

SHOULD CHRISTIANS OPERATE A TITHING SYSTEM?

THERE WAS NO TITHING SYSTEM PRIOR TO THE MOSAIC LAW

ABRAHAM WAS NOT GOVERNED BY A TITHING SYSTEM

The first recorded event of the giving of a proportion of goods was when Abraham *voluntarily* gave one tenth of particular **spoils of war** to the priest Melchizedek in thanksgiving to God for the deliverance of Lot and his family as recorded in Genesis 14:20. The rest of this spoil was given to the king of Sodom (verses 21–24):

- ❖ “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned **a tenth part of everything...**” (*Heb. 7:1, 2*).

However, Abraham was not responding to any statement or law requiring the giving of a tenth. This was not tithing in the same sense as was later given in the Mosaic Law, where the tithe was to be given only on the produce from labour on the land and animals (Lev. 27:30–31). Under the Mosaic Law **spoils of war** were treated very differently to the tithe on **produce from labour** (Num. 31:9, 27–30). Abraham’s was a free will offering.

JACOB WAS NOT GOVERNED BY A TITHING SYSTEM

- ❖ “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘**If** God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house. And of all that you give me I will give **a full tenth** to you’” (*Gen. 28:20–22*).

The conditional aspect to Jacob’s statement shows that he, too, was not giving in accordance within any system of tithing, but only when God performed particular good works for Jacob.

JOSEPH, DURING THE FAMINE, DID NOT OPERATE A TITHING SYSTEM

When the 7 years of famine came, the Egyptians used all their money to buy from the grain reserves (Gen. 47:14–15). They then sold their cattle to Joseph to buy grain (verse 16). Finally, they sold themselves and their land for food (verse 18–20). Then Joseph taxed them at the rate of two tenths—clearly not a tithe and not for the benefit of any priesthood as was the later case in Israel:

- ❖ “Then Joseph said to the people, ‘Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. And *at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh*, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones’” (*Gen. 47:23–24*).

ISRAEL DID NOT PAY TITHES ON THE SPOILS OF EGYPT

Because Yahweh had won a war over Egypt, Israel was to take the **spoils of war** as now belonging to them (Ex. 13:35). Yet there is no evidence that once they obtained this spoil the Israelites gave a tenth of it to anyone. There was at that time no authorized priesthood among the Israelites to take tithe on God’s behalf and in any case this was **spoils of war**.

NO EARTH-WIDE TITHING LAW

The accounts of Abraham and Jacob, although called “tithes” in Hebrews 7:6 concern free will giving of one tenth of spoils. Also the account about Joseph shows that the later tithing system was not in his mind when he taxed the Egyptians. So tithing as a requirement is not mentioned in these accounts and in fact does not come into force until it was established under the Mosaic Law as recorded in the Book of Leviticus.

ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS WAS NOT SUPPORTED BY TITHES

On arriving at Mount Sinai Israel was given the Law Covenant as recorded in Exodus 20-23. In these chapters there is no mention of tithing as a requirement. Later it becomes clear that, for the support of Israel, the money out of the spoil from Egypt would be used. It would be on the basis of **free will offerings** rather than tithing that the tabernacle would be constructed:

- ❖ “So they came, both men and women. All who were of a **willing** heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the LORD ... ²⁹All the men and women, the people of Israel, **whose heart moved them** to bring anything for the work that the LORD had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him **freewill offerings** every morning...” (*Ex. 35:22, 29*).
- ❖ “...for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more” (*Ex. 36:7*).

