The Tithe and the Church

Whose Law Is It?

A study testing whether the tithe binds the church today, or belonged to the Law and the Levitical priesthood that Grace has replaced.

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Anchor Passage

> **2 Corinthians 9:6** *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 9:7** *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 9:8** *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.*

Introduction

A. What God's Heart Looks Like

Before this study asks a single question about law, percentages, or covenants, it wants to look at the passage above and simply let it stand. Not grudgingly. Not of necessity. A cheerful giver. This is Paul's own picture of what giving looks like when it flows from a heart God himself is pleased with — and it is worth holding onto from the very first page, because the question this study is about to ask can easily turn cold and legal if it isn't anchored here first. Whatever this study concludes about the tithe, it should conclude it in a way that still sounds like 2 Corinthians 9:7, not against it.

Many believers were taught, sincerely and often with real pastoral care, that the tithe — a required tenth of income, given regularly to a local church — is God's abiding financial law for his people, carrying with it both promised blessing and warned curse. Others have come to doubt that teaching, sometimes

only privately, wondering whether it reads New Testament grace back into an Old Testament requirement. Both groups deserve a study that takes their question seriously rather than assuming the answer in advance.

Weighing it: Narrative — sets the tone; carries no weight on any contested claim.

B. The Question

Is the tithe — specifically, a required tenth — a standing law for the church today, or was it provision belonging to a particular administration of God's dealings with his people, an administration that has ended? That is the whole question this study exists to answer, and it intends to answer it the way every other study in this library does: by going to the text directly, letting scripture interpret scripture, and following the evidence wherever it actually leads.

Weighing it: Method, not argument — states the question.

C. Method

This study follows the same working method as every other study in this library:

The King James Version is the base text for quotation. Scripture interprets scripture — every tithing passage is read against every other tithing passage, not in isolation. Context comes first: who is being addressed, under what administration, and what comes immediately before and after. Differing views are shown fairly before this study states its own conclusion — Chapter 1, immediately below, is devoted entirely to presenting the traditional case for tithing in its strongest form, before any of it is tested. And every section closes with a short note weighing how strong its argument is and what the other side can fairly answer (§F below).

One tool this study leans on more heavily than most is a distinction already established elsewhere in this library: the **administration** a passage belongs to. Scripture does not deal with God's people the same way in every period of its history — the terms change, marked each time by something God makes heard, establishing new terms (this library's study *The Seven Administrations of Scripture*). Four administrations matter directly for this study:

- **Patriarchal** (the expulsion from Eden to Sinai) — governed by credited faith, not a written code (Genesis 15:6): "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."
- **Mosaic Law** (Sinai to Christ's baptism) — governed by a vowed, written code (Exodus 24:7): "All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient."
- **Christ — the Kingdom at Hand** (Christ's baptism to Pentecost) — Jesus' ministry to Israel under the proclamation "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17), while the Law itself remained in force until the cross (Chapter 5 §A).
- **Grace** (Pentecost to the gathering of the church, the administration the church now lives under) — governed by grace through faith, apart from law (Ephesians 2:8-9): "For by grace are ye saved

through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Every tithing passage in scripture falls into one of these. Locating each one correctly — rather than treating "the Bible mentions tithing" as one flat, undifferentiated fact — turns out to be the single most important step in answering this study's question honestly.

Weighing it: Method, not argument — the administration framework is taken from *The Seven Administrations of Scripture*, where its own weight is examined. A reader who does not accept administrations at all will need the chapters' direct evidence, which does not depend on the framework alone.

D. What "Tithe" Actually Means

The word itself is simple and worth fixing clearly before going further. The Hebrew word is *ma'aser* (מַעֲשֵׂר), and the Greek is the noun *dekatē* (δεκάτη) or the verbs *apodekatoō* (ἀποδεκατόω) and *dekatoō* (δεκατόω) — in every case, the word means, plainly and only, "a tenth." It is not a general word for "an offering" or "a gift." It names one specific proportion. This matters immediately: any giving that isn't a tenth — whether more or less, whether of income or of something else entirely — is not, strictly, "a tithe," however similar in spirit it might be. Keeping that plain meaning in view will matter more than once in the chapters ahead.

