

This is not my study but I agree with it as far as I could see. It's very interesting and informative. It saved me from having to work up the same study.

They did a better job than I would have done, too.

R.F.

## A HISTORY OF TITHING FROM THE BIBLE PART ONE OF

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**PREFACE** Any person who hungers and thirsts for the righteousness of Jesus Christ experiences the ongoing miracle of Christianity: deep personal identification with the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and the other godly women and men of the Bible. Such identification produces assurance that one's motivations, speech, and works are growing in a godly direction, yet the struggle to live godly is always a very difficult but enriching experience (Rom 7:14-22). One is guided by the same understanding of the Law as those who died in the Faith (Heb 11). With failures in living as Christ has shown us, which are more than likely daily, one experiences the battle of the flesh against the Spirit and Spirit against the flesh (Gal 5:17; Ps 19:12-14). The repentance that follows is powerfully described by the mighty apostle Paul (Rom 7:22-25).

Eternal life, God's purposes for all humanity, His grace and the Lamb of God as a sacrifice for the sins of the world were foreknown by the Father before time began and before the creation of the universe (Tit 1:2; 2Tim 1:9; 1Pet 1:18-20; Acts 2:23). God defines what is good and what is evil (Gen 2:9,17; 1Jn 3:4). His understanding is infinite and He knows the end from the beginning (Ps 147:5; Isa 46:10; Acts 15:18). The definitions of sin and spiritual life are the same for all those who will be in the first resurrection. They are all members of the one Faith, one Hope, imbibing of the same Spirit (Eph 4:4-5), and this is irrespective of the time and culture in which they have lived, since God does not change (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8; 1:12). For example, both Moses and Jeremiah, though in their own cultural times, understood, like Paul, that circumcision is of the heart (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25-26). Similarly, David, king of Israel, though he restored the whole Levitical system, understood that God did not want the sacrifice of animals (Ps 51:17; 40:6-8; Isa 1:11-20). This understanding of David and Isaiah is consistent with that of the writer of Hebrews and all the saints (Heb 10:5-10). The OT Levitical system contains prefiguring sacrifices (lambs, goats, bulls, etc), other symbols (shewbread, incense, ark, etc), and a priesthood that suggested the priesthood of Jesus Christ and of the saints (Ex 19:4-6; 1Pet 2:5,9; Rev 1:6). Whatever the nature of the changes made, as the reader presently perceives, in the light of the NT, there has to be a continuing coherency, as alluded to in the previous paragraph. Most of us may readily agree that the tabernacle and temple prefigured the Church (Acts 15:14-17; Isa 33:20). We might readily agree that the sacrifices, tabernacle and temple prefigured the work of God and the Lamb of God (Rev 19:7; 21:2,3,9,10,22). Yet are our concepts consistent? To fully show how these things are integrated and beautifully coherent would take at least a lengthy book. This paper therefore cannot claim to be "The History of Tithing from the Bible," because the subject is so vast, being part of many aspects

intimately connected with the tabernacle, temple and priesthood service. Our paper offers a careful and biblically consistent presentation about support for those who serve God and His sheep as shepherds with Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 21:15-19; Jer 23:3,4), who provide godly care to the poor (Ps 82:3-4; Matt 5:3; Jas 2:5), and who uphold the Festivals (Isa 56:1-8; Ezk 20:1-32; Col 2:16-17). Answers given here, we believe, agree with the known biblical rationale that shows us the spiritual meaning and practical applications of sacrifices, offerings, circumcision, tabernacle, temple, etc. Hubert Krause spent months of work on the initial paper which he gave to me for editing and further input. His research and compilation was immense and I thank him. I also thank my wife, Lois, for her invaluable help. Orest Solyma (Melbourne; 22 Jan.; 24 June, 1998)

## A HISTORY OF TITHING FROM THE BIBLE GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Sacrifices and offerings are aspects of the Law of God, which Law is perfect and continues to transform the lives of those who follow the Shepherd (Ps 23:1-2; 51:6-7). That which is perfect does not change and produces ongoing spiritual growth. For example, though the Son of God never sinned, He grew in wisdom, in stature, in favour before God and men because He lived entirely by the Will of God (Lk 2:52; Jn 5:30). Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Messiah, learned obedience by the things that He suffered and by the trials He experienced, yet He was always sinless (Heb 5:8; Isa 28:16).

