will eventually change everything, but we must be careful not to overstretch the implication of this truth. Jesus’ atonement for example did not abolish the order God set at creation regarding man and woman. It did not abolish or modify marriage as established by God as being between man and woman. It did not abolish the covenant God made with Noah and all mankind. It did not abolish God’s prohibition against murder and against eating meat with blood in it. It did not abolish God’s covenant with Abraham regarding the land of Canaan, and so on.

There really is no space here to deal with this matter, but it is crucial to understand so that we don’t proclaim freedom where God has not given us. Ignorance of this truth underlies and continues to fuel so many false doctrines and practices. We need to understand what Jesus’ death changed and what it did not, so that we don’t find ourselves rejecting God’s word.

**DOES THIS NOT CONTRADICT THE ASSERTION THAT WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW?**

One may wonder, “If we are not under the Law, then why do the apostles take doctrine straight from the Law?” This may seem a little, if not, outright, contradictory to some, or isn’t it?

No, this is not contradictory in the least. *(They give these commands to us not as subjects of the Law but as children of God)*

They do this, and rightly so, because even though we are not under the Law, the Law is the word of God and God never ever changes. The geographical, economic, political, etc., circumstances may have changed. The covenant may have changed. But God remains absolutely the very same. His character and righteousness and holiness and ways remain absolutely the very same. God did not grow wiser or nicer from the Old to the New, so there is absolutely no reason to think he has changed.

If God under the Law said that His Name is “Jealous”, and so forbids idolatry, you can be absolutely sure that His Name is still “Jealous”, and that he still hates idolatry. If God said under the Law that *it is his character and way to*punish sins, make no mistake about it, he still punishes sins. If God considers it righteous for children to honour their parents, so much he promises a blessing for doing so, then you can be absolutely sure that he still expects you to do so today and will bless you if you do. If he made marriage for man and woman, you can be sure that he hasn’t changed his mind about it. If he said, “I hate divorce”, be very certain, he still hates it. What he considered righteous yesterday, he will not consider sinful today.

So, with this understanding, let us return to the question about tithes*(and offerings)*in the church.

**AN OBSERVATION YOU MUST NOT MISS**

You may have observed, and if not, please do, that, apart from a few unique commands such as the Lord’s supper and baptism, there is no body of laws for the New Covenant. Some, based on this, wrongly think that the New Covenant does not have laws, well it actually does [Heb 8:16]. These laws are the laws of God and of Christ [1Co 9:21; Gal 6:2]. The big challenge as I have just pointed out is that they don’t seem to be anywhere in the Bible.

Well, the reason for this is because, they are everywhere in the Bible. God doesn’t change, the New Covenant does not have particularly new and novel laws, no, it’s still the same good old laws of God. God does not have to repeat himself, he gave commands through the Law of Moses and through the prophets, what God expects is for us to read those and get educated in his Laws.

**THE NEED TITHES AND OFFERINGS WERE INSTITUTED TO MEET**

Let us consider the question of whether tithing in the church is wrong by answering the following questions:

1. Does the need God, in his wisdom, instituted tithing to meet under the Law exist in the church? Yes, the very same need exists in the church.
2. Has God who instituted the laws regarding tithes and offerings under the Law of Moses changed? No, he hasn’t.

We have already pointed out that God doesn’t change, so now let us look at the need that the tithes and offerings were instituted to meet. *(Please note that this is not all to tithes and offerings, rather, I am only focusing on the question at hand.)*

**THE NEED TITHING WAS INSTITUTED TO MEET**

*(I will here only speak of the main tithe meant for the Levites serving in the temple.)*The main tithe was for the Levites serving in the temple. Though the Israelites were God’s people, the Levites were particularly chosen from among them to serve in the temple. The tithe was their pay, the remuneration for the work they did in the temple [Num 18:21].

Please note the last point as some think the Levites received tithe only because they were not given land. The reverse is instead the case: they were not given land because they were entitled to the tithes. Significantly, God particularly stated that a Levite is still entitled to the tithe even if he had another source of income [Deut 18:6-8]. The main condition a Levite had to meet to be entitled to the tithe is to be serving in the temple *(some Levites chose not to be employed in the temple but to pursue other businesses)*.

Make no mistake, we have in the church the equivalent of priests and Levites for although we are by the New Covenant all God’s people, it was God and the Lord himself who set in the church “apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers” [Eph 4:7-13; 1Co 12:28-31]. We also read of such a thing in the church as “ministers of the New Covenant” and “ministers of Christ” [2Co 3:5-6; Rom 15:16; Col 1:7; 1Ti 4:6], and this is not referring to every Christian.

If this is so, then without question, the need the tithes and other offerings were instituted to meet remain. The question to us is how do we intend to meet those needs? If God already laid out a pattern for us, why would we reject it and come up with our own or nothing at all. We must be careful not to maltreat God’s servants among us as that will not turn out well for us before our God who is their master.