THE TITHING ARRANGEMENT IN THE WILDERNESS

From the beginning of the second year of the Exodus the Israelites were to start giving a tenth part of their crops and fruit plus every tenth animal to the treasury in the newly erected tabernacle (Lev. 27:30-33). This arrangement did not bring great wealth into the tabernacle because:

1. If a man for various reasons, wished to give money as a substitute, he was penalized a fifth part.
 - ❖ “If a man wishes to redeem some of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it” (*Levi. 27:31*).
2. Such a law was intended to discourage payment of the tithe in money rather than crops and fruit. However, cash redemption was not allowed for the tithe of animals. Moses declared: “It shall not be redeemed” (verse 33). This means that cattle raisers were required to give the tenth animal even if they wanted to keep it for some reason for themselves.
3. Because the tithe was only on agricultural crops and herds, there would have been very little produce given to the treasury while Israel was in the desert of Sinai. (*Deut. 29:5–6*).
4. Leviticus does not state just how the tithe was to be spent or to whom it was to be given. Moses simply said that Israelites were required to pay the tithe. Obviously, any monies were placed in the tabernacle treasury and the limited amount of produce was placed in storage.

THE TITHING ARRANGEMENT IN CANAAN

PREPARING TO ENTER CANAAN

In giving Israel final instructions Moses wrote the first 11 chapters of Deuteronomy to modify a number of laws including tithing. Because the Israelite tribes were going to be living in different parts of Canaan a change was needed in the way the tithe would be gathered and utilized. A central location would now be difficult for the people to reach to pay the tithe. So 48 priestly cities were to be established strategically throughout the land as official sites where tithes could be taken and stored (Joshua 21).

LATER TITHING IN CANAAN

The premium penalty of an extra fifth when the tithe was turned into cash was now no longer part of the Law. This meant that Israelites who lived far from the sanctuary could take this monetary tithe to the sanctuary rather than dealing with produce (*Deut. 14:25*). Those who lived closer could still transport their tithe of produce and animals to the sanctuary.

THE PRODUCTS THAT WERE TITHED

- ❖ “Every tithe of the land, whether of the **seed** of the land or of the **fruit** of the trees, is the LORD’s; it is holy to the LORD ... ³²And every tithe of **herds and flocks**, *every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman’s staff*, shall be holy to the LORD” (Lev. 27:30, 32).

So there were only two types of income that could be tithed: One was from agricultural production of grains, vegetables or fruits. The second type of income that could be tithed was on the increase of animals from the herds and flocks.

THOSE WHO DID NOT HAVE TO PAY TITHES

These included: **hired hands** of a farm owner; **fishermen**; **miners** (Deut. 8:9), (the tithe of minerals extracted from the earth was never called for); **lumberyard owners and workers** (1 Kings 5:7–12); **construction workers** (1 Kings 5:13–18); **weavers, handicraft workers** (or from any form of manufacturing or merchandising); **soldiers**; **government workers**; and **priests**.

There was no law that required a tenth of a person’s wage to be tithed. Only the owners of farms and flocks were required to tithe.

So the Israelite who had fewer than ten cattle did not have to tithe on nine of them because the requirement stated that only the tenth animal that passed under the rod was to be tithed (Lev. 27:32).

ONLY THE LEVITES AND THE PRIESTS WERE
TO RECEIVE THE TITHE

It was only the tribe of Levi that was not given territorial lands as were the other tribes of Israel. So part of their compensation was:

- ❖ “To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting...” (Num. 18:21).

The Levites in turn were to give one tenth of that tithe to the Priests (Num. 18:25–28) who did not tithe at all. So no one but the Levites should receive the tithe to aid with the temple service. Though the Levites were later scattered throughout the land of Israel, there was only one place in the land where they could assist in the service of the tabernacle and later, the temple. Once Israel possessed the Land of Canaan they set up the tabernacle first at Shiloh. Later, in the time of Solomon, it was moved to Jerusalem where the portable structure was later replaced by the permanent temple.

MOST OF THE LEVITES DID NOT HAVE DUTIES AT THE TEMPLE

Neither the tabernacle nor the temple structures were large enough for all of the Levites to work in. So most Levites performed other types of duties; such as being **ordained as teachers of the nation** (Deut. 24:8; 33:10; 2 Chron. 35:3; Neh. 8:7); representing many of the judges of the land; being professional singers and musicians (1 Chron. 25:1–31; 2 Chron. 5:12; 34:12); and being producers of scrolls as well as librarians (2 Chron. 34:13).

