

## What About Tithing?

by Heath Rogers

When we talk about church offerings or contributions, it is not uncommon for the question of “tithing” to be raised. Tithing is the practice of giving a tenth of one’s income or property as an offering to God. While it is almost always associated with the religious practice of the Jews, tithing was practiced by many ancient nations. The Egyptians, Syrians and Babylonians all used it primarily as a mode of taxation.

There are examples of tithing in the Bible that pre-date the Law of Moses. In Genesis 14:18-20, Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe of all he had obtained in battle. Jacob promised to give a tenth of everything he received back to God (Genesis 28:22).

The practice of tithing was commanded to the Hebrews and regulated through the Law of Moses (Leviticus 27:30-33). The purpose of this tithe was to meet the material needs of the Levites (who had received no land inheritance, but instead served God on behalf of the people), strangers, orphans and widows (Deuteronomy 26:12-13). Tithing was an expression of gratitude and an acknowledgment that everything on the earth belonged to God.

Tithing appears in the New Testament, but there it only refers to its usage in the Old Testament or current Jewish practice. A noticeable change in giving practices took place when the church began. Christians were commanded: “*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come*” (1 Corinthians 16:2). The New Testament contains no command for Christians to tithe. Christians are free to choose the amount they give.

Should Christians tithe today? Tithing was a part of the Law of Moses, a law that was done away with on the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:14). The person (or church) who returns to the Law of Moses to bind tithing on himself or others is obligated to accept the entire law (Galatians 5:1-4).

For Christians, giving has to do with attitude, not a specified amount or percentage. “*But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor. 9:6-7). The New Testament gives us the freedom to choose how much we want to give. No one (priest, pastor, elder, deacon, etc.) has a right to tell us how much we have to give. We are told to give as we purpose in our heart. If we choose to give ten percent, that is fine. However, we must remember that the amount we give is actually an acknowledgement of God’s rich blessings and a reflection of our gratitude.