

Follow The Money II (tithing)

by Brian Convery, 11-29-02

[My comments within quotes will be within brackets.]

Today is the Sabbath, August 31, 2002 and we're going to have a study on "Follow the Money." We are going to do so in relation to tithing under the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods.

It has been many years since I penned the original bible study entitled, "Follow the Money." It was a direct result of understanding that the organizations from which I and my family came out of had turned the laws and principles of tithing into a grinding stone, to squeeze every last cent out of their members who are not part of their ministerial hierarchy. With that said, my family and I cheerfully gave for many years. We gave the ministry our first and third tithe in their entirety and a tenth of our second tithe as well as offerings. To this day we do not bare any hard feelings about this for we willingly did so as members of an organization who felt we had a complete understanding of scriptures on such things. We however did not! That is what prompted me to write the original study on "Follow the Money."

When my family and I decided to come out of the organizations and yoke ourselves to Christ and Him alone, we prayed that the Father and the Son sustain us. We had witnessed total reversals of doctrines we had followed for many years. These reversals drove us out of the Worldwide Church of God in 1993. We participated in other organizations after that, but only to see the ministry turn once again to desiring dominion over the brethren rather than serving them, so once again we left. It was hard at first and to some extent still is in the realm of thinking about the brethren who we once fellowshiped with for hours, days, and basically for years on end. But due to erroneous doctrines on marking and disfellowshipping by the organization's leaders, we were shunned by the many, but not by the Father and the Christ. No longer were our Sabbaths spent listening to sermons designed

around the organizations, but now we spent them buried in the bible.

It was a time of doctrines coming and going with the Church of God. It was at that time that we as a family decided to go through the scriptures and evaluate the doctrines we had followed for so many years to see what God had to say about them and not rely on the interpretation or the understanding of a benefactor, as we had for so many years. Personally, I asked God in prayer to give me the understanding by which I could lead my family in such things as the head of the household. My four children had known nothing other than what we had done and followed as the doctrines and the functions of the organizations we'd belonged to. My wife and I held fast to what we understood to be the way of God, and continue to do so today with the help of our Brother, Jesus the Christ. We have come to understand that our relationship with Him has become much more intimate, for we now understand He is training us to be His bride, the wife of His very household, in the family of the Patriarch God the Father. We live in a state of peace with Them that we never conceived to be possible when we were under the dominion of the organizations and not the simplicity of the Body of Christ.

The very first doctrine that we wanted to come to grips with was that of tithing. We had always been taught, as I'd mentioned earlier, that we were to faithfully deposit specific tithes with the leaders of the organization we belonged to. Now, we found ourselves not belonging to any organization. This presented a problem due to what we had been taught about who got the cash. That's right! Not vegetables or sheep, but cold hard cash. There were many orators at the time preaching different things and various teachings on tithing. That is, outside the mainstream organizations which were off shoots of the Worldwide Church of God. For

all those spoke the same thing still, “give us the money for we are God’s ordained representatives on earth to collect it.” We read and heard from some that we no longer had to tithe. To many of the brethren that is very compelling. From some we were also told that we didn’t have to tithe if we were not a farmer. We were told by some we only had to keep a first tithe and none of the rest. I could go on, but I think the point is made and taken that there were a lot of the winds of doctrine blowing around at that time and for that matter there still are. Thus the reason for the original study of “Follow the Money.” Some have asked over the years, why did you only address the second and third tithe then. In the study today hopefully I will answer that question.

My family and I, have been receiving the Journal for over a year now, if memory serves me well. We did not have much news on the activities of the organizations and scattered brethren for many years prior to that. You know, you hear a little bit here and a little bit there from people you’d run into, but we didn’t consume a lot of literature outside of what we were reading in the bible. So receiving the Journal was and has been a thing of mixed review, both of happiness and sadness. Happiness to see that many brethren were realizing their identity and their relationships within the family of God. Sadness that there were so many brethren who were still being dumbed down under the dominion of God’s “representatives on earth.”

My wife and I are very private people by nature to a great extent. We do not delve into other’s business. The scriptures are very clear on the outcome of such endeavors, but they are also very clear on sharing the peace one has been given by God with others. We decided to share that peace with others and are thankful for those brethren and those folks who put the time and effort into the publishing of such things as the Journal, for that has been the most recent vehicle we have used to share what we have understood as to the way of God. **What I write is not for everyone**, but it is

obvious, it is for many who are called by the Father because of the very positive responses we have received. What we are doing is sharing what we have been taught these many years of being yoked to our Husband and no other. That’s as simple as it is, no hidden agenda and no great expectations. Many brethren have inquired about sending money to us. They understand that to take the amount of space we are allowed to take in publications such as the Journal that there is a price tag to it. They are correct. We have not asked and would not ask the publishers to carry us for free. A workman is worth his hire. That biblical principle is unwavering so we have no problem with paying for our space and never will from that perspective.

One man e-mailed me after one of the articles was published and told me I had too much money and too much time on my hands and that I should basically get a life. This was his way of telling me he did not agree with what I had to say in the calendar article published in the Journal. Let me briefly address the idea of too much time and too much money.

I’m employed by a construction company that builds many Wal-marts, Home Depots, hotels, senior living facilities, shopping plazas, etc. all over the northeast United States. Many of my days have been and are consumed with eleven to twelve hours of work in that pursuit and on occasion they go even longer, so to say I have too much time on my hands is an erroneous assumption. What I do have however is the Sabbath, which I and my family thank God for. It is a time of rest and refreshing from the world which we work in. It is also the time God has given us to delve into the pages of the bible for hours upon hours of uninterrupted study, one on one with Christ. So I say I actually don’t have enough time to follow the pursuits I would rather pursue in life.

As to the comment on too much money. I work

for a living. I work very hard and I love to do so. I am compensated for that. My wife runs much of the day to day household functions as well as many responsibilities with our own construction company which we share amongst our family. We work as a team to serve one another and to serve our children's needs. Their ages are currently 23, 21, 17, and 14 years old. Anyone who has or is currently raising four children and a black lab thrown into the mix, knows that there isn't any money left at the end of the day so to speak. That applies whether one tithes or does not. So to say I have too much money on my hands is another erroneous assumption.

So how do we afford (that's my family and I) to pay for published articles and to send out tapes, etc. has been a question asked frequently by others because we have not accepted their tithe money. On occasion we have accepted small amounts to cover postage, but only from the belief that we did not want to offend brethren who have sent us ten or twenty dollars to cover those costs. So to find out the answer to that question, on how do we afford to do this. Lets get into the study of "Follow the Money II."

In Luke 18:8 we read a very startling comment and question asked by Christ.

8: "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. . . [This comment is made in response to the question asked in verse 7]

7: And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?"

It is a very reassuring thing that God says He is patient with us, but will also avenge His own speedily. This question and answer were given as a direct result of a parable Christ had just given. We should be all familiar with it. It is about an unjust judge who was not easily moved who was troubled by a certain widow coming to him with a plea to be avenged and vindicated on a continual

basis. She was very persistent in her plea. She did not give up hope of being vindicated. In time the unjust judge complied. Brethren, hope is a driving force of a future reality. Keep in mind we only read the first part of verse 8. Remember the widow now when we read the balance of verse 8.

8: ". . . Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

This question asked in the context of the persistent widow's plea is a warning to the elect of God. It is an example we are to follow in seeking out our own salvation. Brethren, there is a hope that lies in us, but that's not enough. Hebrews 11:1 tells us:

1: "Now faith is the substance [or the realization] of things hoped for, the evidence [or confidence] of things not seen."

Have we ever given that much thought and applied it to our life in Christ. He told us He would never leave nor forsake us and that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do we believe that? Do we show that by what we do? Can others see our faith? Can they see our hope of things unseen by what we say, but more importantly by what we do? James 2:26 says:

26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

The body is dead without the spirit. Faith is also dead without works. No spirit no life, no works no faith. The Greek word used for faith in Luke 18:8 and James 2:26 and Hebrews 11:1 is #4102 in the Strong's. It says of it:

"*pistis* from #3982 persuasion, that is, *credence*; moral *conviction* (of *religious* truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially *reliance* upon Christ for salvation; abstractly *constancy* in such profession; by extension the system of religious (Gospel) *truth* itself: - assurance, belief,

believe, faith, fidelity.”

Vine’s has a lot to say about this Greek word.

Pistis #4102, primarily, ‘firm persuasion,’ a conviction based upon hearing (akin to *peitho*, ‘to persuade’), is used in the NT always of ‘faith in God or Christ, or things spiritual.’

“The main element in ‘faith’ is its relation to the invisible God, as distinct from ‘faith’ in man, especially brought out in the use of this noun and the corresponding verb, *pisteuo*; they are (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgment of God’s revelation or truth, example, 2 Thess. 2:11-12; (2) a personal surrender to Him, John 1:12; (3) a conduct inspired by such surrender, 2 Cor. 5:7.

Prominence is given to one or the other of these elements according to the context. All this stands in contrast to belief in its purely natural exercise, which consists of an opinion held in good ‘faith’ without necessary reference to the proof. The object of Abraham’s ‘faith’ was not God’s promise (that was the occasion of its exercise); his ‘faith’ rested on God Himself, Rom. 4:17, 20-21.”

So yes brethren, faith is more than just unsubstantiated opinion. It is a reliance on God, based on the faith once delivered. He tells us clearly in James 2:26 that faith without works is dead. Did the persistent widow display the works of faith? Let’s continue in Hebrews 11:2:

2: “For by it the elders obtained a testimony.”

