

## **A Brief Examination of Malachi 3:8-10: Is it a permanent doctrinal bridge to New Testament giving?**

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2 Timothy 3:16-17 (New International Version)<sup>16</sup>**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,**<sup>17</sup>**so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

**2 Timothy 2:15 (New International Version)**<sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Given the title of this work, one automatically knows the opposition that such a piece of writing and thinking will bring; nonetheless, it will not be the first piece that has faced such nor will it be the last. Putting one's views into the arena of public scrutiny is always a risky business. Having said this I will proceed to do my best with the talent that God has lent me to rightly divide his word in a manner that does the Creator honor.

**"Will a man rob God?"** is a question that digs deep into the soul like the drill of an oil rig piercing the earth's depths in search of crude. How can man rob the God who has been so wonderfully generous in both material and spiritual things? Even the carnal man-- found in his right mind-- would concede that the idea of robbing God would be wrong. It reminds me of the disciples gathered at the table on that occasion when the Lord instituted his supper, and he made the statement that one of them would betray him. In Matthew 26:22, the scripture says, And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, **Lord is it I?** The first question is—**will a man rob God?** The second question is **Lord, is it I?** Regarding New Testament Christians—**is the second question justified when we thoroughly examine the context in which the first question was asked?**

The answer would undoubtedly be **YES** if the conditions and context of the first question WERE UNDENIABLY LINKED to GIVING in the New Testament. The very idea of **TITHES** and **OFFERINGS** being a New Testament obligation (were such the actual case) **WOULD DEMAND IT!** There would be no escape! Imagine a giant warehouse in which is found all of the elements of New Testament doctrine. This doctrine has come through the revelation of the Holy Spirit as was promised by the Lord when he had told them in John 16:13 that the Spirit would guide them into all the truth. In this warehouse are rows and rows of shelves, and on some of these shelves are those things which constitute acceptable worship. Among those acceptable worship items found is **GIVING**. We start going through **GIVING** to see what the Lord requires of us. Are there **THINGS** on the **GIVING** shelf which have their beginnings in the Old Testament (tithes and offerings) or is it only Paul's teaching? After a long and diligent search, we discover that the shelf contains only those materials Paul spoke of in the Corinthian letters. Tithes and offerings are not to be found in the warehouse. The apostle has not put them there. Paul says nothing about this matter in his writings on giving. If Paul says nothing about tithing where then is it to be found?

Let us now consider the facts. Since we are talking about tithe, tithes, and tithing, we should note where it is found in the scriptures. The term **tithe** is found fourteen times in the bible; the term **tithes** is found twenty-four times in the bible, and the term **tithing** is found twice in the bible.

I will now provide their locations in the order I presented them. **The following scriptures represent tithe:**

Leviticus 27:30, Leviticus 27:32, Numbers 18:26, Deuteronomy 12:17, Deuteronomy 14:2, Deuteronomy 14:23, Deuteronomy 14:28, II Chronicles 31:5, II Chronicles 31:6, II Chronicles 31:6, Nehemiah 10:38, Nehemiah 13:12, Matthew 23:23, and Luke 11:42.

**The following will show where the term tithes is located:**

Genesis 14:20, Leviticus 27:31, Numbers 18:24, Numbers 18:26, Numbers 18:28, Deuteronomy 12:6, Deuteronomy 12:11, Deuteronomy 26:12, II Chronicles 31:12, Nehemiah 10:37, Nehemiah 10:37, Nehemiah 10:38 (2X), Nehemiah 12:44, Nehemiah 13:5, Amos 4:4, Malachi 3:8, Malachi 3:10, Luke 18:12, Hebrews 7:5, Hebrews 7:6, Hebrews 7:8, and Hebrews 7:9 (2X).

**The term tithing is represented as follows:**

Deuteronomy 26:12 (2X).

This information was compiled from STRONGS EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE, page 1106. The concordance has a numbering system that helps bible students get closer to the meaning of the terms listed in it. There are five sets of numbers used to represent tithe, tithes, and tithing. Those numbers are 586, 1181, 1183, 4643, and 6237. These numbers will correspond to either the Hebrew or Greek dictionaries (depending on where the text is found) and provide us a definition of the term. But our work is only beginning at this point. Once we have discovered the definition, we must look closely at the context of how the term is used in the passage and to whom it is addressed. Upon discovering the **whom**, we must turn an eye of interest as to **why** the **whom** is being addressed. Let us now decode the numbers. The number 586 addresses only four scriptures in the New Testament. Those scriptures are Matthew 23:23, Luke 11:42, Luke 18:12, and Hebrews 7:5. Since it is used in the New Testament, there is a Greek term **apodekatoo** to represent its meaning in these scriptures. The definition is **to tithe (as debtor or creditor :--(give, pay, take) tithe**. Now, allow me to set before you these New Testament scriptures. I will use the New International Version.

**Matthew 23:23.** “Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”

**Luke 11:42.** “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.”

**Luke 18:12.** “I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

**Hebrews 7:5.** Now the law requires that the descendants of Levi who become priest to collect a tenth from the people—that is their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham.

