

Why Do I Need to Pay God?

Geneva has read for us the strong words of God reprimanding the worshippers for their failure to give in accordance to the standards of the Mosaic Law. Malachi 3:8-12

We now turn to the words of Jesus 400 years later when he was being interrogated by the religious leaders of His day. Matthew 22:15-22.

This past week I reviewed the income tax statement prepared by my wife. Wow! I was impressed by the time it must have taken for her to complete such a complicated document. She has done our taxes for 53 years and I'm not in jail.

I think that Stephen Delaphane voiced the feelings of many of us when he suggested a more simplified tax form. It would read, "How much did you make this last year? Mail it in!" We pay the taxes even when we question "Why is so much of the tax revenue being wasted? Why are we supporting causes which we believe are wrong? Why is so much of our money supporting corrupt leaders in foreign countries?"

That was the burning question brought to Jesus by His critics. "Why pay tax to a foreign oppressor?" They concluded that if he said, "Pay the taxes" then the Jewish people would be angry with him, and if he said, "Don't Pay Taxes" Then the Romans could arrest him for being seditious.

Taking a coin from them with the portrait of Caesar on it, Jesus was saying, "by having this coin you recognize the authority of Tiberius Caesar and around the edges of that coin the word were the words, "the divine Augustus, son of Augustus" and on the reverse side, the title read, "pontifex maximus,"the high priest of the Roman nation." In this demonstration Jesus was saying, "You recognize the coin has value and you give it to show that you are paying for the machinery of the government that functions for your welfare and the common good."

BUT THEN JESUS SAID: THERE IS A GREATER RULER TO WHOM WE MUST ANSWER. GIVE...TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S"

"Since humankind was created in God's image there is His imprint upon our being, our personhood, our possessions and our talents."

Perhaps you may have resistance to income tax and even some question about giving to God. Perhaps you might feel uneasy with the offering plate is passed each Sunday and the question comes to your mind, "Why do I have to pay God?" A new preacher came to the church and everyone was excited. The first Sunday he stood to deliver his sermon and said, "If I'm gonna be

pastor of this church, it's gonna walk." And the people replied, "Amen, let her walk." He said, "And furthermore, if I'm gonna be pastor of this church, she is gonna run." And the people replied, "Amen, let her run." And the people replied, "Amen, brother let her run." He said, "more than that, if I'm the pastor of the church, it's gonna fly." They replied, "Amen, brother, let her fly, let her fly." Then he said, "If this church is gonna fly, then it is going to take money." They replied, "Let her walk, brother, let it walk." (From the book, *"A funny thing happened on the way to retirement."* By Paul W. Powell)

First let me dissect the word "pay."

- It's not pay up or else! When I was a teenager working at Safeway trying to keep my car running, having enough money to take my date bowling and take her to A&W root beer I thought giving the tithe (10 percent) was cutting into my fun. So one Sunday I just kept it. That week the generator on my car went bad the repair took all I had made that week. I said to myself, "it's because I kept the tithe. It's pay up or else."
- It's not pay off with the idea that God will overlook my sins if I grease His palm. It's not a protection plan from the thugs of life.
- It's not paying to get. This a popular gimmick that has been used in the past by some famous TV evangelists.

"Give God 10 dollars and you will get \$20 in return." I want you to use the word pay as when you give because you recognize the person is due the respect and the honor. We might say, "We are paying honor to this person because of our deep affection and appreciation for what

he/she means to us." The transformation of giving might be: "Do I have to pay God?" into the phrase, "Wow! I get to pay God because it shows that I honor Him and His Kingdom work.

I've given you four concepts of giving in the First Testament. You can study them in the Scriptures I've listed.

- A steward, Genesis 1:26; 41:40-41, 46-49; 47: 23-25.
- The tithe, Genesis 28:22. The title of the First Testament

was a testimony of the interconnectedness of people and God. It was indicative of a cycle of giving, receiving. Read Deut. 14:22

- The first fruits, Lev. 25:13 which shows that this offering was the best of the crop, etc.

- The year of Jubilee, Leviticus 25:13 It was a giving back to help those who were buried with debt.

{Transition} I don't believe in the New Testament Scriptures that we find a command to tithe. You might not know that the collected tithe of the Jewish worshipper when calculated was at least 20 ½% to 23% of their income. The nation of Israel was designed to be a Theocracy and there were 12 or so offerings given for the celebrations (holidays). the upkeep of the worship place, the priesthood and some charity to the poor. I'm sure it would thrill our treasurer for each of us to tithe at that rate. However, I respect the tithe (10% and Joyce and I have kept that commitment all our married life.) But our giving is not just a number, but an attitude.

I have listed what the four truths demonstrated when the believer tithes.

- When I tithe, I am giving a strong witness to my relationship with the Heavenly Father. I know it has been a strong witness to my family and fellow church members. One cannot lead the church in financial growth with integrity without being an example. I emphasize the word INTEGRITY. Money is literal, visible, concrete evidence that I know and trust the Heavenly Father.

John Wesley founder of the Methodist movement in England during the 1700's in England and American set the bench mark high for the preachers he trained. When he earned 30 pounds, i.e. (The pound is an English word somewhat related to our dollar) he lived on 28 of it leaving two pounds for the Lord's work. When he earned 60 pounds, he had already learned to live on 28 pounds giving away 32 pounds and when he earned 90 pounds he still was living on 28 so 62 pounds went into the Lord's work.

- When I tithe, I am showing my faithfulness as a manager. This comes from a creation mandate, Genesis 1:26 When a person consistently tithes it gives some evidence that they budget their funds. I Corinthians 4:1-2 does not demand that a person be rich, famous but it requires faithfulness.
- When I tithe, "I am expressing my desire to give my best." This application comes from "the feast of first fruits."

"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops." Prov. 3:9

- When I tithe I am praying for the recovery of others. Much of that tithe is to present to this community a lovely place to come and listen to the word of God. To give Bibles for them to read. To teach little children about God. To fund church planting, to send missionaries to

the far corners of the to fund the giving of food and clothes to disaster victims.

CONCLUSION: One pastor told his congregation, "Your church is in real financial need. Quite frankly, it's fit to be *tithed*." I know that churches populated with tithers are able to carry out the Lord's work with enthusiasm and vision.

One might do well to think of the prayer of the late Peter Marshall who served as the chaplain of the United States Senate. He prayed, "Lord, help me to regulate my giving according to my income, lest thou should regulate my income according to my giving."

I want to encourage you to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness believing that all things the things we need will be provided for us. I want to impress upon you that the God who gave His best for us desires to work His image into our being so that we will experience giving our best for Him and His work.

Invitation: This is a message to the family of believers. If you have not come to a personal relationship to Jesus you need to understand that you are not obligated to give to the ministry of this church. What we want you to know and feel is the love of God who gave His one and only son for you. Jesus took your place on the cross to pay the penalty for broken law. For the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus. Once you make that decision the LORD will show you how to be a manager in His Kingdom work.