

## **The Silver and Gold belongs to God!**

**Hag 2:6-9 (NIV)** 6 "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty. 8 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty. 9 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."

Intro: We have been talking about building God's House. That is the theme of Haggai. The people had neglected the building of God's temple to take care of themselves. As a result they had cut themselves off from the blessing of God concerning their personal welfare. In Haggai chapter 2, when the people finally start rebuilding the temple they are discouraged because it doesn't measure up to the grandeur of Solomon's temple that had been destroyed. However, the Lord, know their heart, encourages them with a promise of better things. The pronouncement of a greater Glory than even Solomon's Temple. What he was talking about was the coming of Christ glory and the eventual testimony of Christ's glory in his new temple...the church, the people of the new covenant with a greater and unfading glory according to 2 Corinthians 3. As one look towards the end of Haggai, the Lord promises the future reign of a the chosen one, represented figuratively by Zerubbabel.

Though God's people did not have the finances to rebuild the temple to its former grandeur, the Lord encourages them by letting them understand that resources that were needed all belong to God. He is their resource! I am reminded of Jesus telling Peter to go fishing for the payment of their taxes in Matthew 17:26.

## **Biblical Tithing and Giving Principles**

### **What is the position of the Assemblies of God on tithing?**

The Assemblies of God has always been a proponent of tithing (or giving one-tenth of one's personal income to support the work of God). We believe tithing is a recognition that everything we have comes from God. The practice checks our greed, promotes personal discipline and thrift, testifies to our faith, promotes God's work in the world, and alleviates human need. While we do not believe tithing to be a condition for salvation, we do believe it is a very important biblical model, one which should set the minimal standard for Christian giving for people in all income ranges.

Though some people believe tithing was an Old Testament practice not intended for New Testament Christians, the Assemblies of God believes and teaches that tithing is still God's design for supporting the ministry and reaching the world with the gospel. Our bylaws state, "We recognize the duty of tithing and urge all our people to pay tithes to God" (Article IX, Section 7a.) It is true there is no direct commandment in the New Testament saying, "You must tithe to God one-tenth of your income"; but there is also no statement declaring the Old Testament plan as no longer valid.

Some oppose tithing today quoting Matthew 23:23 as proof text. In doing so they actually twist Jesus' words to teach just the opposite of what Jesus clearly said. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices... But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness." Stopping at that point in the verse might allow some misinterpretation. But Jesus continued, "You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." From here we see that Jesus regarded the Old Testament practice of tithing as continuing into the new covenant under which we now live.

The practice of tithing predates the giving of the Old Testament law. Abraham tithed in response to God's blessing and faithfulness (Gen 14:18-20 (NIV) 18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.) and was no doubt blessed because of his faithful tithing. Under the law, proceeds from the tithes were directed primarily for the support of the Levites and priests who provided religious leadership (Numbers 18:21-29) and for the relief of the needy (Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Today's church still relies on the support of tithers.

**So what does this principle of tithing concern?** Some say its not relevant, its old covenant, it doesn't apply to me.

1. **The Bible is the Word of God.** All of it is. While the Old covenant has passed as a means for our salvation, the principles of God, who he is and his ways are throughout. **2 Tim 3:16-17 (NIV)** 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**1 Cor 9:7-12 (NIV)** 7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? 8 Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?

There are biblical principles which bring blessing in our lives. **Eph 6:1-3 (NIV)** 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise-- 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." The apostle Paul says of the Law. **Romans 7:12-14 (NIV)** 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. 13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. 14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

2. **The Tithe is a basic principle of our Worship.** It concerns:

### 1. **The Lordship Principle**

The tithe is one of the most basic relational covenants between man and God—it is a dedication of all our property and a recognition that everything we have comes from the Lord. (**Gen 28:20-22 (NIV)** 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God 22 and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

### 2. **The Tenth Principle**

The tithe was never intended to be complicated—the tenth part is a biblical symbol of the whole, and our way of consecrating all we have for the Lord's use. (Leviticus 27:32-33) **Lev 27:32-33 (NIV)** 32 The entire tithe of the herd and flock--every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod--will be holy to the Lord. 33 He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed."

### 3. **The Firstfruits Principle**

It is never God's intention to deplete man of his resources, but through faith and obedience to release to him the blessing and abundance of His resources. (**2 Chron 31:5 (NIV)** 5 As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. (**Cain and Able Gen 4:2-7 (NIV)** Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6 Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.")

### 4. **The Storehouse of God Principle**

The tithe is not used for the meeting personal needs or directed by personal agendas, the ultimate purpose is that there would be no lack in the house of the Lord. (Malachi 3:8-10) **Mal 3:8-10 (NIV)** 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

### 5. **The Relationship Principle**

Jesus emphasized that tithing was not to be merely a loveless ritual, giving us a false sense of pride, but that it was to be given in the context of our loving relationship with God. (Luke 11:42) **Luke 11:42 (NIV)** 42 "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

## 6. The One Heart Principle

The tithe is one of the most powerful expressions of unity in a community of believers, and demonstrates a greater ability to accomplish God's will together than as individuals. **Acts 4:32-35 (NIV)** 32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. 34 There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

## 7. The Joyful Giver Principle

Since the sacrifice of faith offered by Abel (Genesis 4:4), the joyful offering of material possessions remains a beautiful reflection of the love that God first showed us in the sacrifice of His Son. **2 Cor 9:6-7 (NIV)** 6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

### Conclusion:

The tithe is a principle of worship, but it also includes the Lord's promise for blessing in our lives. **2 Cor 9:6 (NIV)** 6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. **2 Cor 9:10-11 (NIV)** 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

It is amazing to me that we go to scriptures in the Psalms and proverbs for comfort and direction, we claim, and we neglect so profound, so scripturally documented throughout and scripturally sound a principle as giving.