

## Fact Check: Reconsidering Popularly Misinterpreted Scriptures

Sermon #6 Malachi 3:10 | Tithe: or Rob God?

Malachi 3:10 is one of the most misused passages of Scripture in all the Bible, and especially in fundamentalist and evangelical churches.

### The Incorrect Teaching

- The local church is the **storehouse**.
- The church member who does not bring his full tithe into the local church has **robbed** God.
- God does not bless thieves, so these people are **cursed with a curse**.
- If church members will tithe, then God will **open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it**.
- For the tither, God will **rebuke the devourer**.

### The Eisegesis of the passage

- A sure sign of eisegesis is skipping key phrases.
- Twice there is a reference to national identity: **this whole nation** (v. 9) and **all nations** (v. 10). Do those who use this verse for the Christian tithe believe that the United States (or Canada, or Norway, or Lithuania, etc.) will be honored by other nations if they tithe?
- There are numerous references to agricultural blessings. Do those who use this verse for the Christian tithe believe that a tither's garden produces more than a non-tither's? (For **ye shall be a delightful land** (v 12)).

### Replacement Theology in the Common Interpretation

- The common interpretation of Malachi 3:10 fundamentally requires replacement theology.
- It requires **this whole nation** to mean "the church."
- It requires **the storehouse** to mean "the church building."
- It requires **the tithe** to be "10% of gross income."

### What is the Tithe?

- It is first seen in Genesis 14:20 concerning Abram, who gave Melchizedek a one-time **tithe of all** (presumably all that he had).
- The first instruction to tithe was given to the Israelites in Leviticus 27:30-32.
  - The Israelites were to give a **tithe of the land** and a **tithe of the herd** after they arrived in the Promised Land.

- It was a reminder that the Promised Land belonged to God and was given to them as a gift.
- A man could borrow from the tithe at 20% interest.
- No instruction is given as to how to bring the tithe nor to whom it should be delivered.
- In Numbers 18:21-32, the tithe was given to **the children of Levi...for their service**.
  - The Levites were not land owners, so land owners would bring the fruit of the land to the Levites. The Levites would live off this income.
  - The Levites were to give a **tenth part of the tithe** to **Aaron the priest**. This offering was to be **of all the best** from the tithes of the people.
  - By bringing the tithes, the Levites would have their sins forgiven, but if they **profane the holy gifts** then they would die.
- In Deuteronomy 12:1, 6, 10-11 it is made clear that the tithe was something that took place only when the children of Israel arrived in the Promised Land.
- According to Josephus, the interpretation of the laws of the tithe were as follows:
  - One-tenth to the Levites, given annually.
  - One-tenth to be used in festival celebrations, given annually.
  - One-tenth to be given every third year, for the support of the poor.
  - No tithes were given during the seventh year.

### Tithing in the New Testament

- Jesus condemned the Pharisees for tithing on spices but **have omitted the weightier matters of the law**. They were told that **these ye ought to have done** (concerning tithing) because they were living under the Law (Matt. 23:23).
- The Pharisee in the Temple boasted, **I give tithes of all I possess** while the publican cried **God, be merciful to me a sinner** (Luke 18:12-13).
- Hebrews 7:4-5 make mention of the tithe of Abraham and the obligation of the Levites to tithe on the tithe.
- Nothing more is instructed of the tithe.

### The Tithe Today

- It would be impossible to *Biblically* tithe today (as any Jew would attest).
- Our instruction for giving is found in 2 Corinthians 9:7.