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Tithing In Malachi 3:8-12 and Its Implications for Christians in Edo Land

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Abstract: *The art of giving generally and tithing in particular have been abused as a means of our Christian service to God. The implications of Malachi 3:8-12 in relation to the giving of our tithe as prescribed by God were presented. Tithing was a requirement in order to support the personnel that were working in the Temple. The giving of our tithe as it is in obedience to God, has several dimension of blessing that accrue not only to the giver but others around and within him or her. The individual's obedience is blessed materially and spiritually. The needy around the individual giver and in the society at large. It is obvious that the lack of the understanding which is resulting to a violation against God which truncate the blessing of God upon such an individual who lacks the attitude of giving particularly in tithing and therefore, it becomes a violation against individual as he or she suffers lack.*

Keywords: Tithing, Christians in Edo Land.

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INTRODUCTION

Every child of God has an obligation and responsibility he or she needs to carry out. This obligation is a show of respect and reverence to God. There are many ways to demonstrate respect and loyalty to God, however, this work deals with the issue of tithing from the perspective of Prophet Malachi. It is generally accepted that tithe is a duty that every child of God should perform. It is in this direction that Chrystal noted that tithe was important to God that He established it as a principle five hundred years before the advent of Mosaic Law.

Conceptual Framework

This is the custom of giving one tenth of income or produce for religious purpose. It was known before the Law of Moses which is inferred in Genesis 14:17ff and was practiced in many ancient nations. The Law of Moses later stipulated that every 10th animal and one tenth of agricultural produce was to be given to God. The tithes were giving to the Levites Numb. 18: 21ff because they had no means of income for their religious service. The Levites were instructed to give a tithe of the tithe themselves to the priest Numb. 18:26. Tithe is an expression of gratitude or a means of expressing ones thanks to God for all his goodness.

An Overview of the Practice of Tithing

To have a vivid understanding about the origin of tithing, one needs to know that the first biblical reference of tithing is found in Genesis 14:20, which contain the account of Abraham victorious battle against some neighboring kings. After which he gave a tithe of his treasure to Melchizedek the High priest of

Salem (the theophany of God). To buttress the above ideal, Locke & Russell (1989), are of the opinion that “one should know when God instructs his people to give tithe to Him, but the first recorded instance in the bible about tithe giving is in Genesis 14:20, 21”. This is the first place that laid emphasis on “tithe or tenth” in the bible. However, Lock & Russell (1989), noted that the manner with which Abraham gave his tithe indicated some facts that tithing was a new idea, but most people in one way or the other had establishment and practices before his (Abraham) time. Hence it is said that “the lack of record leave open the possibility that God could have so instructed Adam and his sons about tithing”.

Again, Locke & Russell (1989), pointed to the historical aspect of tithing, to include the religious practices of people of many nations. Though there was no definite knowledge of how the practice began, “yet record show that there was the practice of Tithing in Babylon as early as the sixth century B. C, and Syro-Palestine in the fourteen century B.C, it also been trace to the Carthaginians, Greeks, Phoenician, Arabians, Chinese, Romans, Silicans, Gauls, Britons, and Saxons. This means that tithe took place in various places other than to the land of Israel”. It appears that the practice began as a voluntary and spontaneous act of worship an expression of gratitude to God and it was both a religious and a political gift. It was primarily used to support the temple personnel and temple enterprises. As such, the king usually collected the tithe since he often serves as head of both the temple and the court.

However tithe which begun as a voluntary and spontaneous act of gratitude became a legal and obligatory requirement under the Mosaic Law in about 1500 B.C. in other words, it was a conscious mind concerned by people who practiced it prior to Mosaic Law that God owns everything they had and as such, He needs to be appreciated with some parts of their resources. Furthermore, “as the Christians church emerged some time later after the last destruction of the temple by Romans around 70A.D, the ancient Jews ceased tithing as there was no longer a temple or priesthood ministry in need of support” (38), with this, the early Christians church service was held in houses with groups without a dedicated leader, because there was no building just as we have now. Hence the idea of tithing was not there.

