

“The Tithe”
Hebrews 7:1-10
(Preached at Trinity, May 12, 2024)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The author has been declaring the infinite greatness of Jesus Christ. Yes, following Him comes at a high price. This has always been true, but He is of infinite value. His people must be willing to take up their cross and follow Him. But is it worth it? The Book of Hebrews is clear. YES! Jesus is worth it. Jesus is all in all.
2. Jesus Christ is superior to the prophets. He is superior to the angels. He alone is worthy of all worship and praise. He is superior to Moses. Jesus and Moses were both prophets. They were both messengers sent by God. They were both priests. They were both kings. Among men, there were none greater than Moses. But Jesus is infinitely superior.
3. Jesus is far superior to the Old Covenant priesthood. All of the Old Covenant was progressively revealing God's redemptive purpose in Christ. Jesus is our great High Priest. Beginning in **Chapter 5** the author labors to declare qualifications of the Old Covenant priesthood.
 - A. They were chosen by Divine appointment. Only Aaron and his sons were allowed to serve. The priests had to be of the tribe of Levi.
 - B. Jesus is our great High Priest. But he was of the tribe of Judah, the kingly tribe. He wasn't of the Levitical tribe.
The author answers this by declaring Jesus a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.
4. We've been looking at this mysterious figure. There is so much we don't know about him. His name is spoken of in 10 verses of the Bible. Of those ten times, eight are in Chapters 5-7 of the Book of Hebrews. The other two are in Genesis and Psalms. In **Chapter 5:11** the author wrote: "Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*"
There is much to say about this mysterious individual.
The author's point is to demonstrate the superiority of Melchizedek as a priest of God, and then demonstrate the superiority of Jesus over Melchizedek.
5. The author presses the superiority of Melchizedek over the Levitical priesthood.
 - A. This can be seen in the fact that Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek. Although Abraham was the conqueror, he gave homage to Melchizedek not visa versa. Melchizedek received the tithe from Abraham.
 - B. Also, when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek the tribe of Levi had not yet come into being. **Verse 10** tells us that Levi was still in the loins of Abraham. They were in the lineage of Abraham. This means that with Abraham as Covenant head, Levi also gave tithes to Melchizedek.
 - C. Like Melchizedek, Jesus is superior to the Levitical priests.
The Levitical priests could only offer sacrifices of a temporary nature.

Hebrews 6:20 NAU - "Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

6. This afternoon, I want to take a bit of hermeneutical liberty and address the subject of the tithe. It is an important subject and **Chapter 7** sheds some light on it for us. The reason I'm declaring it hermeneutical liberty is the author's main focus here is not to press the perpetuity of the tithe. He is using the tithe to press the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham and the Levitical priesthood. But I think we can use this passage to argue for the perpetuity of the tithe for the Christian church.
 7. Pastors sometimes preach on the tithe because their members fail in this area of the Christian life. I can't say this about the members of Trinity. Almost exclusively, our members have been faithful in their giving.
But it's always a good thing to affirm the basis of our practices. Why do we practice believers' baptism by immersion? Can you give an explanation of the Gospel? If someone asks you, "What must I do to be saved" can you give a Biblical answer? Why do we tithe? This afternoon I want to set before you the tithe as it relates New Testament church.
- I. The Tithe principle predates the Mosaic Covenant by over 500 years.
 - A. Abraham obeyed God in giving the tithe to Melchizedek.
Genesis 14:20 NAU - " And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all."
 1. We do not find a previous command for Abraham to tithe, yet we find here that Abraham gave.
 2. It is unlikely that Abraham would have started this practice on his own. It would have been an act of obedience to God. God told Isaac of the faithfulness of Abraham:
Genesis 26:5 NAU - "because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."
 3. We find that Abraham's grandson Jacob likewise gave a tithe to God.
Genesis 28:22 NAU - "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."
 - B. It is clearly established that God's people paid Him a tithe long before the Law was given to Israel. In other words, by the time of the Mosaic Law it was already established as the Law of God.
Leviticus 27:30 NAU - "Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S; it is holy to the LORD."
 1. By "holy unto the LORD" we are to understand it as set apart, as belonging to God. God reserves it for Himself.
 2. This part of our increase does not belong to us at all. The tithe isn't paid after everything else has been provided for. It is paid at the beginning as a tenth taken from the first fruits.
 3. We can see God's ownership of the tenth part of our increase in Malachi. God considered the withholding of the tithe as stealing that which belongs

to Him.

