

TITHES

THE giving of tithes was commanded by God Almighty for the upkeep of His Ministry both under the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. Tithes of all incomes, whether in cash or in kind, God says are His. To refuse to offer them to Him is a sin but for those who in obedience to the sacred ordinance give tithes there is the promise of blessing and protection.

Under the law of God *tithe* is the tenth part of a person's income, produce or increase that is given for religious purposes. The practice of paying tithes is very ancient – it existed even before the emergence of the nation of Israel.

Abraham from whose loins the Jewish nation came into being paid tithes to Melchizedek, King of Salem. This happened when Abraham returned from his battle against Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and four kings who were in confederacy with him. He (Abraham) gained victory over them by God's power and returned with all the booty he took from his enemies. It is recorded that Melchizedek who was described as the priest of the most high God came to Abraham and blessed him. Said he: "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." "And he (Abram) gave him (Melchizedek) TITHES of all." – Genesis 14: 18-20.

Levitical Priesthood

After the Israelites were delivered from bondage in Egypt and while they continued their historic journey to Canaan, God instructed Moses to appoint Aaron and his sons to the priest's office. Thus Aaron and his sons were anointed and sanctified to minister to the Lord as priests. (Exodus 28: 1,2; 40: 13-16.) In process of time, God caused the Levites to be consecrated and given to Aaron and his sons to assist them in executing the service of the Lord. – Numbers 3: 9-13; 8: 9-11.

Aaron himself belonged to the tribe of Levi, and it was he and his sons together with his brothers (the Levites) who were brought to join them that constituted the Ministry in their time. It was the will of the Almighty God that they should be entirely addicted to their ministry, and so He made provision for their maintenance. They were given the privilege to take charge of the offerings which were made by the children of Israel from the other tribes, and in all these they had a considerable share. – Numbers 18: 8-14.

Moreover, under the law all the tithes of the people's produce belonged to God. As it is written: "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." (Leviticus 27: 30) But by reason of the calling and the services of the Levites who were not allowed to be occupied in the trades and other affairs of which the other tribes had advantages, God, by statute, gave the tithe or tenth of all the increase of the land to the Levites.

God said: “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...But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.” – Numbers 18: 21-24.

In all the chequered history of the Jews, much importance was attached to the payment of tithes. As a duty, any negligence of it was viewed with seriousness because it amounted to disobedience of the Lord's ordinance and tended to deprive the Levites of the means of maintaining their services for the benefit of the entire nation of Israel and also of their means of subsistence. For this reason God warned the Jews: “Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.” – Deuteronomy 12: 19; see also Deuteronomy 14: 27.

Some people hold the view that the law concerning tithes became obsolete since the advent of Jesus Christ. They say that for the fact that the Aaronic priesthood had been changed no Christian Organisation is entitled to receive tithes. In all sincerity this view, we must say is very wrong.

A certain pastor in the Midwestern State of Nigeria once said that the God's Kingdom Society (GKS) was wrong in receiving tithes. When he was asked by a Minister of the GKS to substantiate his assertion with a biblical authority, he resorted to vain jangling. As the pressure on him to cite the Scriptures was heightened by some friends who were present, he made a bungling attempt to save his face by making reference to Matthew 23: 23.

As soon as the text was read out the pastor without making any explanation exclaimed: “That's it! There you are!” But on the long run he was silenced when the Minister of the GKS gave a comprehensive interpretation of the passage to the effect that Jesus Christ was not against tithing.

Now, let us consider the text under reference. It contains the words of Jesus Christ who lashed and pronounced curse on the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy and for misleading their followers. He said: “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.” – Matthew 23: 23.

From this passage it is clear that Jesus Christ did not condemn the taking of tithes. What he deprecated was the habit of their putting aside the more important demands of the law such as judgment, mercy and faith. *According to him, these weightier matters they ought to have done first and foremost but they should not neglect tithing.*

Other translations in modern English are quite plain in their renderings of the passage. The *Living Gospels* put it thus: "Yes, woe upon you, Pharisees, and you other religious leaders-hypocrites! For you tithe down to the last mint leaf in your garden, but ignore the important things – justice and mercy and faith. Yes, YOU SHOULD TITHE but you shouldn't leave the more important things undone." (*Caps. ours*)

Commenting on the same passage, the well-known Bible scholar, William Nicholson, stated in his work The Bible Student's Companion as follows: "Christ did not discommend their giving tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, but complained of their inconsistency, while they neglected more essential commandments, and substituted insignificant observances for justice, mercy and truth."

Another point which some people seldom consider or do not even understand is the spiritual significance of that ancient incident in which Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. It points out the fact that the practice of paying tithes cuts across the period of the Levitical priesthood to that after the order of Melchizedek.

The Holy Bible clearly shows that the one whom Jehovah has ordained a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek is none other than Jesus Christ. It is the change of the law in relation to the priest-hood that makes it possible for Christ who did not come from the tribe of Levi but from Judah, to be a priest, and to bring into his Ministry others who had no connection with Aaron.

Since Melchizedek received tithes, those who have the grace to be in the Ministry of Jesus Christ whose priesthood is superior to that of Aaron are perfectly in order in taking tithes. St. Paul stated that Melchizedek who received tithes from Abraham did not belong to the priest-tribe of Levi. Concerning this the apostle wrote: "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 but he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises ". – Hebrews 7: 5, 6.