Breuggenman (1982), opined “that apart from the primary function of tithing as regards the support to clergy, maintenance of Churches, and to assist the poor. It also goes ahead to lucrates financial funds for church construction of many magnificent cathedrals in Europe. The law of tithing was enacted from the church in 16th century and was enforced in Europe by secular law from 8th century. Then, in England, in the 10th century, payment was made obligatory under ecclesiastical penalties by Edmund 1, and the penalty was under the control of Edgar for some time”. According to Burkett (1991), in a way of the furtherance of the outlawed of tithe, Pope Gregory vii, made ownership of tithe, when trying to control its abuses.

Clenddenen & Taylor (2004), noted that “in 16th century, the protestant reformer, Martin Luther generally approved the payment of tithes to the temporal sovereign and his imposition of Tithes continued for the benefits of protestant as well as Romans Catholic Churches”. However, this was not without opposition. According to Clark (2016), opposition grew as a result of the imposition of tithing which causes decrease in the payment of tithes in different denominations. As a result, other countries like Italy abolished the idea of tithing in 1887. Ireland on the other hand also abolished the same act, “all the disestablishment of the Anglican church in 1871”. Buttrick et al. (1962), stated categorically that this led to the churches in Scotland dying gradually.

BIBLICAL CONSIDERATION OF TITHING

At the early date in the history of Israel race, Zuck (1991), pointed out that “God made it known that a definite proportion of the saint’s income should be devoted to Him, who is the giver of all. About “Twenty-five centuries ago” from the period of Adam until the time that God gave the law to Moses at Sinai”. But it will be a great mistake if the saints of God in those early centuries were left without a definite revelation, without knowledge of God’s will regarding their

obligation to Him, and the great blessing which resulted from a faithful performance of their duties. Consequently, Abraham gave one tenth of everything he had which shows an act of biblical tithing; as a result of the revelation or commandment he received from God which may not have been recorded in the scriptures. Abraham’s payment of tithe was recognition of the fact that Melchizedek is a priest, hence he “gave him the tithe as a worship acknowledgement to God. His giving displays a voluntary act. Again, Fretheim (1992), says that the pre-Mosaic reference to tithing is in connection with Jacob’s dream at Bethel. Jacob’s promise to God was to give him one tenth of all his blessings after he encountered Him in the dream. This indicates that “Jacob should be regarded as a tither who acknowledges God’s ownership and God’s rightful claim to all things”. Buttressing further, Hartley (2000), noted that it was also Jacob’s recognition that man has the responsibility to tithe all he receives from God. We can therefore infer from this and early incident that tithing was a common practice among godly men of the patriarchal age furthermore, tithe in the Mosaic Law which started as a spontaneous act of worship was made a legal requirement. It was not an offering in the strict place upon every man under the Law. Thus, the Israelite was left with no option in the matter of paying tithes. He or she either paid the tithe or they should be considered as law breakers.

In the words of Gerstenberger (1996), in the Old Testament, “there is an explicit record of instruction on how the Hebrew received tithing of the produce of their field, their livestock, and their possession. Moses stated that, the tithe of the herds or of the flocks, of whatever that passed under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. They shall not search whether it is good or bad, neither should it be change, all shall be holy; it cannot be redeemed (Leviticus 27:32-33)”. In a converse manner, Nelson (2004), stated, there was an instruction not to make any exchange of every tenth animal that was sacred to God, for another animal. Animal could not be sold for money to purchase another. The tithe that was paid to God in the temple has different instruction of which they were to be paid, and for what purpose were they paid. In fact, the first instruction about tithe was said to be agricultural products” and was to be used in annual celebration at one of the shrine’s worship, (Deut 12:5-8, 14:22:29). The implication of the annual celebration was evident in Deuteronomy 12, that it was great opportunity for Levites to participate in the feast, and serve a great unifying, patriotic, and religious occasion.

According to Locks and Rusell, “God gave specification instruction concerning different kinds of tithes, weather of seed of land or of the fruit of the tree, to the Lord (Lev 27:30)’. This was required from every one. Thus the tithe was to be given to support the priest and Levites and work of thy Lord (Number 18:20-24). In the view of Balentine (2002), there was another tithe

called the "Festival Tithe", which was primarily meant to support the Passover tabernacle and weekly feast. This tithe provided for keeping the national feast and custom of the Israelites. It helped them to take care of their traveling and other expenses during their stay in Jerusalem. And were later made occasion for further tithe which was allowed to come in monetary value. Nehemiah thus sets out to reinstate a contribution which has been previously set aside (among other uses) for the purpose of support for the Levites.