He has told us all in Matt 5:17-18: Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill (i.e., to magnify [Ps 138:2; Is 42:21] and to reveal obedience according to godly sincerity and Truth). For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away (Rev 21:1), one jot or one tittle will by no means pass away from the Law till all is fulfilled (the Law is holy, righteous, and good [Rom 7:12]).

However, we find that animal sacrifices are abolished, circumcision is not obligatory, and the physical rituals of the Day of Atonement cannot be carried out. How do we reconcile such changes in the Law with Christ's statement in Matt 5:17-18? Sacrifice, as a principle, is eternal (1Pet 1:18-20; Rom 12:1). Circumcision of the heart, ears, eyes, mouth and whole life has always applied to everyone (Ex 6:12; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 6:10; Acts 7:51; Col 2:11). Jesus is our atonement as the Lamb of God from before the creation of the universe (1Pet 1:18-20). Because this paper challenges accepted conventions and traditions held by tithes-observant churches, it is worth saying again that the Bible upholds the principles of support for those given the responsibility and the gifts to nurture and teach the disciples in the Way, support for the poor and needy, and support for observance of the Festivals typifying the Plan of Salvation. The problems seem to be in: (1) making righteous interpretation of Scripture which is contrary to petrified traditions; (2) making godly judgments from Laws based within a theocratic society but now within the present evil world; (3) explaining, in sincerity and Truth, how biblical principles and practices for today's disciples do not contravene the spirit of the Law. The problem of

the Law is in spiritual perception, godly perspective, and application according to the Will of God, and not the traditions and imaginations of men (cp. Matt 7:21-23). The Pharisees practised their Law but were of their father, the Devil (Jn 8:44). They kept the Sabbaths but did not know their meaning (cp. Isa 1:12-18; Amos 5:21-24; 8:10; Hos 2:11). This document shows that generally accepted interpretations of Scripture about tithes are erroneous. The following exposition shows how the laws of sacrifices, offerings, and tithes are applicable to Christians. The reader is urged to persist in careful reading of this paper and not to let apparent anomalies deter completion of this fairly lengthy study. Please refer to all Scriptures listed. Understandably there is further need to expound the meaning of sacrifices, various offerings, tabernacle and temple typologies and priestly functions. This will be addressed in a later paper.

## PART ONE TITHING BEFORE THE LEVITICAL SYSTEM

### INTRODUCTION

The word “tithe” (Heb ma`aser; the tenth [part]; Strong’s No. 4643; Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Item 1711) is not encountered in Scripture until we come to Genesis 14:20. The first offerings (Heb minchah) mentioned are in Genesis 4:3-4: those of Cain and Abel. Both were apparently worshipping the same God, at the same ‘sacred’ time, and outwardly with the same mind. Abel’s sacrifice and offering were accepted. Though Cain came before the same God (so he thought) and understood that ‘sacrifice and offering’ were required, he determined how that should be done (Col 3:5; Eph 5:5). Cain’s self-determination presided over God’s Will (Heb 11:4; 1Jn 3:12; Jude 11; Rom 12:1-2; also see Jn 8:37-39; Matt 15:5-9). Worship in spirit and in truth was beyond his comprehension (Jn 4:24).

