

Economics and Tithing in the New Testament

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Greetings, brethren! This is the second one that we're going to do concerning the economics in Galilee in the days of Jesus. I went through—in the sermon *Urban Economics of Jesus' Time*—in this book *Jesus and the Forgotten City—New Light on Sepphoris and the Urban World of Jesus* by Richard A. Batey and how this city was the capital city of Herod Antipas and was only four miles from Nazareth.

I want to talk a little bit about Jesus' occupation, being a carpenter and a carpenter's son. We will see that that entailed far more than just working with wood. I mentioned a little bit about it in part one of this series. I'm going to mention it again because this had a great impact concerning finances and tithing and economics. When the Romans conquered the area of Galilee and Judea they owned the land.

All farmers and those who had herds became workers for the state: for the princes who were the subordinates of Antipas or Agrippa or Philip. They received money for their wages, so this made it an impossible thing for people to bring their animals for tithing, because they weren't theirs. They could not bring grain for tithing because it wasn't theirs.

The whole economics was a *money society*. We need to understand that. We also need to understand that the city of Sepphoris was a city of 30,000 people and it was about as modern as could be without electricity, built in a very palatial way by Herod Antipas.

I want to cover a little bit about Jesus' occupation. From the book: *Jesus and the Forgotten City* about the revised understanding about Jesus' occupation:

pg 70—This traditional scene of Joseph and Jesus working as carpenters in Nazareth must now be reexamined, keeping in mind the archaeological the archaeological evidence unearthed at Sepphoris—evidence that places Jesus' early years in an entirely different cultural environment. In 3B.C., when Jesus is about two years old^[corrected age], Herod Antipas chooses Sepphoris as the site for his new capital of both Galilee and Peraea. For more than three decades while Jesus grows up in nearby Nazareth a huge construction project continues, as Sepphoris rapidly becomes the largest and most influential city in the region. The city's inhabitants,

soon numbering almost thirty thousand, are sophisticated and cosmopolitan Jews, Arabs, Greeks, and Romans.

A ten-minute walk from the Nazareth spring to the top of the ridge north of the village rewards one with the magnificent vista of the broad and fertile Bet Netofa Valley a thousand feet below.

Another thing that astonished me was that Jericho is 1200 feet below sea level. Jerusalem is 2500 feet above sea level. If you go on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem you have an average incline on the road of 6%. That's mountain climbing!

When Jesus and the disciples walked up there it was quite a thing for them to do. We also need to realize that these roads were very well taken care of. All the streets coming back to Sepphoris were all paved with stone. The whole city was made out of stone. There was wood used with it, but it was all stone. Here you see this very fertile valley, the Bet Netofa Valley:

The hill of Sepphoris, three miles north, rises almost four hundred feet from the valley floor. This is a beautiful and inviting view toward the site of ancient Sepphoris.

So they would come up to where the spring was in Nazareth and then you go up 400 feet to where the city of Sepphoris was. Jesus said, 'A city set on a hill cannot be hidden'; a good reference to the city of Sepphoris.

Joseph and Jesus knew of the construction of the new capital and would have been acquainted with artisans and other workers employed on the site. Shirley Jackson Case, professor of New Testament at the University of Chicago, made a fascinating observation based on his reading of Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian who knew Sepphoris well. "Very likely 'carpenter' as applied to Jesus meant not simply a worker in wood but one who labored at the building trade in general, and it requires no daring flight of the imagination to picture the youthful Jesus seeking and finding employment in the neighboring city of Sepphoris.

With His father and His brothers to help build the city. Obviously, I'm sure that they wouldn't work on the pagan temple that was there. But they could have worked on the forum, on the theater, the basilica, Herod's palace, or all the apartments that were built

there in Sepphoris. They had three and four story apartments.

The whole economy and everything that was done there is very much like what we have today. It was a money-based economy, not a barter-base! And being a money-based economy, and being in subjection to the Romans, the Jews could not bring their tithes in the form of produce or animals.

Also, God expects people to tithe on their increase. Increase also comes from doing business to have a profit in buying and selling—the parable of the pounds and the talents. All those parables are done in terms of money. Likewise with Jesus, His brothers, and Joseph working there as carpenters, they received money; they received payment.

But whether or not he actually labored there, his presence in the city on various occasions can scarcely be doubted; and in fact of such contracts during the formative years of His young manhood may account for attitudes and opinions that show themselves conspicuously during His public ministry.”

pg 71—Visits of Jesus to Sepphoris are not recorded by the Gospel writers, who give only fragmentary accounts of His life and ministry. After Jesus became widely recognized as an influential religious leader, [Herod] Antipas sought to arrest Him. Sepphoris would not be a safe setting in which to proclaim the coming Kingdom of god. The Gospels do tell of Jesus’ travels throughout all the cities and villages of Galilee and into Phoenicia, Caesarea Philippi, and the Decapolis, as well as journeys through Samaria to Jerusalem in Judea. It is difficult to believe that, during the approximately thirty years that Jesus grew up looking at Sepphoris, he never visited the capital or met the people living and working there. Even casual contacts with the capital would have given Jesus firsthand knowledge of Greco-Roman city planning, architectural design, and sophisticated engineering technology—as well as the cosmopolitan citizens.

Today, we still have the theory of evolution, even in religion, which affects our thinking; that they were just grubby little carpenters working in some outback, rural area, and that all Jesus did was call fishermen and farmers. That’s not the case. We’re going to go back and revisit the account of Matthew—a Levite and tax collector—who was rich!