Weighing it: Direct statement — the word itself means a tenth. The other side can fairly answer that "tithe" is often used today for all giving to a church. That is modern usage; scripture's word names one proportion.

E. What This Study Claims

This study argues seven claims. They are named here once, so that each weighing note can say which one it bears on.

	The claim	Argued in
P	The tithes of Genesis — Abraham's and Jacob's — establish no standing law	Ch. 2
L	The commanded tithe was Mosaic Law provision, built around the landless tribe of Levi	Ch. 3
M	Malachi 3 addresses Israel under the Sinai covenant, not the church	Ch. 3 §C; Ch. 4
J	Jesus' words on the tithe uphold the Law for those still under it; they do not instruct the church	Ch. 5
H	Hebrews 7 records the change of priesthood and of law that ends the tithe's legal basis	Ch. 6
G	The Grace administration's giving is willing, proportional and generous, not a fixed tenth	Ch. 7
R	The New Testament's giving runs to distinct purposes — relief of saints in need, doing good to all, and support of those who labour in the word — and no tithe governs any of them	Ch. 8

Weighing it: Method, not argument — names what is being tested.

F. How to Read This Study's Weighing Notes

Every section of this study ends with a short note in bold, headed **Weighing it**. It is there because a study that states a strong argument and a weak one in the same confident tone has not been honest with its reader.

Each note says two things. First, how strong the section's argument is, on a five-step scale used across this library. **Direct statement** means scripture says it in so many words; the only question is what the words mean. **Strong inference** means it follows closely from what scripture says, and the alternative has to strain against the text. **Reasonable inference** means it is the more natural reading, but an honest reader can take it otherwise. **Corroboration only** means it fits this study's position but would fit the opposite roughly as well — it may be stated, not leaned on. **Neutral** means it is commonly cited but settles nothing.

Second, each note says *which way the section points*, and on which of the claims above. Chapter 1 states the other side's case, and its notes say so rather than rating it. Each chapter closes with a short "In Short." Where the narrative states a count, a sequence or a word study in a sentence, Appendix A gives the detail behind it.

Weighing it: Method, not argument — bears no weight either way.

Chapter 1 — The Standard Case for Tithing

Before this study tests a single argument for tithing, it owes the position a fair and full hearing — not a summary built to be knocked down, but the case as its own most careful teachers actually make it. Many sincere, careful students of scripture have taught that the tithe is God's abiding standard for his people's giving. Their case does not rest on one verse alone; it is built from several different angles, each reinforcing the others. Read together, without yet answering any of it, it is a genuinely substantial case.

A. The Tithe Belongs to God by His Own Claim

The starting point for many who teach tithing is not a promise of blessing but a claim of ownership, stated as plainly as scripture states anything:

> **Leviticus 27:30** *And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD.*

On this reading, withholding the tithe is not simply a failure of generosity — generosity, by definition, concerns what is one's own to give or withhold. If the tithe is *already* the Lord's, as this verse states outright, then withholding it is closer to keeping something that was never the giver's to keep in the first place. This is the foundation the rest of the traditional case is built on: the tithe is framed not as a suggested percentage but as a return of what already belongs to God by his own declared right.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — weighs against this study, and is answered in Chapter 3 §B.

B. A Pattern Older Than the Law

The traditional case does not rest on Moses alone. Its strongest textual support, in the eyes of many who hold it, is that tithing appears twice in Genesis — centuries before Sinai, before any written code existed to command it. If two different patriarchs, independently, gave a tenth without being told to, the argument runs, that points to something built into the fabric of true worship itself, not merely a rule for one nation under one law.

> **Genesis 14:18** *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.*
>
> **Genesis 14:19** *And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:*
>
> **Genesis 14:20** *And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

Abraham — later called, in Hebrews, simply "the patriarch" — gives a tenth of the spoils of battle to Melchizedek, a priest-king of the true God, without any recorded command to do so. Advocates of tithing note that Melchizedek is widely read (by many, though not all, interpreters) as a type of Christ himself — both a king and a priest, a combination the Levitical priesthood was never permitted — which

lends Abraham's gesture a weight beyond an ordinary one-time act: the father of faith, tithing to a priestly figure who prefigures the Lord Jesus.