However, the central focus of the passages under examination is on the tithe as a means of support that enables the Levites to return to their various duties at the temple, and therefore to maintain the apparatus for the proper worship to God. According to Brown (1998), the Levites relied on the tithe contributions for their sustenance, whereas the priests' allocation of certain portions from the various sacrifices meant that they had at least some other means of support. It was mainly the details on the people's pledge, mention in verse 37-39 which deal with the issues related to first fruit and tenth of the tithe for the priests. The people agree to bring their tithes to the Levites. It is observed by Fensham (2008), that the seeming discrepancy between the people "bringing" and the Levites "collecting" the tithes can be easily resolved by a system whereby the Levites "collect" at the local "store centers" what the farmers "bring" to them. In turn the Levites bring to the temple storeroom the portion of the tithe that belongs the priest, it is unclear whether all the tithes collected are to be deposited in the temple storerooms or just the priestly portion and for the temple will be fully staffed and functioning.

Once again these verses summarize the various reforms that Nehemiah had put in place during his first term in Jerusalem, the events related in chapter 13 center on the people's failure to maintain their agreement to support the Levites with their tithes, and on the misappropriation of a room in the temple storehouse complex by Tobiah. The room Tobiah claimed had previously been used for the storage of offerings, including "the tithes of grain, wine and oil". It is suggested here by Fensham (1982), that Nehemiah was not present in Jerusalem while this neglect and abuse occurred. The length of Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem is not stated however, the arguments regarding the chronology of events are peripheral to the main focus of these passages; for this study the relevant details concern the importance of the tithe as it related to the support of the Levites and to a lesser degree the specific items that were tithed once Nehemiah had evicted Tobiah and cleansed the rooms, he sees to it that the "officials" should return to their duties, and the people should begin to bring their tithes to the storehouse once again.

The tithe in this passage is referred to as that which has been "prescribed for the Levites", an

indication that this particular use of the tithe was still considered to be its central purposes. Alexander & Rosner (2000), says that in addition to Tobiah's misuse of the temple facility, Nehemiah learns that "the portions of the Levites" (v.10) have not been distributed to them. Since these portions had been given to their rightful recipients, the ministering Levites had to return to their own towns in order to tend to their own land and make a living. This was in opposition to what the Lord had commanded; that the Levites were to receive tithes in exchange for the work of ministry in the temple and because of their lack of land inheritance. Once the Levites' rightful inheritance begins to flow back into the storehouse rooms, Nehemiah appoints four reliable men to take charge of the store and to ensure that they are properly distributed among the temple personnel (v.13). In all the three chapters, the point was emphasized that the requirements should be implemented as it is written in the law" (10:36),"required by the law" (12:44) or in response to the hearing of the law (13:3).

A new era of Jewish worship has started, worship according to the prescribed legal principles". Concerning the various regulations which were put in place by Nehemiah, this includes the tithe law, notes that the regulations did not necessarily correspond exactly to the Mosaic Law. The tithe system was clearly a vital part of the entire temple worship structure, enabling its ministers to serve without encumbrances. From Nehemiah 10:37-38 it seems that the Levites actually went to the towns of Judah and collected the tithes, bringing a tenth of the tithes back to Jerusalem to be stored. The system includes placing responsible men in charge to ensure that the system is managed effectively. As in 2 Chronicles 31 the newly reinstated tithes were to be stored in special rooms at the temple and used primarily for the support of the priests and Levites.

EXEGETICAL EXPOSITION OF MAL.3:8-12

This is the act of someone who denies the existence of something or someone, denies the potency of a superior or oneself and of others. Denial leads to disobedience which ultimately is a violation of order, standard, or requirement. The people had disobeyed God by robbing Him of tithes and offerings. Actually, when God's people are not faithful in their giving, they not only rob God, they rob themselves and rob others as well. God had shut off the rain and spoiled the crops because of their selfishness. Tithing, of course, is not "making a bargain with God"; rather has promised to bless and care for those who are faithful in their stewardship. Surely, God is not in need, He is not bankrupt. However, God wants our tithes and offerings as expressions of our faith and love toward Him. When a believer's love for Christ grows cold, it usually shows up in the area of stewardship and therefore leading the individual to live in denial.