The walk from Nazareth to Sepphoris takes about an hour. I had driven the distance between Nazareth and the excavations at Sepphoris over four hundred times, but in the summer of 1988 I took the opportunity to walk. I awoke at four A.M., dressed hurriedly, and forced down a breakfast of hot coffee and dry bread spread with jam and peanut butter. When the bus carried the diggers to the excavation at 4:30 A.M., it was still dark. A few minutes later when I left the Galilee Hotel, our home in the center of old Nazareth, the first light of dawn outlined the eastern hills. As I walked toward Mary’s well, the spring of ancient Nazareth, the streets were empty—a sharp contrast to the noise and stifling fumes of the daytime traffic. Here and there I encountered an industrious merchant up early preparing to open his shop. We did not exchange greetings in the darkness.

pg 72—By the time I reached the top of the ridge the sun greeted me and cast its soft amber rays over the low-lying, blue-gray mist in the valley below. Somehow on foot the familiar panorama seemed even more peaceful and inviting. Looking toward the hill of Sepphoris, I recalled again Jesus’ words. “A city set on a hill cannot be hid” (Matt. 5:14). Strolling down the north side of the ridge and across the gently rolling hills toward Sepphoris, I became keenly aware of the ease with which traffic moved between Nazareth and Sepphoris and wondered how often Jesus may have walked this way.

Sepphoris provides a significant new perspective for understanding the world in which Jesus lived and worked, both as a carpenter and religious teacher. The construction of Antipas’ Sepphoris viewed from the ridge above Nazareth is reminiscent of a scene from Virgil’s epic poem *The Aeneid*...

Then he goes on to describe the epic poem. I read that to let you know that it was truly something very different.

{Showing a picture from the book of Sepphoris looking back toward Nazareth. They have the model city of Sepphoris that they were putting together as they did their archeological excavations and dug up the things that were there.}

Remember, this was filled with shops, merchants, all kinds of services. It had a bank, a government basilica, a coliseum, a theater, a forum and apartments—all contained within it. This was the capital city of Herod Antipas. It was opulent. Also the princes who worked with him came there. The palace of Herod Antipas had 100 bedrooms! So it was no little village in a ditch.

Teachings of Jesus in relationship to economics and wealth:

pg 161—God is the Creator and Sustainer of all life. This message is at the center of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom or reign of God. Faith in God's sovereignty, benevolence, and nearness demands radical obedience. The disciple may no longer measure the value of life by material possessions if he is not rich toward God (Luke 12:15, 21).

Luke 12:15: "And He said to them, 'Watch out, and keep yourselves from covetousness, for no one's life is in the abundance of the things that he possesses.'"

If He said to beware of covetousness then, boy! beware of covetousness today! You have all the ads coming on radio, television, in newspaper, magazines, billboards signs, in stores, and the whole society today is based on covetousness.

Covetousness becomes a *root cause* as to why people claim that they ought not tithe. You need to think about that, because we're going to talk more about tithing. But I want to continue setting the stage for us in understanding of the economics and urban setting in which Jesus lived, worked and preached.

This talks about a rich man who had a lot of ground, v 16: "Then He spoke a parable to them, saying, 'The ground of a certain rich man...'" We read in part one of this series about how fertile the valleys were around Galilee. They brought in abundant crops and it earned a lot of money for Herod Antipas and the princes who owned it. So, a *certain rich man* would have been one of those princes.

"...brought forth abundantly. And he was reasoning within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to lay up my fruit?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my granaries and build greater ones, and there will I lay up all my produce and my good things. Then I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years; take your rest, eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, "Fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; and to whom will you leave what you have prepared for yourself?" So *shall it be to* the one who lays up treasure for himself, and

is not rich toward God'" (vs 16-20). Yes, it is true that we have to be *rich* toward God in our:

- character
- attitude
- in building gold, silver and precious stone on the foundation of Jesus Christ

Those are the true riches. But also, we need to understand the things that were taking place during the days of Jesus. This has really been an eye-opener to read and understand this book; to realize how much it is like today. You know that they tithed! You know that they had to bring the Roman money up to the temple and exchange it for the temple money and then put that in the temple treasury.

Here we have a completely different society still functioning by the laws of God, though it was not like it was when the children of Israel first came into the land of Canaan.

pgs 161-162—Once as Jesus started out on a journey, a rich young Jewish ruler ran up to him and knelt down asking...

The young rich Jewish ruler means that he had to be in with the Romans. You could not get wealth unless you were in with the Romans.

...“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus deflects his praise, saying that no one is good except God, and then proceeds with an answer. “You know the commandments: ‘Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” The man responds that he has observed all these commandments from his early youth. Jesus looks lovingly at the man and offers a challenge and an enviable invitation: “You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”....

Let's understand the purpose of this. God would rather have you dedicated to Him, owning no physical goods, than to have physical goods and reject God. That's the whole tale of too many people. The 'tweeners' of that are those who are Laodiceans and they are 'rich and increased with goods'—which they rely upon and *are poor toward God!*

You know what happened: The rich man turned around and went away because he had many goods, and he was sorrowful. He left! He had great possessions!

...In spite, perhaps of, or perhaps because of his wealth, the radical cost of discipleship was to high (Mark 10:17-22;

cf. Matt. 19:16-22; Luke 18:24). This young ruler's love for his wealth prevents him from receiving the "treasures in heaven" that Jesus promises. His greed typifies many Galileans confronted by Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

In the parallel account in Mark 10

Aware of those standing by, Jesus adds a warning: "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!" Indeed, a camel can pass through the eye of a needle more easily than a rich man can enter the Kingdom (Mark 10:23-25). But those, who for the sake of Jesus and His Gospel, forsake family, lands, and houses, will receive a hundredfold in this life (although with persecutions) and eternal life (Mark 10:29-31; cf. Matt. 19:29-30; Luke 18:28-30).

