



# No.4

## FINANCES IN THE BIBLE

### The priorities of the New Testament Church

It is interesting that most churches use Old Testament laws to obtain tithes, offerings and first fruits offerings but will not adopt the New Testament model as exhibited in Acts 2, to the extent of selling possessions in order to ensure no one is in need. They don't adopt the Holy Spirit-led church, but adopt the law of Moses and other laws of the elders from the Old Testament.

From the beginning, money has been a stumbling block for the church. Scandals due to greed and corruption in the Catholic church during the Middle Ages (and beyond) were not the end: some of the so-called protestant and evangelical churches and ministers have also brought shame to the Body of Christ because of deception, corruption and manipulation of believers. Unfortunately, it's still happening today.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is about love, integrity and obedience to Jesus. The enemy uses corruption in the church to deceive and to steal the seed of the Word from many people. Some people even draw the conclusion that ALL churches and ministers are dishonest and corrupt. This was never Jesus's plan!

### The law takes away the Spirit-led life

The sad reality is that the Law, imposed on the believer in the churches, has taken away the spontaneous, super-generous Holy Spirit-led giving demonstrated by the early believers in the Book of Acts.

While there are exceptions, and some believers are generous Spirit-led givers, ignorance and the obligation to give ten percent has stolen the beauty and joy of giving led by the Holy Spirit.

The pastor of a big church in America shared with the congregation that ten percent giving is not for the New Testament church. He rightly taught that in this 'Age of Grace' we are to give by the leading of the Holy Spirit. The elders of the church were concerned they would have less income from the tithes and offerings. To their surprise, the giving increased dramatically, because people were giving now generously without the dictate of the Law. The Holy Spirit was now in charge.

### The local church should support the flock

While the church in the New Testament is not the storehouse, the local church should support the congregation if ever a believer is in need. The congregation is also to be active in meeting one another's needs as in the Book of Acts. The believer is to be supported in body, soul and spirit. Encouragement, prayer, practical help, finances, family support, spiritual guidance, and most especially, God's love. God's love will always direct us to be generous with finances, effort, time. The shepherd is to take care of the flock and is to imitate Jesus. Jesus shepherds us with provision, protection, nourishment, love, care, counsel, wisdom and every attribute of the Holy Spirit. A church family is to trust God, but also to help each other and to share with one another.

The mission of the shepherd is found throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament God had words of strong rebuke and warning for bad shepherds, and also prophecies of a good shepherd that was to come (Jesus). In the New Testament, Jesus identified himself as the Good Shepherd and we find in the epistles the notion of good shepherding extended to those who would lead in the church. Again, a pastor is to imitate the Good Shepherd, Jesus, and take care of His flock. Every believer is to imitate Jesus in whatever role in the family, church, community, at work, etc.

## KINGDOM LIVING COLLEGE

1 Timothy 6:17-19

“To those who are wealthy in the present age, be giving a charge not to continue to be high-minded, neither to have their hope set upon the uncertainty of wealth, but upon God, the One who is constantly offering us all things in a rich manner to enjoy; to be doing good, to be wealthy in the sphere of good works, to be liberal, sharers with others, laying away for themselves a good foundation with a view to the future, in order that they may lay hold of that which is truly life.”

Some preachers, acknowledging that tithing was a levitical law in the Old Testament want to justify taking tithes and offerings on the basis of Abraham giving a tenth of all the spoil of the battle to Melchizedec (Genesis 14:20-23). There is no connection between this event and the New Testament. Abraham presented Melchizedec with a tithe (a tenth) of all the items he had gathered. (Note that God granted Abraham the victory). By this act Abraham indicated that he recognised Melchizedec as a priest who ranked higher spiritually than he.

Hebrews 7:1-3

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of God the Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all; the first designation on the one hand being interpreted means king of righteousness, and then, on the other hand [he was] also king of Salem which is king of peace, fatherless, motherless, having no genealogy, having no beginning of days nor termination of life, but likened [in these respects in the historical record] to the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Jesus is our High Priest. He is seated at the right hand of the Father after He lived, died, was raised from the dead and ascended into Heaven. Jesus has established the New Covenant with His blood and has fulfilled the Law on our behalf so that we are free from the law. The fact that Abraham gave a tithe to the priest Melchizedec does not establish any law in the New Testament (nobody has the authority to do that) nor is it a continuation of the Levitical law, because Melchizedec appeared to Abraham hundreds of years before the Mosaic Law was established. Some preachers teach that this act of worship of Abraham to Melchizedec establishes the law of tithing in the New Covenant. There is no basis for this, because Jesus is now our High Priest after the resurrection and His Spirit in us believers has replaced the Law of the Old Testament.

**Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. He never changes, true, but He has replaced the Old Covenant with the New. The Law was abolished and the Age of Grace was established.**

If we want to have clarity and proper doctrine, it is important to discern the Old and the New Covenant. One of the mistakes many churches make is they rely on people's tithes and offerings instead of trusting God; then the pressure and sometimes manipulation take place. When we trust in ourselves, we take control of finances and adopt an attitude like “my finances” or the “church's finances”. NO. It has got to be God's finances, it is His church. He is responsible to provide and take care of His church, we must consider ourselves only stewards of His church and money and should not take possession of it.

### **What is our real inheritance?**

Is our real inheritance right here on earth or is our inheritance in heaven? Have we inherited houses, land, possessions, money, etc. or have we inherited eternity and the kingdom of God and His righteousness? The things of earth are temporary, the things of heaven are eternal.

What we encounter on this planet is not the abundant life Jesus promised; it is only a temporary place where we believers ought to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and nothing else. By seeking the will of our Heavenly Father, we become overcomers and utilise our God-given gifts and talents on this earth for the glory of God. God will supply all we need for our mission here on earth, but this supply is not for us to “own”: we are only stewards of God's provision.