

Sunday January 29th, 2006

The Tithe is the Lord's – Part 2

Intro. – As we continue to look at the tithe today the message will really be in two parts. Firstly, we need to revisit some of the things we had looked at last time to refresh our memories and to lay some additional foundation that will hopefully help us to understand the tithe better. And secondly, to understand from scripture what happens to it – turn off the filter!

1). Ge 14:18 *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. 21 ¶ Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 "that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich' –*

- a). Let's note the context in this scripture concerning Abraham's giving of the tithe.
- b). It comes immediately after the meeting with Melchizedek in which Melchizedek blesses Abraham in relation to both realms of the kingdom.
- c). And speaks concerning the defeat of Abraham's enemies in relation to the same.
- d). And then we have the contrast between Melchizedek, a type of Christ and the king of Sodom, a type of Satan, the god of this world.
- e). We can clearly see in whom Abraham puts his trust, refusing that which this world has to offer.

2). This event is then followed at the beginning of chapter 15 with this Ge 15:1 ¶ *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."*

God then makes a blood covenant with Abraham in respect of his inheritance and his descendants.

a). It is without doubt that all this is connected – it is because of Abraham’s response to Melchizedek, and his stand with regards to the king of Sodom, that God cuts covenant with him.

b). And what a comfort he is given - *"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."*

3). The question for Abraham as indeed it is for us is, ‘In whom do we trust? Where is the focus of our attention? This world or our inheritance in the world which is to come?’

a). Mt 16:24 ¶ *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*

b). Mt 6:19 ¶ *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

c). Mt 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

d). Lu 16:11 *"Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 "And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? 13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." 14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*

e). The thing of particular interest in this last scripture is in v11. You would notice in your Bible that ‘riches’ is in italics showing that it is added by the translators, but would be perfectly in keeping with the thought in the scripture

Ro 9:23 *and that He might make known **the riches** of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,*

Col 2:2 *that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to **all riches** of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,*

f). Notice, please the implication is that those who are faithful in the unrighteous mammon are those to whom the true 'riches' are to be committed – those who are faithful – those who act out of faith in respect of wealth – that which God has provided for us materially.

4). It seems impossible to separate this from the tithe given by Abraham, when the true riches were revealed to him.

5). But our handling of what God gives us materially goes back before Abraham in an incident that we might easily overlook.

6). Ge 4:1 ¶ *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." 2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 ¶ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 ¶ So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."*

7). Now let's notice something from God's own commentary on this event

a). Heb 11:4 ¶ *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*

b). Note the beginning of the scripture – 'by faith'

c). Now what do we know of faith? - Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

d). In order to make this 'more excellent sacrifice' by faith, Abel had to be responding to what God had said concerning it.

e). Quite clearly Cain had also heard but acted apart from faith by not being obedient to that which God had said.

f). The Septuagint version of the Bible (the Greek translation of the Hebrew text which was made about two hundred years before Christ) translates Genesis 4:6-7 as follows

g). *And the Lord God said to Cain, "Why art thou become sorrowful and why is thy countenance fallen; hast thou not sinned as thou hast brought it rightly but not rightly divided it?"*

h). This makes Cain's sin not what he brought, but the bringing of the wrong quantity and quality in disobedience to God's word on the subject.

i). And seeing Abel as a type of Christ and Cain as a type of Israel, His brother, we cannot help but note that Israel is characterized by a constant disobedience/unbelief in respect of what God has said.