Let's understand something that is very important. Luke 16:10: "The one who *is* faithful in *the things that are* least is also faithful in much; and the one who *is* unrighteous in *the things that are* least is also unrighteous in much. Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true *riches*?" (vs 10-11).

You need to think and understand about that in your relationship to God concerning tithes and offerings.

Let me just stop and say this: This is not a pitch for more money. This is not to merchandize you. We always live within our budget. We have never mailed out a letter asking for money, and we won't. I've never sent a sermon out pleading for money, and it won't happen. We trust God and ask God to bless the brethren, but it is also part of understanding the Truth of God that you know what God requires so that you can be faithful in those things, whether it is least or whether it is much.

There is a lesson here, v 11: "Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true *riches*?" The "...unrighteous mammon..." by the way is money!

Money is a gauge of part of your relationship with God. Years ago when we were part of the larger Church of God, that became the only gauge of whether you were righteous or not. That can't be! It can't be where it is the only gauge, and send out letters every month; send money and give all you can and so forth. That is merchandizing the people.

Please do not mistake what I am saying in

teaching the Truth about the economics during Jesus' time and what I'm saying now, and what I'm bringing out here from the Word of God ***that I'm asking for more money. I'm going to teach the Word of God, and you will have to choose whether you will obey God or not! That is entirely up to you!*** But you also have to understand the consequences if you don't. And I, as a minister, if I do not teach this and do not tell you this—not only this, but concerning Sabbath, Holy Days, faith, love, hope, grace, keeping the commandments of God—all of those things are necessary.

We need to understand that! I just want to set the record straight! I know there are some people who are going to get angry at me. If you're angry at me, then ask yourself:

- Are you angry at me?
- or*
- Are you angry at yourself?
- or*
- Are you angry at God?
- or*
- Are you upset because you have a guilty conscience?

That's what you need to do! The reason I bring this out is very important and these are the words of Jesus:

Verse 12: "And if you have not been faithful in that which *is* another's..." Who owns the tithe? *God does!* It's His! What you do with it then is faithfulness or a degree of faithfulness, or unfaithfulness—depending on what you do.

"...who will give to you your own?" (v 12). In other words, who is going to give you eternal life? You need to think on that.

Here is the Truth, here is a lesson, 13: "No servant is able to serve two masters..." Absolutely true in every principle of everything that you do, whether it be God, another man, an occupation, money, possessions:

"...You cannot serve God and mammon, for either he will hate the one, and he will love the other; or he will hold to *the* one and will despise the other. You **cannot...** ['ou dunatai'—the impossibility] ...serve God and mammon.' Now, the Pharisees who were also covetous, heard all these things; and they ridiculed Him. And He said to them, 'You are those who justify themselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination before God'" (vs 13-15). Very profound lessons we can learn!

pg 163—Jesus expresses His radical ethic in the commands, "Be merciful, even as

your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36) and “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Trusting fully in God’s sovereign love, the disciple shares this love with others and so reflects the Divine nature in interpersonal relationships....

That is the most important thing. Tithing—unless you’re robbing God—is not a salvational thing. But it is something that everyone needs to do ‘according to how God has blessed them.’

...Faith in God’s care liberates the disciple from the tyranny of material possessions and “the cares of the world.”....

I think that is really quite a good way to express it.

We’ll go back over the thing concerning Matthew the Levite. A lot of people have said that people in the Church cannot give money to the Church or tithe to the Church because the Levites are still here and the priesthood was still there. Therefore, if they tithe then they would have to tithe to the Levites and then tithe to the Church. If they were not in the synagogue and they were not at the temple, and they were following Christ and the apostles, they had no obligation to that, because they have to leave and forsake that through baptism. That’s a false argument. It’s absolutely nonsensical.

However, I’m bringing out here concerning Matthew the Levi because anyone who was following the apostles could still tithe. Matthew was a Levi, Barnabas was a Levi and many of the priests came obedient to the faith. You need to re-think some of these old clichés that people come up with.

Luke 5:27: “Now, after these things, He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ Then he arose, leaving everything, *and* followed Him” (vs 27-28). That was a lucrative job! He was not like the rich man who refused to sell all of his possessions. He just got up and left it.

Verse 29: “And Levi made a great feast for Him in his house, and there were a large number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.” Quite a thing!

Let’s look at a key thing that has to do with money, with tribute money, Matthew 22:15: “Then the Pharisees went and took counsel *as to* how they might entrap Him in *His* speech. And they sent their disciples *along* with the Herodians...” (vs 15-16). These were the official ones from Herod Antipas; they were going to try to trick Jesus into saying that you shouldn’t give taxes to Caesar.

Let’s just stop and think about it. There are a lot of people who lay themselves open for a lot of problems and troubles, unnecessarily so, who say that we need to get out the system, out of social security, get rid of our driver’s licenses, the licenses on our cars, and we need to get back to the Constitution once delivered because it was never provided for in the Constitution.

They fail to realize a very important thing: *We were there once*—weren’t we? As long as there is Satan the devil in the world, given the same amount of time—if there were that much time left; and given that you could get back to the Constitution once delivered—guess where we would be in 200 years? *Exactly the same place!*

Let’s understand the economy and things as they were in Galilee and Judea being under Roman servitude. It’s very much like today. One could say that the taxation of the Romans was illegal because it’s not from God. You want to be crucified? *Their IRS agents were worse than ours!* This answers a question: Should we pay income tax? *Yes!* Jesus gave the answer.