Denier is a violation against God

Worship essentially is an expression of our awareness of who God is; it is honouring and praising Him for Himself any true worship must honour and exalt the Lord. Tithing as an act of worship is as old as Abraham, who gave tithes to Melchizedek, recognising that Melchizedek was the representative of the Most High God (Gen 14:20; Heb 7:1). Jacob vowed to God that he would tithe (Gen 28:22), so tithing predates the Law of Moses. However, tithing was officially incorporated into the Law of Moses as a part of Israel's worship. In bringing the tithes and offerings, the people were not only supporting the ministry of the temple, rather, they were also giving thanks to God for His generous provision for their own needs and deliverance. The word *denier*; is a verb *qal* perfect 2nd person masculine plural *rWfvb*. turn aside, out of one's course, from following prescribed rules, *yrex]a;mepers.*, abs., from attacking, *l[;me*; turn in unto for figuratively. turn aside from right path, from 'y, his commands, etc., revolting against the God as though leaving adenerated life. The people neglected the act of tithing by disobeying God thereby depriving the temple ministry of what it needed to keep doing the ministry. The temple storerooms were empty of produce and many of the priests and Levites had abandoned their service to go back home and work their fields in order to care for their families (Neh 13:10). The people had vowed to bring their tithes (10:34-39), but they had not kept their vow. God made and owns everything, He does not need anything that anyone will offer to Him (Acts 17:25). However, when God's people obey His Word and bring gifts as an act of worship with grateful hearts, this gladden the heart of God.

God's complaint against Judah is that, though He has called this people into a relationship with Himself, the people have refused to honour Him. This goes beyond disrespect; they have despised God's name (6). As the prophet pointed out, a son honours his father - and God had been a Father to Judah. A servant shows respect to his master; and God was rightly called "Lord" and "Master" by His people. Why then was God treated in Judah as unimportant? To rob means to steal, deprive of something rightful owned. Yes; man is doing continually with no fear of the wrath and judgment of God. Robbing God is a heinous. crime, to rob verb, *qal*, active, prefixed (imperfect), singular- masculine- third person *Gad* in His presence and with His knowledge is unthinkable, especially for these that claim t know and lice Him. Hebrew 4:13 says "But all things are naked and open unto the eye of Him with whom we have to do", no one would be foolish as to rob his heavily father, his benefactor, or the hand that feeds him. Rob: means" defraud, in trying to defraud God we only defraud ourselves. No man ever lost by serving Gad with his whole heart or gained by serving Him. But God will not endorse it.

Denier is a violation against oneself

God's covenant with his people are in most cases conditional. In robbing God, the people were not fulfilling the covenant they had made with the Lord: therefore, God could not fulfil his promise to bless them (Lev 26:3ff). Whenever we rob God, we always rob our-selves. We rob ourselves of the spiritual blessings that always accompany obedience and faithful giving (2 Cor 9:6-15). Physically, the money that rightfully belongs to God that we keep for ourselves never stays with us. The scripture is very clear on this in Hag 1:6 "You have sown much, and bring in little ... and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes". People who lovingly give their tithes and offerings to God find that whatever is left over goes much farther and brings much greater blessing.

It is a truism that giving is an act of faith and God rewards that faith in every way. According to LeTourneau, an industrialist "If you give because it pays, it would not pay". We give because we love God and want to obey Him, and because He's very generous to us. When we lay up treasures in heaven, they pay rich dividends for all eternity. The promise in Mal 3:10 was linked to the covenant the Israelites had made with the Lord (Deut 28:1-14), so if they faithfully obeyed Him, He would faithfully keep His promises.

Denier is a violation against others

Our disobedience not only affect the individual but also those around him. The remnant that returned to Judah after the exile had a great opportunity to trust God and bear witness to other nations that their God was the true and living God. If every church member would bring the Lord His due (10 percent of the income, the tithe), and then add offerings (as an expression of gratitude), our local churches would have more than enough for their ministries. And they would be able to share generously with the many other good ministries that deserve support. The needs of the priests and Levites were met from the sacrifices and also from the tithes and offerings brought to the temple by the people. The word "tithe" of one's grain, fruit, animals, or money (Lev 27:30-34; Neh 13:5). There were special storage rooms in the temple for keeping the grain, produce, and money that the people brought to the Lord in obedience to His Law. Whenever the people fill they would not be able to carry heavy produce all the way to the temple, they could convert it into cash, but they had to add 20 percent to it just to make sure they were not making a profit and robbing God (Lev 27:31).

