

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 remains a part of the new covenant—and if so, how should tithing be practiced.*

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of July 30, 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 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, many disciples during their third tithe years borrowed moneys to balance budgets, or within the United States, disciples accumulated consumer debt during their third tithe years, suggesting that the third tithe was not properly understood. The practice as administered by the Radio Church of God and its derivatives didn't produce its desired effect although those disciples who gave a third ten percent of their incomes were blessed in many different ways.

Reviewing the reading of the previous two Sabbaths, the practice of tithes and offerings being collected and spent locally is suggested in the Apostle Paul writing to Corinthians that he robbed other fellowships when he spent moneys sent to him by those fellowships for his support while in Corinth. Also, in his letter to Timothy, Paul says that local elders who preach and teach are worthy of being supported. Coupling these practices with the understanding that saints are the temple of God and as such dwell in the Jerusalem above, arguments about no temple existing are fallacious. Saints are spiritually called and chosen as the tribe of Levi was physically chosen, and as Levites the priesthood paid tithes to the family of Aaron, who was additionally chosen to stand before God, disciples as the spiritual royal priesthood will pay tithes and give offerings to their teachers who have a greater responsibility placed upon them. Teachers who have taught disciples to be lawless will be denied in their resurrection (Matt 7:21-23). Teachers who have taught disciples to disregard or not be faithful in keeping the least of the commandments (the Sabbath commandment is usually taught as least) will be called least in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:19) if their righteousness exceeds the Pharisees (v. 20), who had the Law but didn't keep it (John 7:19). Therefore, with receiving tithes and offerings goes greater responsibility to "get it right," so to speak. Again, to whom much is given much is expected. This pertains to knowledge and ability; it doubly pertains to moneys. The teacher or would-be teacher of spiritual Israel who is unwilling to work in a secular vocation as Paul worked with his hands as a

tentmaker will inevitably prove to be one of Satan's disguised ministers of righteousness (2 Cor 11:14-15).

The first passage read should be Deuteronomy chapter 14, verses 22 through 28, especially verses 29 and 29; followed by Deuteronomy chapter 26, verses 12 through 19; followed by Leviticus chapter 27, verse 30.

Commentary: The idea that seems apparent is at the end of three years (the third and sixth year of a seven year agricultural cycle), an Israelite was to bring forth the full tithe (or tenth part) of his increase, and was to give this tithe to the Levite that dwelt within his town. The implication is then that this tenth part was taken to Jerusalem or wherever *YHWH* placed His name on the first, second, fourth and fifth years, but was held locally on the third and sixth years. The land was not harvested on the seventh year, but allowed to rest anticipating Christ's millennial reign when humanity as the field of God will not be harvested. All human beings will be born of Spirit during the Millennium—the Holy Spirit will have been poured out on all flesh. Death will have been defeated. So until Satan is loosed from the bottomless pit for a short while (three and a half years) following the thousand years, the earth will not be harvested; the field of God will lie fallow and will be given its rest. There will be no death or harm in all of the Lord's holy mountain.

A certain amount of ambiguity exists in the Hebrew text concerning the tithe, plus an extra or second tithe, the tithe that is eaten by the circumcised Israelite where the Lord placed His name. The language suggests that the purpose of the tithe was to learn to fear God. If the Israelite ate his entire tithe where God placed His name (the temple at Jerusalem), what would he have given to the temple? The implication is that the Israelite delivered his tithe to the temple, and that an additional tithe or tithe of the tithe was retained by the Israelite or returned to the Israelite for the Israelite to eat while in Jerusalem. Instructions to bring the "full" tithe to the Levite and fatherless on the third year would not be necessary if the accepted practice of every Israelite on years one and two was to deliver the full tithe to the temple. The tithe was brought to the temple, but the Israelite ate of this tithe while in Jerusalem. No valid reading of the Hebrew text has twenty percent of the Israelite's harvest being brought to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, an additional tithe is indicated in the language. Therefore, this second or additional tithe is a tenth of what the Israelite brought to Jerusalem.

