

We might think, some of us, that a tenth is a lot to give to God. You know, if I earn 200 pounds, I've got to give God 20 pounds. That sounds like a lot. Well, let's look at Israel under the Law of Moses. Remember, the law was an inferior dispensation; it was based on an inferior covenant. Under the law—and you remember, we pointed out the difference between law and grace. The law operated through commandments. The Israelites had no options under the law. The tithe didn't belong to them. The Bible says the tithe of everything is the Lord's. If they held on to the tithe, they were holding on to something that didn't belong to them. But, that was only the beginning of their giving. It wasn't the end, it wasn't the roof, it was the foundation. Look for a moment in Deuteronomy 12:6. God is speaking about the place to which they'll go to worship and bring their offerings. And notice as we pointed out last time, when they worshiped, they always brought an offering. Listen to this list:

There to that place you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hands, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks.

Actually, there were seven different kinds of offerings. The tithe was only the foundation. It wasn't the roof, it was the beginning, not the end of their giving.

Now, we've said that through tithing Abraham and Jacob acknowledged the Lord as their God, as their high priest. And this principle is applied to us as Christians in Hebrews 7:8. The writer of Hebrews is discussing the fact that Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, and that the Levitical priests received the people's tithes. This is what he says:

Here mortal men [that's Levitical priests] receive tithes, but there [and that's in the case of Melchizedek] he receives them of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

I want you to notice that the receiving of tithes in the high priesthood of Melchizedek is not in the past tense. He receives tithes of whom it is witnessed [Melchizedek] that he lives forever. In other words, the acknowledgment of the priesthood of Melchizedek by tithing is still just as applicable as it was in the days of Abraham. It has not passed out of date.

Now I want to emphasize we're talking about grace, not law. This is not commandments; this is what the Holy Spirit does in your heart. But the Holy Spirit is also the author of the Bible. And when the Holy Spirit has his way in your heart, you'll do what the Bible says. Not because God waves a stick at you and says, "I'll beat you if you don't," but because His Spirit has touched your heart.

Now, in Hebrews 8:6, the writer is contrasting the Old Covenant under Moses which was law—as I said, because the law was given through Moses—and the New Covenant through Jesus, which is grace. Grace and truth came through Jesus. And this is what he says:

But now he [that's Jesus] has obtained a more excellent ministry than that of the Levitical priest, inasmuch as he is also mediator of a better covenant which was established on better promises.

Isn't that wonderful! We have a better covenant established on better promises. Let's thank God. But what I want to ask you is this, and it's simply a matter for you to decide. If we have a better covenant established on better promises, could it possibly be appropriate for us to offer God less than they offered under the Mosaic covenant? It seems to me there is no way that that could be logical. If we have a better covenant, let's respond in a better way. And as yet, as a matter of fact, as far as I know, and I don't keep anybody's books, I would say in many, many sections of the Christian church, professing Christians today respond much less generously than Israel did under an inferior covenant.