Implications If Mal. 3:8-12 for Christians in Edo Land

Many Christians do not pay tithe simply because they lack knowledge of the biblical principle of tithing. Therefore, the need for Christians to organize training fir the their members, for the churches need through teaching on tithing and lay her emphasis on the rewards that God would honour who generous and

obedient tithe to her church, hence, those who know it and practice and follow biblical principles have a lot of benefits. Christians should pay their tithe it is another way to experience God's creative care and provisions. One will be strengthened in faith; generous given is faith-driven, not preacher-driven, impulse-driven or need-driven. Tithing is very important because it will guide your mind to remember that a day and time will come when you shall look back to see what you have done with your life. Vivid understanding of the church of This passage will help in teaching that God requires His people to tithes, for tithing is not part of ceremonial law, it is part of moral law not something that has a dispensation limitation, but is something that is binding on God's people in all ages.

Implication of Mal. 3:8-12 for the needy

The Old Testament tithe laws made provision for those within the community who were disadvantage in some way. These include widows, orphans and resident aliens. Each of these segments of the community, for various reasons, was unable to provide for themselves adequately. The common denominator in the list is that each group represented people of "precarious social status". Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and 26:12 indicate that special provision was made for this groups; tithe was designated for this purpose. Malachi 3:5 warns of judgment against those who oppress (or defraud) the widow, orphaned and alien. In discussing the use of the tithe, the tithe, like the Sabbath year, was to benefit the poor and the landless, thereby showing love to both God and neighbour.

Implication of Mal. 3:8-12 for the Spiritual Growth

Giving to the Lord's is not just fulfilling our responsibilities, but a way of honouring the Lord. The truth is that God honours those who honour him, he prospers them both physically and spiritually, while material reward may accompany obedience. In giving, Paul emphasizes the spiritual aspect by the various terms he uses to describe the collection for the saints in 2 Corinthians 8-8. He refers to giving as a "grace", and urges the Corinthians to excel in this grace, even as they seek to excel in other spiritual grace (2 Cor. 8:7). When giving is seen in this way, as an activity that context, Paul indicate that willingness and readiness is giving is "proof" of their love. In that sense, giving is a demonstration of faith and works; the external flows out of the internal. When Paul speaks of material blessings related to giving, he stresses that they are for the purpose of mire giving (2 Cor. 9:8-11). The Macedonians "first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5); their generosity began with their dedication to the Lord, a spiritual matter. The teaching of Jesus regarding possessions, and suggests that treasure in heaven will be the result for followers of Christ who are willing to share their wealth.

Implication of Mal. 3:8-12 for the Lord's house

Paul is reminding them that the priest receive their support and living of the temple. The temple was central place of worship for God's people, and the central place from which to distribute food, a situation that is no longer the case today. The produce store was used to supply workers, most likely when they ministered in their rotations. In the Deuteronomy texts on tithing it is evident that not all tithes were stored in the temple storehouses. Some of it was stored in the local towns for distribution to the poor and other needy groups. Some have suggested that the "whole tithe" referred to in Malachi 3:10 may have been that portion of the tithe that the Levites presented to the priests, that "tithe of the tithe". This portion would be stored at the temple for the use of the priests. The term is also used in Leviticus 27:30 and Numbers 18:21, where it refers to the fact that the whole tithe has been designated for the Levites.

Implication of Mal. 3:8-12 for individual

God's blessing is available to every human, but there are certain things that must be done to command the blessing. Giving is a force that attracts God's attention and blessing upon him and his descendants, Solomon gave unto God, and God appeared unto him and blessed him and gave him wisdom and material blessing. God said in Malachi 3:10 "bring all the tithes into my house. And when Christians carry out obligations, the Lord said I will pour out blessings and open the window, when believers give with all sincerity, the blessing of the Lord will definitely come down from heaven.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that Malachi 3:8-12 teaches every Christian to honour God with their tithe. Loyalty to God is not declared by words rather by obedience to the word of God. It is the requirement of God to give our tithe in order to meet with His purpose for the temple workers. Lack of obedience in this regard is to limit the purpose of God for the generality of his people. God in reality is the owner of all things but he has bequeathed our possessions to us to test our stewardship.

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