It becomes progressively clear in the OT that sacrifices, offerings and tithes are integrated parts of the same worship system in Israel. Conclusions made about one aspect must be alike in principle to other components of godly worship. It is the righteousness of God that is required rather than the sacrifices of animals (Ps 40:6-8; Heb 10:5-10; Ps 50:13-15; 51:16,17; Isa 1:11; Jer 6:20; 7:22,23; Amos 5:21-25; Mic 6:6-8). In looking at these Scriptures and in considering their message it is clear that pureness of heart is foremost (Ps 51:10,19). The Pharisees and Sadducees obeyed the Law—as they saw it—but were rejected by Christ, who always does the Will of His Father (Matt 23:23,28,33; Jn 8:44; Matt 7:21; Jn 5:30; 1Cor 15:24,28).

### ABRAHAM AND THE TITHE (Gen 14:16-20)

A common belief about what the Bible says is that Abraham, the father of the faithful, paid his tithes to Melchizedek on the basis of some universal law of tithing which was then in force. This law was codified when the nation of Israel was established.

What the Bible does say:

Abram, victorious over the armies of the kings, had rescued his nephew Lot and brought back all the goods and captives previously taken by enemies. He was met by Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, who blessed him and to whom Abram gave tithes of all or, as most translations render it, a tenth of everything.

The Bible does NOT say that Abram was obeying a set law prescribing that a tenth be given; and that God had commanded him to pay this amount. Perhaps this biblical example implies that tithing was obligatory? We cannot argue for or against a decision from silence on a matter.

A closer examination: Note that Abram gave Melchizedek “a tenth of everything” he had brought back from battle. Abraham will be in the first resurrection, is therefore a part of the Bride of Christ, and is therefore a Christian (Gal 3:8; Heb 11:10). Abram was “giving” as opposed to “paying” a tenth. Melchizedek did not use any compulsion of law to collect this tenth. By contrast, in Lev 27:30-33; Num 18:24; Deut 14:22-29, the words “give” or “gave” are not used in describing the obligations of the Israelites to tithe in the Law of Moses.

Christians in various churches are urged to follow Abraham’s “tithing” example, but the means of this tithe precedent, going to war to save, is precluded from any explanations. This could hardly be called a consistent use of precedence.

Abram was giving a tenth of the spoils of war as Heb 7:4 says. Some of the possessions he had recaptured belonged to Lot (v 16), but most of them belonged to the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (v 11). None belonged to Abram, who refused to take anything that belonged to the king of Sodom (vv 21-24). How can it then be stated that Abraham was acting in accordance with a universal tithing law which was later codified? Nowhere else is there any reference to Abraham tithing.

Tithes were paid of crops from the land or of animals to a long-term Levitical priesthood (Lev 27:30-31). The spoils of war are not an increase from farms, orchards or ranches. After the battle, Abram was left with no more than he had possessed previously (v 24). So there was no “increase”! There was, moreover, no biblical teaching that a tenth of the spoils of war was subject to tithing.

Consider the following two examples. When Israel “spoiled” the Egyptians, there is no evidence that any tithes were paid on their acquisitions, even if these spoils are to be considered as back wages due to them for their years of slavery (Ex 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36). They did later make liberal offerings to the building of the tabernacle.

The Israelites defeated the Midianites in battle and divided the war booty (Num 31:1-12). One five-hundredth was taken from half the total booty given to the men of war and was allotted to the priests. One fiftieth of the other half given to the ‘congregation’ was allotted to the Levites. There was no set tithe—one tenth—of the booty given. There was no agricultural increase—the fruits of human effort and God’s blessings. The

Mosaic instructions given by the LORD (v 25) regarding the spoils of war did not include the requirement to tithe, even though the booty included cattle and sheep (Num 31:9, 26-31).

