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Is the Gospel Your Ticket to Wealth?

John 10:10: (NASB) *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

This past week, the Powerball jackpot was up around 500 million dollars! To many it represents a dream of a care-free life full of travel, leisure and luxury. For some Christians, the mere fact of their Christianity represents the same, as the "Prosperity Gospel" preaches that God does absolutely want you to live the good life - to live with ease and comfort - after all, God WANTS to bless you! So, is the Gospel really our ticket to wealth? Does sowing the seeds of tithes and offerings reap a harvest of financial freedom? Stay with us!

Where does tithing come from?

The first account of tithing in the Old Testament: Sodom and Gomorrah weren't always bad. This is the point in time when they were raided and word got back to Abraham. (*Abram* at the time.) His nephew Lot was taken captive with all of the goods. **Genesis 14:11-24:** So Abram brought back all the goods and the people, including Lot. He was so successful in the attack to bring back what was stolen that a grateful King of Sodom, whose city was just pillaged, goes out to meet Abram. Melchizedek is a well-respected priest, a representative of God and also goes to meet Abram.

Abram gave ten percent of the goods to Melchizedek. This is the very first tithe in the Bible. The King of Sodom was so glad to get his people back that he tells Abram to keep all of the stolen goods, but Abram refuses.



Observations regarding this first occurrence of tithing in the Bible:

- Abram's tithe was not from his own goods, but from the goods of the land of Sodom.
- These goods were what he won back in battle.
- Melchizedek blessed Abram and gave credit for the victory to God.
- Sodom's king offered all of the goods to Abram as just reward for the rescue of the people.
- Abram refused and gave all the rest back to its rightful owners!
- This "tithe" was a one-time offering that cost Abram nothing of his own goods.



Introduction, *The Prosperity Gospel Ruined My Life, YouTube.com*

- *We were a couple that wanted to live the American dream so when the pastor started teaching about business and how God wants you to be prosperous, how to get wealth God's way, we were blown away! We were thinking like, wow, so God wants us to be rich and have a nice house, all these cars, and vacation homes? I mean, both of us came from a background where his family struggled; my family struggled, so we weren't used to having nice things. So to see people say that God blessed them with these things if they would seek Him first...*



God wants to bless you! We agree...but what does that blessing look like?

The Law of the Jews introduced tithing for all the people: Leviticus 27:30-34: The tithes were to come from the land that God would give them, and those tithes would be considered holy before God. Tithe here specifically meant ten percent.

Who received the tithes? And why?

Numbers 18:20-21: There were twelve tribes in Israel and eleven were given ownership of land. The tribe of Levi was not given any physical inheritance because they were set aside for special service to the Lord as priests. They were not to be spending time working the soil; rather, they were in charge of worship for the nation. The Jewish people were to give a tenth to support the Levites, who had no way to make a living because they had no land ownership. The Levites relied on everyone else.



If you want blessings, pay first, *Creflo Dollar*

- *... 'cause we need supernatural help! Some of you need to get down and get some communion. Put your bills on the table, take your "seed" and put it aside. Put your bills on one side and hold that cup up and hold that bread up and solicit the supernatural assistance of the Holy Spirit and sow that seed where God cares for you to sow that seed and you WATCH how God*

shows up! You have to do this if you're ever going to know if it works! This is the authority that we have been honored with. And if we execute this authority, it works! Do NOT allow your intellect to determine whether or not you will do this. Your intellect won't agree with this. This blows the socket out of your intellect. This does not make sense!

Don't think? Just send the money? Hmmm....we do not agree. **But the Levites also had a responsibility to offer a tenth - how? Numbers 18:25-30:** When Israel was to give their tithes to the Levites, Israel would count out every tenth cattle that would be arbitrarily set aside. But the Levites had to give the BEST tenth to the Priesthood - Aaron and his sons. So it cost the Levites even a little more than it did the average person.

 **God: Everything I wanted Him to be, The Prosperity Gospel Ruined My Life, YouTube.com**

- *At that time I viewed God as the source for everything I needed and wanted. Whatever I wanted out of life that was positive or good, then God wanted it for me as well. I guess that God was everything I wanted Him to be. If I was going to sacrifice and do all these things, God had things he was going to give me in return.*



Observations - the giving of tithes was limited to the following conditions:

- Tithes were only from the increase from the land of Canaan, either of the harvest or cattle, both of which grew because of the land;
- Tithes were given to those who had no land but who served the people spiritually instead. Those who served had to *also* give the *best* tenth of the total tenth they received.