**A CONSEQUENCE OF NEGLECTING THOSE WHO SERVE IN THE CHURCH**

In the days of Nehemiah, the people failed to give their tithes and the result was that the Levites and singers forsook the work of the temple and went in search of other jobs [Neh 13:10].

If the church is God’s temple, his house, then those who have been chosen to serve in his house, the church should have food and not be made to starve to death or forsake the house.

Neglecting those God has called and gifted to be specially dedicated to his service among us can be considered an act of killing the church. The ministers of the church are humans just as those of the Old Covenant, and they have needs. We cannot expect or demand dedication from them if we do not pay them.

If these men are not properly catered for, they will naturally have to divide their time between their service to God in the church and trying to make a living. Some will even forsake the work of God completely so as to be able to cater for themselves and their families.

**THE LORD COMMANDED REMUNERATION FOR HIS SERVANTS**

In any case, the Lord expects and commands that the church will take care of his ministers and this is repeated in scriptures [Mat 10:10; Luk 10:7; Gal 6:6; 1Ti 5:17; 1Co 9:13-14; Gal 6:6]. You may take note that according to Jesus, his ministers are to be given wages [Luk 10:7].

**HOW DO WE FULFIL THE LORD’S COMMAND AND EXPECTATION?**

To fulfil the Lord’s command, we only need to look at how he handled the same in the past, especially, under the Law. We cannot deal with God on our own terms but on his own terms.

Since God does not change, even if God should institute a law on remuneration of his ministers among us, what do you think he would institute? So, does he have to state it all over again?

Do you think for example that God is not honoured when you give him your firstfruits, instead of your last? Go read the story of Cain and Abel and see that even before the Law, you honour God when you give him your firstfruits [Pro 3:9].

If under the Law, the people were commanded to give tithes, among other offerings, as pay for those serving on their behalf in the temple, should we who are under a ‘better’ and ‘higher’ covenant do any less? In faithfulness to God and the example he has set for us, the least we can commit to the welfare and remuneration of the ministers in the church is the tithe of our incomes. Or should we make it less, like 5% or 2.5%. Or maybe we should give thoughtlessly like Cain, anything we can spare and expect God to commend us.

**CONCLUSION**

Tithing is not a sin, but in fact is commendable.

Tithing was instituted by God, among other offerings, as a payment for the service of his servants, those chosen from among his people to serve on their behalf in the temple. Now, as under the Law, God and the Lord have instituted offices in the church and have men who are dedicated to the service of God among his saints. Now, it is very clear that the Lord expects, and indeed commands, that “those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” [1Co 9:14].

If the Lord never showed us an example of how he would have us fulfil this expectation and command, then we would be left to come up with our own solutions. But God, who is not the author of confusion, has laid out a pattern for us in scriptures from Abel to the Law. His servants were taken care of with tithes and regular and irregular offerings. We are certainly free to do more, but the least we can acceptably do is to live up to the standard already laid down, abandoning or lowering the standard is not acceptable. Well, it is up to us, whether we would follow his ways or chose ours.

Let me say this lastly, we have to be very careful in this matter of giving for after the first sin of Adam and Eve, the next sin we read of had to do with giving. Abel’s gift was accepted because he gave the firstborn and the fattest of his flock to God. Cain’s gift, on the other hand, was rejected because it was not his firstfruits neither was it his best. Giving to God has been an issue from the beginning, we really should be careful in this matter.

May God our Father guide his people who sincerely seek to do his will in this matter. Tithing is not a sin.

**APPENDIX**

**OTHER FACTS ABOUT TITHING**

For those who contend that it is only the tithe of farm produce that we are to give, we have the example of Abraham who gave not of farm produce but of the spoils of war.

Also, Melchizedek to whom Abraham gave tithes was a king and certainly wasn’t in desperate need of goods like a common man. Also, Abraham who gave the tithe was God’s chosen man, which tells you that being all Christians does not mean that there aren’t those more important than others among us.

By the institution of God through the prophet Samuel, the king of Israel was entitled to a tithe from the people of Israel [1Sa 8:15*ff*]. This tithe was apart from the tithe they gave for the Levites serving in the temple. From this fact, we can see that tithing is a form of taxation [Rom 13:6].

**THE TWO TITHES OF THE LAW**

There are two tithes commanded the people under the Law.

1. The first was to be given to the Levites who served in the temple yearly.
2. The second followed a three-year cycle.
   1. In the first two years, this tithe was to be used for feasting in the temple of God [Deut 14:23]. Feasting in the temple was to keep the people in check as they celebrated their harvest and success. God wants us to “rejoice with trembling” [Psa 2:11] and not lose our heads or decency in the name of rejoicing. The Levites*(who were unemployed in the temple)*living in the towns of the tithers also partook of this tithe. The tithers didn’t actually eat all the tithes alone.
   2. In the third year, the tithe was to be stored in the tithers’ towns for the welfare of the Levites, the poor, widows, orphans living in the tithers’ town [Deut 14:28-29]. This was a sort of social welfare.