We’re going to read about some of them in a moment, but verse 3 states:

3: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

Have we taught our children that before they’ve

gone out into the world and into the world’s education system. For that matter do we believe it ourselves? God says it is an act of faith to do so. In verses 4-12 we read about some of the testimonies of faithful people. God says of Noah in verse 7 and of Abraham in verse 8:

7: “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, [or reverence] prepared an ark for the saving of his household. . .”

8: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And went out, not knowing where he was going.”

Brethren many of us have done the same thing spiritually in recent years. We trusted and believed Christ that He would never leave nor forsake us, if we were obedient to Him and the Father. We too, are also sojourners who are waiting for the city which has foundations whose Builders and Maker is God. Will Christ find this faith when He returns? Will He find the hope of the elect as seen in their works? Will He find the love of God within them? Revelation 19:7-8 tells us of His wife and what she will do.

7: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

8: And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

Those are works! Yes, the bride will have the faith of Jesus. She will have the conviction to follow Him wherever He goes. She will be yoked to Him and no other. She will be about the business of the household. She will be fulfilling the qualifying criteria, the qualifications, for the role of the bride in the household of Christ as found in Proverbs 31:10-31 and elsewhere which we’ve studied at great length in the past. We can be assured of one thing brethren. She will not

consist of those who just accept the opinions of another or the filtering of scripture through the eyes of another, but who place their faith in Christ and dine with Him one on one and then do the things He expects of her.

We are told in Ephesians 4:1 that those who are called have a walk worthy of the calling with which we were called. Who called us? The Father! In that calling verses 2 and 3 state:

- 2: “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,
- 3: endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace.”

And I emphasize the unity of the spirit. Many people are confused on that issue today.

In verses 4-6 we’re taught that:

- 4: “There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
- 5: one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- 6: one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Do we believe that? Do our works show that? It doesn’t say one organization. It says one body! That is a spiritual body. There are many who try to slice off an arm, slice off a leg, and claim it for themselves. It’s a disgusting thing that’s running rampant through the churches of God and has been for many years.

What about verse 7?

- 7: “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”

Do we believe Christ Himself gives to each of us spiritual endowments as gifts to edify one another? Do we believe that these gifts are given by Christ for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry (not the ministry) for the edifying of the

body of Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ as the scriptures here tell us? Or do we believe that these gifts were given as rankings of hierarchy, to install layers of benefactors between the Husband and His bride, to keep the saints dumbed down and subject to their dominion and rulership?

When the apostle Paul was called of God, he dropped his evil ways and humbled himself in lowliness, gentleness, long suffering, and edified the saints in love or outgoing concern. He truly strove to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. He knew as an apostle, or as one sent forth by God, he did not have rulership over the rest of the body and clearly understood that a body only has one head. He repudiated the hierarchy of Judaism and turned to Christ for the strength to fulfill the function he had been called to. In 2 Cor. 1:24 he states:

- 24: “Not that we have dominion [or “rule” in the Greek] over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith **you** stand.”

Paul understood how he was to function as an apostle of Christ. Back in Ephesians 4:14-16 we are told by Paul:

- 14: “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried away with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive,
- 15: but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ
- 16: from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

So with that said lets turn to the scriptures to follow the patterns of tithing, as to their laws, principles, and applications. We will see who received them, who used them, who controlled their use, and what they were to be used for. We will also see how they apply to us today. We will also see who was to tithe and what they were to tithe. We will look to the word of God, the faith once delivered, to get our answers. Remember Christ has not, and will not leave nor forsake us. It is we who do the leaving and the forsaking. And also remember He will be the same yesterday, today, and forever as to the patterns He and His Father have set in the word for us to follow. Also remember Their method of teaching those who have been weaned off milk. Isaiah 28:9-10:

9: "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those weaned from milk! Those drawn from the breasts!

10: For precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."

So lets follow the money through the scriptures and see the pattern as it applies to the who, when, and why of the biblical tithing systems. It is thoroughly spelled out for those who are called of the Father to see. Remember faith without works is dead.

Lets start with the first occurrence in the word of God. We find it way back in Genesis, the book of beginnings, in chapter 14 and specifically verses 18-20.

18: "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the Priest of God [God Most High is the Father today.] Most High.

19: And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth;

20: And blessed be God Most High, who has

delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all."

Here in these three verses we find a whole bunch of firsts in the bible. We find Melchizedek mentioned for the first time. We find bread and wine mentioned together for the first time. We find tithing mentioned for the first time. We have studied all three of these subjects at great length in the past, but I would be derelict if I did not at least point them out and their significance being all mentioned together here. In the past we have seen that all three are inseparable and we will address Melchizedek and tithing today, but do not forget the importance of the bread and wine as symbols of the Melchizedek priesthood. Bread and wine are symbolic of the body and blood of Christ. They will be used in the New Testament times as the symbols of the Passover of the Lord. They always have been and always will be used by the Melchizedek priesthood. Please don't ever forget that!

The book of Hebrews has a lot to say about this particular priesthood. Lets once again review it for it ties together the subject at hand, that is tithing to this priestly order, and in all places the New Testament scriptures, to detractors amazement! Watch the pattern and listen to what the word of God is telling us about tithing. Hebrews 6:19-7:19:

19: "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20: where the forerunner has entered for us, Jesus, having become High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. [Forever, for 2 reasons, 1) because it was interrupted for a short time by a need for a physical priesthood and 2) Christ became the actual sacrifice in the flesh for a short time. But now it has been put in place once again, forever]

1: For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham

returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

2: to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,”

So here we see several things confirmed in verses 1 and 2 and several things added to what we read in Genesis 14. We see that Melchizedek was in deed the king of Salem and the priest of the Most High God. It’s been confirmed here. We also see that he received a tithe of all that Abram had gotten from the slaughter of the kings. Once again the New Testament scriptures confirm what we read in the Old Testament scriptures. We also have just read that Jesus became the High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. So this is a priestly order, not just one individual. The Greek word translated order here in Heb. 6:20 as well as in chapter 17, verses 7, 11, 17, and 21 is #5010 in the Strong’s. It says of it:

“*taxis* from #5021; regular *arrangement*, that is, (in time) fixed *succession* (of rank or character), official *dignity*: - order.”

Vine’s says of it:

“*taxis* #5010, ‘an arranging, arrangement, order’ (akin to *tasso*, ‘to arrange, draw up in order’), is used in Luke 1:8 of the fixed succession of the course of the priests; of due ‘order,’ in contrast to confusion, in the gatherings of a local church, 1 Cor. 14:40; of the general condition of such, Col. 2:5 (some give it a militaristic significance here); of the divinely appointed character or nature of the priesthood, of Melchizedek, as foreshadowing that of Christ, Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11 (where also the character of the Aaronic priesthood is set in contrast); 7:17.”

Now remember patterns brethren. We are also told in these verses specifically Heb. 7:2 that Melchizedek was first translated king of righteousness and later king of Salem, meaning

king of peace. That is significant for us to follow the pattern of this priesthood. There was and is a progression. Heb. 7:3,

3: “without father, without mother, without genealogy [#35, unregistered as to birth], having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.”

Hebrews 13:8 states,

8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Do we believe that to the point that our actions and our works, confirm our beliefs brethren? As the betrothed of Christ we are to follow Him, not some surrogate or Johnny come lately. Listen to the emphasis which follows what we have just read about the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:4,

4: “Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the plunder.

5: And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham;

6: but He whose genealogy [#1075, descent cannot be reckoned] from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.”

Now that is very clear. We see tithing being conducted under both orders. It is a pattern in the law. Tithing is an integral part of the order of Melchizedek, and was long before there was an Aaronic priesthood. This lesson from God is now explained even more thoroughly.

7: “Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

8: Here mortal men receive tithes, but there He receives them, of whom it is witnessed that He lives.

9: Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,

10: for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

We are clearly told here that there is a lesser who is blessed by a greater. The Melchizedek order is the greater and God uses tithing here in Hebrews to establish that point. It tells us also here in verse 8 that Melchizedek was not a mortal man, because it contrasts him with mortal men. That's not just by occasion or coincidence. That language is put here for a reason. That's the understanding of the author who actually wrote the book.

Tithing is an established fact in the order of Melchizedek. That cannot be made any clearer than it is stated here. But how does it work? We have seen the who of the system, that is of Melchizedek, but not the why and how yet. That is all coming as the pattern of tithing unfolds, but first lets continue to be taught about the actual order of Melchizedek.

11: "Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?"

12: For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law."

Now what was changed in the law and in fact what law are we talking about. Remember the preceding verses, the context is clear. Verse 5 tells us,

5: ". . .those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment [or have a law] to receive tithes from the people according to the law. . ."

No longer are we talking about the Levitical priesthood or that of the order of Aaron, but that of the order of Melchizedek as the greater. The priesthood after the order of Aaron received tithes from the Levites, not from the people as we will see later from the Old Testament scriptures. The Levites received tithes from the rest of Israel. It was all spelled out in a command from God and was written in the law. Verse 12 told us that the priesthood was changed. That means no longer Aaron, but Melchizedek. Thus, there needed to be a change in the law. What law? Not changing the priesthood. That was already done. So what are we being told here? The only law in context here is that of tithing, as to who received it. No longer do Levites receive it as verses 13-14 tell us and we will read momentarily. Remember "follow the money." There was (and is today) no doubt a movement by the wolves and hirelings of that time to establish a money grab by trying to say they were the ones who were to receive the tithes of the brethren and that they claimed some relevance to Levi and the order of Aaron to do so. Here the author of Hebrews is clearing that error up. He is making straight that which men make crooked for he goes on to say in verse 13,

13: "For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. [Oops, there goes there argument on that one.]