Additionally, part of the peoples’ tithe even went to support a type of social security service every third and sixth year for the destitute. This indicates that the one tithe, which was distributed differently over a seven year period, was not simply intended only for religious purposes. This very fair system benefitted Israel greatly.

HOW THE LEVITES MADE THEIR LIVING

THE TRIBE OF LEVI'S ALLOTTMENT OF 48 CITIES WITH LAND

Joshua chapter 21 gives the main details concerning these 48 cities that were distributed throughout the land of Canaan according to the particular families of Levites. Earlier Moses had expressed Yahweh's command about the pastureland:

- ❖ “The LORD spoke to Moses...‘Command the people of Israel to give to the Levites some of the inheritance of their possession as **cities** for them to dwell in. And you shall give to the Levites **pasturelands around the cities**. The cities shall be theirs to dwell in, and their pasturelands shall be for their cattle and for their livestock and for all their beasts’” (*Num. 35:1–3*).

Because not all Levites were supported by the tithe they could earn a living from cultivating their allotted city land, and so allowing them to live independently of the tithe. Each Levitical city had an area of land of at least four square miles. So it was only when Levites served at the tabernacle that the tithe was for their support (Deut. 18:6–8). However, the Levitical lands were to remain within the tribe of Levi perpetually because: “...the fields of pastureland belonging to their cities may not be sold, for that is their possession forever” (*Lev. 25:34*).

THE SABBATICAL PATTERN FOR THE TITHE

- In the first, second, fourth and fifth years the tithe payer himself could eat of the tithe at the temple with the Levites having only a share. (Deut. 14:27).
- In the third and sixth years the tithe was not to be brought to the sanctuary but to be kept in the home area of the Israelites and distributed to Levites and the poor in the home communities (Deut. 14:28–29). This was a very fair system.

However, it does mean that the only times that Levites got the full tithe was on the third and sixth years of a seven year sabbatical period.

THE HALF-SHEKEL TEMPLE TAX

The temple in Jerusalem was primarily funded for its upkeep and operations from the giving of a half-shekel tax **by every male in Israel** (Ex. 30:11–16) from twenty years of age upward. This half-shekel was to be sent each year to the temple treasury no matter where Israelites lived in the world. So the general funding did not come from the tithing of the Israelites farm produce and herds. This system was in operation during Jesus' lifetime, and so to cover this annual temple tax for himself and Peter (Matt. 17:27) Jesus miraculously caused a fish to have a coin valued at one shekel (Gk. *stater*) in its mouth and Peter was sent to catch the fish.

JESUS AND THE APOSTLES DID NOT OPERATE A TITHING SYSTEM

The Messiah, Jesus, did not receive tithes to support his ministry from anyone—he being of the tribe of Judah and not a Levite: “For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests” (*Heb. 7:14*). Furthermore, Jesus' apostles were also not of the tribe of Levi, so they, too, did not support their later ministries by means of tithing.

USE OF PRIVATE FUNDS FOR JESUS' MINISTRY

Luke tells us that Jesus and his disciples were supported by private funds from believers such as:

- ❖ “...Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who **provided for them out of their means**” (*Luke 8:3*).

TITHING OPERATED UNTIL THE NEW COVENANT CAME INTO FORCE

Jesus acknowledged that, under the Old Covenant Law, it was right to tithe. Nevertheless, the Jewish religious leaders had failed to set it in balance with much more important matters. So in his condemnation of these leaders Jesus said to them:

- ❖ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you **tithe** mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others” (*Matt. 23:23*)

Yes, Jews, including Jesus and his disciples back then, were supposed to pay the tithe. This was simple a matter of obeying God in respect to the Mosaic Law up to the time it became obsolete after Jesus’ death and when God’s people would then be under the New Covenant.

NO TEMPLE, NO LEVITES—NO TITHING

Tithing applied only to the time that the Mosaic Law operated and was given only to those ordained to receive it, namely the tribe of Levi. Interestingly Jewish rabbis of today do not require that their synagogue members should pay the tithe that was demanded in the Hebrew Scriptures. The reason is that the rabbis know that only Levites had the right to receive tithes. Since there are no ordained Levites or priests serving in the temple because there is no temple then it would be wrong. In fact, some rabbis view it as being a sin to require the operation of the tithing system.

