

THE

HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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No. 105

THE TITHE

The promised land of the Old Testament era became a reality when the children of Israel, after 430 years of waiting and then 40 additional years of wandering, finally received the land distribution allotted each of the twelve tribes. Having now become that great nation God had prophesied and arranged (Gen. 12:1-3), Israel functioned as both a spiritual and a secular nation under direction of the law given by God through Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20). This law was to continue for some 1,500 years until the appearance and crucifixion of the Messiah.

But the land distribution purposely excluded the thirteenth tribe -- that of Levi. Because

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of the twelve sons born to the patriarch Israel, the nation which was also known by that name was frequently referred to as the twelve tribes. God created a thirteenth tribe, however, when He arranged for Joseph's two sons to equally inherit their father's estate (Gen. 48), thus forming two tribes out of Joseph's original one.

Although the tribe of Levi did not receive a land allotment (Num. 18:20, Deut. 18:1-2), they were favored by God in that they enjoyed a special recognition as the tribe of the priests. It was their privilege to serve the other twelve tribes in attending to the affairs of the tabernacle (Num. 3 and 4, 1 Chron. 23:24-32) and in making offerings and sacrifices (Num. 18:23). It was from their number that the high priest always emerged. Forty-eight cities were provided for their habitation, including six cities of refuge (Num. 35). Since those of this tribe did not receive a land inheritance, God provided for their subsistence through a sharing from the other tribes -- this was called the tithe (Num. 18:20-24).

The Lord explained what constituted a tithe when to Aaron He said, "*I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation*" (Num. 18:21). The source of this tenth was "*the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks*" (Deut. 14:23).

The Tithe in the New Testament

Although the tithe is mentioned many times in the Old Testament, it is mentioned only four times in the New. Hebrews 7:2-4 speaks twice of it with reference to Abraham, and at a time even prior to the Law of Moses. In both Matt.

23:23 and Luke 11:42 reference is made to the improper manner of tithing by some who were living under the jurisdiction of the old law. Note should be made of the fact that each of these passages speaks of tithing during the Old Testament era. Not one reference is ever made of tithing as a practice among Christians. Why do you suppose this is so?

The Design of the Tithe

As has been earlier noticed, the tithe was arranged by God to provide for the tribe of Levi, the tribe of the priests. Their purpose and service was wisely designed by God to fill a need during the time when Israel served as a people through whom the Messiah would eventually appear. During this period of some 1,500 years, prophet after prophet arose to point ahead to the time, place, and circumstance of the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. When Jesus appeared and His purpose was accomplished in the death, burial, and resurrection, God's purpose in both Israel and the tribe of Levi had been completed. Having fulfilled their purpose and because of their rebellion to God, Israel became a scattered people in 70 A.D. (Dan. 9:26, Luke 21:24). The purpose and function of the Levites, consequently, ceased as well. It is understandable, then, that the tithe also ceased and no longer had a place in God's plan.

But What About the Christian Age?

One of the outstanding joys of the Christian is that he no longer requires a priest through which he approaches God. Peter speaks of all Christians as constituting "*an holy priesthood*" and "*a royal priesthood*" (1 Peter 2:5,9). John in his Revelation refers to us as "*priests unto God*" (1:6), "*priests*" (5:10), and "*priests of God and of Christ*" (20:6). There is no longer a

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special priesthood, but all disciples serve in that capacity. Since that distinction no longer exists, the tithe no longer has a place.

Early Christians Recognized Their Responsibility

Even though Israel and the tithe have fulfilled their role in God's plan, Christians continue to have an obligation in support of the Lord's work. The early disciples were instructed, *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store"* (1 Cor. 16:2).

An example of such support is evidenced in Romans 15:26, *"For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem:"*

Allusion to such contribution and its use is noted in passages such as Acts 6:1 where there was a *"daily ministrations"* and Acts 11:29 where *"the disciples ... determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:"*

Manner of Contributing

An approved example of when and where such contribution took place is recorded in 1 Cor. 16:1-3, as noted earlier. In this and related passages it will be observed that the contribution took place

- On the first day of the week (Acts 20:7)
- At the appointed assembly (Acts 20:7, Heb. 10:25)
- Was retained until it could be forwarded to where there was a need.