If Jesus would have said not to pay taxes, they would have arrested Him right there, the Herodians would have taken Him and He would have gone before the authorities for teaching people to rebel against the taxes.

“...to Him, saying, ‘Master, we know that You are true, and *that* You teach the way of God in Truth, and *that* You are not concerned about *pleasing* anyone; for You do not respect *the* persons of men. Therefore, tell us, what do You think?...’” (vs 16-17). Isn’t this the way a lot of these things go? People sit down and ask: What do you think? Rather than say, ‘What does the Bible say?’

Where people get themselves in more trouble in talking about the Bible is when they talk about it and give their thoughts on it and never open the Bible to really find out what it accurately says! Here we have the same thing:

“...Is it lawful...” (v 17)—according to God’s Law because it certainly was for Roman law; it was the law of Rome: you pay taxes! They had tax collectors everywhere!

“...to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said, ‘Why do you tempt Me, **you hypocrites?**’” (vs 17-18). Sanctimonious pretenders—‘hyprocrites’ is what they called actors in the theater because they play acted.

Verse 19: “‘Show Me the tribute coin’ And they brought to Him a silver coin [‘danarius’]. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription *is* on this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’.... [holding the

coin right there in His own hand] ...And He said to them, 'Render then the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God'" (vs 19-21).

Does God have any requirement concerning wealth? *Yes!* This also shows that in rendering to God they rendered it in money, because there were very few that had their own land where they could go tithe of the grain, or the flock, or herd, and so forth. Plus you had all of the workers: carpenters, shoemakers, clothing makers, leatherworks people, those who bought and sold merchandise. They didn't do it for nothing. They all made a profit. A profit is increase!

I've covered this before, and I don't want to sound sarcastic, so let's go to another Scripture since we are to render unto God the things that are God's, let's go to Num. 18. *God* tells us what is His. *God gave it* to the priesthood and the Levites. But in particular, it talks about agricultural things because it takes no brain to figure how to give 10% of your increase if it's money. Therefore, that does not have to be spelled out in great detail by saying that if you have ten danarius then you give one of the danarius. It's easy to figure.

But when you have cattle, as they had when they first went into the land, if the land belonged to them and they did it the way that God said, then you have to have specific instructions for it. This becomes very important because it tells us the things that belong to God:

Numbers 18:20: "And the LORD said to Aaron, 'You shall have no inheritance in their land...'" We have the same thing today. You may own a house; your family may inherit it. In fact, the Levites in the Levitical cities could buy land and own a house. Here where it says *they have no inheritance in the land*, there was no special geographical area called *the tribe of Levi*. They were scattered throughout all the 12 tribes so they could take care of teaching, doing their duties according to the Word of God.

The Levites then would come up to the temple during the Holy Day season and they would all be there and they would have two weeks during the rest of the year when they would come up and work one week as we find in the book of *Josephus*. That's what it means *no inheritance*. So, if I own a house it's not an inheritance, though I can pass it on to my children. Levites and priests own houses and they could pass it on to their children.

"...neither shall you have any part among them. I *am* your part and your inheritance among the children of Israel. And behold, I have given the sons of Levi **all the tithe** in Israel for an inheritance..." (vs 20-21). All the tenth means that on whatever

increase there was to be a tenth of a tithe given. If you were a merchantman and you made money, and you would tithe on it. If you bought and sold and made a profit, you would tithe on it.

Just like today, people don't go into business to lose money. They don't go into business to give things away. Do you think that God would charge all the farmers and ranchers, making all of them tithe, but not have any of the workers—miners, laborers, carpenters or the craftsman—tithe, though they made a profit and maybe even made more money than some of the ranchers and farmers. That would be very ludicrous to believe, especially in light of the fact the way the economy was during the days of Jesus, and it was a moneyed society. "...all the tithe [tenth] in Israel for an inheritance..."—whatever it was!

The *special circumstances* of the firstfruits, of counting cattle, fruit and so forth, are covered because they're specific and detailed things that needed to be covered. But if you have a profit in money, it's very easy to figure.

But it's still "...all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance for their service which they serve, the service of the tabernacle of the congregation" (v 21).

- What if the Levites lived in an area where they raised a lot of chickens? *All the farmers would bring chickens and eggs and feathers!*
- Can he live on chicken and eggs?
- What would the Levite do with them? *He in turn could turn around and sell them!*
- What if you had five poultry ranchers and each one of them brought you chickens every week? *You'd get sick and tired of chickens—wouldn't you?*
- How are you going to get some beef? *You'd have to sell them or barter them!*
- How are going to get a goat?
- How are you going to get some milk?
- How are you going to get some vegetables?
- How are you going to get these other things?
- How are you going to get clothes?
- How are you going to get shoes?

It all evolved down into being a moneyed society whenever you had the urban centers develop. Quite a thing! "...all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance for their service which they serve, the service of the tabernacle of the congregation."

Verse 22: "Neither must the children of Israel come near the tabernacle of the congregation from this time forward, lest they bear sin and die. But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their

iniquity, *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. But the tithes of the children of Israel... [all the tithes from every source] ...which they offer *as* a heave offering to the LORD, **I have given to the Levites to inherit...**” (vs 22-24).

A tithe is also given as an offering. That’s important to understand when we get back to the New Testament.