CHRISTIANS ARE NOT UNDER THE MOSAIC LAW

Just because tithing is a biblical law it does not mean that such a system should operate for Christians. If Christians were still under the Mosaic Law they would have to get their children circumcised and keep the rest of the many hundreds of laws detailed by Moses, including the sacrificing of animals at a temple. The requirements of the Law were not to be followed by the Christian Congregation (please see STUDY 4). The focus was now on Messiah Jesus and no longer linked to physical things such as: The Jerusalem temple, the sacrifices, the priesthood, or with the physical tithe in the Law Covenant. These regulations were now obsolete (2 Cor. 3:6–18) and had dealt: “...*only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation*” (*Heb. 9:10*).

SUPPORT FOR THE MINISTRY UNDER THE NEW COVENANT

BY FREE WILL OFFERINGS

When Jesus sent out the seventy, his instructions were:

- ❖ “...I am sending you out ... Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ... And remain in the same house, **eating and drinking what they provide**, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, **eat what is set before you**” (*Luke 10:3–8*).

Because Jesus said: “You received without paying; give without pay” (*Matt. 10:8b*) the work was to be done in faith, supported by the free will contributions of those who were loyal to the Christian commission. In fact, on this basis the Congregation was very well supported.

NO BURDEN PLACED UPON CHRISTIANS

Some organizations insist that people should sacrifice their physical welfare and that of their families, even selling their homes, to gain God’s favour. It is then expected that the receipts from such

sacrifices be used to pay tithes to the organization. However, Jesus does not demand that people make such sacrifices in this way so that he gains money at the expense of the welfare and health of families. His heavenly Father had earlier said that He desired mercy, not sacrifice (Matt. 12:7). Such an organizational teaching principle is, indeed, dangerous and is in conflict with Christ's teachings. The biblical tithe was never meant to be used for Christian purposes. Only free will contributions serve these purposes.

OUT-OF-CONTEXT QUOTING OF SCRIPTURES TO SUPPORT TITHING SYSTEMS

Obviously out-of-context quoting of the Scriptures is a misuse and abuse of them. It is rather like applying the statements concerning God's commissioning of Cyrus to invade ancient Babylon as relevant to Christians today to promote an invasion of Iraq. Similarly certain modern-day Christian organizations or individuals employ such abuse of the Scriptures when they apply the Mosaic tithing laws to themselves rather than to the ancient Levites to whom the commission was exclusively given. They may even claim that they are now doing Levite type work so that they are the modern-day "Levites." In this way they are self-appointed rather than God-appointed as were the Levites.

From this position they can then proceed to further misapply other Scriptures to demand that they be paid the tithe. Malachi 3:7-12 is a favourite passage misused in this way. However, it is imperative to note the context of this passage.

IS FAILING TO PAY TITHES A STEALING FROM GOD?

❖ "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' Will man rob God? Yet you are **robbing me**. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your **tithes** and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the **full tithe into the storehouse**, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke *the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits* of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts" (*Mal. 3:7-12*).

As a contemporary of Malachi, Nehemiah explained the situation as one of food shortages in the land (Neh. 5:2-6). Then he examines the situation of the Levites:

❖ "I also found out that **the portions of the Levites** had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field. So I confronted the officials and said, 'Why is the house of God forsaken?' And I gathered them together and set them in their stations. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into **the storehouses**" (*Neh. 13:10-12*).

So Judah was then under a curse resulting in insects devouring the crops and fruit and the cattle not reproducing properly. Malachi then promised them help from God in relieving those bad conditions if they would turn from their ungodly ways, and in particular in their failure to pay the tithes and contributions. If they rectified that failure by filling the storage containers at the temple they were to have "a blessing until there is no more need" (*Mal. 3:10*). This was probably no hardship at all in view of the fact that the temple area was relatively small. So for the following reasons Malachi 3:7-12 should not be used by a Christian organization in an attempt to impose a tithing system upon its members:

- The passage was written in the early fourth century B.C.E. to the ancient Jews.
- It was the agricultural/animal tithe of ancient Judah—it was not about money.

