

The following suggested or possible grouping of Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and limited commentary are, hopefully, obviously thematically related. And the concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *whether tithing retains a part of the new covenant*.

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of July 16, 2005

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

Because of a decade of Internet chatter about *no temple, no tithe*, and because of the past teachings of the Radio Church of God, of its immediate successor organization (the Worldwide Church of God under Herbert Armstrong), and of that organization's derivative splinters, the practice of tithing within the greater Church is not as well understood as it was a century ago. Within the past fifty years, the teachings of the Radio Church of God have been assumed historically correct. It is now periodically taught within the Evangelical Church that under the Levitical priesthood prior to the destruction of the temple twenty and thirty (on the third and sixth year of a seven year cycle) percent of an Israelite's increase was retained in a first, second, and third tithe system. But as Scripture passages concerning tithing are today read, an application of common sense must be applied: a grain farmer outside of Jerusalem would not have brought his entire crop to the temple. His crop was thrashed, winnowed, and stored in his barn on his acreage. What he took to the temple was what he intended to give, either as tithe or offering, with offerings commonly being livestock that could transport themselves—be herded—to Jerusalem. Grain had to be carried.

The first passage read should be 1 Corinthians chapter 3.

Commentary: The Apostle Paul tells the saints at Corinth that what he writes is still milk, for they are not yet able to handle solid spiritual food. He writes that the divisions among them verify that they are babes. Likewise, the divisions within the greater Church today verify that saints haven't yet matured. So Paul's writings must be read with the understanding that what he writes is spiritual milk.

In verse 9, Paul writes that the saints are God's field, God's building, both analogies [field and building] appropriate and at work in the typology Paul uses.

What Paul teaches about Christ Jesus forms the foundation of the Church (vv. 10-11) There is no other foundation. And Paul says that saints are God's temple (vv. 16-17). Not many temples, but one. Not a temple built of stone, but of flesh and blood. So those of Israel that look for another stone temple

to be built themselves build on another foundation other than the one Paul laid. And those would-be saints that today teach no temple exists are without spiritual understanding, and should be avoided. Again, saints are both the field of God that brings forth its early barley harvest and its later wheat harvest as well as the building/temple of God, in which this royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) both dwells and serves God as the Levitical priesthood served *YHWH* in a stone and timber building.

The reader should now read Deuteronomy chapter 14, verses 22 through 29; followed by Numbers chapter 18; and Leviticus chapter 27, verses 30 through 33.

Commentary: The English word “tithe” means “a tenth,” or “a tenth part.” A half century ago, one Sabbatarian fellowship asked its members to *tithe* twelve percent, thereby transforming the noun into a verb referencing the act of religious giving. But God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7), the person who gives voluntarily and not under compulsion.

The tithe of the land is the Lord’s, and is holy. Israelites in Egyptian bondage didn’t pay a tithe to God—tithes were not paid until Israelites entered Judea, the promised land. And disciples are today the field of God; they equate to Judea, with some bringing forth a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Matt 13:8). Therefore, a tithe of this increase belongs to God, and is holy to Him.

Here is where the disciple who is not a cheerful giver gets him or herself into trouble: in the transition from a stone temple to a temple of flesh and blood, from the laws of God written on two stone tablets to these same laws written on the hearts and minds of disciples, the physical increase obtained through the work of an Israelite’s hand becomes the spiritual increase obtained through doing business with the knowledge of God.

The reader should now read Luke chapter 19, verses 11 through 27; Matthew chapter 25, verses 14 through 30; and Matthew chapter 13, verses 10 through 15 and 34 through 35.

Commentary: A disciple can “trade” or do business with the knowledge of God that has been given to the disciple through Jesus returning to heaven, a far country, but a disciple cannot put his or her knowledge out to a moneylender. A person places money with a moneylender, or banker. Likewise, a disciple can trade or do business with the talents or abilities the disciple has. A disciple can also bury or conceal these abilities as a disciple can bury or conceal his or her knowledge of God, but the disciple cannot place his abilities with a moneylender. Again, what the person places with a moneylender is money.

Both parables [money and talents] were given within days of Jesus’ crucifixion. This subject was very much on Jesus’ mind at the end of His earthly ministry.

