

## **Tithing - what the Bible says!**

Amongst some churches tithing is encouraged and in some cases, even demanded. The pressure to conform by giving a tenth of one's income can be quite considerable. It often leads to hardship for those who are least able to maintain this practice. It unfortunately attracts the poorer people because they are promised material prosperity because of their giving. If we are to help such people who are struggling under the imposition, we need to know what is actually taught in the Word.

**General principles.** These are contained in Deuteronomy 14 v22-29. Firstly, the Israelites were to take **a tenth of the produce of the land**, grains, wine, oil and stock and go to an appointed place and have a celebration. It was not given to run the church (ie religious system), **the people ate it themselves!**

**Every third year, the tithe went into the city food banks** for those who did not have a plot of ground that they could cultivate. These were the Levites, widows and orphans, and strangers (non natives who dwelt among them). For more background one should read Leviticus 27:30-34 and Numbers 18:21-32. However, it is the Deuteronomy passages which give the way tithing was to be put into practice. In Malachi 3:3-12 and Luke 18:12 we see some of the negative practices and attitudes involving tithing, which involves taking from the Lord what is his due.

**Why a tenth?** The number ten represents what is full or complete. It comes from the basis of the fact that we have 10 fingers and ten toes, ie these form a complete set. Thus we have the idea of all things of power (pictured by the hands by which we do things and we need all our fingers to be able to do things properly); and all things of support (pictured by the feet which support our body and get us to the place or state of being useful. If toes are missing we would have some problems doing this.) Have a look at the book *Apocalypse Explained* par. 675.20 for more about this.

**What it means.** The practice of tithing concerns the acknowledgement that all the power to do good and everything that supports our spiritual life are from the Lord, thus all good and truth is from him. The good is represented by the live stock of the land and the truth by the produce. So it is an acknowledgement that our spiritual growth, thus our good affections, our right understanding of truth, our perceptions and concepts of these, are all the Lord's doing. It is the acknowledgement that without the Lord, we can do nothing. We owe him everything!

Eating the tithes at a place appointed by the Lord entails the idea of taking these principles into our life. If we do not, we are like the pharisee in Luke 18:12 who trusted in his own righteousness. In the instructions involving the food bank we have the idea that we are to share with others, the good and true things that the Lord has blessed us with. In this way, the Lord's kingdom comes and his Church grows, for each one of us is a church in the smallest degree or form.

The money that was levied in ancient times to maintain the religious system and temple upkeep was the temple tax of a half shekel. A modern half shekel is worth about 16 cents, certainly not a tenth of ones income!