

## **TITHING: A MISSING KEY TO REVIVAL STEWARDSHIP SERIES**

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### **TEXT:**

**Malachi 3:1 “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. 2 “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. 3 He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. 4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.**

**Malachi 3:5 “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts.**

**6 “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.**

**Malachi 3:7 “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’**

**8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. 11 Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts. 12 “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.**

**INTRO:** Malachi, like Joel, is about end-time revival. Joel 2:28 prophesies the end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Malachi 4:5-6, also quoted in Luke 1:17, prophesies that God is going to send Elijah, the prophet revivalist who called Israel to repent during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel. He prophesies two comings of Elijah. The first is before the Great Day of the Lord. The Jewish people understood this as the coming of the Messiah. That is why all Orthodox Jews pray this after every meal, “May God in His mercy send us the prophet Elijah.” Malachi also prophesies the coming of Elijah before “the terrible day of the Lord.” This is His second coming when everyone will stand before the Lord on Judgment Day, and God will separate the sheep from the goats. The goats will go into the eternal lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation 21:8).

What we know about Malachi is found in this prophetic book. It is a series of messages or oracles given by a prophet named Malachi that was compiled into this last book of the Old Testament. Malachi means “my messenger.”

We also don’t have an accurate date of Malachi. We know that it is in the post-exilic period. The Temple had been rebuilt (Malachi 1:10, 3:1, 3:10). The book uses the Persian word for governor (Malachi 1:8). The best guess of scholars is that Malachi was written around 430 BC.

Haggai and Zechariah, which were written before Malachi, had prophesied greater glory coming to the Temple and to Israel. But instead of revival, Israel had more poverty, oppression, divorce, moral and spiritual laxity, pride, indifference, lukewarmness, skepticism, permissiveness, and thus a very discouraged people.

Malachi is a revivalist because he is trying to revive the spirituality of the people of Israel. If the people repent, God will give them an unprecedented blessing. Malachi 3:1-12—this is the text for today. I feel that the Church is like the Laodicean church. We may have the numbers, and we may have what looks like apparent success, but we are lukewarm. One of the indicators is that the Church is not tithing. According to the latest Gallup Polls of 2021: **Only 37% of those who attend church tithe.**

God has a lot to say about money. The Bible contains 2,000 verses on money. This will impact your life, marriage, health, and your finances. Last week we talked about the Type of Giving that pleases the Lord. I understand that we are in a challenging season economically because of the pandemic, but I believe that God wants us to prosper in times of adversity. But we must be faithful to do the basics. Here is a running commentary of Malachi 3:1-12.

## I. RUNNING COMMENTARY ON MALACHI 3:1-12



- A. Malachi 3:1** “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.
1. “My messenger who will clear the way before Me” is talking about John the Baptist.
  2. **Matthew 11:9** “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. **10** This is the one about whom it is written, ‘**BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.**’... **14** And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.”
  3. John the Baptist is the Elijah to come. He carried the revival mantle of Elijah. Elijah called the nation of Israel to return to the Lord during the most apostate time of King Ahab and Jezebel’s reign.
- B. Then Malachi prophesies the appearance of Jesus. Malachi 3:1b** “And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.
- C. Malachi 3:2** “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. **3** He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. **4** Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.”
1. Jesus is going to purify His people through His blood shed on Calvary and the sanctifying fire of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Malachi 3:5** “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts.
1. Here Malachi shifts into “the terrible day of the Lord” when God judges the wicked (Malachi 4:6).
- E. Malachi 3:6** “For I am the LORD, I do not change; I the Lord do not change.”