14: For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood."

So forget the Levitical priesthood. No longer do we follow the law of tithing to the Levites and thus the order of the Aaron. Those who come to you and claim continuance of that pattern are thieves and robbers. For the law was changed as to who receives the tithes of God as well as the priesthood itself being changed.

15: "And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another

priest

16: who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

17: For He testifies: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

18: For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,

19: for the law made nothing complete; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God."

So now brethren we have seen that the order of Melchizedek is mentioned in both the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures. It is also significant that tithing is a common component of that priesthood and that the New Testament scriptures accurately delineate the difference between who is the lesser and who is the greater in regard to tithing. We who are called of God, the Father, are under the order of Melchizedek and thus that law and pattern when it comes to paying tithes. To who? Not the Levites, but to the Priest of the Most High God. That is very important to understand and it will become very evident as we progress through this study on "following the money."

Lets take a minute and review what we have just read from the bible. We saw that in Genesis 14:18-20 that Abram gave tithes directly to Melchizedek. We read in Hebrews 7 that Levi paid a tithe to Melchizedek as well, verses 9-10. We also see in Hebrews that we today are under the order of the Melchizedek priesthood. Hebrews tells us that there was a change in the law on tithing. This is not all just a coincidence. This is a very clear pattern and plan of God. We see that tithing started with Melchizedek and we see that the Melchizedek priesthood is with us today. The scriptures clearly tell us that this Melchizedek is Christ. Hebrews 7 and 8 are unchallengeable on this point to a converted and for that matter even an unconverted mind alike, unless they are trying

to deceive. So what were the laws pertaining to tithing to the Melchizedek priesthood? For that matter what were the laws pertaining to levitical tithing? Are they the same? If not, what are the differences? What are the similarities? We are going to address all of these questions and more in the study.

Lets go back to Genesis 14 and see what the bible says about how and what Abram tithed. Genesis 14:20,

20: ". . . And he gave him a tithe of all."

We have already established that Abram gave this to Melchizedek, king of Salem, the Priest of God Most High, verse 18. The question now remains what exactly did Abram give Melchizedek when it says, "and he gave him a tithe of all?" What was the, "all" and how did Abram acquire it? Lets get a little history on the matter as only Genesis 14 can give us. Genesis 14:1-2,

1: "And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations,

2: that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela"

So here we see two distinct groups of kings. We will see that group 1 made war with group 2. Genesis 14:3,

3: "All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim"

So the battle took place. Now look what we learn about the results of this battle. Verse 4,

4: "Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled."

We can clearly see that group 1, run by Chedorlaomer, beat up group 2 and that group 2 was required to be ruled by group 1. We also see group 2 rebelled in the thirteenth year of their subjugation by keeping the cash. We can turn to the pages of the bible to review the patterns of such things in that region, but I trust we all are familiar with the results of such events. When one king conquered another king, the defeated king would have to pay tribute to the victor. This came in many forms. It could be gold, silver, manufactured goods, raw materials; such as ores, timber, etc. livestock, and yes even people. We read that throughout the biblical accounts. So here we see group 2 in Genesis 14 saying to group 1, we don't like that arrangement any longer and are not going to be participating in it. Well, what do you think old king Chedorlaomer and the boys thought about that? Verses 5-6,

5: "In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,
6: and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness."

Now I'll bet that group 2 (who got beat up in the first place) was saying yippee because old group number 1 was not coming in their direction any longer, but actually went in the opposite direction and attacked group three. Lets look at verse 7 now,

7: "Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat, and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazon Tamar."

Uh-oh! Group 2 now has a big problem. Old king Chedorlaomer and the boys have now returned to the neighborhood and beat up the neighbors. Do you think old Chedorlaomer is about to forget the twelve year cash cow that ran away? Not likely! Verses 8-10,

8: "And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim

9: against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five.

10: Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; [that's pretty metaphorical] and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains.

Here we see group number 2 getting whooped again. Old king Chedorlaomer and the boys were going to get their due, so in the fashion of warring kings they decided to be nice guys and leave the kings intact. Right? Not quite! We know of such patterns because of what the bible tells us. Watch what we're told in verses 11-12,

11: "Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way.

12: They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed."

Lets take a little time here brethren to see exactly what is being said in verses 11 and 12. In verse 11 we are told that group number 1 took, "all the goods" and "all the provisions" from group number 2. The Interlinear Bible translates verse 11 as follows,

11: "And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food, and went away."

Strong's says the Hebrew word translated goods here is #7399 *rekush*. It states of it:

"from passive participle of #7408, properly as gathered goods, riches, substance."

So what do these goods consist of? Well lets

eliminate one category of things. The word translated “provisions” here and it’s contrasted with goods in the New King James is #400 in the Strong’s. It says of it:

“*okel*, from #398, food, eating food, or mealtime, meat, prey, victuals.”

So here we see, “all the goods” are qualified outside of “all the food.” This is very simple to see and an important thing the bible is telling us. Not only did they take all their food, they also sacked both cities and took all their substance which included riches of every category. In verse 12 we see they not only did the same to Lot as in taking all his goods, but they also took him as well. So here we see they took food, riches, and people. Lets look at verses 13-15 following the story through here.

13: “Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram.

14: Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

15: He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.”

There is a lot to be said here about protecting oneself and family, but that is not our focus today. Lets plainly understand however that Abram was compelled to fight for his brother’s son’s freedom and well being, after he had been attacked and taken away captive. In verse 16 we see the results of his activities.

16: “So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother [this should be his brother’s son Lot] and his goods, as well as the

women and the people.”

Then in verses 17-20 we read about Abram meeting Melchizedek and how he gave him a tithe, or tenth of all. My question to you the reader or the listener is what did the “all” consist of? We clearly read in this account that all the food and all the goods were taken. We defined what “goods” were earlier by the Hebrew word. We saw in verse 16 that Abraham brought back everything including the captive people. How much “all” did he have? Well, it is obvious he had all the goods minus some of the food as per verse 16. He also had Lot and all his goods and he also had women and the people. We read the chronology of group one and their attacks. Before they attacked group two for a second time they attacked group three remember. These kings from group one had a proclivity for attacking others and taking their goods. Take a look at any map which describes the areas of the king’s attack. It becomes quite evident that group number one had a lot of goods with them from all these defeated kings from both groups, two and three and that they were heading home to store them up and savor the victories when Abram ruined the party. Yes, Abram had a lot of wealth with him when he was met by Melchizedek. He had it “**all**.” Verse 20 says,

20: “. . . And he gave him a tithe of all.”

The actual dollar amount is irrelevant. What is very important is that he gave a tenth to the Priest of God Most High. Now how did Abraham obtain all this wealth? Did he grow it from the ground? No! Did he fashion it with his own hands? No! So how did he acquire it all? He fought an evil group of kings and took everything they had with them. Did Abraham acquire this increase by his efforts? Yes, he did. He worked for it. So a tenth of all he acquired from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who had been with him was given to Melchizedek. He didn’t just tithe on one aspect of the goods did he? No! Abraham depended on God for his well being. He depended on God for

all his increase and as such knew he was to give a tenth of “all” of it to God. Brethren the rest was his to do with as he felt. We can actually see this in verses 21-24,

21: “Now the king of Sodom [remember he ran and hid in the mountains] said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” [Well isn’t that generous. They were already Abram’s, but look at Abram’s next statements.]

22: But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, [In other words he gave him ten percent of what he had. Abram clearly tells the king of Sodom that he has given a tenth to the owner of everything that exists. He tells the king here it isn’t yours anymore, it’s mine because he gave it to me and I gave him ten percent.]

23: that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is [the thought better says **was** (past tense) not **is** (present tense)] yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’ — [Now isn’t that incredible. Abram knew who gave him the increase and he had the character to tell the king that very thing. Watch what he does, how he displays this in verse 24.]

24: except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”

Abram let the king of Sodom take what was left of his original goods and provisions after he had first tithed them to Melchizedek and after those with him had eaten and after a portion was given to each of his allies. So here they all shared in it before the balance was given back to the king of Sodom. These are very clear things to see. They have a purpose in that they are teaching us about the tithing laws of the Melchizedek priesthood. Abraham tithed of all that he acquired, both riches and food. All the increase he was given was to be

tithed on and then he could do with it as he pleased. Abraham clearly understood that God owned everything in heaven and earth and that he was required to give a tenth back to God before he used it. So yes, tithing is a vital part of the laws of worship under the order of Melchizedek. Let me state here also that Abraham obeyed God in all that God commands of us as well. Often we have read and studied that in the past, but lets just listen one more time to God’s account of this. Genesis 26:5,

5: “because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

Those are God’s own words brethren. Abraham answered his calling and kept the instructions of God as to his commandments, festivals, and holy days and his laws. Hebrews 11:8 tells us of his calling and obedience to God. The scriptures tell us he is the father of the faithful. Abraham trusted God and all that He said. He knew who and what God was. He also knew and kept God’s commandments, laws, and statutes. Tithing my friends was just one of them. We are not going to go into any others today for that is not our focus in this study. We have spent quite a bit of time on Melchizedek and the obvious command to tithe and its fundamental principles as to tithing on all our increase. Lets now turn to the bible again to study the tithing laws and principles God gave to Israel under the order of Aaron. There are many today who attempt to use the doctrine of tithing to fleece the sheep. We are going to see that those who misuse the doctrine of tithing are nothing more than thieves and robbers and are classified as hirelings and wolves by Christ as well as many more descriptive terms to categorize them.