But on the third year, the tithe was not taken up to Jerusalem, but was given to the local Levite. Again, the language does not suggest that this is a third full ten percent of the Israelite's increase...the tithe anticipates that a portion of the spiritual harvest of Judean hillsides will be brought to the temple in the Jerusalem above, or to the local Levite. Of the ten servants of the noblemen who went into a far country (Luke 19:11-27), seven apparently would not have the nobleman rule over them. They rebelled against the nobleman, just as the Church has rebelled (and will again rebel) against Christ—a person will not have Christ rule over the person when he or she teaches that Jesus abolished the Law, teaches that disciples are under a dispensation of Grace. Those who teach disciples this heresy

profess love for their Savior, but they doggedly refuse to keep or to teach others to keep what they consider the least of the commandments. They agree murder violates Jesus' commandment of love. They agree that adultery violates love. They agree that coveting violates love. But they will not enter the rest that Jesus as the *Logos* gave human beings at creation. And this refusal, once the Tribulation begins, will be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will not be forgiven. Thus, the reality of the parable Jesus spoke as He was about to enter Jerusalem that last week of His physical life has the seven, all His servants, sending an envoy after Him, telling Him that they will not have Him rule over them, that they will not enter His rest but will come (or attempt to come) before God the following day. These seven will be slain upon His return.

But three of Jesus servants do not overtly rebel. One (as a field following a Sabbath year's rest) brings forth a tenfold increase. One (as a field the second year following lying fallow) brings forth a fivefold increase. The third servant buried what was left with him, and neither did business with it nor placed it with moneylenders. This third servant didn't bring forth any increase for the nobleman—and as such, this servant rebels against the nobleman. This servant didn't bring his full tithe to the local Levite at the end of the third year, but kept untouched and unused that which could have brought the nobleman profit.

The juxtaposition of the third tithe and the third servant hasn't knowingly been previously taught; thus, this juxtaposition might seem strained when first heard. It is not. As previously covered, a disciple receives from Christ knowledge of God as a descriptive aspect of the second covenant.

The reader should now read Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 34; followed by Hebrews chapter 8, verse 11.

Commentary: Receipt of the Holy Spirit causes the laws of God to be written on two tablets of flesh, the hearts and minds of disciples. Receipt also causes all who are born of Spirit to know God. Disciples do not need to be taught that there is a God and that the Bible is His inspired Word—the first two lessons of every biblical correspondence course are not needed. So what Jesus left with disciples is knowledge of God, this knowledge imparted through the Comforter. Therefore, every disciple has knowledge of God and actually must be taught (not that they should be) to reject keeping the laws of God.

The historical record reveals that disciples have not received, with birth from above, wealth or physical possessions. Disciples are in this world but are not of this world—they are born of Spirit, and have their citizenship in the heavenly realm. Thus, it is unreasonable to suppose that the wealth Jesus as the nobleman journeying into a far country left with ten servants is actual money. The wealth is, again, knowledge of God, with everyone receiving the same knowledge, but not necessarily the same talents hence the difference in the two parables. The servant or disciple who does business with this knowledge and produces a tenfold increase receives twice the reward as the servant who produces a fivefold increase. Not so concerning talents. The servant who has five talents and produces five more

receives the same as the servant with two talents and who produces two more. And as with knowledge of God, talents are given by God. Therefore, the servant who buries his talent, like the servant who buries the wealth left with him, will have what little he has taken away. In other words, the servant who buries his wealth or his talent will lose both as well as his salvation.

The reader should now read Exodus chapter 32, with emphasis on verses 25 through 29; followed by Numbers chapter 25 and Deuteronomy chapter 33, verses 8 through 11. The reader should also read Genesis chapter 49, verses 5 through 7.

Commentary: The sons of Levi were, for cause, scattered throughout the other tribes of Israel. They did not have a physical inheritance, but were set apart for temple service.

The reader should now read Numbers chapter 1, verses 47 through 54; chapter 2, verse 17; chapter 3.

Commentary: All of Israel was the firstborn son of YHWH (Exod 4:22), but the tribe of Levi was given as ransom for the firstborn sons of Israel. The firstborn belong to God (Exod chapter 13). And the firstborn is linked with the Passover through Jesus as the first of the firstfruits also being the paschal lamb of God, a Lamb appropriate to the size of God's household.