(go to the next track)

Verse 25: “And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, ‘And you shall speak to the Levites, and you shall say to them, “When you take tithes from the children of Israel, which I have given you...”’” (vs 25-26). That shows that *God owns the tithe*. This clearly establishes it, because He gives it, as something that God owns. *That’s His!*

So, when Jesus held up the coin and said, ‘Whose image and superscription is this?’ and they said, ‘Caesar’s.’ Then He said, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and render to God the things that are God’s,’ He was talking about money, because *the tithe belongs to God* and He gave it to the children of Israel. Subsequently, we’ll see that this was transferred to the Church (1-Cor. 9), which we covered very briefly and this time I’ll go through it in greater detail so we can understand it.

“...which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it for the LORD... [it’s still God’s] ...*even* a tenth of the tithe” (v 26). What would happen was that the Levites, in receiving the tithe, would have to tithe to the priesthood.

Verse 27: “And your heave offering... [Interesting, heave offering could be anything.] ...shall be credited to you as grain of the threshing-floor and as the fullness of the winepress.” This means that they were giving money, based upon the same command where they gave of the corn and where they gave the wine. This could be a tithe of anything.

Verse 28: “So, you also shall offer a heave offering to the LORD of all your tithes, which you receive from the children of Israel. And **you shall give from these the LORD’S heave offering to Aaron the priest**. Out of all your gifts you shall offer every heave offering of the LORD of all the best of them, the Holy part out of it.’ And you shall say to them, ‘When you have lifted up the best of it, then it shall be credited to the Levites as the increase of the threshing floor, and as the increase of the winepress’” (vs 28-30).

He’s drawing a comparison. He didn’t say it shall be counted the increase of the threshing floor, meaning only grain; or the increase of the winepress,

meaning only wine. This show that you are to use the same principle in determining the tithe of any increase that is made—whether it comes from the land, or whether it comes from labor.

Verse 31: “And you shall eat it in every place, you and your households. For it *is* your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation. And you shall bear no sin because of it when you have offered up the best of it. Neither shall you profane the Holy things of the children of Israel, lest you die” (vs 31-32). There we have very clear instructions concerning the tithe.

Let’s see something that is very important. God is against merchandizing. God is against taking advantage: Luke 20:45: “And as all the people were listening, He said to His disciples, ‘Beware of the scribes...’” (vs 45-46). Most of the scribes were Levites. Here they had sinned by going around to take advantage—in this case particularly of widows.

“...who like to walk in robes, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and *the* chief seats in the synagogues, and *the* chief places at the suppers; who devour the houses of widows, and as a pretext pray at great length.... [so they get paid for those long prayers] ...These shall receive the greater judgment” (vs 46-47).

That’s exactly what happens in the Catholic Church today. They don’t believe in tithing, so you pay for the Mass, you pay for the Mass for the dead, you pay the priest, and what happens, they end up merchandizing the people. I’ve seen this over and over again. Whenever someone says, ‘Oh, we don’t have to tithe in the New Testament’—which is entirely incorrect—what do they do? *They devise their own system!* ‘We’ll have pledges!’

- Are you to follow the law of man or the Law of God?
- Should you follow a law of man that replaces a Law of God and say you’re delivered to do that?
- Should we do that?
- Should we end up like the Catholics?

It’s kind of like one man who wrote me a very nasty letter and said, ‘You should not be incorporated as a 501C3 church. What you should do is take in the money and everything you send out you should charge for, and then you should pay taxes on all the money that comes in.’

That’s the silliest proposal that I have ever heard of! God inspired that in this country that the churches can receive tithes and offerings without paying taxes. And for everybody’s information, there is no required Federal report if you’re a 501C3 church organization. The government does not give

you a mandate of what to do or what to say or how to run your organization. We run it according to the way that God wants! They're happy with that. But we do pay the taxes of withholding and social security, because that is the law of the land, and we do render unto Caesar those things that are Caesar's. Here is the merchandizing that took place.

Luke 21:1: "When He looked up, He saw the rich men casting their offerings into the treasury." It was money! And the gifts that they were giving, we don't know if this was above tithing, but they would give. Do you not give a tithe? *Yes!* If you give it, it is a gift that you put into the treasury even though God says that it is His.

Verse 2: Then He also saw a certain poor widow drop in two small coins. And He said, 'Of a truth, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all *of them*; for all these have from their abundance cast into the offerings to God... [they had to take the Roman money and convert it into temple money and that's what they put into the offerings of God] ...but she, out of her poverty, did put *in* all the livelihood that she had'" (vs 2-4).

1-Corinthians 9 is where a lot of people go to say, 'Paul did not collect tithes.' Paul was following the principle of the condemnation of Jesus concerning the Pharisees. He said, 'Woe to you Pharisees; you tithe of mint and anise and cumin and you have overlooked the weightier matters of the law: *judgment, mercy and love.*

What Paul was trying to do is he was trying to get the Corinthians to come to the understanding of judgment, mercy and love, so they could then pick up their responsibility of doing the things financially. He said, 'Forgive me this wrong' (2-Cor.); so he admitted that not taking tithes and offerings from the Corinthians was a wrong, and that he robbed other churches; those who say they don't believe in tithing and they setup their own system.

1-Corinthians 9:1: "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in *the* Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, without a doubt I am to you. For you are the certification of my apostleship in *the* Lord. My defense to those who are examining me is this" (vs 1-3).