These four scriptures do not show themselves as relevant to New Testament giving. In the case of **Matthew 23:23**, the following may be accurately said:

“Jesus used the example of tithing to show how far they had missed the mark. God had commanded a tithe of the first fruits of one’s labor as an expression of thanksgiving and honor for his providential care for his people (Deuteronomy 14:22; Leviticus 27:30). The scribes, however, went to extreme lengths to tithe on insignificant things (such as tiny plants) with great mathematical accuracy. They were very attentive to minute matters of little importance, but they neglected to care for the needy and the weak. Jesus admonished them because their hearts were not right. They were filled with pride and contempt for others. They put unnecessary burdens on others while neglecting to show charity, especially to the weak and the poor. They meticulously went through the correct motions of conventional religion while forgetting the realities.” Don Schwager, **The Gospel of Matthew**

In the case of **Luke 11:42**, the same may be said given the fact that the same context is involved. In the case of Luke 18:12, Jesus speaks of two men who had gone up to the temple to pray, one being a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, in his prayer, had boasted of not being like robbers, evil doers, adulterers, even like the present tax collector. He fasted twice a week and gave a tenth of all that got. But this passage affords no building material in that the force of it is clearly rooted in the Law of Moses and not the doctrine of the apostles.

**Hebrews 7: 5.** *Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham.* Though the term **tenth** is used in the text in the New Testament in a book other than the gospels, we must now investigate why such is the case. Consider the general context of Hebrews 7. The principal figure is Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God. His greatness is spoken of (Hebrews 7:4) for even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder. This leads to the verse (5) under investigation which has to do with the Law of Moses, where a point is being made by the writer *that the Levites who became priests were to collect a tenth from their brothers according to the Law. Focus now on verse 6 which says,*

*This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater (verse 7). In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living (verse 8). One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham (verse 9), because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor Verse 10).*

Is this the signal to tithe because Abraham paid a tenth to Melchizedek? The answer is no. What significance then does this passage have? Under the Law of Moses, the Levites had a commandment to take tithes. This much is stated in the passage (verse nine). The only ones who were able to accept tithes were the Levites. Regarding Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek, of course the law had not been given at this time because it was still during the Patriarchal Dispensation. I need to make a point here. The fact that the law was not given at this time does not make tithing binding on New Testament Christians. The purpose here was not to create a model for New Testament Christians but rather to show how great this priest was to whom Abraham had given the tenth. This point is proven in verse seven. To further amplify the point, the one who was to collect tithes, Levi, was yet in the body of his great grandfather (verse ten). That being the case would show that Levi through Abraham paid as well. The superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood is in view. Jesus, who was of the tribe of Judah (a tribe about which Moses spoke nothing about priesthood), was to become a priest after the order of Melchizedek (See Psalms 110:4). Let us take this a step further. The twenty-second through the twenty-fifth verses of Hebrews seven are significant in pinning down the context of the chapter. They show why Jesus was made a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Having dealt with Matthew 23:23, Luke 11:42, Luke 18:12 and Hebrews 7:5 (Remember the first number was 586), I shall move on to the second number out of the five, 1181. The Greek term dekate, the feminine term of dekatos **means a tenth, i.e. as a percentage or (tech.) tithe:--tenth (part), tithe. The scripture which would fall under 1181 is Hebrews 7:8. The third number out of the five is 1183** is from the Greek term dekato meaning to give or take a tithe:--pay (receive) tithes. There are **two scriptures** to which this **number (1183)** belongs: **Hebrews 7:6, Hebrews 7:9. In Hebrews 7:9 it appears twice.** Since I have already dealt with Hebrews 7, I will now move on to the Old Testament passages. There are two final numbers—4643 and 6237. As a reminder, these numbers are taken from STRONG'S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE, page 1106. They are coded to the language used in translating the text. In the case of these last two numbers would represent the Hebrew and Chaldee languages. There are **twenty-eight scriptures represented by 4643**. Four scriptures represented by 6237. I will list the scriptures in their number order.

## **4643**

Genesis 14:20—4643, Leviticus 27:30, 31, Leviticus 27:32, Numbers 18:24, 26 (2X), Numbers 18:28, Deuteronomy 12:6, Deuteronomy 12:11, Deuteronomy 12:17, Deuteronomy 14:23, Deuteronomy 14:28, Deuteronomy 26:12 (2X), II Chronicles 31:5, II Chronicles 31:6 (2X), II Chronicles 31:12, Nehemiah 10:38 (2X), Nehemiah 12:44, Nehemiah 13:5, Nehemiah 13:12, Amos 4:4, and Malachi 3:8, 10

## **6237**

Deuteronomy 14:12, Deuteronomy 26:12, and Nehemiah 10:37, 38

These are the only places in the Old Testament where the terms tithe, tithes, and tithing are found. If there are any materials to be used to build that doctrinal bridge to New Testament giving they must be found here. What definitions are given for these two numbers? The number 4643 consists of maaser, maasar, maasrah. Respectively, these terms point to a tenth or tithing. **Let us now look at those scriptures which carry the number 4643.**

### **Leviticus 27:30-34. (NIV)**

A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the Lord. 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. **These are the commandments the Lord gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.**

### **Numbers 18:24.**

Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord. That is why I said concerning them: "They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.

