***Living in the Fullness of Christ***

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***Let’s begin with the Tithing Command***

How much should we give to the church? Since the religious revolution, the most common teaching is to give a tenth. This teaching comes from a few bible passages. Many spiritual writings contain comprehensive analyses of these passages. The emphasis of this article is on the practicality of this instruction.

When Abraham led an army of 318 men to rescue his nephew Lot, he was greeted with bread and wine on his victorious return at the King's Valley by Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of The High God. The Bible said,

“*Blessed be Abram by The High God, Creator of Heaven and Earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”* Ge 14:19-20

In theology, we understand Melchizedek to be a foreshadowing for Christ according to Hebrews 7:2,

“*First, the name Melchizedek means ‘king of righteousness; then also, ‘king of Salem’ means ‘king of peace.’”* Heb 7:2

Chapter Seven gives us a spiritual analysis of “tithing”. Amazingly, Abraham’s grandson Jacob had the same understanding,

“*and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”* Ge 28:22

The book of Leviticus, which is known as the ‘offering manual’ in the Pentateuch stated clearly about tithing in 27:30,

“*A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.”*

Number 18:24-28 tells us that the Lord has given the tithe of the people to the Levites.

Tithing is an indisputable teaching in the Old Testament. (Reference: Deut 12:17, 14:23,28, 26:12; 1Sam 8:15,17, 2Chr 31:5,6; Neh 10:37,38, 12:44, 13:12…etc).

In the book of the minor prophets, we read about admonitions against neglecting the giving of tithe. Obviously, God’s people at that time have stopped tithing and increasingly sinned against God. The prophet Malachi rebuked them sternly in 3:8,

“*Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In tithes and offerings.”*

He also reminded us of God’s promise:

“*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”* Mal 3:10

Did Melchizedek not give Abraham God’s blessing? We can capsulate the teaching on tithing in a statement: Tithing is our obligation to God and God will bless us.

***Tithing in the New Testament***

The Hebrew people have reduced their obedience to the Law of God to a set of behavioral norms. Hear the rebuke of the Lord in Luke 11:42 for them,

“*Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.”*

The Lord’s heart is clearly shown: We are not to believe that giving a tenth fulfills our role as a saint. Tithing is only one of our responsibilities. The Lord also taught us not to boast about it in Luke 18:10-14,

“*Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ 13 But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ 14 I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted”*

It is clear that our tithing must come with an obedient heart to God’s teaching of the Bible. Tithing is the fundamental obligation of every citizen in the Kingdom of God. Note that a church should not assess a person's spirituality based on his monetary contributions and delegate governance responsibilities accordingly.

***How should we make monetary offerings?***

Today, we no longer count our gats and give every 10th to God. However, we could give a fixed percentage of our income to the church. For those who have a regular income, it is good to give a fixed percentage for the church’s operation. The 10% can be a rule of thumb. You need to do a budget for your expenses and, by faith through prayer, put aside a fixed percentage, and ask the Lord to provide for you. (Remember that it is God who provides for you).

Some of us, such as business owners, may not have a steady source of income. In this case, you could contribute a fixed amount each month and a thanksgiving offering at the end of the year after you've tallied your earnings. In fact, a thanksgiving offering is what every saint should do in addition to the regular offering.

As a saint, we should set aside the sum of the offering ahead of time. Making careless offerings is disrespectful to God. Paul reminded the saints in Corinth,

 “*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”* (1Cor 16:2)

The haphazard collection is inappropriate. It reveals a lack of prayer. The extent of our love for Christ can be seen from the way we make monetary contributions: bring our monetary offering to the church together with thanksgiving prayers and godly worship.