8). So let us note that in respect of Cain and Abel, Abraham and Abraham's grandson Jacob, the tithe is instituted before the Law of Moses and before the inception of the Church.

a). It has been from antiquity an expression of where man is in relation to the tension between this world and the world which is to come. And is an action of faith that declares steadfastness in the hope that is set before us.

b). The tithe then in its origin is not given to a man or an institution but to God. Exactly what is given to us in:

c). *Le 27:30 '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 to the LORD. 31 'If a man wants at all to redeem any of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. 32 'And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD.*

d). The tithe is the Lord's, always has been and always will be.

e). And our giving of the tithe even now is an issue of faith. It is not an issue of money.

f). Remember, God introduces the tithe for the benefit of the tither. It is the hearts and minds of men who have perverted this. Remember Cain and Abel.

g). Cain – *"If you do well, will you not be accepted?"*

h). Abel – *through which he obtained witness that he was righteous,*

9). This being said, what then should we do with the tithe and what should happen to it?

a). Well let's not bother ourselves with man's opinions, let's see what scripture says.

10). Now under the Law of Moses Israel had three tithes. Two were added to that we have found through Cain and Abel, Abraham and Jacob

a). Let us remember something concerning the Law

b). Ga 3:19 ¶ *What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made;*

c). There are three things to note here – the Law was ‘added’, that is it was in addition to that which God had already said. It was added because of transgressions on the part of Israel. And was in place ‘until the Seed should come’ – until Christ. Who came to fulfill the Law.

d). That which was added then would relate to Israel’s second and third tithes, not that which was already in existence.

e). Let’s look at how this first tithe, the one in existence before the Law, was handled.

11). Nu 18:21 *"Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting. 22 "Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. 23 "But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. 24 "For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.'"*

a) Note then, in respect to Israel the tithe belonging to the Lord was given to the Levites in return for the work they perform. The reason being they had no inheritance in the land and were therefore not able to produce for themselves. Their sole focus was on the work of the tabernacle of meeting.

12). This is instructive for us because of what is written by Paul in respect of this with regards to the Church

a). 1Co 9:7 *Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? 8 Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? 10 Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*

12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? 14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. 15 ¶ But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.

b). Let's see some things here.

i/ v7 – the natural analogy - *Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?*

ii/ v9 – the analogy of scripture - *9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about?*

iii/ v11 – each part of the body having a separate function - *If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*

iv/ v13 – comparison with the OT - *Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?* – referring to the Levites in Numbers 18.

v/ v14 – the command from the Lord - *14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.*

What 'even so' tells us.

c). Although Paul gives his reasons as to why he has not accepted funding for his apostolic ministry from the church in Corinth, he had been receiving financial support from the other churches.

13). What must we conclude then? – 'Even so' – in the same way as the tithe was used to recompense those who worked exclusively in the tabernacle, so would the tithe be used to support those in full time ministry within the church today.

a). In our own setting, not only is the same true, but is actually happening.

b). And we would need to see this in a broader context than that which we would call a 'salary'.

c). The Ministry of the Word and prayer, Ac 6:4 *"but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

(The work of the Tabernacle) which God has called me to here is not confined within the walls of this building, but reaches to the very ends of the earth and as such it incurs expenses carrying out that ministry, which could be anything from postage to plane tickets and would of necessity include those things which would keep the minister functioning that we might classify under the heading 'salary'.

d). Now I have 'salary' in inverted commas as the word really conveys the wrong idea.

e). Salary is paid by an employer to an employee, and although in our relationship with the government, particularly the immigration service and the IRS there is no other way to describe what goes on here, this is not how God sees it all and should not be how we see it either.

f). Within a church context a salary makes you a hireling and a hireling dances to the tune of the one that hires. It must be God alone who directs the steps of this Pastor.

14). Remember the tithe belongs to the Lord, it does not belong to a church, a denomination or a preacher – it belongs to the Lord. And as such it must be used in the way the Lord designates.

a). Pastor/Teachers are not employed – they are separated by God and set in place wherever God wants them.

b). Eph 4:8 *Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."*

Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

c). Regardless of our previous experience, regardless of what anybody else does, we must align ourselves with the testimony of scripture.

d). Relate the story of your coming in respect of finances.

e). Maybe it requires a paradigm shift in our thinking – so what else is new?

f). In our context here, as it should be everywhere, I do not work for you – you are my work.

g). 1Th 2:19 *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*

h). Col 1:28 *Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*