We read earlier in Hebrews of the earliest time in scripture that Levi tithed. Hebrews 7:9-10,

9: “Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,

10: for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.”

There is no doubt that the New Testament writers understood all about tithing. Notice this also, the author used the present tense in the Greek for “receive” in Hebrews 7:9. That Greek word is #2983 in the Strong’s. It says of it:

“*lambano*, a prolonged form of a primary verb, which is used only as an alternate in certain tenses; to *take* (in very many applications, literally and figuratively [probably objective or active, to *get hold* of; whereas #1209 is rather subjective or passive, to *have offered* to one; while #138 is more violent, to *seize* or *remove*]).”

Vines says of it:

“*lambano* #2983 denotes either ‘to take’ or ‘to receive,’ (1) literally, (a) without an object, in contrast to asking, e.g., Matt.7:8; Mark 11:24, RV, ‘have received’ (the original has no object); (b) in contrast to giving, e.g., Matt. 10:8; Acts 20:35; (c) with objects, whether things, e.g., Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30. . . This has been styled a vulgarism; metaphorically, of the word of God. . .”

Now the point being stressed here by me in reading from Vine’s and from Strong’s and from the bible is here in approximately 68 A.D. the writer is acknowledging that Levi was still receiving tithes. In what format is not important, but rather the fact that it was taking place. That is one of the reasons why we read earlier in these scriptures, the emphasis placed on the doctrine of tithing in reference to a change in the law as to the order of Aaron and to the order of Melchizedek. None of that is coincidental. The physical temple was still in place at that time with all its trimmings. So too was the Church of Christ, the living temple of the Lord. That’s why I mentioned earlier that the author here was making a definitive point that they were not to be tithing to the Levites or anyone following that pattern because no longer were they

accountable to it because they were under the order of Melchizedek and that’s why I brought that point up and emphasized it and that’s why the author brings it up here. He’s teaching us a profound lesson. Most today if asked about the earliest account of tithing would never turn to the book of Hebrews. In fact they wouldn’t include Melchizedek in it as well. They would turn to the book of Levi.

In Leviticus 27:30-32 we see the word *tithe* mentioned. In specific these verses state.

30: “And all the *tithe* of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’S. It is holy to the LORD.

31: If a man wants at all to redeem any of his *tithes*, he shall add one-fifth to it.

32: And concerning the *tithe* of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD.”

What is chapter 27 talking about. Is it talking about principles of tithing? What exactly is the context of it and why are *tithed* things mentioned here, specifically seed of the land, fruit of the tree, and the herd, and the flock? In verses one and two we read:

1: “Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
2: Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to the LORD, according to your valuation,”

The Interlinear Bible translates it:

2: “. . . When a man makes a difficult vow by your evaluation.”

What God is instructing Moses to do here is to teach Israel about redeeming people and property. He first addresses males from ages 20-60 and the amount of silver assigned as valuation. He then does the same for a female of that same age group

and so on for other age groups of both male and female. He then goes on and talks about beasts, clean and unclean, and their valuations. Then he addresses houses and how the priest is to set valuation of it. He then goes to a field and does the same and ties it into the jubilee etc... In all of these we are taught about redeeming them after they have been consecrated to God by a vow and how much more it will take to get it back if in fact that item is even redeemable. In verse 26 we get the start of the exceptions. The firstlings are not allowed to be consecrated because they are already God's.

26: "But the firstlings of the beasts, which should be the LORD'S firstlings, no man shall sanctify; whether an ox or a sheep, it is the LORD'S."

So we see here something special. He's telling them how they're supposed to figure out all these things. Verse 27 then talks about the firstlings of unclean beasts and the fact that they can be redeemed. In fact, they have to be redeemed as verse 27 tells us.

27: ". . .then he shall redeem it according to your valuation . . . [if he didn't] then it shall be sold according to its valuation."

We've talked often about the laws of the firstborn. That is tied to the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. On the first day of Unleavened Bread Moses instructed Israel about these laws. We can read all about that in Exodus 13, specifically in verses 11-14. They're very informative.

11: "And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you,

12: that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the

males shall be the LORD'S.

13: But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem."

As we've studied so often at Passover and the first day of U.B., this law is tied directly to what God did for Himself. He took all the firstborn unto Himself. These are very important things to understand for they are all linked to the pattern of God. Look what Moses taught the children of Israel about this lesson and the symbolism of the first day of Unleavened Bread. Exodus 13:14-15:

14: "So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

15: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem."

The first day of U.B. is all about the firstborn of God and coming out of sin and it should not be confused or mixed with the lessons of the fourteenth, the Passover of the Lord, for we read in verse 16:

16: "It shall be a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

Yes, it is all about coming out of sin and being numbered among the firstborn of God. Notice in verse 11 however that the firstborn laws did not start until they entered the promised land. That is significant to remember as we will see in this study. So back in Leviticus 27 we read similar

things as to the firstlings of animals and which ones are redeemable. Now we see something else introduced here. Lev. 27:32,

32: “And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD.”

Now we could take the time to explain in detail as to what that was and how it was conducted, but we have done that at length in the past. What it is simply saying is that the flock or herd was rounded up into the pen. They would enter through an opening in which only one at a time could pass through. Each tenth one was holy to the Lord. That is why we read what we do in verse 33:

33: “He shall not inquire whether it is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it; and if he exchanges it at all, then both it and the one exchanged for it shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.”

This whole thing is about consecrating redeemed things. You don't consecrate something that the Lord already owns. For instance right here we're not talking about the firstling of the flock are we? No, because, “the firstling of the flock” takes place when it's born and then separated. Here are the others that are coming through a pen. These are older animals that are being pushed through the pen, so it has nothing to do with the firstlings. We have to understand the flow of all these things. So what God just told us here is very important. If a man's best ram or ox went through as number ten he lost it. God is teaching Israel a very important lesson in this 27th chapter of Leviticus. Is it about tithing? No! Is it about what can be redeemed and what can't and the laws surrounding that very thing? That is the chief focus. Have we learned something about tithing? Yes we have. For one, it's God's. The same thing is taught about the tithe of the land as verse 30 tells us. The differences with the seed and the fruit however is that it can be redeemed for one-fifth added to its

value. Now why do you think that is so? Because it could not shed blood, brethren! It was not a living breathing animal made of flesh. Remember the life is in the blood as Leviticus 17:14 tells us.

14: “for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.’”

Brethren these are very important lessons to learn. We have studied about the blood in the past and will again in the future, but today we are studying tithing so we will move on with that. The point I am making here about Leviticus 27:30-32 is that tithing is only mentioned here to teach us we cannot tithe something which is already consecrated. There are some who teach that these scriptures right here categorically are teaching that one only has to tithe on fruits, vegetables, and livestock. That does not say that here and in fact does not even imply it. We will also clearly see that is not found in all the bible no matter how hard they try to twist it. Before we leave Leviticus 27 however lets read the last verse. Verse 34:

34: “These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.”

So here we are clearly told that Moses understood all that was mentioned in this chapter from Mount Sinai. What did Moses do with everything he heard from God at Mount Sinai. He wrote it into the book of the covenant. Exodus 24:3-4:

3: “So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has said we will do.”

4: And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. . .”

Verse 7,

7: “Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. . .”

All that we need to know for salvation is found within the pages of the bible. It is the faith once delivered. We do not need to go outside of it for our instruction as to the commandments, statutes, and laws of God. We don't turn to the experts who have twisted scripture to suit their traditions, and greed for power and dominion. No, we sit down with Christ, the Word of God, and let him instruct us. Yes, we do go to dictionaries and lexicons and concordances and such to learn the meanings of words, but we do not go to the commentaries. We do not need an interpreter. For the spirit of God does that as we live and study in spirit and truth. It is the spirit which helps us develop the gifts we all have, to be able to edify one another and serve one another in the love of God. We have only one Head and His name is Jesus, the Christ. So, from Leviticus 27 we can glean that we are to tithe on the seed of the land, the fruit of the trees, and the beasts of the flock, if it was not already consecrated to God and that this was known by Israel and agreed to from Mount Sinai. Verse 30 also tells us “all the tithe of the land.” “Whether” and “or,” are not part of the original text.

For many years I was a member of the Worldwide Church of God. That organization had a very detailed tithing doctrine. Its chief elements were; there are three tithes. The first and third were collected by the hierarchy of the organization. The second one was kept by the one generating it, but had many restrictions to its use. Off the top of it ten percent was given to the hierarchy. The rest could only be spent at stipulated feast sites where the hierarchy supposedly placed the name of the Lord. These deceived men would tell the brethren to rejoice at these sites, but to not forget the Levite which was an inference to them. This was all done so that the one who had saved these second tithes

could save some of it and deposit it with them at the end of the festival. On top of all this, they demanded monetary offerings on the annual holy days. It was quite an artful thing to one who makes a living fleecing people. If this was not so serious, it would be funny. I do at times laugh at how I believed them and how I gave them anywhere from thirty to fifty percent of my income. P. T. Barnum set it straight; “There is one born every minute!” So, was the doctrine the Worldwide Church of God taught to be found in the pages of the bible? Yes, some of it was and is. But it is a far cry from their deceived fleecing teaching. So, lets follow the money once again as to why, how, when, and who had to deal with the Levitical tithe.