He was being criticized for not doing it, because it was something that the Church was given to do! It was authority over the brethren that God gave to the ministry. Since he wasn't doing it, they criticized him. Here's his answer:

Verse 4: "Do we not have a right... [*'exousia'*—authority; it doesn't mean power in the sense of *power*—*'dunamis'*—but in the sense of authority] ...to eat and to drink?" How are we

going to eat and drink?

Verse 5: "Do we not have a right to take with us a sister, a wife, as also the other apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" What is this telling us? *The other apostles and the brethren of the Lord*—Judas, Simon, and Cephas (Peter)—not only had wives but also it's implying that they partook of tithing.

Verse 6: "Or I only and Barnabas, do we not have a right to refrain from working?" If you work and you make money then you support yourself. If you forebear working—meaning you don't work—then you have to be supported somehow. He goes on explaining a very profound principle:

Verse 7: "Does anyone at any time serve as a soldier at his own expense?..." When I volunteered for the Army, I stepped forth and they had me get rid of all my civilian things. They cut off all my hair. They gave me all the GI-issues: fatigues, dress uniform, shoes, socks, underwear, a rifle, instruction, food—three meals a day. You don't go and provide that for yourself.

He's saying that it's self-evident that those who are going to serve in the military must also receive wages, must also be provided all of these things.

"...Does anyone plant a vineyard and not eat the fruit of it? Or does anyone shepherd a flock and not eat *the meat* and milk from the flock?" (v 7).

Now, here's an interesting interpretation, v 8: "Am I saying these things *merely* from a human point of view? Or does not the law say the same things? For it is written in the Law of Moses..." (vs 8-9). What did we just read in the Law of Moses in Num. 18? *All the tithe went to Levi!* That was transferred over to the ministry. We find that right here and then substantiated legally in Heb. 7_[transcriber's correction].

"...'*You shall not muzzle the ox that is treading out corn.*'..." (v 9). Paul is saying with this that this is the least you ought to be able to do. At least give something!

"...Is it because God is concerned for oxen?" (v 9). A lot of animal rights people would be upset with this. And a lot of people interpreting the Scriptures would be upset that Paul was so liberal in interpreting the Scriptures here.

Verse 10: "Or does He not certainly say *this* for our sakes? For our sakes it was written..." That's something! To take that and apply it directly to the preaching of the Gospel.

"...so that the one who plows might plow in hope... [we're to set our hands the plow and not

look back] ...and the one who threshes the corn in hope might be partaker of his hope. If we have sown to you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your physical things?" (vs 10-11). Whether it be food, clothing, money, a place to live; to reap of your *physical* things.

Verse 12: "If others participate in this authority over you..." Who are the *others*? Well, he listed some of them. Who were the others who were taking advantage of it? *The false apostles* (2-Cor. 11). It was authority! They partook in this authority over the brethren.

"...much more surely *should* not we?... [partake in this authority over you] ...Nevertheless, we have not used this authority..." (vs 11-12). So, in circumstances where people are so carnal, and they're worried about physical things, what he did in Corinth to try and encourage them is to say to himself, 'Okay, we're going to do this free'; hoping that they would grow up in knowledge and understanding and they would be able to respond and do the things they needed to do. That's fine!

"...but we have endured all things, so that we might not hinder the Gospel of Christ" (v 12). Remember, there were these false apostle coming in who were also the competition. He wanted to cut off an occasion of those false apostles from collecting the tithes. So, he didn't do it.

Verse 13: "Don't you know... [understand] ...that those who are laboring *in* the sacred things of the temple live *of the things* of the temple..." What are the things of the temple? Not only the sacrifices, not only the tithes of the physical things, but of the money, which was put into the treasury. We saw that that was at the temple.

"...and those who are ministering at the altar are partakers with the altar? In the same way also..." (vs 13-14). The Greek word for [al]so is 'houtos' meaning *in exactly the same way*. We read:

- Num. 18 that it was all the tithe
- Luke 21 that they put their gifts into the treasury

It was all the things!

Verse 14: "In the same way also the Lord did **command**..." Whether it is *ordained* (KJV) or *command* makes no difference; the Lord is the One Who did it. This is direct New Testament authority that the tithes were transferred to those who preach the Gospel. Absolutely clear!

It says in *exactly the same way* did the Lord order "...that **those who preach the Gospel are to live of the Gospel**. But I have not used any of these things..." (vs 14-15). He wanted them to be converted first. We're going to see that he had to

take wages or money from other churches.

"...And I have not written these things in order that this might *now* be done to me. For *it would be* better for me to die rather than to have anyone make my boasting void" (vs 14-15). What he was doing is saying, 'I'm doing this as an example for them that they may be truly converted and quit looking to men and look to Christ.

Verse 16: "For though I preach the Gospel, there is no *reason* for me to boast because an obligation has been laid upon me. And woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if *I do this* against my will, I have been entrusted with a ministry. What then is my reward? That in preaching the Gospel, I may make the Gospel of Christ without expense, **so that I may not abuse my authority in the Gospel**" (vs 16-18). So, there was the second part of it. He didn't want to abuse it. Then he would be free to teach to all. You know all the flack that he would get from the Jews.

We're going to see some very interesting things in 2-Corinthians 11 and here's why he did not do it; he explains why: 2-Corinthians 11:1: "I would *that* you might bear with me in a little nonsense; but indeed, do bear with me." He says, 'I'm going to be foolish about this, so I want you to listen and pay attention, and bear with me.'

Verse 2: "For I am jealous over you with *the* jealousy of God because I have espoused you to one husband, so that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ" (vs 2-3). He wanted them first to be grounded in Christ, because there were other false apostles and preachers coming.