It is interesting that when preachers today ask for tithes, they do not talk of all of the *other* tithes required of Israel. There were other tithes on top of the tithes given to the Levites, for a total of three:

1. As already discussed, the tithe given to support the Levites: Numbers 18:21 2. The tithe was used by the tither to be able to worship the Lord throughout the year: Deuteronomy 14:23: You have heard of "emergency" funds? This was a "worship" fund! 3. A tithe once every three years: Deuteronomy 14:27-29:

This was to support *those who could not support themselves*. All of these tithes were required by the same Levitical Law! a) Levites in your hometown; b) Strangers (people who are not Jews and are struggling) in your hometown; c) Fatherless or orphans in your hometown; and d) Widows in your hometown. Tithes were *never* money! They were *always* harvest or cattle. 2 Chronicles 31:5-6

 **We will control the money supply, Bill Winston, YouTube.com**

- *Folks, we're in a combat zone! Not only we gonna get the wealth, we gonna strip it! Meaning leave them with none of it, that the church gonna have all of it! We gonna be in control of the financial system of this earth!!! Praise God! That came from the Holy Ghost! We are gonna be in control of the financial system of the earth!! (repeated) We're gonna be in control of the money supply! (repeated)*

Jesus did *not* teach tithing for the Christian. **Let's look at another New Testament text that confirms that Jesus could NOT have perpetuated such a ritual:** Hebrews 7:11-14: (NRSV)

¹¹Now *if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood—for the people received the law under this priesthood—what further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising according to the order of Melchizedek, rather than one according to the order of Aaron? (If perfection had been obtainable through the Levitical priesthood - and it wasn't - things would have moved on that way.)* ¹²For *when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.* ¹³Now *the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.* (The tithes went to the tribe of Levi. Jesus is of the tribe of Judah, not Levi. Different time, different law, different method.) ¹⁴For *it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.*

The inability of the Law and its priesthood (due to sin) to bring the people to God caused a change - now there would be a new High Priest and a new priesthood.

1 Peter 2:9-10: The Apostles made it clear that Jesus made a new rule. Did Jesus tell us to tithe to the new priesthood? NO. **What kind of inheritance was this new priesthood given?** John 14:2-3: Jesus did not tell his followers that while he was gone, we are to accumulate as

much wealth as possible here on earth. He offered a spiritual blessing with the reward to be with him in heaven. We are supposed to take the *principles* of the Old Testament law and apply them to our lives. We will talk more about how to do that.

Notice the core point of tithing - the land of Israel that God gave His people - is no longer a part of the conversation. It is no longer about the land. The Son of Man did not have a place to lay his head - it was now about something broader.

If tithing were a New Testament command or continuation, then consider the following:

- Gentiles were being converted by the thousands;
- Gentiles were pagan and had no sense of the Jewish Law, including tithing. Why isn't the New Testament harping about tithing to these newcomers?
- There were many major conflicts between the Jewish Christians and the Gentiles, such as eating meat offered to idols, circumcision, and other rituals of the Law relating to the Gentiles. The core of Christianity came from the Jews.
- The conference in Acts 15 targeted the most major conflicts between the two cultures - but tithing was NEVER even mentioned at this conference. (The big point was circumcision.)
- Gentiles had never tithed and were *not* being asked to tithe! If tithing was a mandate for Christianity, there would have been much teaching on the matter to all of the new Christians who had no Jewish context.

This text is about giving, not tithing: Mark 12:41-44: It was not about the amount of dollars and cents; it was about the heart behind the giving. What she gave was essentially worthless, but it was all she had. She chose to give that money.



Give and you preach, Binny Hinn, Money Hungry Prosperity Preachers, YouTube.com

- *The only people anywhere who can preach the Gospel are those who have been saved. Think about the judgment of God on those who reject this privilege. That's why Paul said, Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel. The greatest privilege we have been given is the preaching of the Gospel. And when we sow seed - when you give to "God TV," you are preaching the Gospel! Look, you may not be the one going around the world like I am...maybe God hasn't called you to go out and preach to the multitudes, but every time you sow seed, every time you give....*

Isn't it interesting that they don't mention money - they refer to it as "sowing the seed," which just happens to be land related? Luke 9:57-58: So, I guess Jesus didn't have a private jet??? The blessing is not in what you are *getting*, the blessing is what you are *giving*.

The following are some of the New Testament texts used to support Christian tithing and the only places in which Jesus actually discusses the practice. **The only places where Jesus discusses tithing:** Matthew 23:23: These were Jewish Pharisees that were opposing Jesus. So yes, you are supposed to give your tithes, he was saying, because that is what is required of you by the Law!