Christian Factor Determining the Amount

While the tithe of the Old Testament involved a tenth, no certain amount is stipulated in the New Testament. Being a better and more complete expression of God's will (Heb. 7:22, 8:6), the New Testament presents the Christian responsibility as a matter of one's ability and intent. This is defined by Luke in Acts 11:29 as *"according to his ability,"* by Paul in 1 Cor. 16:2 as *"as God hath prospered him,"* and by Paul in 2 Cor. 9:7 as *"according as he purposeth in his heart ... not grudgingly, or of necessity,"*

Purposes of the Christian Contribution

While the disciple must continue to live in a material world, it is necessary that he face the reality that material needs must be met. Several passages indicate needs which were attended to by early disciples, thus giving us insight into needs which we must also attend. One of the early needs involved the care of widows (Acts 6:1-6). Additional instructions about their care is found in 1 Timothy 5:5-15. Orphans can well be included in this area of concern, as mentioned by James 1:27. Relief of suffering among the brethren in Judea was provided by various other congregations (Rom.

15:26, 2 Cor. 9:2). Support of those who laboured among the brethren was mentioned in Phil. 4:15-16 and 1 Cor. 9:3-15.

The Tithe in Contrast With Contribution

The tithe was a provision arranged by God which served its purpose during the time of the Old Testament and the Ten Commandment Law. The contribution so often referred to in the New Testament was, and continues to be, a practice designed by God for the function of His people during the Christian era. The apostle Paul clearly and unmistakably points out this distinction in his Galatian letter, 3:17-19, *"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after <after the promise made to Abraham, HLC>, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."*

Verse 16 explains that seed to have been Christ. It is evident, therefore, that when Christ came, the old law and its provisions became complete, ushering in the New Testament era and its beauty. The tithe then ceased; it has no application in the Christian era.

HARRY COBB

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**ALL SUNSHINE
MAKES A DESERT.**

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who shared in the inheritance that Job left for his seven sons?
2. According to Psalms, a thousand years in God's sight is like what?
3. What did John the Baptist eat?
4. What two books record the death of Judas?
5. Whose descendants were the only ones allowed to burn incense before the Lord?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Give the Hebrew name of any one of the three youths thrown into the great furnace?
HANANIAH, MISHAEL, AZARIAH (Dan. 1:6)
2. In the sole Gospel account of Jesus actually writing, with what and on what did He write?
HIS FINGER, ON THE GROUND (John 8:6)
3. Jezebel, queen of Israel, forged letters to obtain what for her husband? NABOTH'S VINEYARD (1 Kings 21:7-8)
4. Which two prophets ate honey-flavored scrolls? EZEKIEL AND JOHN (Ezek. 3:3 and Rev. 10:10)
5. Who wished his words to be letters of lead set into carved rock? JOB (Job 19:23-24)

Gossips have been catalogued as three different types:

1. *Vest-button type, always popping off;*
2. *Vacuum cleaner type, always picking up dirt;*
3. *Linament type, always rubbing it in.*

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Sept. 4 - 9	Mt. Zion Church Brookhaven, MS	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 9 - 11	Summerfield Rd. Church Selma, AL	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
Sept. 19 - 23	Mt. Zion Church Crab Orchard, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 23 - 25	Bonaventure Rd. Church Savannah, GA	Unavailable at copy time
Sept. 26 - 30	Lily Church near London, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 3 - 6	Hokes Bluff Church Gadsden, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 7 - 9	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 9 - 15	Liberty, KY	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
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WHAT CAN I DO TO BE SAVED?

1. I MUST BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (John 8:24; Acts 16:32)
2. I MUST REPENT OF MY SINS (Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19)
3. I MUST CONFESS THE NAME OF CHRIST (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10)
4. I MUST BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16)