1. His nature (all knowing, all powerful, being omnipresent) cannot be changed, nor His character of love and faithfulness.
2. The emphasis in Malachi is that God is faithful to His promises. He will bring revival and prosperity to His people if they repent.
3. **Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).**
- F. **Malachi 3:7b “Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “But you said, ‘In what way shall we return?’”**
  1. Return to the Lord. The Hebrew word for return is the word *shoov* or *shoob* (e.g., Joel 2:12). Return means to repent of your sins and to come back to God.
  2. **Malachi 1: Return to God in Faith**
  3. **Malachi 2: Return to God with My Standard Concerning Family (“I hate divorce” - Malachi 2:16)**
  4. **Malachi 3: Return to the Lord with My Standard Concerning Finances**
  5. **Malachi 4:4-5: Return by Turning Your Heart Toward Your Children: “He will restore [Hebrew: *shoov*] the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”**
  6. **Any time revival is promised, it is preceded by repentance (Joel 2:28, Acts 3:19). Repent by being faithful with your tithes and offerings.**
- G. **Malachi 3:8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.”**
  1. **Everything is God’s, but He wants you to give 10% back to Him. Why? It is because He wants our hearts. Matthew 6:21 “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” He also wants to train His children to be loving givers. By withholding your tithe, you are robbing God.**
  2. Everything belongs to God, but 10% was set apart as a reminder that He owns everything and that He was first in one’s life.
  3. You are robbing me? Stealing was a violation of one of the Ten Commandments. To steal from one’s neighbor was a grave sin. Stealing from God and the church is unthinkable, but we do it each week with our tithes and offerings. I remember one of the churches that I was working with for TheCall Pasadena at the Rose Bowl. The CFO of this megachurch in LA had embezzled the church account, and he was on the run. The FBI had traced him to Hawaii.
4. **The tithe is holy to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30-33).**

5. On the gross and not the net. Your company is doing a favor for you by taking money out for taxes. But if you were self-employed, you would first tithe and then give to the government second.

6. The offering is beyond the tithe.

**H. Malachi 3:9 “You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.”**

1. You are under a curse. A curse, but the opposite of blessing is a curse.

2. We are not under a curse in the New Testament (Galatians 3:10-14), but the principle of blessing that comes with obedience will not be there.

**I. Malachi 3:10b “And try Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts...**

1. Tithe literally means “ten,” and the number ten stands for a test.

2. There are two dimensions of testing. One is that we are tested. Tithing was instituted for our benefit to help us to obey and manage our resources. It is a test of our character. Tithing also keeps us from the love of Money.

3. There is a tremendous lesson learned from the feeding of the multitudes.

Jesus has the people sit in groups of 50 and 100. Management and organization is part of God’s DNA. Jesus takes the bread and gives thanks—acknowledging that everything comes from God the Father. He then gives the bread to His disciples. This is delegation. The people eat until they are full. Customer satisfaction. Then He collects the 12 baskets full.

Stewardship. How are we managing what God has given to us?

4. But this is the only place in the Bible that God says to “test Me”!

**J. Malachi 3:10c “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” says the LORD of hosts.**

5. A literal open heaven of rainfall. If there is a possibility that God would do this, an open heaven would do it. He mentions “windows of heaven.” There are many windows in a home. Multiple blessings.

**K. Malachi 3:10a Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house...**

1. The tithe went to the Levites, the priests. The Storehouse was the place where the priests would receive the offering to feed their family, and they in turn would perform priestly duties for the people. And the money was given to the poor.

2. Today, the Storehouse is where you get fed spiritually.

3. You don't eat at McDonald's and pay at Burger King. I love Pat Robertson, but Pat Robertson is not going to marry you, dedicate your baby, visit you in the hospital, or do your memorial service. But our pastors will. Let me also say that because we have a team, I don't have to run around like some pastors do, who are also the custodians of their church, but because of your tithe, I am able to help our church reach nations through HIM and WU. My job is to feed and lead this church.

**L. “Pour out such a blessing... All nations will call you blessed.”**

1. The whole purpose is to reach nations. It is all about winning souls.
2. They will witness the blessing in your life, which will be a testimony of God's love and goodness. We are to be light to the world. We see how we are to use unrighteousness mammon to reach the lost (Luke 16).

## **II. ARGUMENTS AGAINST TITHING**

### **A. TITHING IS UNDER THE LAW, AND I AM NOT UNDER THE LAW**

1. **Abraham tithed 430 years before the Law. Then tithing was incorporated into the Law.**
2. **Genesis 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.**
3. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek. He is a type of Christ. He had no beginning and no end. His name means “King of Righteousness,” “King of Peace” (Salem).
4. Melchizedek is either the Lord Himself or at the very least a type of Christ, and we see Abraham, the father of our faith, tithing to him.
5. Abraham is the father of us all (Romans 4), and the book of Hebrews states that we are priests under the order of Melchizedek.
6. **When people say that I am not under the Law, what are they saying?**
7. Transcending truths that are true in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. Did you know that murder was under the Law? Do we say because it is under the Law, can we murder? Stealing is under the Law; so now that I am under grace, can I now steal? I am under grace; does that mean we throw out the Old Testament? Which of the Ten Commandments do you want to throw out because we are under grace? Grace gives us the power to obey the commandments.