Luke 18:10-14:

- Who was being spoken about in these texts? (In both cases, the person doing the tithing was a Pharisee.)
- What Law were they under? (The Jewish Law from the Old Testament.)
- Were they Christian? (...no.)
- Is there any indication that they even wanted to be Christian? (No, most of the Pharisees only wanted to condemn Jesus.)
- What level of importance is Jesus putting on tithing in these examples? (It is important, but not THE most important thing. Jesus doesn't even put tithing at the top of the list in relation to Judaism!)

A lot of preachers hold these next verses over their parishioners' heads and ask, "Are you going to rob God?" Malachi 1:6-10: Remember how the tithes were given to the Levites - the priesthood - and they were to give the best of those tithes as their own tithe? Guess who is in trouble here! They were self-centered, not God-centered, by keeping the best for themselves. The average person (same as the parishioner now) was not being chastised - it was the priesthood. (Same as Christian ministers today?) Having your allegiance to heaven does not mean accumulating wealth. But you can still serve Christ and work a job. The Apostles advised that we are to take care of our families or we are worse than an unbeliever.

Here is God's anger towards the priesthood specifically: Malachi 2:1-4 Malachi 2:7-8: As you listen to the Prosperity Gospel, are the preachers giving instructions as a messenger of the Lord Almighty or as a messenger of accumulation and "me first?" **Who is doing the robbing in this next text? The priesthood!** Malachi 3:8-10: Where were the Christian storehouses during the writing of the New Testament? There weren't any. Preachers will say the *storehouse* here is their church. The problems with that are: a) tithes were never money; b) this is talking about the Old Testament Law only, and c) the true church has nothing to do with a physical building or real estate. But how does the Bible define the "church" in the New Testament? It is the people serving God. So there is no physical *storehouse* to bring the tithe there. Acts 20:28 Romans 16:5: The "church" here is the body of Christians. There is no biblical command to bring money to a church building! The Old Testament's Law worked in a very physical manner. Tithes came from the Promised Land and went to the priesthood who did not have an inheritance and were to serve the people. So, if you want to take this Malachi text and "Christianize" it, it is the *priesthood* that is robbing God and the Christian storehouse is not some building, but heaven! Galatians 5:18-21: Why isn't "lack of tithing" mentioned? If it is the key point the preachers tell us it is that unlocks blessings, shouldn't it be at the top of the list?

 **No seed, no heavenly permit, Creflo Dollar**

- *God is not permitted - heaven does not have permission - your seed is the permit that gives heaven the go ahead to bring increase in your life. If seed is not sown, heaven is not permitted to bring increase. These are simple principles that people seem to get stuck on in the middle of a hard time! What you should know is, if I'm stuck in something, I got to sow something. Something's got to be sown...If you're dealing with deficits like this ministry has, you have to sow seed.*

Let's translate that: Your money is the permit that gives heaven the go ahead to bring blessings in your life. God is not permitted to bless you unless you give money! This is an insult to the Gospel! If you are stuck in this thinking, we urge you to study it scripturally, because it is a misrepresentation of the Gospel. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: This sowing is time, sacrifice, effort, priorities! God loves a cheerful giver. And what is the reward? Servants? Mansions? Nope. God's love. That for a Christian is all we need...are you disappointed?

 **Satisfied in Jesus alone, The Prosperity Gospel Ruined My Life, YouTube.com**

- *We started reading the word more. We started asking God to fill us with His Holy Spirit more, and for the first time we started thinking to ourselves, what does it mean to be satisfied in Jesus alone? If the ultimate thing we are supposed to be doing is to bring glory to God, how more is it you can bring glory to God than to denounce everything that seems valuable to you and say Jesus is more valuable to me than pursuing money and wealth? He is my only source of joy.*

What does it mean to be satisfied in Jesus alone? Christian contentment! Putting things in perspective! Trusting in Him! Not complaining through our trials! In a lot of ways, "stuff" is a curse, not a blessing. Remember the rich young ruler? Remember the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-18? (A picture of the Christians at this end of the age.) They were lukewarm because they were rich and needed nothing, not realizing how wretched they actually were.

1 Timothy 6:3-12: (NASB) ³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶But **godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.** ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

This does not mean a Christian can't have wealth or work hard. It doesn't say a rich man can't enter the Kingdom, but the principle is that if you have a lot of things, that may be where your



attachment is. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. If your treasure is on earth, on things...where is the inheritance for Christians? In heaven...you can't have both! The evidence has become undeniable against seeking earthly gain under the umbrella of Christianity! Undeniable that is, if we take the New Testament in its proper context...

*¹¹But flee from these things, you man of God, and **pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.** ¹²Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

THIS is what the prosperity of the Gospel is...pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Habakkuk 3:17-19

***So is the Gospel your ticket to wealth?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***