

Week 17
114/251

Transforming Daily
“ . . . *In tithes and offerings . . .* ”
Malachi 3:8

This passage has been used many times by many ministers to stir up the church to give responsibly. Whereas I agree that the church needs to be stirred up to give, and to give not only responsibly, but generously, I disagree that this passage is directed to the church. Even in general principle, for the church, this passage falls short. The children of Israel and the church are two different entities.

In this passage, historically and prophetically, the prophet Malachi is telling the children of Israel (such as they were post exile) that if they would repent and turn back to God, they would be forgiven. Most of them did not repent, and of course, soon thereafter came the 400 silent years. One of the areas of repentance that Malachi was calling them to was in the area of giving, and in particular, giving tithes and offerings from the fruit of their farming and herding. Historically, the children of Israel were to give according to the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 27:30-34 as well as passages in Numbers and Deuteronomy) as it is clearly stated in Leviticus 27:34. The church has no such law.

Then how is the church, the individual that makes up the local church, supposed to give? The believer is to give generously, as needed, and as God has prospered them (for instance, 1 Corinthians 16). Because God has not changed, and He is the same yesterday today and forever, in general principle, the tithes and offerings He required of the children of Israel is not a bad start, but it isn't the half of what the believer should be giving (notwithstanding that the children of Israel brought fruits, vegetables, grain and livestock to a literal storehouse). If there is anything for the church to share in this passage in Malachi, with the children of Israel, it is the principle of planning to give, preparing to give and purposefully giving. The amount that the church should be giving, however, should far exceed what was required of the children of Israel to give. Why?

The reason the believer should give more to the church (by the way, not only money, but time and talents) is simply because he or she doesn't have to. Think I'm speaking in riddles or semantically? Read the context of Malachi. The giving is literally food and natural resources, not currency and coinage (v.10). What was the purpose? So that nothing and none of them would go lacking, or be dependent on the resources of the nation (local government) in which they lived. Further, the practice of bringing into the storehouse, in light of the fact that it was commanded by law and national distinction, would invoke the blessing of God upon them (v.10-12), protect them from the enemy (both natural and supernatural v.11), and glorify God (v.12).

Therefore, believers (the church) should plan to give, prepare to give and purposefully give, not because it is only responsible to do so, but also a privilege. I always say that if God has a person's heart, He has their wallet (time and talents) as well. How can I be sure? It will be reflected in tithes and offerings.