### **Numbers 18:26-29.**

"Speak to the Levites and say to them: 'When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the Lord's offering. Your offering will be reckoned to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. In this way you will also present an offering to the Lord from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites. From these tithes you must give the Lord's portion to Aaron the priest.

**Deuteronomy 12:6, 11, and 17.**

There bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your free will offerings, and the first born of your herds and flocks. Then to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the Lord.

You must eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and oil, or the first born of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts.

**Deuteronomy 14:23, 28.**

<sup>23</sup> Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.

<sup>28</sup> At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns..

**Deuteronomy 26:12**

<sup>12</sup> When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.

**II Chronicles 31:5, 6, 12** As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the first fruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything.

<sup>6</sup> The men of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them in heaps.

<sup>12</sup> Then they faithfully brought in the contributions, tithes and dedicated gifts. Conaniah, a Levite, was in charge of these things, and his brother Shimei was next in rank.

**Nehemiah 10:38.** <sup>38</sup> A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury.

**Nehemiah 12:44**

<sup>44</sup> At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites.

**Nehemiah 13:5**

<sup>44</sup> At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, first fruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites.

**Nehemiah 13:12**

All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and oil into the storerooms.

**Amos 4:4**

"Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years.

**Malachi 3:8, 10**

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 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.

These twenty-one scriptures I have listed, in no way point to the New Testament, and by the New Testament, I mean from Pentecost forward. Their particular teachings are embedded in the Law of Moses, and it is there where they fulfill their mission. I have written them out that you may investigate the boundaries of their context in an objective manner. Are they linked in their Old Testament context? Indeed they are. Does Malachi 3:8, 10 introduce a door through which tithes and offerings are laid at the gate of the apostles' doctrine—to be picked up by the apostles and made as much a part of New Testament doctrine as communion and singing a cappella? Is this what we are to understand based on the language of Malachi 3:8-10? Does the science of biblical interpretation—hermeneutics (not the new variety) demand this understanding?

I would like to cite some works on Malachi at this time. E. M. Zerr in his book Bible Commentary, Volume Four had these remarks.

Verse 8. Will a man rob God? was doubtless answered with an emphatic "no" by these people. But they recognized the question actually to be an accusation that they had robbed Him, and then they asked in what way they had done so. The Lord's reply was that it was done in tithes and offerings. When the Jews held back part of their tithes, or brought some inferior products to the service, they were thereby robbing God. The whole nation could justly be charged with the evils complained of because all the people upheld the corrupt priests and prophets (Jeremiah 5:31).

The Biblical Expositor, volume 2, had this comment to make. (Please forgive the long passage).

A new subject is introduced by these words, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me" (3:8). With this startling pronouncement and accusation, God returns to the charge of failure on the part of Israel to carry out the precepts of worship outlined by His servant Moses. This time it is the people, not the priests, who are addressed. The rebuke was that appointed tithes (see Lev. 27:30; Numb 18:20, 21; Deut.14:22, 23) and offerings (the word is variously used for free will gifts, the half-shekel tax for the sanctuary, first-fruits, portions of sacrifices reserved for the priests, and so forth) have been withheld. In consequence, a curse rested upon the people, and they were deprived of blessing.

But again the God of judgment was also a God of grace. Let the people turn from their wicked ways and render obedience to the revealed of their covenant God, and He would open the sluice gates of heaven and flood them with blessing (3:10).

In the case of the final scriptures represented by the number 6237 (Deuteronomy 14:22, Deuteronomy 26:12, Nehemiah 10:37, and Nehemiah 10:38, the word is **asar**. Its meaning is to tithe, i.e. surely take or give a tenth.

#### **Deuteronomy 14:22**

Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year.

#### **Deuteronomy 26:12**

When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.

#### **Nehemiah 10:37, 38**

Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees, and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work. A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury.

I see no evidence in these final scriptures that would remotely suggest that tithing has "flown across the borders of dispensational geography (from the Mosaic into that of the Christian)" landing squarely on the table of the apostle's doctrine. Such a thing was not done in the first century worship doctrine nor is it to be done in the twenty-first century.



I cannot see why Paul would fail to mention tithes if they were meant to be given. Listen to this and judge for yourselves.

Though I myself have reason for such confidence—  
If anyone else things he has reasons to put  
confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised  
on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the  
tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in  
regards to the Law a Pharisee; as for zeal,  
persecuting the church; as for legalistic  
righteousness, faultless. (Philippians 3:4-6)

Now I would like for you to consider the Pharisee of Luke 18:11. “God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. (Luke 18:11, 12).

It would seem to me if Paul were legalistically faultless as a Pharisee, he would have mentioned tithes as being a part of New Testament giving. Certainly more can be said on this matter, but I have earnestly tried to set before you things to consider.