We've established that tithing was a command of God to Moses and to Abraham. We saw that Moses taught this to Israel. Did Abraham teach this to his children? Yes he did. We see that his wheeling and dealing grandson knew about tithing, however he tried to mix it up a little with God. Genesis 28:22,

22: “And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

Now isn't that nice. Here Jacob is telling God that if he blesses him with goods, he in turn will give God His ten percent. We're not going to enter into a discussion on the merits of what Jacob was or was not doing here. The point is that he was aware that tithing was something one did with God. It was obvious that he learned about this from his father, Isaac, and Isaac from his father, Abraham. We are going to see that there is a major difference in the tithing systems of the Levites or the Aaronic priesthood and that of Melchizedek. The big difference is mentioned in Hebrews 7:4-8.

4: “Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth

of the spoils.

5: And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, [In other words those who follow that system. Those who were under that law.] though they have come from the loins of Abraham;

6: but He whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

7: Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

8: Here mortal men receive tithes, but there He receives them, of whom it is witnessed that He lives.”

Do we see the major difference? Abraham tithed to God directly in the personage of Melchizedek who became Jesus Christ. Israel tithed to the sons of Levi. One to immortal and one to mortal. Do not lose this important fact as we move through this study. Abraham also tithed of all the increase of his hand didn't he? Yes, he gave a tenth of **all** to the High Priest, to Melchizedek. Can we find where Israel was instructed to do the same thing? Yes, we can if you believe the bible. We will get to that shortly, but lets establish the pattern of the tithe commandment. Who received it and why? Numbers 18:21:

21: “Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.”

Now remember this was work for what they were doing at the tabernacle of meeting and remember who that tabernacle is today. It's very important. No confusion there. That is quite clear and to the point. Levi was being paid for doing work. Verse 24,

24: “For the tithes of the children of Israel,

which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’”

Now notice what the Levites were to do with the tithes. Verses 25-26,

25: “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
26: “Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: ‘When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithe.”

So here we now see the Levites were required to give a tithe of what they received to the Lord as well. Did they give this to Melchizedek, the priest? No! Verse 28,

28: “Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the LORD from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the LORD'S heave offering from it to Aaron the priest.”

So not only did they give it to Aaron, the priest, look what they gave him. Verse 29,

29: “Of all your gifts you shall offer up every heave offering due to the LORD, from all the best of them, the consecrated part of them.”

So here God understanding human nature as He does and did, told the Levites that they couldn't just give a tithe of all they got at any given time. For instance, they couldn't figure up a total tithe quantity from lets say the shanks or briskets of all the cattle. No, they had to give a tithe of all the various tithes, when they received them and on top of that it had to be the choice pieces or parts, the sanctified parts, the fat parts. Verse 30,

30: “Therefore you shall say to them: ‘When you have lifted up the best of it, then the rest shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the produce of the winepress.’”

So here we only see produce of the threshing floor and produce of the winepress mentioned. Does that mean they only received grain and wine? Some teachers would have you believe that. They say only that which was grown from the ground was to be tithed. That would mean only grain and grape growers had to support the Levites and the priests through their tithes. I’m not kidding you. That is what some teach. Remember over in Leviticus 27:32 we read there that they also tithed of cattle and sheep. Remember the very principles as to how God instructs us. They form patterns throughout the scriptures for us to follow. Isaiah 28:9-10,

9: “Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? [Two questions brethren.] Those weaned from milk! Those drawn from the breasts! [not infants, but those who are growing and able to eat at the table one on one with Christ.]
10: For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little.”

So here in Numbers 18:30 we see God specifically giving instructions as to things which were to be tithed. He’s not saying only these two things, grain and wine, but uses them as an example to make a very big distinction between Israel and the Levites as we are about to see. Verse 31,

31: “You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your wages for your work in the tabernacle of meeting.”

Notice they could eat it in any place they chose. All the members of their household could do so of this tithe. We will see that is not the case for

Israel at large. We have just gone through what WCG coined the first tithe. It is clear to see that only the Levites and priests and their households could use it. That is direction straight from God as verse 25 qualified. With this clearly in mind, lets look where and how tithes were also used and by whom. We’re going to see why WCG also qualified a second and a third tithe. Before the children of Israel entered the promised land, they were once again instructed as to what they had agreed to in the book of the covenant as we read earlier. Deuteronomy 12 has much to say about that, but we’ll focus on the parts about tithing. Deuteronomy 12:4-5,

4: “You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things.
5: But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.”

Now remember the context here is about proper worship of God. He says He will place his name in a particular spot and they will have to go there to worship Him. They could not do it anywhere they pleased. Verse 6,

6: “There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.”

Now that’s a lot of stuff. That is seven categories of things. We are told in Deuteronomy 16:16 that this was to occur three times a year.

16: “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty.

Why not empty? Because they were just commanded over in Deuteronomy 12:6 to take their burnt offering, their sacrifices, their tithes, their heave offerings, their vowed offerings, their freewill offering, and the firstlings of their herds and flocks. To show up empty would be to break the commandment of God. We know from the scriptures that God placed His name in Jerusalem, in the temple in Jerusalem that is. This is where they all had to bring the tithe to. He instructed them further on this point in verse 7.

7: “And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.”

Verse 11,

11: “then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD.

12: And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you.”

Now lets wait a minute here. It just said here that the other Israelites were to do this. So now we see that all the other tribes were to bring all these things to the place where God placed his name and as we saw they were to do this three times a year. Specifically at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles and we read further that they were to eat before the Lord their God at these times, verse 7 and now they were also to rejoice before Him with all their household. So now in verses 17 and 18 we go on and read.

17: “You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand.

18: But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all to which you put your hands.”

Here we see Israel commanded to eat of a tithe (and the offering I might add) before the Lord with all their households and to even share some with the Levites who dwell with them. They could only eat it at the three feasts of the Lord.

So once again here we see Israel commanded to eat of a tithe before the Lord with all their household and to even share some with the Levites who dwell with them. They could only eat it at the three feasts of the Lord or at the three festival seasons when in attendance. This cannot be what we have earlier deemed the first tithe for that tithe could only be eaten by the Levites and Priests and their respective households and they could actually eat it in any place they wanted to. So we see there’s a major difference between these two tithes. So here we’re talking about another tithe, a second tithe, or as we have come to know it or call it, the festival tithe. Can this be clearly substantiated anywhere else? Yes! Deuteronomy 14:22,

22: “You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year.”

Why does it say truly or accurately here about the grain? Remember God knows human nature. For the same reason he told us what He did back in Leviticus 27 and the same reason he told us what

He did a few minutes ago in dealing with the Levites giving the choice things to the priests. If it wasn't in there, they wouldn't give it to them. They would give them the garbage parts. But anyway, another point being stressed here to Israel. Leviticus 23:22,

22: "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God."

Israel had to still tithe for the whole field even as they were commanded to leave some there for others who were less fortunate. It is not a coincidence this is mentioned here in Leviticus 23 at the conclusion to the instructions of the feast of Firstfruits or Pentecost. We have studied that in the past especially as it pertains to the bride of Christ. Now back to Deuteronomy 14:23-26,

23: "And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. [Do not lose sight of that. We are to learn to fear God through this activity for a reason.]

24: But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you,

25: then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses.

26: And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household."

So here we see a definite second tithe. It is not to be short changed and please understand this, it was not administered by a Levite. It was in the control of the tithe keeper. This tithe was to be used for eating before the Lord at the prescribed time of His festival. This tithe was to be used for food. So how did they pay for their accommodations and such? Did they bring all that with them? We know for the Feast of Tabernacles they were to dwell in booths made from leafy boughs, etc... But that was not the case for Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits, so don't let anybody try to deceive you and mix that up.

We read where they could convert the edible tithes to money and then buy what they needed for eating before the Lord. The emphasis is on eating that which God gives them to sustain them brethren. It is about as basic as one can get. That is why we are to eat these tithes, so that we may learn to fear the Lord our God always as verse 23 tells us. This is only a physical application or shadow of the spiritual reality of that to come. We are totally dependent on God for life and we should respect Him for it or fear Him as the translation says. Thus we return to Him the tithes He commands of us and also share them with others.

I have actually read where teachers state that only farmers tithed in Israel. Only those who had food crops and livestock needed to tithe. Follow that thought for just a minute. Not everyone was a farmer or herdsman were they? Not everyone had crops or flocks to tithe. Some people were blacksmiths, some carpenters, some boat builders, some tanners, some tent makers, and on we could go. By the teachings of some, these folks didn't have to tithe. Does that even seem applicable to a rational mind? Deuteronomy 16:16 tells us that all your males had to appear before God at these times, not just the farmers and herdsman. They, all the males, were commanded to eat of their tithes before the Lord with their households. It wasn't just farmers. It was every Israelite. So if

they didn't grow crops and have sheep and cattle, did they not eat during these times? Of course they ate, for they used the tithes of their increase of their hand in that year to purchase what they needed at the feasts. Deuteronomy 16:13-14 gives specific instructions as to keeping this festival tithe and using it for the Feast of Tabernacles. Look what we learn from verse 15.

15: "Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice."

