

EAST CAMBRIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“A first century church in the 21st century”

Bible Reading Plan

Week 38

- Isa 64-66; 2 Cor 2
- 2 Kg 21; 2 Chr 33; Ps 71;
2 Cor 3
- Nahum; Ps 149; 2 Cor 4
- 2 Kg 22-23; Ps 73; 2 Cor 5
- 2 Chr 34-35; 2 Cor 6

Leading Services

Announcements: Larry L.

Morning:

Song Leader: Tony Y.

Opening Prayer: Richard L.

Lord's Table: Brock G.

Asst By:

Closing Prayer: Zack V.

Evening:

Song Leader: Zack V.

Opening Prayer: Tony Y.

Closing Prayer: Richard L.

Scripture Reading: Brock G.
(Zechariah 14:10-21)

Sermons

AM:



Tithing

Tithing is mentioned in the Bible. Some have, for this reason, concluded that Christians should tithe. Others even believe that constitutes the basis for Christian giving. Should Christians tithe? To “tithe” is to give a “tithe,” that is to give one-tenth of what one has. The first biblical reference to this act is Abraham’s gift to Melchizedek, which was a tenth of the spoils he had taken in war; the war was against Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him (Genesis 14:8-16). Moses then wrote, “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all.” (Genesis 14:18-20 ASV). This is the only time we know about that Abraham, the friend of God (James 2:23), gave a tenth. He made his offering consistently with his character (“Abram of God Most High”) and out of respect for the status of Melchizedek who was “priest of God Most High.”

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Should Christians Tithe?

When Jacob, Abraham's grandson, made his covenant with God at Bethel, on his way to find a wife at Padan-Aram (a region in ancient Mesopotamia), it included payment of tithe. He vowed to give God a tenth if He would help him return to his father's house safely (Genesis 28:16-22). We don't know who the recipient of Jacob's gift was as the Bible is silent on this point. But these are the only references of the giving of a tenth before the Law of Moses came into effect. Notice that tithing was practiced during the patriarchal age, long before it became a legal requirement for the children of Israel.

The first time we find the word "tithe" in the Law is in Leviticus 27:30. God made tithe the rate of the wages to be paid by Israel to the tribe of Levi. The reason was that the portion of land that God allocated to the Levi, when Israel entered Canaan, was not equal to that given to the other tribes. Thus, provision for the upkeep of the sons of Levi was made by tithes under the Levitical system (Numbers 18:21-24). And the Levites in turn gave a tenth to provide for the priests for the work they did in offering sacrifices and taking care of the temple (Numbers 1:50-51). Note that the money the people gave to support the Levites was demanded, not given as a free will offering (Leviticus 27:30). There were also gifts given in addition to the tithe according to Leviticus 23:37-38.

Tithing was required until the death of Christ, which inaugurated the Christian era. Hebrews 9:15-17 says, "And for this cause he [Christ, CC] is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force *after men are dead* [that is, where there has been death, emphasis mine]: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator [that is, he that made the testament, CC] liveth." From the time of the death of Christ onward, the Bible says nothing about tithe being an obligation. Why? Because we don't have Levites and priests around anymore (the temple they were supposed to take care of doesn't even exist anymore, as it was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70). Since the tithes were for the support of the Levites, and since priests no longer exist, there is no need for them.

Furthermore, when Paul explained to the Colossians Christians that Christ had in His death forgiven their trespasses, he went on to say, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14; cf. Galatians 3:24-25, Ephesians 2:14-15). The term "ordinances" is a reference to the handwritten Law of Moses, and to nail those ordinances "to the cross" is to abolish them. Christ has in His death abolished the old covenant and instituted a new one (Hebrews 8:13). Christians are under the new covenant or "law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2) and, for this reason, are not amenable to the Law of Moses. This new covenant instructs each Christian to give as they are prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2) and as they purpose in their heart (2 Corinthians 9:7). In other words, Christians give freely. We need to learn to give from God who is a Giver (John 3:16).

Not only can Christians give money, they can also give of possessions, time and talents. One can use of his time to assist in personal care and hospitality. The apostle Paul encouraged Philemon to show this kind of individual responsibility.

As a church, the gifts collected by the church may be used to relieve saints in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-9) and to assist preachers of the gospel. The collection thus made is to be taken on the first day of the week, that is Sunday, as part of the church regular worship meeting (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). The New Testament does not authorize that Christians resort to means other than the contribution taken from the saints to get money. Money taken from people by other means may not be given freely.

Should Christians tithe? The simple answer is "No!" Tithing is no longer required. It was an Old Testament command for the people of Israel.

- Constant Coulibaly