

PROFITABLY UNDERSTANDING TRAGICALLY MISINTERPRETED BIBLE PASSAGES

Part III: Understanding God's Malachi 3:10 Call For His People To Tithe For Material Blessing (Malachi 3:10 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. Many Christians are taught that failing to "tithe", or give ten per cent of their income to the church, will lead to God's withholding His material blessings from them! Malachi 3:10 KJV is used where God says: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." [In one case, the leadership at a midwestern Bible college once urged its students to give 90% of their income into the school's coffers with the charge that they usually hoarded 90% of their money and gave God only 10%, so they were obligated to give Him the 90% at least once in their lives!] As a result, giving has often become a guilt issue rather than a "cheerful" one as 2 Corinthians 9:7c KJV promotes!
- B. However, Malachi 3:10 and verses like it have been tragically misunderstood and misapplied, for God has a very different giving program for today, one that replaces what Malachi teaches 3:10 (as follows):

II. Understanding God's Malachi 3:10 Call For His People To Tithe For Material Blessing.

- A. The Malachi 3:10 stipulation (and others like it) were applicable for the dispensation of the Mosaic Law:
 - 1. Under the **dispensation** of the Mosaic **Law**, God made tithing, or giving one-tenth of one's income, a **requirement** for **Israel** with the reward that she would receive material blessings from the Lord:
 - a. Leviticus 27:30-33 told the people of Israel under the Law to tithe, or give to God ten percent of the increase "of the land, trees, herds, and flocks", Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., ftn. to Lev. 27:30-33.
 - b. To the degree God's people living under that dispensation kept this and all the other commands of the Mosaic Law, God recompensed them with material blessings of this earthly life, Lev. 26:3-5.
 - 2. Yet, as she had returned to the land from her Babylonian Captivity, Israel had failed to heed God's Law on tithing (Mal. 3:7-9), so the **Malachi 3:10** charge was given **for Israel to tithe according to the Law!**
- B. Now, long **before** the dispensation of the Mosaic Law, Abraham **voluntarily** gave tithes of his gain from the spoils of war to the Lord's priest, Melchizedek, cf. Genesis 14:20. This act expressed his thanksgiving to God for granting him the victory in the battle, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., ftn. to Genesis 14:20.
- C. However, in the dispensation of the **CHURCH**, the **believer** is **dead to the Law** (Rom. 7:4a) and has been **delivered from it** (Rom. 7:6) and is then **free from requirements** to **tithe**, cf. Colossians 2:12-17, 20-22.
- D. Accordingly, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:6-10 of a completely **different** program God had instituted regarding the believer in the **Church era**, one that is **FREE** of **TITHING** as a **requirement** (as follows):
 - 1. In the dispensation of the Church, believers are to give the amount set by each giver himself, and that without external pressure from others or from internal, legalistic pressure in himself, 2 Cor. 9:7a,b:
 - a. The KJV word "grudgingly" (NIV "reluctantly") is from the Greek word, *lupays*, meaning "grief" from a sense of loss from within, or giving out of pain to gratify a self-imposed pressure of false guilt, cf. U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1963 ed., p. 638; R. C. Trench, Syn. Of the N. T., p. 237-238.
 - b. The KJV "of necessity" (NIV "under compulsion") interprets, *anagkays*, or "compulsion of any kind, outer or inner," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Arndt & Gin., A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., p. 52.
 - c. Thus, God wants Christians to give cheerfully, not out of outer or inner pressure of any kind!
 - 2. However, the amount one gives also determines the amount God will reimburse him, a revelation that aims to encourage the believer to give bountifully in faith in God's provision, 2 Corinthians 9:6, 8-9.
 - 3. As **God reimburses** a believer for what he **initially** gives, he is to take from the **top** of that **reimbursed** income what he needs for his **own living costs before** giving a **second** offering to God, 2 Cor. 9:10a,b.
 - 4. As the process is often repeated, the amount one can give keeps increasing to his joy, 2 Cor. 9:10b-11.

Lesson: (1) *No believer may today pressure (a) others or (b) himself to give a certain amount in the offering, for we are not under the Law.* (2) *Rather, (a) after first meeting our living needs, (b) each is to give the amount he cheerfully sets, (c) knowing God will reimburse him according to what he gives.*

Application: (1) *May we not press (a) others or (b) ourselves to give what hurts our joy!* (2) *Rather, (a) may we FIRST pay for our living needs out of our income, and (b) THEN give what we cheerfully set, (c) being motivated to do so generously as we know God reimburses according to the amount given!*