We see then that Abram's action in giving a tenth to Melchizedek was not in accord with any clear law of tithing then written or unwritten. Abram may have been responding, in part, to customs within the religious culture of his day. He did recognize Melchizedek as the high priest of God (Heb 7:1). He retained nothing of the spoils, so nothing was "tithable". They would have been mostly goods and possessions, treasures and valuables, we would assume, along with captive slaves and animals. Abram would have realized (if a tithing law were in force) that since only new crops and animals were subject to the tithe, he was not required to pay.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that Abram tithed on the spoils of war. He gave a tenth to Melchizedek, most to those who had been robbed, and some to those who had helped (Gen 14:21-24). Whenever this example is used to induce people to tithe it seems that other problems inherent in this historic event are overlooked. If Melchizedek was the preincarnate Jesus Christ, who were his supporting priests? Who were his subjects in Jerusalem? Does this historic event suggest that the first public preaching of the Gospel was to Jebusites (Gal 3:8)? This is a problematic example to use to induce others to tithe. But this OT event is used as part of the argument to persuade people that it is an important precedent and example of tithing by the "father of the faithful" (Gal 3:7-9; Rom 4:12,16; Isa 51:2). This is a precedent and example of great importance, but is it of tithing?

**ABRAHAM AND HIS TIMES** For Abraham, the principle of the tithe was not something new for in his Babylonian cultural environment the practice was common. Cuneiform tablets contain frequent references to tithing in ancient Chaldea and Ugarit in Syria. The great temples of Babylonia were largely supported by the esra, or tithe, which was levied on prince and peasant alike. Tithing in ancient cultures is invariably associated with a sacrificial system and offerings to a god or gods. (See W. von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, [Eerdmans: 1994], pp 188-98; A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, [University of Chicago: 1977], pp 183-98; W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, [SCM: 1987], Vol 1, pp 141-77; Harris, Archer, Waltke (editors), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, [Moody Press: 1980], Item 1711, and 1711c,h; G. Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, [Penguin: 1983], pp 127-8; 132-3; 161-4; 196-200; 369-70).

The *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Douglas, Hillyer, Bruce, et al (editors), [IVP: 1988]), which is a popular three-volume Bible dictionary, makes this introductory comment: "The custom of tithing did not originate with the Mosaic law (Gn. 14:17-20), nor was it peculiar to the Hebrews. It was practised among other ancient peoples" (TITHES, p 1572). More detailed verification is in the above sources.

Abram, who was familiar with these ancient practices common in Ur, Haran, and amongst the Canaanites, gave, as a freewill offering of thanksgiving, a tenth of the

spoils of war; a thank offering of a tithe for the very likely miraculous deliverance of all and for the retrieval of the stolen goods. Perhaps an additional reason for the offering was that it was made to a king-priest, Melchizedek. Nevertheless, it was voluntary. Admittedly, the writer of Hebrews uses Abraham's example to compare it to the tithes the Levites received (Heb 7:5). But more on this later.

WHO WAS MELCHIZEDEK? The HarperCollins NRSV Study Bible says Melchizedek was a Canaanite priest-king. Footnotes in the Jerusalem Bible (Darton, Longman & Todd: 1966) say that 'several of the Fathers even held the opinion that Melchizedek was a manifestation of the Son of God in person.' The NJB 1985 edition does not include this comment. The Soncino Press Chumash has a footnote saying, The Midrash identifies him with Shem (as do some Targums on the Pentateuch (W.R. Inge & H.L. Goudge, Hebrews, [Cassell: 1924], p 61). The DSS (Dead Sea Scrolls) fragment, 11QMelch, which identifies him as the Elohim who takes his place in the divine council in the midst of the elohim (cf. Ps 82:1).' G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, [Penguin:1990], pp 300-301), has: He [The Almighty God] will assign them (i.e., the captives given liberty) to the Sons of Heaven and to the inheritance of Melchizedek; for He will cast their lot amid the portions of Melchizedek, who will return them there and will proclaim to them liberty, forgiving them the wrong-doings of all their iniquities.

