

SESSION THIRTY-THREE SUPPLEMENT

GIVING FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVER

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INTRODUCTION

In Malachi 3:7-12, the Jews are rebuked for their sin of "robbing God" by withholding their tithes and offerings. How does this passage relate to believers today who are not under the Law? What principles can we learn from this passage that are applicable to us today? In such a discussion, discretion must be used in application of Malachi 3 to those of us today. For example, part of God's promise in Malachi included blessing of "the land," a promise peculiar to Israel.

ISRAEL'S TITHING SYSTEM

A. Context of Malachi 3

The context concerns the calling of God to the Israelites to "return to Him" in repentance, so that God could "return to them" with blessings. Then, faithfulness to the Mosaic demands of tithing is taken as a particular example (see Deut 26:12-15 for the background to Malachi 3).

B. Objectives of the Tithing System

1. Provision and care of the Levites, the priests and their families (Lev 27:30-33; Num 18:24,26-28; and Deut 12:18).
2. Care for the poor (Deut 14:28-29).

C. "Food for the Storehouse"

The primary means of giving for Old Testament saints was by offering crops and animals. The sanctuary had store-chambers built for the purpose of retaining the gifts (2 Chron 31:11ff; Neh 10:33; 13:12).

GUIDELINES FROM MALACHI 3

- A. God has a rightful claim to our money and possessions.
- B. Failure to give to God is as though we were robbing God, and hence *sin* (Mal 3:8).
- C. In "robbing God," we are robbing ourselves. In Israel's case, they continued under *curse* (Mal 3:9).
- D. Giving is reflective of our faith in God, or the lack thereof.

- E. God is conscious of our giving as well as our lack of doing so (and improper giving!).
- F. God is not satisfied with "token" gifts, but rather an obedient heart (i.e., God is displeased when we hold back what we should be giving).
- G. Our giving affects others. When we stop giving, others will often follow suit (notice the phrase, "the whole nation of you" in Mal 3:9).
- H. Adverse conditions are not an acceptable excuse for refraining from giving. Keep in mind that Israel was poor and experiencing God's curse at the time He reprimanded them (Mal 3:9).
- I. Giving is not an end in itself, but a basis for God blessing us and meeting all our needs.
- J. God controls our circumstances that affect our prosperity, and He can alter them at His will (Mal 3:11).
- K. God loves to be put to the practical test where we step out by faith on His promises (Mal 3:10).
- L. God is anxious to bless the heart wholly devoted to Him (Mal 3:10). "The opening of the windows of heaven is a figure, denoting the most copious supply of blessing so that it flows down from heaven like a pouring rain (as in II Kings 7:2)" (Keil & Delitzsch, vol. 10, p 464).

NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES (selective)

- A. According to 1 John 3:17, we are to be ready to give to those in need.
- B. 1 Cor 16:2
 - 1. All should give.
 - 2. Giving is to be proportionate (and may also vary). "When prosperity comes . . . it should be used to give more, not necessarily to buy more" (Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, 86).
 - 3. "Lay by him in store"
In whatever manner we give, there still should be an ever-ready supply of money available to give out as the Spirit directs.
 - 4. Giving should be periodic.
- C. According to 2 Cor 9:7, giving is not to be done grudgingly or under compulsion. If not done willingly and joyfully, then it is not really an act of faith.