Immense Benefits

In the days of Malachi the prophet the natural Jews became so lax in their devotions and duties that they failed to keep the ordinances of the Lord. They were reprimanded for backsliding and warned to return to God. For not paying tithes, which is the Lord's portion, they were said to have committed robbery and were placed under curse.

Concerning the faithless Jews it is written: "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? 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. And I will rebuke the devourer (satan) 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. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.” – Malachi 3: 7-12.

It is clear from this passage that immense benefits are derived from the payment of tithes. Upon the faithful God will shower blessings from heaven, and He has also promised to protect them and preserve their means of livelihood or source of income so that the devil may not harm them or destroy their means of subsistence. Anyone who has a good understanding of and faith in this will never fail to give his tithe, however small or however big it may be, to the Lord's Organization.

Faithful Christians must learn from the experience of the typical Jews and endeavour to do God's will with faith and godly fear, regardless of what self – sacrifice it may involve. It will all redound to their blessings. “They that sow in tears (in self-denial) shall reap in joy.” – Look up Psalm 126: 5, 6; Hosea 10: 12 and Romans 15: 4.

The troubles or difficulties some of us encounter in life are due to our sins or faithlessness or negligence in doing our duties to God. There are people who labour hard and earn much money but they have no peace neither do they make any good use of the money. Rather they appear wretched and live in debts. All such ones should examine themselves and amend their ways, for the causes of their troubles are spiritual.

“Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; consider your ways. Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; consider your ways...Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.” – Haggai 1: 5-9.

The GKS

Our detractors go about telling lies to people that the GKS always takes either the whole or half of her members' salaries or income every month. And it is a pity that some believe this rubbish.

The truth is that the members of the organisation pay tithes as of faith – and this the faithful ones do voluntarily because they understand the importance of this particular obligation or service to God. It does not make them poor, rather those who are doing it honestly as ordained by God can testify to the blessings of the Lord upon them. Many of the members came to the GKS in a low state of life but today a lot of them have become men of substance despite the fact that they pay tithes and make other contributions in support of the Lord's Organisation. There are those who started as office messengers but are now in positions of honour, through the grace of God, in

their various departments or walks of life. The payment of tithes does not militate against their rise, rather they appreciated that it has contributed to their blessing or success.

The blessing of God is not reckoned only in terms of money, buildings and cars because there are several ways in which God distributes His blessings among His worshippers. Whatever may be your state, if you as a true worshipper know how to count your blessing, you will definitely find evidence of God's favour on you and you will be satisfied. – 1 Timothy 6:6-8.

It is not all the members of the GKS that are paying tithes and no one is compelled to pay. Even among those who are paying not all are faithful. Yet it is among such ones there are more complaints of hardship and other troubles. But those who are faithful are being prospered and they are more in peace with God. It pays to fear God and to do His will. And granted that any unfaithful worshipper has material possessions, Jesus asked, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" – Mark 8: 36; see also Luke 12: 15.

The Ministry of Christ in the God's Kingdom Society is made up of men and women with their children who have disentangled themselves from the affairs of secular life and devoted their lives wholly to the service of the Lord. Some of them had the talent and opportunity to become great in worldly circles but they have shown faith and a true sense of self-denial required to meet the Lord's demands and, like Moses and the apostles of Christ, have chosen "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." – Hebrews 11: 24-26; see also Luke 18: 18-30.

Those who have visited Salem City, the headquarters of the GKS, and other branches where the Society has property, will not need to be told what the tithes and donations are used for. Apart from the maintenance of the ministers, there are other good works and humanitarian services the Society is rendering by the grace of God: there are orphans and widows and some poor but faithful ones who are in the care of the church; and many people both among members and non-members have enjoyed spiritual as well as financial and/or material benefits from the organisation.

Now, the GKS is spending much money monthly in publishing *The Weekly Sermon* alone. At present our weekly production has risen to 26,000 copies, though we are still unable to cope with the demand of the public, and they are given out free of charge so that no one may be prevented for lack of money from receiving the truth of God's word and being spiritually enlightened. But how is the Society able to do this? It is from the tithes and donations of the members and other people of goodwill who appreciate that it is the work of God and are moved to give support for which God will give them abundant reward.

By reason of the mission of the God's Kingdom Society in feeding the people with the spiritual food (God's word) that gives life, she is in every respect competent to receive contributions from the people. Said St. Paul: "If we have sown unto you spiritual thing is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?... 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.” – Read 1 Corinthians 9: 7-14.

There is blessing in being liberal to God’s organisation where the truth is preached without pollution. That which discourages or bars people from the expenses of charity in the Lord is the weakness of their faith concerning the gains and spiritual blessings of charity. But King Solomon said: “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat! and he that watereth (by supplying the needs of God’s organisation) shall be watered (blessed) also himself (by God).”- Proverbs 11: 24, 25.

Yes, they that sow to the Spirit (support God’s cause) shall reap material blessings NOW and in the end life everlasting in God’s perfect Kingdom of endless bliss. Read and consider deeply, Galatians 6: 7-10.