

Tithes: Was it to be money?

Introduction:

1. On a radio program, a caller asked where in the bible does it show that tithing was the giving of money.
2. A quick glance of the scripture revealed there were no places that specifically said "money" was to be given as part of tithing.
3. This is an attempt to dive deeper into this subject and see if the bible clearly says "money" in some form was to be given as part of tithing.

Tithe; Tithing; Tithes – are mentioned in the Old Testament approx. 25 times and 7 times in the New Testament.

Defined according to Strongs as: (Hebrew) 4643 ma` aser (mah-as-ayr'); or ma` asar (mah-as-ar'); and (in plural) feminine ma` asrah (mah-as-raw'); from 6240; **a tenth**; especially a tithe:

Defined according to Vines as: TITHE (VERB)

1. **dekatoo** ^1183^, from dekatos, **"tenth"**, in the active voice denotes "to take tithes of," <Heb. 7:6>, RV, "hath taken (KJV, received) tithes"; in the passive, "to pay tithes," <7:9>, RV, "hath paid (KJV, `payed') tithes."# In the Sept., <Neh. 10:37>.#

2. **apodekatoo** ^586^ **denotes (a) "to tithe"** (apo, "from," dekatos, "tenth")

3. **apodekateuo** ^586v^, **"to give tithes"**

(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)(Copyright (C) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Defined according to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: TITHE

(tith) (ma`aser; dekate): **The custom of giving a 10th part of the products of the land and of the spoils of war to priests and kings (1 Macc 10:31; 11:35; <1 Sam 8:15,17>) was a very ancient one among most nations.** That the Jews *(from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database Copyright (C) 1996 by BibleSoft)*

Scriptural Review

I. Abram/Melchizedek – Genesis 14:14 – 24

A. Verse 16 – Says Abram brought back "all the goods" & verse 20 says Abram gave him a tithe of all

1. This could have included money, but text does not suggest this
2. The Hebrew word translated "goods" (rekush) – refers to possessions
 - General term for all movable goods; livestock; utensils, etc.

Summary: The text seems to suggest the tithe that was paid to Melchizedek was of "goods" or possessions/property. The text does not say directly this included money in the traditional sense and there is not enough in the text to "necessarily conclude" traditional money was part of what Abram received as part of the spoil and what he gave as a tithe.

II. Tithing By Command Under The Law of Moses

A. Lev 27:30 – 34

1. When God commanded Tithing under the law of Moses in the above text it involved:

- verse 32 – herd, or flock, or what passed under rod

B. Numbers 18:26 – 28; Deut 12:6 - 17

1. Connects tithing with a heave offering

2. Some have concluded this refers to an additional "Contribution" or "Gift" that was to be given with Tithes

Heave Offering from Hebrew: 8641 teruwmah (ter-oo-maw'); or terumah (Deut. I: 11) (ter-oo-maw'); from 7311; a present (as offered up), especially in sacrifice or as tribute: KJV-- gift, heave offering ([shoulder]), oblation, offered (-ing).

3. When a heave offering was to accompany a tithe or even a sacrifice, specifics were usually given on what the heave offering should be:

Examples: **Num 15:18-21** 18 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land to which I bring you, 19 'then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the LORD. 20 'You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal as a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up. 21 'Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the LORD a heave offering throughout your generations. (NKJ)

Example: **Exod 25:1-3** 1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. 3 "And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; (NKJ)

Verse 8 & 9 - 8 "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. 9 "According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it. (NKJ)

4. Both examples above demonstrate God requiring a heave offering and Him giving the specifics. Neither example pertains to tithing although Exodus 25 shows a clear request for gold, silver bonze as an offering in the building of the tabernacle.

III. Deut 14:22 -28

A. In this text God specifies what was to be tithe

1. verse 22 – increase of all grain produced year by year

2. verse 23 – speaks of grain, new wine, oil, first born of the herd

3. Verses 24 – 26 Connects money to tithing but not in the way most think...

Deut 14:22-26 22 "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year.

23 "And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. "But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, 25 "then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. 26 "And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.

4. Here tithing was not money but what was to be given as a tithe could be converted to money but only in this specific circumstance.

IV. II Chronicles 31: 5 – 12

A. Text speaks of tithing in the days of Hezekiah

1. The things that was given as tithes came from the field and livestock

2. This text much like other Old Testament text seems to separate Tithes from Offerings (heave, freewill). This is perhaps an observation to pay attention to.

- Neh 10:37 – 39 is another example of this; [SIDE NOTE: Consider where some of these tithes were being stored... the "treasure house". While neither gold nor silver, etc. is mentioned, a portion of these tithes of the ground were being stored in the "treasure house".

3. Other passages that show offerings and tithes were different:

- Neh 12:44
- Neh 13:5 – 12: tithe of corn, new wine, oil
- Amos 4:4 – shows a contrast between sacrifice and tithes
- Mal 3:8 -10 – Will a man rob God of tithes and offerings

V. New Testament References

A. Gospel accounts that reference tithing

1. Matthew 23:23 – The Pharisees tithe mint (like mint plant), anise(use for food and pickling), cumin (is an umbelliferous plant with aromatic seeds, used as a condiment). Jesus said they were supposed give a tithe of this.

2. Luke 11:42 says these Pharisees gave a tithe of mint, rue, and all manner of herbs

3. Luke 18:12 – is the account of where two went up to the temple to pray and the Pharisee prays about how he give tithes of all he has. He could be referring to money but one would not necessarily conclude this. One would only necessarily conclude his tithing would be in keeping with the law of Moses which from our study thus far does not include "money".

4. The final passages in the new testament which speaks of tithing all come from Hebrews 7:5 -9. They speak of the time when Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek. This was to show two priesthoods and the superiority of one over the other.

Summary:

- 1. A review of the above mentioned passages explains tithing as being a 10 of possessions/property (livestock, produce, etc.) being given to the priest.**
- 2. While most would consider "money" a type of possession, it does not seem from any passage (Old or New Testament) that giving a tithe of what we would consider "money" was required.**
- 3. One possible view is "money" is not a possession but a medium used to purchase/acquire possessions/property.**
- 4. Finally, it is clear the scriptures makes a separation between what is considered an "Offering" and what was considered to be part of "Tithing". I will simply suggest that while money (gold, silver, etc.) may not have been part of tithing, it certainly was given as an offering of some kind - Ex 25:1-3.**
- 5. These are my initial observations, but I continue to study this subject. I've tried to stay away from any speculations of what could be or might be. I would encourage others, as they investigate this subject, to do likewise. I welcome feedback and suggestions of other passages that might shed additional light on the subject.**