Malachi 3:8-9 NAU - "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!*"

- C. This law was frequently disregarded by the disobedience of Israel but during every time of revival the tithe was one of the first things restored.
1. Hezekiah commanded the people during one such time of revival.
2 Chronicles 31:5 NAU - "As soon as the order spread, the sons of Israel provided in abundance the first fruits of grain, new wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of all."
 2. We can witness it again when the children of Israel returned from Babylon
Nehemiah 10:37 NAU - "We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithe of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns."
- D. The tithe was used for the support of the Levites – the priestly family
Numbers 18:21 NAU - "To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting."
1. God did not leave it to the whims of the people how they would support the priestly family. It was specified with no exceptions.
Deuteronomy 14:27 NAU - "Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you."
 2. The author is declaring that even the Levites paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham. The Levites who were authorized to receive tithes paid tithes.
Hebrews 7:9-10 NAU - "And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him."
 3. So we see that God ordained the tithe for the maintenance of the priestly duties of the Levites. But we also see that the tithe predates the Levites. Melchizedek the priest also received tithes. They were his right to receive and Abraham paid them as an act of obedience.

II. The Tithe in the New Testament

- A. There is nothing in the New Testament that sets aside this Divine command.
1. In fact, Jesus affirms it.
Matthew 23:23 NAU - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others."
 2. The same means that God used to support the priestly tribe is the means He uses today for the support of the ministry and the expenses of the

church.

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 NAU - "Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the *food* of the temple, *and* those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? ¹⁴ So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel."

a. The Levites were supported by the tithe.

Numbers 18:21 NAU - "To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting."

b. Likewise, ("so also") God has ordained that pastors should be supported by the tithe.

1 Corinthians 9:14 NAU - " So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel."

1 Timothy 5:17-18 NAU - "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

c. Paul takes us back to the Old Covenant Law in his defense for the support of the ministry.

1 Corinthians 9:7-11 NAU - " Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? ⁸ I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? ⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?

B. Here in Hebrews 7 we are told of Abraham giving tithes to Melchizedek
Hebrews 7:1-2 NAU - "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation of *his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace."

1. Jesus was sent forth after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a type of Christ, an example of the priesthood of Christ.

Verse 21 – "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec:"

2. If Abraham brought tithes in honor of Melchizedek, how much more do we owe tithes to Christ, the Head of the Church?

III. The particulars of the tithe

A. How much is a tithe?

1. Many falsely apply the teaching of 2 Corinthians 9 to the tithe.
 - a. Their presumption is every Christian is left to decide for himself how much to give.
2 Corinthians 9:6-7 NAU - "Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."
 - b. 2 Corinthians isn't referring to the tithe but to freewill offerings collected for the poor.
2. The tithe has a particular meaning. It means "tenth." The word "tenth" in **Verses 2, 4, 5, 6** is the same word translated "tithes" in **Verse 8**.
3. God established the principle of proportionate giving. Everyone gives the same percentage of his increase. Although those with larger increase should provide greater freewill offerings.

B. Where should the tithe be given?

1. Most parachurch ministries argue forcefully that the giving of the tithe is not limited to the local church. Without questioning their motives we can surely see the temptation to draw from the storehouse of the church.
2. Since the purpose of the tithe was for the support of the Temple service, we should presume the "storehouse" must have referred to the house of God.
Malachi 3:10 NAU - "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house"
Nehemiah 10:37 NAU - "We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithe of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns."
 - a. Paul referred to the church as the "house of God."
1 Timothy 3:14-15 NAU - "I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; ¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."
 It's from the word οἶκος which is most often translated "house."
 This is the way the KJV translated it.
 - b. The tithe should be brought to the local church of which the Christian is a member for the support of the church, the ministry, and the Gospel mission.

This principle is incorporated into our church covenant.

Each of us vow: "to contribute cheerfully and regularly through the tithe for the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all the nations."

- c. Just as there were other special tithes, there are other offerings for benevolence and ministries outside the local church

Conclusion:

What is God's purpose in ordaining the tithe? Some thoughts from A.W. Pink:

1. It is a constant recognition of the Creator's rights.
He had the right to declare one tenth of our income to be His just as He has the right to declare one seventh of our time as His. In our sinful nature we deny God's authority over us.
2. Tithing is an antidote against covetousness. The tenth does not leave our giving to our discretion.
3. Tithing is the solution of every financial problem in the work of God.
It is God's means of financing His church.
Where you have ten families, you have sufficient to provide for the full-time support of a pastor. (without consideration of buildings & other expenses)
Where tithing is practiced, no church should have to go into debt.
4. Tithing is a test of our faith.
Dare a new convert who has trusted the matter of his soul to Jesus Christ trust one tenth of his income?
Malachi 3:10 NAU - "test 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 a blessing until it overflows."
While we do not tithe with expectation of return, God clearly reveals consequences to our actions which cannot be ignored.