Gerhard von Rad in his Genesis commentary, (SCM: 1972), makes these comments (p 179): Ps. 110 connects the Melchizedek tradition with the Davidic throne and since Ps. 76.2 uses the name Salem for Jerusalem, one must here hold to the identification with Jerusalem. The supposition of a pre-Israelite city-king of Jerusalem does not cause the least difficulty since the discovery of the correspondences between the Syro-Palestinian city-kings and the Pharaoh during the fourteenth century B.C. In it were discovered letters from a prince of Jerusalem. The name Melchizedek is certainly old-Canaanite (cf. Adonizedek, Josh 10.1). The combination of both offices, priest and king, in one person was not unusual in the ancient Near East (e.g., in Phoenicia). The commentator goes on to say that this priest-king was a heathen (p 180), but adds: ... the most important thing is that Abraham received the blessing of the precursor to David and the Davidic dynasty, that even Abraham had recognized his duty toward Jerusalem and its king (p 181).

The Jesuit, Leopold Sabourin, in The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning, (Alba House: 1974), expresses similar views: Melchizedek, king at Salem, the Jebusite city, was a priest of el-elyon (God-Most-High: Gn 14:18), worshipped by the Phoenicians and the Canaanites. In a way David installed Yahweh in Zion, to replace the former divinity. In return (cf.

Ps 2:6), Yahweh proclaimed David king and priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4) and made with his family an eternal covenant (cf. also Pss 89:3,4,28,29,36; 132:10ff) [p 358].

The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, (New York: 1944), has this interesting comment: Melchizedek, as described in Heb. 5:10; 6:20; ch. 7, was without father,

without mother, without genealogy. This statement means that his pedigree is not recorded (cf. Ezra 2:59,62). This mode of expression is ancient. Thus Urukagina, king of Lagash (c. 2450 B.C.), who is famous for his economic reforms, said that he had neither father nor mother, but that the god Ningirsu appointed him; he was probably a usurper. Melchizedek is further described as having neither beginning of days nor end of life, of whom it is testified that he lives. He suddenly emerges from the unknown and as suddenly disappears; it is not known whence he came or whither he went; neither birth nor death is assigned to him; he is a type of undying priesthood.

The identity of Melchizedek and his significance are controversial. If a claim is made that he is literally without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life (Heb 7:3), that he is the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, then we have Jesus Christ living and ruling in a Jebusite city in the days of Abraham. The Jebusites were heathen. Who were his helpers in his temple? Would some of them have formed a pre-Levitical priesthood? Such questions seem to be unaddressed when claims are made that Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ directly ruling over a heathen city. Furthermore, such an interpretation overlooks the mother of Jesus Christ in Rev 12:1-5 (see Isa 54:1,5,13; Ezk 16:3,45). A more comprehensive addressing of this subject will be forthcoming in another paper.

**JACOB AND THE TITHE (Gen 28:20-22)** A common belief about what the Bible says is that Jacob, like his grandfather Abraham, was committing himself to tithe on his future blessings from God on the basis of a law of tithing then in operation.

What the Bible does say: Jacob made a vow, pledging to God a tenth of all his future blessings if God stood by him.

To whom did Jacob give his tithe? To Melchizedek if he was still in Salem? To Isaac? Did he just burn all his tithes? Jacob's example of offering to tithe is problematic in terms of application today.

Insistence on tithing must give intelligent answer to, "To whom does one tithe?" And if one does tithe, then how does one determine who should receive it? Jacob's vow to tithe conditionally was made in Gen 28:20—before Levi, his son, was born. The Book of Jubilees (c. 200 BC), an apocryphal work supposedly revealing Moses' visions during his 40-day stay on Mt Sinai (Ex 24:18), says that Jacob tithed to his son, Levi (Jubilees 32:8-15).

The Bible does NOT say: that Jacob was obeying a set law prescribing the giving of a tenth; that God had commanded him to pay this amount. Why would Jacob have to vow to give God a tenth of everything if a tithing law from God already required it? to whom, and how, when and for what purpose Jacob gave this tenth he vowed to God.

A closer examination: Jacob promised God a tenth of "all You will give me," but only if (v 20) God would be with him and would bless him.