Verse 4: "For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different Gospel, which you did not accept, you put up with it as *something* good." They were broadminded and accepting common ground; very similar to what we have today in the ecumenical movement.

Verse 5: "But I consider myself in no way inferior to those highly exalted *so-called* apostles." The so-called chief apostles; the hotshot apostles! This has nothing to do with Peter, because Peter was not the chief apostle. I tell you, the different Churches of God have *put up with* all kinds of things from false prophets. You put up with it and let people push your face into the ground. *No!* Christ does not want that! God does not want that!

Verse 6: "For although *I may be* unpolished

in speech, yet, *I am* not in knowledge; for in all things I have demonstrated this to you.” *You know us inside and out; there’s no reason for you to suspect us or look upon us this way.*

Verse 7: “Now, did I commit sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the Gospel of God to you freely?” This is something that is true: Whenever the Truth is spoken that a person doesn’t like, they tend to find fault with the person:

- he didn’t say it just right
- he was angry
- he’s been critical
- he didn’t do it in a loving manner

The Apostle Paul had the same problem because he was not good looking and was rude in speech, and he told the truth. He says:

Galatians 4:16: “Now then, in speaking the Truth to you, have I become your enemy?” Think of it in the Church of God. If the Truth of God cannot be preached in the Church of God, because we make enemies of those who are listening, **are those who are listening really in the Church of God?**

You need to think about a lot of these things. Not only am I talking about tithes and offerings and things, I’m talking about a lot of important principles in Christian living.

2-Corinthians 11:8: “I robbed other churches... [probably taking more than the tithes that they had, because some of the churches were very small] ...receiving wages *from them* for ministering to you.” In other words, so ‘I could continue doing it without charge.’

Verse 9: “And when I was present with you and in need, I was not a burden to anyone (for the brethren who came from Macedonia fully supplied my needs)...” They had regular things coming to Paul from Macedonia because it was well known that those in Corinth didn’t take care of Paul. So, Paul was trying to preach the Gospel to them in the face of all of these false apostles—and those who were also exercising the authority of tithes and offerings over them—he said, ‘I’m not going to do it so that these people will be converted; so that they will understand the Gospel of Christ. I think it was a lost battle; a lost cause.

“...for I kept myself, and will *continue* to keep myself, from being burdensome to you in anything. *As the Truth* of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia... [that’s where Corinth was] ...Why? Because I don’t love you? God knows *I do*. But what I am doing, I will do, so that I may cut off *any* occasion from those who are desiring an

occasion...” (vs 9-12). He was doing it to avoid a confrontation that would cause problems with the brethren.

“...so that in the things they boast of, they also may be found even as we *are*” (v 12). That’s referring directly to the false apostles. They gloried in themselves! They gloried in their false gospel! They gloried in being able to take tithes and offering from the brethren! And the brethren didn’t give anything to Paul, because he didn’t ask for it. He did it to “...cut off *any* occasion...” As we will see, Paul was wrong!

Verse 13: “For such *are* false apostles—deceitful workers who are transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.”

- To exercise that authority over them!
- To preach a false gospel!
- To preach another Jesus!
- To bring another spirit!

Verse 14: “And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—whose end shall be according to their works” (vs 14-15). Then Paul goes through listing all the things that he went through.

Let’s understand some of the leverage and the power that some of these false apostles had.

Verse 21: “I speak as though we were under reproach for being weak; but in whatever *way* anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I also am bold. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they *the* seed of Abraham? So am I” (vs 21-22). They would come in and say something like:

- we are from Judea
- we heard Christ
- I was there when He fed the 4,000
- I was there when He fed the 5,000
- let us tell *you* the gospel of Christ, which was *another* gospel

They were going by the physical things, who they were; not by the spiritual things of what Christ wanted.

Verse 23: “Are they servants of Christ? (I am speaking as if I were out of my mind.) So am I, above *and beyond measure*...”

Then he lists all the things that he went through. Everything that he did while all of these false apostles were mincing around in their long robes and their finery and everything like that, and collecting tithes and offerings from the brethren and putting down Paul saying, ‘If he were really an

apostle he would exercise this authority—wouldn't he?'

Let's see what he went through, "...in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in imprisonments more frequent, in deaths often.... [near death and death watches] ...Five times from *the Jews* I received forty *stripes* less one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I spent in the deep. *I have been* in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from *my own race*, in perils from *the Gentiles*, in perils in *the city*, in perils in *the desert*, in perils on *the sea*, in perils among false brethren" (vs 23-26).

I tell you, Paul had a very unpleasant life! All of this he's telling the Corinthians, and 'you didn't even have the slightest bit of conversion, that even though I didn't exercise this authority over you, you still didn't participate.' That's the long and short of what he's saying here. But he said, 'So be it! I'm not going to collect anything from you because I do not want you to say that *Paul made me do it.*'

Likewise in the situation here: In bringing these sermons I'm not doing it to make you do it. If you don't feel that you can give any money to a man, then you'd better not do it. But you better go before God and understand what God requires, and you better decide what you need to do according to God leading you with His Spirit what you ought to do.

Now I want to cover something that is *very* important. I've seen this over and over again in my *many* years of being a minister.

2-Corinthians 9:6: "But this *I say*: the one who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly... [in the *physical* sense and also in the *spiritual* sense] ...and the one who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Each one as he purposes in his heart, *so let him give*, but not grudgingly or by compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver" (vs 6-7).