- It was to go to the storehouses that had their origin in the time of King Hezekiah (8th century B.C.E. 2 Chron. 31:4–10).
- The tithed produce was to be sent only to the temple at Jerusalem (or to one of the 48 cities) except in the third and sixth years of a sabbatical cycle.
- Only ordained Levites were to receive the tithe.

CAN “THE LAW OF THE FIRSTBORN” BE APPLIED TO CHRISTIANS?

This concerns the firstborn of herds and flocks or the first fruit of the harvest. It has **nothing to do with tithing** which concerned the tenth animal. Some organizations demand to be the first paid from a Christian’s income, so they confusedly apply the word “first” regarding animals and produce in this regard. But, as with the entire Law of Moses, the law of the firstborn is not applicable to Christians (Num. 3:12–13, 40–45; 8:16–18; Lev. 23:10–14; Num. 18:12–28; Deut. 18:4).

DID THE “CHANGE IN THE LAW” REAPPLY TITHING
TO CHRISTIANS?

Concerning Melchizedek:

- ❖ “He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, **but resembling the Son of God** he continues a priest forever. See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take **tithes** from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man who does not have his descent from them **received tithes from Abraham** and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. Now if **perfection** had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise **after the order of Melchizedek**, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is **a change in the priesthood**, there is necessarily **a change in the law** as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended **from Judah**, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest **arises in the likeness of Melchizedek**, who has become a priest, *not on the basis of a legal requirement* concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him ‘You are **a priest forever**, after the order of Melchizedek.’ For on the one hand, **a former commandment is set aside** because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but **this one** was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’” This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but **he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever**” (*Heb. 7:3-24*).

Some modern-day organizations make the faulty assumption that this “change in the law” concerned to whom the tithe was to be paid i.e. no longer to Levites serving at the temple but to Christian organizations. However, Hebrews 7 is dealing with “**a change in the priesthood**” (verse 11) which then results in a change in the Law (verse 12). This does not mean that the details of the Law can be

reapplied to the Christian Congregation. The “change in the law” meant its replacement by the New Covenant. Even though the new priesthood is of the order of Melchizedek no tithing law came into force with that priesthood. Also it cannot be assumed that such a law is in force because Abraham provided a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek because these were spoils of war and given voluntarily. They were, therefore, nothing to do with Levitical tithing.

ONLY JESUS IS THE MELCHIZEDEKIAN PRIEST

Sometimes Christian organizations today reckon themselves as Melchizedekian priests. However, the letter to the Hebrews makes it very clear that the priesthood of the order of Melchizedek is “an unchangeable priesthood” (Heb. 7:24). It is one where the priest never dies and this role is filled by the **one person only**—the Messiah. Melchizedek was only “resembling” the Son of God. He was not actually the Son of God as was Jesus who came only in the *order* of Melchizedek. However, a major problem arises when any body of Christians says that they themselves are a part of that Melchizedekian priesthood. This would require that they **be perfect** as was Jesus Christ and already **living forever**. Furthermore, the Christian Congregation today has only *one priest—one mediator—one advocate* between all members of the Congregation and the Father, namely Christ Jesus and they do not need any other priests. So because of the changed priesthood there has now been a change in the law. This means that Christians do not have to support Levites or Levitical priests with any tithing laws. But aren’t Christians also called priests?

CHRISTIANS ARE ONLY PRIESTS FIGURATIVELY

Indeed, in 1 Peter 2:5, 9 and Revelation 5:10 Christians are called “priests.” However, they are certainly not Melchizedekian priests because only Jesus is in the *order* of a Melchizedekian priest. So in what sense are Christians “priests” in these passages? It is in the sense of being likened to the nation of Israel in its relationship with the rest of the Gentile world. This is so because Exodus 19:5–6 presents Israel as a “nation of priests” to the rest of the world. In the same way, both Peter and John describe the Christian Congregation as a “nation of priests” to the world. Nevertheless, God has not ruled that it must receive tithes. If it were to receive tithes then it would simply be paying tithes back to itself!! Furthermore, just as the Gentile nations never paid tithes to Israel so, too, it would not, today, pay tithes to the Christian Congregation.

