

## TITHING AND BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

### Old Testament

#### *Torah Land*

Num 26:52-56 Divvying up land according to size, by casting lots

Lev 25:8-17, 23-24 Jubilee and land belongs to God

Lev 25:25-28 Redeeming and receiving back sold property

#### *Torah and Sabbaths*

Deut 5:12-15 Sabbath Day (4<sup>th</sup> Commandment)

Exod 23:10-11 Sabbath Year intro

Deut 15:1-18 Sabbath Year details

#### *Torah and the Poor*

Exod 22:21-27 No oppressing the poor, charging interest, or holding their clothing overnight

Lev 19:9 Don't harvest to the edges, repeated in 23:22

Lev 25:35-46 People falling on hard times

Deut 16:9-12 Festivals celebrated with the poorest of the poor

Deut 14:22-23, 28-29 Tithes of all crops are eaten before the Lord so we may fear him, and the three-year tithe is set apart in their towns for the poor to come and eat their fill – this is so important it becomes a central part of their liturgical dedication of the land to God (Deut 26:1-15). Combined with the sabbath year, there are 3 years every 7 in which the needy are pretty much totally bankrolled.

### Old Testament and Tithing

#### *Representative Passages*

\* Gen 14:18-20 Abraham tithes his victory spoils to Melchizedek

\* Lev 27:30-33 Tithes of the ground, trees, and animals

\* Num 18:20-28 Tithes for Israel's priests

\* Deut 12:10-12 Tithes after Israelites take possessions of Canaan

\* Deut 12:17-19 Tithes eaten in the presence of the LORD where he assigns

\* Deut 14:22-23 Annual tithes of all produce - so they will fear the LORD

\* Deut 14:27-29 Tithes for Levites and the poor

\* Deut 15:19-23 Not a tithe but sacrificing/eating the firstling of their flocks before God

\* Amos 4:1-5 The wealthy love to bring tithes every three days

\* Mal 3:8-12 Post-exilic Jews rob God of tithes, thus robbing themselves of God's blessing

## Recap

### *3 Functions of Tithing in the OT*

- \* Acknowledge that our bounty is a gift from God
- \* Provide for the poor folk with whom we share life
- \* Provide for those who dedicate more time to serving God than making money

### *4 Additional Observations*

- \* All people tithe – including those who live off of the tithe
- \* All resources are tithed – crops, tree fruit, animals, war spoils
- \* Some tithes are given away, while others are consumed in the presence of the Lord
- \* Tithing is only one part of Torah economics. It takes place alongside debt forgiveness, leaving fields partly unharvested, interest free loans, providing for those who fall on hard times, freeing slaves every 7 years, and returning acquired land every 50 years.

### **How is the church's situation today different from OT Israel?**

- \* We lack a centralized sanctuary to visit in order to “eat in God’s presence.”
- \* We lack a priestly class, though we have ministers who serve God full time.
- \* We do not live in “our” land, but we are surrounded by unbelievers. So most of the poor in our cities are not “our poor” with whom we do life together as it was for Israel.
- \* The “aliens” in our cities are not “our aliens” in the sense that they are guests in our land. They don’t consider themselves outsiders in relationship to God’s people, but outsiders in relationship to a wider society of which committed church-going Christians are also a minority.
- \* We live in a society that collects taxes from us and uses them to finance assistance programs to help all the poor in our cities - so we are not the only help around.
- \* Believers in our cities lack structural unity and shared life together. We don’t function as a single people of God such that we even have a clue what other Christians are and are not doing.
- \* Most occupations do not receive their bounty in large lump sums a few times a year. It is usually divided up equally throughout the year.
- \* Most people in our society function in a cash economy.
- \* Housing differs considerably today. Many rent, some live in houses owned by banks, and the government subsidizes housing for low income people.

### **A Kingdom Context for Understanding NT Teaching about Money**

- \* First last, last first
- \* Least are greatest
- \* Leaders serve
- \* Poor are raised, rich lowered
- \* In the kingdom none go without
- \* Our church family is true family
- \* We are not *necessarily* constrained by geography, biology, mortality, property, profitability

## **New Testament**

Matt 6:1-4 When you give alms...

Matt 6:19-34 Storing up treasures...

Matt 19:16-30 Rich young man

Matt 25:31-46 Sheep and goats

Luke 12:13-34 Rich young fool and much more...

Luke 16:1-15 The shrewd manager parable

John 13:21-30 Judas' role as treasurer

Acts 2:42-46 All things in common

Acts 4:32-25 All things in common

Acts 6:1-6 Neglected Greek widows

1 Cor 7:23-40 Loose attachments to worldly things

1 Cor 9:1-14 Right to earn living from gospel

2 Cor 8:1-5 Generosity in giving

2 Cor 9:1-15 Giving to Jerusalem church

Eph 4:28 Earn a living so you will have something to share with the needy

Phil 4:10-20 Giving with no strings attached

1 Tim 5:3-16 Providing for widows and relatives

Heb 13:16 Share what you have

Jas 1:9-10 The lowly vs. the rich

Jas 1:27 Pure religion

Jas 5:1-6 Warning to the rich

Jas 4:1-6 Satisfying cravings and spending on your pleasures

Jas 4:13-17 Boasting about plans to make money