Now let's understand something very, very important and profound: I've heard people say, 'See, we don't have to give tithes.' Really what should happen is this: Since in the New Testament it doesn't require tithing—which is not a true statement—therefore, we should use that as a guideline and anyone who wants to be right with God should give *more* than a tenth.

I've heard those platitudes from men whose covetousness is really after the money. You know what I have found? *Not one has ever given more than a tenth or even close to it!* That is an ideological mask of false brethren or false ministers who do not know the Truth of God. In saying that and in doing that they are misapplying the

Scriptures, and *they themselves do not do it!*

I had a occasion of that with a man who wrote me and said, 'I can no longer follow you, Fred Coulter, because you are not teaching sound doctrine. Nowhere in the New Testament does it teach that we should tithe.' Well, I just read it to you!

Let's understand one thing about the tithes and why Paul said, 'Forgive me for this wrong.' We're going to reiterate one point again, and let's see what God says. As we have already established, God made it clear that the tithe belongs to Him and He gave it to the Levites. He also made it clear through the Apostle Paul and also, obviously, to all the other apostles, that He transferred that authority to the Church.

Please remember that when the Church started out they sold land and brought all the money to the apostles—didn't they? Far more than a tithe!

Malachi 3:7: "'From the days of your fathers, you have gone away from My statutes, and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you,' says the LORD of hosts...." It's not just this sentimental, mushy-mushy, emotional feeling. There has to be some substance to it. There has to be something that you do with it. ***You have to return to God! He explains how to do it!***

"...But you say. 'In what way shall we return?'.... [God says how to do it]: ...Will a man rob God? Yet, you are robbing Me...." (vs 7-8). These things belong to Him. If they didn't belong to God, how could you rob Him? *Think on that!*

"...But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings! You *are* cursed with a curse; for you are robbing Me, *even* this whole nation" (vs 8-9).

Also, I have seen this true as can be: Those who believe in tithing and are faithful, they are blessed according to the promise given here—more than they can receive. They're blessed in many, *many, many* different ways! Those who don't tithe have to use the tithe to pay for the curses that God brings upon them, because their financial structure generally falls apart. I've seen that almost 100% true!

If you're not going to give what belongs to God, He's going to make you spend it on something that He would have ordinarily blessed you in. But because you did not want the blessing of God in tithing, you receive the cursing. So, He is going to let you spend the money that you should have tithed on things of a curse:

- ill health
- not being able to take care of things

- having bills that you need to pay because you can't manage your money
- having a car collapse on you

Whatever it may be, it's going to be eaten up because it belongs to God! That's why He says, "You *are* cursed with a curse..."

Verse 10: "Bring all the tithes into the treasure house, so that there may be food in My house. And prove Me..." God challenges you to *prove* Him!

If you just say that you're going to prove God. 'Let's see if He's going to help me.' *Forget it!* You're not doing it in a willing attitude, because you love God. You're doing it because you're compelled to do it, and you might as well continue to live under a curse and spend the money for all those things that you need to spend it on, because you don't willfully and willingly love God and obey Him. That's just the way that it is! We really need to look at the 'facts of life' with this.

"...now with this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'to see if I will not surely open the windows of heaven for you, and pour out a blessing for you, until *there is not enough room to receive it.*'" (v 10). Not only physical blessings, but spiritual blessings.

Verse 11: "And I will rebuke the devourer..." That's something! There are many devourers out there in the world!

"...for your sakes, and it shall not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field,' says the LORD of hosts" (v 11).

- That's what we are to do!
- That's why it's from God!

We will see why the Apostle Paul repented of wronging them for not collecting the tithe, but he said, 'Nevertheless, I still won't do it, because I've started this way and I'm going to leave it up to God to take care of it for you.'

2-Corinthians 12:11: "I have become a fool *in this* boasting. You have forced me *to do so*, when I ought to have been commended by you. For in no way was I inferior to those highly exalted *so-called* apostles—even if I am nothing. Indeed, the signs of an apostle were demonstrated *by me* in all patience, in signs and wonders and miracles among you. For in what *way* was it that you were inferior to the other churches, **except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong**" (vs 11-13). So, he repented of it!

Verse 14: "Behold, a third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not burden you; for I do not seek what is yours..." We need to understand

that, brethren! The tithe belongs to God!

- Do you love God?
- Do you want to obey Him?
- Do you want to serve Him?
- Do you want to do the things that are pleasing to God?
- Do you want the blessings that come with God, because you're lovingly obeying Him?

Not only in keeping the Sabbath and those things, but in everything that belongs to God.

That's why I bring this out. It is not to get more money from you. It is not to have a big stash of cash or however you want to look at it. It is so that you will be able to have the blessings that come from God.

- God expects you to do it in faith
- God expects you to prove Him

God will back up His Word and He will bless and prosper you if you do follow through and give your tithes and offerings according to the way that God has instructed!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Luke 12:15-20
- 2) Luke 16:10-15
- 3) Luke 5:27-29
- 4) Matthew 22:15-21
- 5) Numbers 18:20-32
- 6) Luke 20:45-47
- 7) Luke 21:1-4
- 8) 1 Corinthians 9:1-18
- 9) 2 Corinthians 11:1-7
- 10) Galatians 4:16
- 11) 2 Corinthians 11:8-15, 21-26
- 12) 2 Corinthians 9:6-7
- 13) Malachi 3:7-11
- 14) 2 Corinthians 12:11-14

Scriptures referenced, not quoted: Mark 10

Also referenced: Books:

- *Jesus and the Forgotten City—New Light on Sepphoris and the Urban World of Jesus* by Richard A. Batey (amazon.com)
- *Josephus*

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