8. **Matthew 5:17** “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (NIV)
9. People have told me that Jesus was part of the Old order until after His resurrection and the birth of the Church. After His death and resurrection, Jesus gave the Great Commission, so what do we do with these verses? Matthew 28:19-20 “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... teaching them to obey everything that I commanded you.”
10. How are we to exceed what the Pharisees had done? By not stopping tithing but by tithing motivated out of grace and love.
11. God gave us the gift of righteousness by grace. Grace demands more than the Law. Jesus is full of grace and truth. He is saying, “I am requiring more than the Law.” The standards are not lower but higher, but God gives us the power to do so. The ordinances of not committing murder or adultery have not changed. Tithing has not changed. There is grace not to commit adultery and murder. There is grace to tithe.
12. “I don’t give ten percent because I am under grace and not under the law.” Great, then you will be giving more than 10% because grace is just the starting point.
13. Billy Graham, who passed away in 2018, the most respected leader in our time: **Billy Graham said, “The Bible says that it was Christ’s love for the church that caused him to go to the cross. If Christ loved the church that much... I must love it too. I must pray for it, defend it, work in it, pay my tithe and offerings to it, help to advance it, promote holiness in it, and make it the functional, witnessing body our Lord meant it to be.”**
- B. JESUS TAUGHT TITHING: Matthew 23:23** “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.” (NIV)

1. If I said that Jesus taught tithing and it is in the Bible, would you do it?
2. Tithing is one of the principles that 10% belongs to God. This was true before the Law and affirmed in the Law, and Jesus affirms it in the New Testament.
3. Jesus is saying that justice, mercy, and faithfulness is the Law. Do we say that because we are under grace and not Law, that we don't have to be just and merciful and faithful? Jesus said that you should do the justice, mercy, and faithfulness and without ceasing tithing.
4. The two institutions that God established before the Law was tithing and the Sabbath.

### **C. I MUST PAY OFF MY DEBT FIRST**

1. My debt is first to God. The tithe belongs to Him. I must not rob God to pay others. God will help you get out of debt, but we must first obey God. When you tithe, He shows Himself strong. He will provide.

### **D. I CAN'T AFFORD TO TITHE**

1. You cannot afford *not* to tithe. It is better to have God's blessing on the 90% than have all without the blessing of God. Giving is not a financial issue; it is a Lordship issue. People under the Lordship of Jesus should stop quibbling about tithing and rationalization. When the firstfruits is set apart and holy, the rest becomes holy. **Romans 11:16 If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.**

### **E. MY LITTLE WON'T MAKE MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE**

1. It has nothing to do with the amount but has everything to do with obedience. The poor widow could only give two small coins (Luke 21:1-4).

### **F. WHEN I MAKE MORE, THEN I WILL START TITHING**

1. The Bible says that if you are faithful with little, then you will be faithful over much. If you are not doing it now, you won't tithe when more income comes in.

### **G. YOU DON'T KNOW MY FINANCIAL PROBLEMS**

1. I know what they are saying. Pastor, "I will not be able to meet my budget." The day that we allow our financial problem to color our giving is the day we stop trusting in God, thus limiting Him from providing for us supernaturally. People do whatever they have to do to adjust. It is usually the argument that I don't want to lower my standard of living and tithe.

### **H. I MAKE A LOT OF MONEY. IF I TITHE, I WOULD BE GIVING AWAY AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF MONEY AND I DON'T KNOW IF THE PASTOR CAN HANDLE THAT.**

1. This argument came from a person I know.





2. You are not God. You don't know if the money is going to corrupt the pastor. You obey God, and God, out of love, knows how to correct His leaders.
3. People do that all the time. Major Christian athletes made headline news when the media found out that they tithed on their multimillion-dollar contract.

**CONCLUSION: Let's repent and turn our hearts back to God!**