God here differentiates between all your produce and all the work of your hands to clearly point out the fact that everyone who had an increase from the field or from whatever work they did was to tithe on that to be able to come to the feast and rejoice before God as they were commanded. Remember in Genesis 14 Abraham tithed of all of what? Verse 11 told us, "of goods and provisions" or better translated riches and produce. The Scofield translates Deuteronomy 16:15,

15: "The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase and in all the works of thine hands."

The Interlinear translates it.

15: "Your God shall bless you in all your produce and in every work of your hands."

The Hebrew word translated produce here is #8393 in the Strong's. It says of it:

"*tebuwah* from #935; *income*, that is, *produce* (literally or figuratively): - fruit, gain, increase, revenue."

It's root word is #935 and Strong's says of it:

"*Bow* a prime root, to go or come in a whole variety of applications."

Are the bells going off! The Brown Driver Briggs states:

"product, revenue, 1) product, yield, usually of earth, . . . crops, etc... 2a) income, revenue, in general Job 31:12 (almost equals possessions)" 12 "for that would be a fire that consumes the destruction and would root out all my increase" Proverbs 10:16 "the labor of the righteous leads to life. The wages of the wicked to sin." [Same word brethren! Proverbs 15:6, 6: "in the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but in the revenue of the wicked is trouble."

Same word again. We could go on and see the same thing. The point is the Hebrew word is translated product, produce, increase, and revenue and applies to both crops and possessions. Lets just say for arguments sake that God is only talking about crops using this word in Deuteronomy 16:15, this Hebrew word *tebuwah*. Now lets look at the other half of the statement God made.

15: "...all the works of your hands."

"All" means exactly that, "everything." Works here is #4639 in the Strong's. It says of it: "*maaseh* From #6213; an *action* (good or bad); generally a *transaction*; abstractly *activity*; by implication a *product* (specifically a *poem*) or (generally) *property*:"

That seems pretty clear to me. It means doing business, making money at doing business. Remember the context we are talking about in Deuteronomy 16:15 is tithing. The scripture is saying tithing on these works, these transactions, of your hands.

Vines says of the word:

"*maaseh* #4639 'work; deed; labor; behavior.' The basic meaning of *maaseh* is work. Lamech used the word to signify agricultural labor (Gen. 5:29). The Israelites were commanded to

celebrate the festival of First Fruits as it signified the blessing of God upon their 'labors' (Exod. 23:16). It is not to be limited to this. As the word is the most general word for 'work,' it may be used to refer to the 'work' of a skilled craftsman (Exod. 26:1), a weaver (26:36), a jeweler (28:11), and a perfumer (30:25). The finished product of the workers is also known as *maaseh*: 'And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bake-meats (literally, 'work of a baker'). . . (Gen. 40:17); (Num. 31:51). The artisan plied his craft during the work week, known in Hebrew as the 'days of work,' and rested on the Sabbath: 'Thus says the Lord God: The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened.'" (Ezek. 46:1; Exod. 23:12).

Now once again it is very clear what the word means. Tied together with "all" and "of your hands" and it means exactly that "all the works of your hands", "all the transactions of your hands", "everything you labor at that can result in an increase or is revenue generating." Contrast that with all your produce and we have a fundamental law of God. Everything that you produce that is an increase from year to year is titheable. It cannot be made any clearer by God. Those who teach this only applies to crops and flocks are in error and are causing the called of God to break His laws. That is very serious. I hope all who listen to or read this understand that error.

I asked a question earlier if there was anywhere in the tithing laws of the time of the Levites that stated that we are to tithe from **all** just as Abraham had done from Melchizedek. I think we just answered that question. We can see it is part of the pattern.

So now we have seen two very distinct tithes under the levitical system. One was given to the Levites and the other was kept and used by the tithe generator for the feasts. There is no tithe of the

second tithe however. That was an error of teaching. There was clearly a tithe of the tithe of the first one and that was given from the Levite to the Priest. No such thing existed in regard to the second tithe regardless of what obscure one scripture these fleecers may turn to. It doesn't exist in the bible. It's not part of the pattern. We have more to see still brethren.

Now we are going to look at a third tithe and see it too had restrictions on it and it too was to be distributed by the tithe generator and no one else. It's easy to see that tithing involves more than vegetables just as Abraham tithed of "all" so did Israel. The fact that Israel was to eat before the Lord is specific to keeping the feasts with the focus God puts on them. Not everyone brought food tithes. Those who didn't bought the excess of those who did. It all balanced out. The carpenter, jeweler, blacksmith, and candlestick maker used their cash tithes from all the work of their hands to purchase goods from those who brought primarily agricultural tithes. This brings up another point of concern which I see being expounded upon lately by some. That is that some or all of the tithes are intricately tied to the sabbatical year rest and that no tithe is saved that year. Their premise is obviously tithing is only agricultural in nature. As we have seen to suggest tithing was only agricultural and that it was only farmers who were required to tithe is without biblical support. So to state tithing is tied to the seven year land rest is ridiculous. Those who provided agricultural tithes were blessed in abundance in the year prior to the seventh year rest or otherwise the sixth year as the scriptures tell us. It is obvious that they set aside the portions they would need for the following year to keep the commandments of the Lord, be it in cash or produce.

Now lets look at the command for a third tithe in the bible. We can see that there was a first tithe which could be eaten only by the Levites and the sons of Aaron throughout their dwellings. We also

saw another tithe which was to be eaten by the tithe keeper and his household, but only at the place where God placed His name. Now let's look at another tithe with an entirely different set of rules unique to it just as we saw rules unique to the first and second tithes. Deuteronomy 14:28,

28: "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates."

Here we see a tithe referred to as one not being kept in every year, but specifically in the third year. It also clearly states it is to be of the produce of that year. That once again tells us tithing is not restricted by the 7th Sabbatical year. The first and second were to be kept every year. This is a big difference here. The scriptures do not contradict one another. So we know this is definitely talking about a different tithe as we will see. Verse 29,

29: "And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do."

Here we see this tithe of the third year could only be eaten by the Levite, stranger, fatherless, and widow. We also see it could be eaten within their gates or in other words, the gates of those who produced it. We also see the keeper of the tithe was not included in those who could eat of it. This is very different from the first and second, yet contains components of each in it. It is however very clear that it is not to be confused with the first or second. The first could not be eaten by the originator of it or the stranger, fatherless, or widow. As well, the second was different in the fact it could be eaten by the originator of it and his family and it could not be eaten within his gates, but only three times a year at the place where God placed His name. Each of these tithes have laws peculiar to themselves. They clearly show they

were distinct from each other. In Deuteronomy 26 we get more insight into this third tithe. Verse 12,

12: "When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year—the year of tithing—and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled,"

Notice here that the third year was referred to as the year of tithing. God refers to it as such because he names things for what they are. This third year was a year in which three tithes were kept. That only took place every third year. Now look at specific direction given to this third tithe that the tither could not eat himself. Verse 13,

13: "then you shall say before the LORD your God: 'I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.'

This brethren is very important to each and every one of us. Here Israel was commanded to tithe in a specific manner. We have seen that each tithe had its own commands. They were not to be mingled together, but to be kept separate according to those particular commandments for each. Just in case you might think you can make an exception to these commands, God specifically says you can't. Verse 14,

14: "I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for an unclean use, nor given any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me."

We are to keep the feasts of the Lord at their

appointed times from year to year. God does not suspend them for any reason, thus the laws of tithing are an intricate part of that and are not suspended as well. Each tithe had a specific purpose and fulfilled a specific function. Israel was not to forget them or their specific usage and commands. The first tithe provided for the needs of the Levites and the Aaronic priests. It was their income for the work they did in their service of the tabernacle. The second tithe provided for the needs of the festival goer and his family. These were at very specific times. The third tithe was used to provide for the basic needs of the fatherless, widows, and strangers and yes that pesky Levite. To me it is clear that under the Aaronic priesthood there were three distinct tithes kept for three distinct purposes. The individuals who produced them kept and administered both the second and the third themselves. The first however was given to the Levites. There are many organizations who tell their members that this method of tithing is in force today. By this I don't mean the exact way we have just seen from the bible, but variations of it, of course everything tilted in their favor. The common thread however is that they collect it as God's representatives. These leaders of these organizations then use it as they wish. They claim that in fact they do the work of the modern day Levite or Priest. Is that what is taught in the New Testament scriptures? Which priesthood is in force under the terms of the new covenant? Those answers are simple to come up with and in fact we have already done so and answered them earlier in the study. We read in Hebrews that there was a change in the law. The first covenant was associated with the Aaronic priesthood. The second covenant with the Melchizedek priesthood. It is obvious that tithing is a part of the commands associated with it, actually with both. We read that in the Old Testament scriptures as well as in the New Testament scriptures. It is a pattern that is not broken. We saw that Abraham tithed of all his increase. It certainly isn't a stretch by any means to state that ten percent is given to God through the

Melchizedek priesthood. One who denies this is denying the plain scriptural truth.

Did Christ ever discuss tithing in the New Testament? Yes, He did! Luke 11:42,

42: "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

Matthew 23:23,

23: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

Here Christ himself is telling us that tithing should be done, but it is not the main focus of either covenant. It was a part of a much bigger package. The religious leaders of His day did not understand that package. They rejected the majority of the commandments of God for their own traditions. It is interesting that they hung onto tithing though. Many religious leaders today claim that the commands of God are done away with, but you hear them preaching tithes and offerings. It's just stunning. Thieves and robbers, my friends. They abound. At the time Christ made these statements the temple was still in place in Jerusalem. It would be until 70 A.D. at which time the Romans destroyed it. The priests still served at it until it was destroyed. By the way, the Scribes and Pharisees were not Priests. They were wanna-bes. The Sadducees were those who served at the temple.