Perhaps he was trying to bargain with God (he still had many hard lessons to learn), but at any rate his preparedness to give his tenth was conditional upon God fulfilling His end of the agreement. Can any individual lay conditions upon a law God has established? The paying of the tithe, as we see in the example of ancient Israel, was not conditional but obligatory. It was God's and holy to Him (Lev 27:30,32).

If tithing were a universal law, then Jacob would have been obligated to pay a tenth of his increase to God; he would have had little choice in the matter! Furthermore, Jacob also used the word "give", which, as we have seen, is not used when describing the tithe-payer's obligations.

Arguments used to persuade people to tithe on the basis of Jacob's example are not well-founded.

The Talmudic scholar, Rashbam (1085-1174), is cited in the Soncino Chumash as saying that Jacob's tithes were made in the form of sacrifices, presumably burnt offerings. "All" a person's acquisitions, however, were not tithable, according to the law of the tithe later set down for Israel. What was tithable were those items ordained by the law as subject to the tithe, i.e., one's crops and animals. So to assume that Jacob was acting according to the demands of an unwritten tithing law later to be outlined to the Israelites as part of the Old Covenant is not biblically provable. What Israelite ever tithed on all that he was given or acquired? See the later discussion which takes Lk 18:12 into account.

**JACOB AND HIS TIMES** The vow to tithe by Abraham's grandson, Jacob, was in accord with common practice among the Semites and other ancient Middle Eastern cultures.

Abraham lived until the boyhood of Jacob, who was probably fifteen years of age when Abraham died. It is therefore quite natural to conclude that Jacob followed the pattern of his grandfather and father in using the concept of the "tenth" as the basis for offerings to God. But how and to whom does one give offerings and tithes according to the will of God?

Presumably, if Melchizedek were with us today we would be pleased to tithe to him. But who can be equated to Melchizedek today?

**Conclusion:** As the reader will have already deduced, Jacob was making a promise to offer in thanksgiving a tenth of all future blessings God would bestow upon him.

Offerings based on all acquisitions is reasonable.

Such offerings take into account the total of one's perceived and measured blessings (Deut 16:17; 1Cor 16:2; 2Cor 8:12-15). For Jacob, who still had much to learn about faith in God, it was perhaps also a matter of self-preserving expediency. He may have been seeking to make a deal with God by which he would be protected from his brother Esau and could return safely to the land promised him (Gen 33:17-20).

**THE TITHE FROM ABRAHAM TO MOSES** A common belief is that an unwritten law of tithing was in continuing force from the earliest times, and that this law was ultimately tabulated and given to Israel as part of the Levitical laws of the First Covenant.

What the Bible does say: Apart from the usage of the word “tithe” in the examples of Abraham and Jacob, there is no other reference to the tithe until the law for ancient Israel is introduced in Leviticus 27:30-34.

Let us consider a few examples where we might logically expect at least some mention of the tithe in the OT.

**JOB** There is no reference to tithing when Job’s vast wealth is discussed. He is described by God as blameless and righteous, fearing God and shunning evil (1:1,8). Job describes himself as: giving to the needy and to the poor (29:12-16; 30:25; 31:16-19); taking care of the widow (31:16); taking care of the orphan (31:17-18). How is it that, in reminding God of his good deeds in these areas, Job never once, as part of his defense, mentions any “faithfulness in tithing” on his part? To whom would he have tithed?

**JOSEPH** (see Gen 41:28-49; also 47:20-26) As ruler of Egypt, Joseph decreed that the Egyptians who lived on the land he had acquired for Pharaoh pay to the king one-fifth of their crops for the 7-year period of good seasons. If he were aware of a universal tithing law one would assume that, as a principle, one-tenth, rather than one-fifth, of the crops would have been demanded. One might argue that his decisions may have been premised on the principle that one-fifth (a double portion for the firstborn [see Deut 21:17; Ex 4:22; 16:5,22; Job 42:10; Zech 9:12]) was a means of future national redemption of Israel and Egypt from famine.