Disciples are to be about the business of discipling others who have been drawn by the Father (John 6:44) and chosen by Jesus (John 115:16). Disciples are to be about the work of their Father and Elder Brother. They are to be doing the work of planting and watering those to whom God has given growth. And they are to use the knowledge of God that has been given to them in their planting and watering; they are to use the talents and abilities God has given them in their planting and watering. And if for whatever reason they choose not to do business for God, they are to put their money out to those who will bring God a profit when Christ returns. For if they will neither do business for God nor put their resources out to moneylenders, they will lose what they haven't yet received: eternal life. Tithing is a salvational issue.

The disciple who, today, refuses to tithe because no temple, nor Levitical priesthood exists—or who refuses because Christians are not under the Law of Moses—bears his or her coveting of that which belongs to God as uncovered sin, the reality of taking away what a person doesn't have. This person, still desperately in need of spiritual milk but almost always believing him or herself mature, places wealth or possessions or family before God, thereby assuring him or herself the loss of the first as well as the loss of salvation. And because this spiritual infant believes that he or she is spiritually mature, this disciple will refuse instruction and will refuse to hear the voice of Jesus. It isn't that this person cannot hear. This person will not listen.

A salt covenant was made between God and Levites (again Num 18:19) that allowed Levites to eat of the offerings sacrificed on the altar. *YHWH* [singular in usage] was to be their portion and inheritance; they were to have no inheritance in the land. Likewise, disciples are to be in the world, but are not of the world (John 17:6-19). Disciples are to be the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13), which is not the main dish but the seasoning added to make the main dish palatable. But if disciples lose their ability to season the harvest of the earth, they are good for nothing. They are as a buried talent or pound. They neither make humanity, consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32), more palatable to God, nor do they produce an increase for God.

The reader should now read Matthew chapter 23, verse 23; and Luke chapter 11, verse 42.

Commentary: Again near the conclusion of His earthly ministry, Jesus in chiding the Pharisees said that they tithed those things that were really unimportant, but left undone the weightier matters of the law. He said that it was right for them to tithe the leaves of herbs, but that their priorities were wrong.

In typology, the Matthew 23 passage is the last Adam naming the animals from which no help-mate could be found, and as such is comparable to Genesis 2:18-20. The last Adam's help-mate created from a wound in His side (i.e., the Church as the last Eve) was to have its priorities correct while not leaving undone the small matters. The Church was to give to God the tithe of even small increases while doing business for God; in that the purpose of the ministry is to prepare the laity for ministry (Eph 4:11-15).

Under the new covenant, which has the laws of God written on tablets of flesh and the temple of God made of flesh, tithing hasn't been abolished but becomes the work done in producing a harvest for God—and to do this work, physical resources are needed. A disciple will either spend his or her own resources in doing this work, utilizing talents and knowledge of God to the best of the person's abilities, or the person will place his or her talents and knowledge (commonly manifest in the form of moneys) with another who is doing a work for God. Tithing did not end with the destruction of the stone temple, nor did the law of God cease to be with the loss of two stone tablets.

The reader should now read 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 1 through 10.

Commentary: Disciples are living stones, the living stones that form the temple of God. They are that royal priesthood that replaced the Levitical priesthood. And as the chosen tribe of Levites paid tithes to the family of Aaron (Num 18:28), so too will disciples pay tithes to the fractured Church hierarchy—to the work that the disciple determines is of God, built upon the foundation that Paul laid, the foundation that is Christ Jesus. Many more works claim to be of God than are of God. It might well be easier at this beginning of the 21st Century to do business for God, utilizing God given talents, than it is to find a work that is of God.

Paul writes to the saints at Corinth that he robbed other churches in that he accepted support from them while he was with in Corinth (2 Cor 11:8). The implication of what Paul writes is that tithes should be used locally: he would not have robbed other churches if he had accepted support from them while doing a work among them. Paul asks the saints at Corinth to forgive him for not burdening them, this burdening in the form of taking tithes and offering from them (2 Cor 12:13). For through Paul not burdening them, they failed to properly respect him.

The person conducting the Sabbath service should close services with two hymns, or psalms, followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.

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