Christ didn't receive tithes from anyone during his 33 1/2 years on the earth as a human being. It was only after His death and resurrection to eternal life with the Father once again that He resumed His

duties as the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7, 8, and 9 tell us volumes about this. So, is Christ the only member of this Melchizedek priesthood? 1 Peter 2:5,

5: “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

Verse 9

9: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”

Here we are told that there is a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood. It is also called a holy nation and a spiritual house. We are also told that its members will offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. Here we see that Christ is not the only member of this priesthood. We read earlier that He is the High Priest and here we see there are others who are priests as well. They are likened to living stones which are being built up. Verse 6 tells us Christ is the chief corner stone of what? The spiritual temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17,

16: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

17: If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”

We are the temple of the living God. We are those who offer up spiritual sacrifices. We are a royal priesthood. Why a royal priesthood? Revelation 1:5-6,

5: “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over

the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6: and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

We are priests after the order of Melchizedek. We have a lot of work to do. Spiritual sacrifices do not come easily in this world. Like their physical counterparts they come by fire. I could go on with many such scriptures to prove who is of this priesthood, but that would just be redundant. The truth is plain to see. It is clear that there is a priesthood under the terms of the new covenant. It is after the order of Melchizedek and tithing is one of the commands of it. So how does it work? We can see that ten percent of all our increase is required by the lesson taught in Genesis 14. So who is the steward of it and who saves it? What is it used for? Lets establish first what the acceptable spiritual sacrifices are those which we are to offer up to God through Christ.

To help us understand the answers to these questions let's read Romans 12:1,

1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

Here we see that presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is acceptable to God. So how do we do that? Verse 2,

2: And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Hebrews 10:19-22,

19: “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: by a new and living way which He

consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21: and having a High Priest over the house of God,

22: let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

How we live our lives and what emanates from our heart is one of the acceptable sacrifices to God. Hebrews 13:15,

15: “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

16: But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

These are just some of the ways in which we can offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. Share here in verse 16 is #2842 in the Strong’s *koinonia*. It says of it:

“from #2844; *partnership*, that is, (literally) *participation*, or (social) *intercourse*, or (pecuniary) *benefaction*.”

Vines says of it:

“*koinoneo*, ‘to have a share of, to share with, take part in’ (akin to A, No. 1), is translated in Heb. 13:16 ‘to communicate,’ literally ‘be not forgetful of good deeds and of the fellowship’;”

Hebrews 13:16 tells us two very important things. One, we are to do good and to share ourselves with others. Christ Himself tells us how we are to do that. Matthew 19:16-17,

16: “Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

17: So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Remember Romans 12:2,

2: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is good and acceptable and the perfect will of God.”

Brethren we are to reject the way of this world for the way of God. We are to be growing in grace and knowledge so that we are able to discern between the two and choose life over death. To do good is to keep the commandments of God. They will not be burdensome for they are what lead us to eternal life. Summed up they are outgoing concern for others. That is the embodiment of what God is doing for us. 1 John 5:1-4,

1: “Whoever believes [or puts trust in] that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves Him who is begotten of Him.

2: By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

3: For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

4: For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world——our faith.”

Here we see what was taught in Hebrews 13:15-16 summed up. We cannot have love for one another unless we love God first. Only then can we truly love, *agape*, another human being. To have done that we must understand that Jesus is the Christ, Messiah, and that we have been begotten by the Father. We are to systematically reject the ways of this world. We do that by keeping God’s commandments through faith. We believe God. We put our trust in Him. We keep His commandments which result in our being different than the world. It is seen by the world. We are in the world, but not of the world. We share this with others. We are drawn to those who comprise

the body of Christ. As Ephesians 4 tells us, by speaking the truth in love, we grow up in all things of God and to Him who is the head, Christ, by whom the whole body is joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does its share, thus causing growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

There is a mighty plan of salvation being worked out here at this time. This is the first phase of it. It is not for all mankind at this time, brethren. That comes later. It is only for those who are called by the Father and that's not by our choosing. That's by Him with the purpose of being drawn close to His Son. Those called must develop an intimate relationship with Jesus, the Christ, at this time to become part of the royal priesthood we read about earlier.

Have you ever asked yourself, what is a royal priesthood? Peter tells us it is synonymous with a chosen generation, a holy nation, and his own special people. A chosen generation, a holy nation, and his own special people is not synonymous with "all" is it? No it isn't. It represents only some of the "all" doesn't it. In fact scripture tells us that "many," (which is nowhere near the "all") are called, but few are chosen. And we read that in Matthew 22:14. It is not my intention to get into the plan of salvation here. That is covered in detail in the study of the "Two Covenants" as well as other studies we have done. It is very important to understand that the body of Christ does not consist of all mankind. It does not consist of an organization or any grouping of organizations. It can only consist of those who have been called by the Father as John 6:44 and verse 65 tell us. Those who answer that calling and draw close to the Son in such a way that there is no one between them will be one with Him. They will be sanctified and cleansed by Him with the washing by water of His word, so that Christ might present the church, His bride, those whom He is at one with, to Himself so as they will not

have spot nor wrinkle or any such thing, but that they should be holy and without blemish. These are the ones who will make up the members of the royal priesthood. Those who run around and tell you they are God's representatives on earth and have dominion over us do not have a clue what God is doing. No man is your spiritual head. That is reserved for Christ. To let another step into that role is blasphemy brethren. There are many who do such things. It is these "heads" who think they direct the body. They put themselves in the place of God. They teach others by their works and deeds that it is they who discern right from wrong for you. They declare themselves the priesthood and anoint one of their own as the high priest. Hebrews 5 tells us how God did it.

1: "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2: He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.

3: Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins.

4: And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was."

That's how it was in Israel of the Old Testament. The high priest was not some mucky muck, but a lowly servant of the people. He didn't rule anything and he surely was not to appoint himself. Look at how it is set up today. Verses 5-10,

5: "So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."

6: As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek";

7: who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with

vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

8: though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

9: And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

10: called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”

There is only one Head of the body and only one High Priest and that is Christ. He does not have any surrogates in heaven or on earth. It is amazing how easily people subject themselves to the dominion of would be Lords. Look what the author of Hebrews says here in verse 11.

11: “of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.”

Why did he tell them this? Because they were allowing another to come between themselves and Christ. They were content to listen to another tell them what the bible says. They did not sit at the table and eat solid food one on one with Christ. They became dependent on someone feeding them. Verse 12,

12: “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the scriptures of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.”

Brethren the purpose of a teacher in the body of Christ is to help another to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. So that they in turn can stand on their own two feet and feed themselves and then be able to do that for others called by the Father. The body of Christ, the Church of the Firstborn, is not about men ruling men. It is not about rankings. It is not about corporations or organizations. It is about each and every member

doing its part to assure growth in the body. Its about service to one another. It is about each member using the individual gifts they have been given to edify the body in love. The apostle (or one sent forth) Paul, tells us in 2 Corinthians 1:24,

24: “Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.”

We don’t stand by rulership of men. We don’t stand by rulership of apostles. We don’t stand by ministerial authority. These are all deceits of those who suffer from delusions of grandeur. We are a royal priesthood. We all have functions to perform in that priesthood. We have only one High Priest. That role is filled by Christ. So lets answer the question I asked earlier, as to what is a royal priesthood to begin to understand our responsibilities in that commandment and in that commanded thing. Hebrews 8:6,

6: “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, [And that word is #3009 *leitourgia* and it means service] inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”

Not only is Christ the High Priest He is also the mediator. These roles are combined under the order of Melchizedek. Remember Genesis 14:18,

18: “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; He was the Priest of God Most High.”

He’s both king and priest. Under the order of Melchizedek we see two functions, king and priest. In Revelation 5:10 we are told,

10: “And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”

We have two roles to fulfill in a royal priesthood. We have civil as well as spiritual responsibilities

to fulfill. This is very, very important to understanding as a whole, but in particular to the subject at hand today which is tithing. Under the first covenant the order of Aaron was restricted to priestly functions. That is simple and clear to read in the scriptures. Aaron was not involved in civil matters. That was administered to by Moses. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant. The roles were not the same. They were divided amongst two people. Not so under the order of Melchizedek. We have seen earlier in this study that the priests received tithes, but they did not tithe to another. The thieves and robbers who have entered the sheepfold claim this role for themselves. They are lovers of themselves and lovers of money. They make a religion, an art, out of extracting cash from the sheep. It is a focus of everything they do. They twist scripture to support their lust of acquiring money rather than serving the sheep. Then there are others who teach the opposite. They claim that because the called of God are part of the priesthood that they do not have to tithe and in essence it is no longer required of them. I think we have clearly demonstrated that tithing is a function under the Melchizedek priesthood. If anyone chooses to disregard that it is their choice of which we all have many to make, but it is contrary to the scripture and the law of God. We who are of a royal priesthood have dual responsibilities of both civil and spiritual nature. We saw that Abraham gave a tenth of all his increase to Melchizedek. That can't be any clearer. As part of our priestly duties we are to administer that portion of the tithe that comes into our possession. We also have civic responsibilities as well and one of them is to tithe under the order of Melchizedek. This is very easily accomplished.

Lets look at what the apostle Paul did. Acts 18:3,

3: "So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tent makers."