How significant is it that in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 19:3-24:8), where the commands and statutes of God are set down for the people, there is no mention of tithing even though the festivals of God are noted (23:14-17)? The Israelites were instructed to bring the firstfruits of the land into the House of God (23:18-19). They were told to make burnt offerings, peace offerings, and offerings of sheep and oxen (20:24; 25:4). We see in the whole of the Mosaic text, Gen to Deut, that tithes are a part of a larger OT system of theocratic worship. Notice the amplification with regard to festival gifts and expenditure in Ex 23:17,19a (which is in the context of ratification of the Covenant), in Deut 12:5-7,11-15,17-19,21,26,27; 14:22-29; 16:10,11,13-17. Please notice how these references to offerings and tithes in Deut are consistently to do with the festivals.

**Conclusion:** It would seem that Abraham, in instructing his descendants, would have informed them about any law of tithing. Yet where is the scriptural evidence for Isaac, Joseph, or any of Jacob’s descendants tithing to specific human sources until the Levitical system was set up under Moses? The same argument might be used with respect to the Sabbaths and Festivals. Argument from silence is not proof. However, we may infer the Passover and the resurrection from Abel’s sacrifice and from Cain’s murder, and from Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22 and Heb 11:17-19). We may infer Sabbath observance by the patriarchs from Gen 2:2-3; Heb 4:4-5; Ps 95:11; et al. It is clear that a separate paper is needed to address this topic. But to

whom would the patriarchs have consistently tithed? How would we understand that Abraham had the whole Gospel if it were not for Paul telling us in Gal 3:8? Would not the patriarchs, along with Job, have left some scriptural evidence that a universal tithing law was in operation during their lifetimes? Our discussion makes it clear that notions of tithing were known. Their application seems markedly different to what so many understand today.

The patriarchs were spiritual leaders in their own right, so to whom would these patriarchs have regularly tithed? There is abundant evidence for offerings and sacrifices. However, regular tithing cannot be adequately accounted for. Patriarchal sacrifices, offerings, and voluntary tithes are expressions of the heart and are personal expressions of Divine blessings. It is clear that the patriarchs expressed gratitude, generosity and worship, and associated these with the concept of firstfruits, firstlings and offerings (Abel: Gen 4:4,5; Noah: 8:20; Abraham: 12:7,8; 13:3,4,18; 22:2ff). Gen 22:9 and Heb 11:10,17-19 show us that Abraham anticipated the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Christ is the Firstfruits of God, and God's means of redemption (1Cor 15:20,23; Col 1:15; Heb 12:23; Jas 1:18; Rev 1:5; 14:4). We know Abraham observed circumcision (Gen 17:23-27; 21:4), but circumcision is not obligatory in the NT (Acts 15:5,24; Rom 2:26-29; Gal 3:3).

The Levitical system, which received the burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, heave offerings, vow and freewill offerings, and firstlings of the people (Deut 12:6), had not yet been set up.

The Melchizedek priesthood—even if it could have received the tithes of the Hebrews (Gen 14:13), and there is no evidence that it regularly did—presumably ended in Jerusalem at some point of time. It was located only in Salem (Jebus). And who were all the people associated with Melchizedek? Who were the support staff, and what nationality were the citizens of Salem (Jebusites)? Who were the recipients of Melchizedek's teaching and for how long? Who built and destroyed the temple in which he was the high priest? The Bible doesn't say, but we might assume that they were not descendants of Abraham. Biblical history says that the earlier citizens of Salem were Jebusites (Gen 10:16; 15:21; Josh 15:8,63; Jgs 1:21; Ezk 16:1-3). It is therefore somewhat presumptuous to use such a problematic example to endorse regular tithing in our present environment.

Who should receive our offerings, our vow offerings, our thank offerings, our peace offerings, our freewill offerings, the gifts of our increases?  
Those who say we should give it to them because they claim to preach a gospel?

By what authority and by what criteria do we decide what to give, how much to give, how often, and to whom?