Disciples are today the firstfruits of God, the firstborn (from above) of spiritual Israel, the nation promised to Abraham that will eventually encompass all of humanity. When the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, every human being will be a spiritual son of the patriarch. As such, disciples today are the spiritual reality of the tribe of Levi. They are the royal priesthood, a nation of kingly priests [or kings and priests], holy to God. Whereas the rebellion of Korah (Numbers chapter 16) forms the shadow of an actual event that will happen in the Tribulation, Korah's rebellion also foreshadows a persistent problem in the Church. Since the entire Church is holy, belief is that anyone can teach the Word of God, not just those whom God has chosen. This was a problem for Paul. It was a problem Peter addressed, and it was a problem John needed to address (3 John 9 & 10). It is today a problem that has greatly grieved the Body of Christ, for many teachers and would-be teachers have deceived themselves into believing that they have been called into the ministry. Most have not been so called.

Levites were scattered throughout the cities of Israel. They went to Babylon with the nation, and some of them returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of God (Ezra 8:15-20). Disciples, today, as little lights shining during this long spiritual night that began at Calvary, are scattered throughout spiritual Babylon, with some of them having returned to the Jerusalem above to rebuild the house of God there. This spiritual priesthood is eligible to receive tithes and will pay tithes; this spiritual priesthood has no inheritance in Israel. Its gain is God's, not its own. And for a disciple not to support the spiritual Levites as well as the fatherless dwelling in his city to the extent of a full tithe on the third and sixth year is for the disciple sin.

The above concept will produce some confusion and considerable discussion. Within the physical model is ambiguity, with the tenth calf under the rod being the tithe, meaning that no tithe was owed if only nine calves were born to the Israelite farmer. Nevertheless, the calf that opened the womb belonged to God. So even though a tithe might not be payable, redemption of the firstborn remained in effect. Likewise, competing and complimentary concepts are in play when it comes to the spiritual nation, which is holy in its entirety. Disciples will tithe, and they will support each other while remembering the poor (Gal 2:10). They are, if doing a work for God, eligible to receive tithes and offerings, but they should not teach unless called to do so. They should not preach or teach until mature in the faith, something that doesn't often come to young men (or women) through four years of theological training. However, if they do preach or teach, they are entitled to be supported because of their work, but supported by those disciples locally affected by their work. The mega-denomination that vies with other mega-denominations for the tithes and offerings of disciples is anathema to Christ. Inevitably, these mega-denominations take for their television ministries moneys that should be spent locally. They promote lawlessness. In their slickness [professionalism], they seem like ministers of righteousness, but in actuality, they use their size to persecute disciples who rightly teach other disciples to live by the laws of God written on hearts and minds, the same laws that were codified on stone tablets when the temple was also a stone building. They are spiritual Philistines that, like Goliath, defy the armies of the living God and must be slain. As Philistines, they live in the promised land of God's rest, but they are not of spiritual Israel. As Philistines, they neither look nor act like humble servants of God, servants of whom the world was not worthy (Heb 11:38).

So many disciples have sent their tithes and offering to spiritual Philistines that there is today a hesitancy to tithe. Instead, an offering plate is passed each service to collect what might be given. Each fellowship of *The Philadelphia Church* will have to decide if passing an offering plate at every service is a practice the fellowship wants to continue. The funding of the fellowship should come from those disciples who attend, and should come from their tithes and offerings. Their tithes should be budgeted locally even if doing an international work—and the poor should be remembered, for disciples are themselves without a physical inheritance in this world. Their reward, their gain, their inheritance is in heaven, where their citizenship is.

Again, tithing is a salvational issue; for not tithing equates to burying a disciple's knowledge of God and of this son of God's talents. But tithing doesn't necessarily mean sending money to someone else's ministry. It can mean this. It can also mean doing business with one's own knowledge and talents and moneys, with the disciple accountable to Christ for producing gain for Christ. Before doing business, however, the disciple needs to be fully aware of the responsibility that comes with preaching and teaching.

There is a first, second, and third tithe that is all the same tenth of an Israelite's increase just as there was a first, second, and third servant who appeared before the nobleman upon his return. All three received the same coin, but not two coins or three coins. Each had to do business with one of ten

coins. Likewise, disciples are to do business with one of ten coins. This coin is the disciple's tithe when manifest as money.

The reader should now read Psalms 11, 14 & 15.

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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