Acts 20:33-34,

33: "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

34: Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me."

1 Corinthians 4:12,

12: "And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;"

1 Thessalonians 2:9,

9: "For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God."

1 Thessalonians 4:11

11: "that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,"

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9,

7: "For you yourselves know how it is right to act like us, because we were not disorderly among you;

8: nor did we eat bread from anyone as a gift, but by labor and toil, working night and day in order not to burden anyone of you.

9: Not that we do not have authority, but that we give ourselves as an example to you, for you to act like us."

Brethren we are to work with our own two hands to provide for ourselves as well as for others. That is the example that the apostle Paul set. Look what he tells us about himself in 1 Corinthians 4:10-11,

10: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are

strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!

11: To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless.”

Brethren how many so called apostles have we seen exhibit these credentials. We who are members of a royal priesthood are to work for our own livings. We are to provide for others in the basic things of life; food, clothing, and shelter from what we ourselves earn. We do that for our families. That is the example of Paul which he said we are to follow. If we have an increase from the work of our hands, we are to tithe on it, but what do we do with that tithe? We have also the priestly role to fulfill, as such we can use it as well. Paul made this clear also in many scriptures. 1 Corinthians 9 speaks in detail of it. Verses 13-14,

13: “Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?”

14: Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”

Under the order of Melchizedek we can both produce and use the tithe. We do not abrogate either of those responsibilities. We balance them out as per Paul’s example. We are the stewards of both. Can we collect the tithes from another? Yes we can, but only under the guidelines set by Paul. Paul did not use the tithes and gifts of others for his worldly needs. He provided for them by himself. In fact he even short changed himself to insure others needs were met ahead of his. He did provide for those who were with him. He did accept and administer what was given by others for the needs of the saints elsewhere and for preaching the gospel to others. Philippians 4:10-19,

10: “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

11: Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

12: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

14: Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.

15: Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

16: For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. [in preaching the Gospel]

17: Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

18: Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

19: And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Paul used what was given to him by other members of the church, the royal priesthood, to preach the gospel and administer to others. We could read many scriptures that tell us the same thing. What a tremendous example he is to us. His selflessness and service to others is without comparison in the epistles. His work ethic stands out in all he did. We too are to follow suit. We are to work to provide for our basic needs in life. We are to feed, clothe, and shelter ourselves and our family. 1 Timothy 5:8,

8: “But if anyone does not provide for his own,

and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Brethren there come times in the church where there is a need to fill the functions of evangelistic movements, etc. Often this requires individuals to be away from their work for lengthy periods of time to preach the gospel. It is then up to the rest of the body to supplement the one chosen to perform that function. These are collective decisions done by various groups of brethren such as local churches. The same pertains to preaching or publishing the gospel. This is done through the collective efforts of the body. Resources are pooled to pay for all that is necessary to place the truth before others. This can happen through tapes, articles, booklets, tours, etc. We also have the responsibility and command to care for the widow and the fatherless who are amongst us. James 1:27 clearly tells us this. It is a pattern throughout the scriptures. How are all these responsibilities met? Through the keeping of tithes. Are we subject to the tithing laws of the first covenant or better stated the levitical tithe? No, we are not! We brethren are subject to the laws of the tithing of the order of Melchizedek. We are a party to the second covenant. The book of Hebrews clearly tells us we are subject to the laws of that covenant and the priesthood of Melchizedek. The OT & NT scriptures tell us we are to keep a tithe or ten percent of all our increase to God. You can search the scriptures from cover to cover and not find anywhere where it says we are to tithe a second and a third under the order of Melchizedek. So what do we do? It is at this point brethren where we make personal decisions and choices. Do we use the ten percent for preaching the gospel, attending the feast, and caring for the spiritual widows and fatherless? That is a personal decision for each and every one of us to make. It is also asked, do we apply the pattern of the levitical tithe to what we do under the order of Melchizedek? Once again a personal decision. There are many who hope you do decide

this. In other words to follow the pattern under the levitical priesthood. They claim they are the stewards of your first tithe, ten percent or more of your second, and your entire third. The scriptures tell us you and you alone are the steward of your tithes under the order of Melchizedek for you are a member of a royal priesthood, kings and priests. The Old Testament scriptures clearly tell us that the levitical priests only had control of the first tithe and that the individuals once again have total control of the second and third.

Let me state clearly here that all those tithes were for purely physical purposes. They were to be used for food, shelter, etc. There were no kings and queens with their systems of taxation, levies, dominions, etc. at that time in Israel when God instituted the Levitical tithing system. It served many functions as we have seen from scripture. It was designed to meet the needs of the priestly order and their families as well as the other participants who participated in the worship of God as He commanded. It also served to meet the civil needs of the land of Israel in providing for the less fortunate in society. The first ten percent went to sustaining the Levites and the priests. The second ten percent went to feeding and providing for the needs of the festival goers. The third ten percent in every third year was for the care and maintenance of the misfortunates in society. Unfortunately brethren we do not live in that system or land that God set up. Israel itself soon abandoned the system which God had set in place.

We are robbed of much of our increase by the governments which rule over us. They take a portion of our increase from us before we even get our hands on it. They further take it through taxation of goods and services and our property. This is not God's way of doing things. So what do we do once again? Remember what we read in Deuteronomy 14:23-24 earlier. It is a basic premise of a relationship with God.

23: "And you shall eat before the LORD your

God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

Brethren do we do this with all our heart? Look at the beautiful scene God has just put before us. We are to be rejoicing before Him to the full for it is He who blesses us abundantly. We are to trust in our God in all things. We are to depend on Him to provide for our needs and in turn we are to obey Him and follow His ways. This is all a shadow of the marriage supper between Christ and His bride. This is of great importance to us all brethren or at least it should be. It doesn't get anymore personal than this, does it? It is very intimate, a very intimate relationship. Never forget our relationship with Jesus Christ is one on one. There is no benefactor between us. We all answer for ourselves to Him individually. We are the temple of God as scripture tells us. He has placed His name in us through the begetting of His Holy Spirit.

It has been my habit to keep three tithes. That is my personal decision. I have made it with a full understanding of what we all have read in regard to the scriptures on tithing under the order of Melchizedek. I have a purpose for doing so and specific reasons. Let me explain each briefly. I work for a living in the construction field. As such I have an increase from that work of my hands. I set aside tithes based on my net income. Why the net you may ask? Because the government takes my money before I have it in my possession. They rob me for I do not give it to them willingly. They take it from me to use for many ungodly things. So I tithe on what is left. That which is truly my increase. I administer all three tithes. The first I use to preach the gospel. It is used to purchase tapes, postage, study materials, space in publications, trips in pursuit of the preaching of the gospel, etc. I do not give it to another to be the steward of it. I and my family also keep the commandments of God as best we can, and

included in that is keeping the festivals of God. To do this I keep a second tithe, so that I am able to follow the instructions to rejoice while doing so. How we do that rejoicing is clearly defined in Deuteronomy. I use this tithe solely for this purpose. As for the third tithe I keep it because of the need I see to care for the widow and the fatherless. James 1:27 tells us,

27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

These are two spiritual things here. They are not addressing the physical. To me it is very clear in stating that these are the orphans and the widows of this spiritual age we live in. There are many who have turned from our Father and our Husband, Christ, and who are now orphaned and widowed because of the actions that they have taken. They have been deceived. I truly believe it is a responsibility of mine as well as others to seek them out through the preaching of the faith once delivered, the Word of God. With that said, every third year I keep a third tithe to help in that pursuit. My first tithe funds just do not cover all the expenses, so my family and I make that additional sacrifice every third year. If the funds were there to cover the cost of such endeavors then I may not keep that third ten percent every three years. I can also tell you plainly that if I could not afford to do so in a given third year, I would not feel any guilt in not keeping it. To date that has not been the case in either scenario. By that I do not say I am rich and have no difficulty in doing so. These are personal and family sacrifices.

Brethren as you all well know there are many personal choices to make after we are called by the Father and enter into a relationship with Christ. There are also many dangers which lurk along the road to salvation. Satan has deceived the whole world as to what Christianity is. It is up to us individually to overcome those deceptions and to

renew our minds so that we can prove all things, especially that which is good and acceptable in the perfect will of God. It is also our responsibility to share that grace and knowledge with others, in and out of the body of Christ. We who are called of God at this time are to help proclaim the wonderful truth and light of God unto a darkened world. We are to clearly and simply articulate the reason of the hope which lies in us to all who ask at the very least. We are to use the gifts we have received from Christ to build up the body for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, till we all come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man and unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

There are many who attempt to turn the sheep, the body of Christ, unto themselves rather than to God. Tithing is just one way in which they twist the scriptures to accomplish that. If you have someone telling you that they have a right to collect your tithe because they are God's representatives, send them packing. It is you who distribute them whether you keep one, two, or

three tithes. We are to function as kings and priests under the order of Melchizedek. If individuals decide to pool their tithes and resources for a purpose laid out in scripture, then that is an acceptable thing. If one comes to you and tells you that you are not required to tithe, the scriptures tell us he is not speaking the truth. We are required to tithe under the terms of the second covenant. It consists of 10 percent of all. Anything above and beyond that is between you and God.

Personally, I would like to be able to do more with my time and my resources. With that said I try hard to maximize both, in serving our God and the Church at large as others do as well, but that is a discussion for another day.

Beloved of God, test all things, hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil, and may the peace of God sanctify you completely and preserve you blameless at the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Our peace we give to you.