

120. Principles of Tithing

By Arland Steen

Supreme Scripture

Hebrews 7:1-10 (NKJ): *For this Melchizedek, 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 translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” ³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. ⁴ Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.*

The entire chapter here is devoted to showing how Jesus is the fulfillment of all the types and shadows embodied in Melchizedek. It gives special attention to the fact that Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, who was either Jesus Christ himself or a representation of Christ. Plus, all this occurred 430 years before the Mosaic Law.

It teaches 3 simple and beautiful things about God's design for tithing and the central place of tithing in God's economy.

1) Tithing is an eternal principle.

Many say tithing is just for the OT, but it is not. God simply allowed the Levites, during the time of the Mosaic Law, to exercise it in their behalf because they had no inheritance.

So, let's go back to the first mention of Melchizedek:

Genesis 14:18-20 (NKJ): *¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tithe of all.”*

430 years before tithing was part of the Mosaic Law, Abraham tithed to Melchizedek. According to the book of Galatians, Abraham is our spiritual father and Melchizedek is a type of Jesus Christ. Some prominent Bible teachers think he might even have been Jesus Himself.

We also know Melchizedek is a type of Christ because Hebrews 5:9-10 says so:

⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰ called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”

Our text presents a full portrait of Melchizedek which underscores the full depth and meaning of the book of Hebrews, because it tells us the full story of Melchizedek and the present-day reasons and meaning of the tithe.

Notice his titles from Hebrews 7:2:

King of Righteousness (same as Justice), and King of Peace (Salem).

"He's made like unto the Son of God. So that means he is a type of Christ, he is fulfilled in Jesus.

Notice Hebrews 7:3: Understand the object of the apostle in using Melchizedek as an example, is to vindicate the fact that Jesus is our High Priest. Every priest had to vindicate his genealogy. His ancestry had to be verified. Before he could be accepted as a priest, he had to prove he was of the tribe of Levi, a son of Aaron (see Ezra 2:61-63).

They kept scrupulous records. When their ancestry couldn't be traced to Aaron, they were for priesthood purposes, said to be without father or mother. But Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi. So, in this sense, Christ too was without father or mother.

But Paul is reminding them there is a precedence for this. This is not the first time a non-Levite served God as a high priest – Melchizedek did.

This act of tithe-giving signified that Abraham recognized him as a superior - even to himself:

- His office was priest of the Most-High God - thus he had intimate access to the Divine presence
- He offered sacrifices to God
- His residence was in Salem meaning "king of peace." Christ is the 'Prince of Peace.'

So, if Melchizedek, a non-Levite, a type of Christ, could be a priest much more can Jesus who is far greater. I've said all this to show you tithing is an eternal principle:

- Hebrews 7 points out that tithing was not from the law
- There was no law that commanded Abraham to give a tithe to Melchizedek
- The tithe was an act of homage, reverence, and subordination to God
- Tithing did not stop with the Law because it didn't start with the Law
- Abraham gave this tithe as a tribute to the Most-High God, who, being the possessor of heaven and earth, dispenses all spiritual and temporal favors, and demands the gratitude and loving obedience of his subjects.

Hebrews 7:8 is a most remarkable verse.

According to this verse, Jesus receives tithes in heaven. When you write your tithe check, you may think you're giving it to your local church, but in a very real and spiritual sense, true tithers have their money received by the Lord Jesus Himself.

Tithing is an eternal principle. It was begun before the Law, continued during the Law, and continues today, after the Law.

2) Tithing is a perfected principle.

The whole emphasis of Hebrews is to show how Jesus perfected the Mosaic system. He did not do away with the sacrificial system. He perfected it.

Hebrews 7:11 (NKJ): *Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?*

He perfected it by one sacrifice once and for all.

How is the tithe perfected...Christ can't give it for us?

Can we make a once-for-all offering as He did His sin offering? No.

Then how is the tithe perfected?

We perfect the tithe when we give the tithe to Jesus because we love Him, not because we are forced to, just as He gave His life for us because He loved us.

God wants us to love Him and trust Him and serve Him and there is no better way than to trust Him than with earthly mammon. Money represents your life and when you honor God with the tithe, you honor Him with your very life.

The tithe is only a beginning. It is a start. We can do nothing less.

It is the point from which we can tell how serious we are about honoring God.

As one writer said:

"If we are not willing to give a tithe, then we need not pretend that we love him. If we are not willing to give a tithe, we need not pretend we are going to serve Him in all His commands. We need not act as if He is Lord of our lives. We need not tell people we have submitted ourselves to Him if we are not willing to come up to that bare minimum of tithing, which the Jew under the law was commanded to do."

Principle #2 has to do with our motive for giving. We should give because we love God and want to obey God. Period.

We should not give mechanically because we want to get something in return.

You simply give because you love Jesus! Let's just keep it simple. Why do I tithe? Why do I give offerings? Because I love Jesus!

3) Tithing is a blessed principle.

The tithe is perfected also in that God gives back to us what we give:

- Proverbs 11:24 (NKJ): *There is one who scatters yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty.*
- Malachi 3:10 (NKJ): *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house and try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts. If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.*
- Luke 6:38 (NKJ): *Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom...*
- 3 John 2 (NKJ): *Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.*

This is a principle of life. The whole physical world operates this way.

If we give our time to an employer, we receive money in exchange.

Farmers give their toil to the earth and then receive harvest. That is the law of seedtime and harvest.

To say you can't afford to tithe is dangerous.

As one said, "The most dangerous thing in all the earth is to contradict one of the principles of God for our lives."

The truth is you can't afford not to tithe.

Personal Blessings

I thank God for my Dad. I started working when I was 13 years old and I made \$18.00 my very first week. I brought it to my Dad sitting at his desk and I said, "Help me figure out how much I need to give to God." He said, "\$1.80." He counted it out for me and I've been doing that ever since.

I've been comparatively speaking tremendously blessed. I have had multiple people come up and give me multiple thousands of dollars. I remember standing in the back of the church one Sunday and an usher gave me an envelope. He said, "Pastor, before you open this, I want you to know I cannot tell you who gave it to me. They said to tell you it is a gift from heaven." And when I opened

it up there was \$4,000 in there. It was the amount I needed to pay off some furniture I had just purchased.

But I'm like Paul, who said, "I know how to abound and I also know how to be abased." I know what it means as an adult to wonder where is my next meal coming from? Where am I going to sleep tonight? How am I going to pay a bill? I've known them both. But as soon as I began to tithe as a teenager, it seemed like my money multiplied – without a raise or a second job. This is because of tithing.

While attending Bible school in Oklahoma having nothing, a man I did not know knocked on my door and placed an envelope in my hand and walked away. The envelope had \$25 in it. I ran out to find him and thank him but he was gone. Angel unaware? I don't know. He looked human to me.

Why did these things happen? I believe it's because I love Jesus and I tithe.

Why did these things happen? I believe it's because when I was 13 years old my Dad showed me how to tithe.

Why did these things happen? I believe it's because when I was abounding, I was giving 30% to the Lord. And then, during the tough season when everything went away, I still gave 10% of what I had to God.