BUT SHOULDN’T CHRISTIANS APPLY THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TITHING LAW?

PRINCIPLE is defined as: *rule, truth, law, assumption, precept, rudiment, regulation, canon, code, direction, dictum, theorem, axiom, or maxim*. So really a principle is **not something figurative**, but rather it is the literal basic truth or essence of a thought. So **to apply** the principle—the basic truth—of a law is very *close to applying the law itself*. In fact, the judges in Israel were given latitude in how they applied the Law to each case. They could draw from the principles on which the Law was based so that the verdict for each case for the same crime would vary somewhat (Ex. 21, 29-32; Num 15:30, 31). However, it was the whole Law that was set aside (Heb 7:18) including its principles. Nevertheless, if one did apply the principles of the Law to Christians the door would be opened to all aspects of the Mosaic Law including executing those who do not follow the Mosaic Law. Examples would be:

- One’s getting circumcised
- The sacrificing of animals (Lev. 1–5)
- The boring of the ear of a slave (Ex. 21:5–6)
- The wearing of phylacteries (Num. 15:37–39)

NOT FIGURATIVE

1. Although one's heart can be circumcised (Deut. 10:16) this is a figurative circumcision and not the application of the principle of circumcision. But what would it really mean to apply the principle of circumcision?
2. Although one could wear a phylactery figuratively (meditating on Scripture) how could one apply the principle of wearing it?
3. Although one could make figurative sacrifices e.g. "a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips" (Heb.13:15); yet how can one apply the principle of offering an animal sacrifice?
4. Furthermore, how can one apply the principle of boring someone's ear so that they are recognized as one's slave?

In all of these situations one must literally do something i.e. some literal thing that shows that one is now part of actual Israel; some literal thing that shows that one gives priority to the Shema; the making of a literal physical sacrifice; and finally some literal thing to indicate that someone is now one's slave. It all must mean that Christians would actually be performing parallels to the Mosaic Law—a law that has been "set aside." The reality of this is that the turning of the Mosaic laws into principles has no sanction within the Holy Scriptures and is simply a way to misuse teachings that God long ago cancelled. Such a concept is really a way to originate human laws of one's own and attempt to impose them on others. Furthermore, it leads away from the freedom that Christians have in Christ.

WHAT ABOUT APPLYING THE LAW OF TITHING 'IN PRINCIPLE'?

IN PRINCIPLE" is: "a general idea or plan, although the details are not yet established." *Oxford Dictionary of English*. So what would circumcision in principle really mean? Nothing more than a wish to get circumcised because one should, but cannot for other reasons. It is the same regarding the practice of wearing a phylactery in principle or offering an animal sacrifice in principle or boring someone's ear in principle. For all these one is agreeing to the rightness of the literal actions but simply cannot do them. So to state that one should apply the Mosaic Law regulation concerning tithing 'in principle' is really simply **to wish to apply** the law itself but not actually doing it because of other considerations. So the concept of tithing in principle becomes rather meaningless.

CONCLUSION

1. Abraham's voluntary tithe given to Melchizedek was of spoils of war and not part of a tithing system.
2. The tithing system came into existence with the Mosaic Law and not before.
3. Tithing applied only to ancient Israel up until New Covenant times.
4. Only the farming community (10 animals or more) were to pay the tithe.
5. It was a very limited system. Only serving Levites were to receive the produce and even then they only benefitted fully in certain years.
6. The main support for the temple operations came from the half-shekel temple tax.
7. Because Christians are not ordained Levites and serving in the temple they have no right to receive any tithes.

8. Because Christians are not under the Mosaic Law it would be wrong to impose any form of tithing system upon one's Christian brothers and sisters, whether by misapplication of the Mosaic Law or by any application of its principles.
9. The method of supporting the Christian ministry is to be by free will offerings.

By Raymond C. Faircloth
www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk

§