Two generations later, Jacob, receiving the same covenant promise his grandfather had received, responds the same way:

> **Genesis 28:20** *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,*
>
> **Genesis 28:21** *So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:*
>
> **Genesis 28:22** *And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

Two patriarchs, in two separate generations, without any tithing law yet on record — and both land, independently, on the same figure: a tenth. For many who teach tithing, this convergence is not a coincidence to be explained away. It is read as evidence that "a tenth" is not an arbitrary Mosaic percentage but something closer to an instinctive, divinely fitting response wherever true faith meets real blessing — which is exactly why, on this view, it should be expected to outlast the Law that later formalized it, rather than expire along with it.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — weighs against this study, and is answered in Chapter 2.

C. A Direct Promise, Twice Repeated

If Genesis supplies the pattern, two further texts supply what many regard as the clearest positive case: an explicit connection between tithing and blessing, stated as an open invitation rather than a closed historical instruction.

> **Proverbs 3:9** *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:*
>
> **Proverbs 3:10** *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*

Because Proverbs belongs to Israel's wisdom literature — general instruction in how life under God actually works, not narrow case law for a single ritual system — many tithing advocates read this text as evidence that honoring God with the "firstfruits" of one's increase is a principle of life as such, not a provision tied to the Tabernacle or Temple alone.

The clearest and most frequently preached text, though, is Malachi's:

> **Malachi 3:8** *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*
>
> **Malachi 3:9** *Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*
>
> **Malachi 3:10** *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

Read plainly, this is God himself naming the withholding of the tithe as robbery, pronouncing a curse over it, and then — in the very next breath — issuing what sounds like a standing, open invitation: bring the tithe, and prove me. Many who teach tithing read "prove me now herewith" as language that does not sound closed off to one generation of ancient Israel; it sounds like God inviting anyone, in any age, to test him on this specific point and see the windows of heaven open. This chapter will be examined fully and on its own terms in Chapter 4 — but its plain, surface force, read exactly as it appears, is real, and deserves to be stated as such before it is tested.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — weighs against this study, and is answered in Chapter 4, including Proverbs 3:9-10 in §D.

D. Jesus's Own Words

Some who hold the traditional view point to Jesus's own recorded words as decisive, arguing that whatever else might be said about the Law's other requirements, Jesus himself treated tithing differently:

> **Matthew 23:23** *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

The word that carries the weight, on this reading, is *ought*. Jesus does not say the Pharisees' tithing was itself the problem, something they should have abandoned along with their neglect of judgment, mercy, and faith. He says plainly that tithing the smallest herbs was a thing they *ought* to have done — a word of positive obligation, not neutral description — even while rebuking them for missing what mattered more. On this reading, Jesus is not merely reporting a Pharisaic custom; he is affirming its rightness in the same breath he condemns its imbalance.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — weighs against this study, and is answered in Chapter 5.

E. A Priest Who Still Lives to Receive It

The book of Hebrews, in the course of a much larger argument about Christ's priesthood, includes a verse some read as extending the tithe's relevance into the present, on the authority of the New Testament itself:

> **Hebrews 7:8** *And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.*

On one reading of this verse, the contrast being drawn is not only between Levi and Melchizedek in the distant past, but between mortal priests who die — the Levitical priesthood generally — and a priest who is *now* said to live and, by implication, *still* to receive. If Jesus is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, and Melchizedek received a tithe, some conclude that Jesus, as the living, permanent high priest, continues in some sense to receive tithes today — an argument this study will need to weigh carefully and in full context in Chapter 6.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — weighs against this study, and is answered in Chapter 6.

F. The Pattern of Supporting Those Who Minister

Finally, the traditional case draws a line from the Old Covenant's structured support of its priesthood to the New Covenant's own instructions about supporting those who labor in ministry, arguing that the underlying principle — not necessarily the exact number — carries forward even where the word "tithe" itself is not used:

> **1 Corinthians 9:13** *Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?*
>
> **1 Corinthians 9:14** *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*
>
> **1 Timothy 5:17** *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*
>
> **1 Timothy 5:18** *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*

Paul draws a direct line, in his own words, from the Old Covenant's temple support system to the New Covenant's support of gospel ministers — "even so." Advocates of tithing argue that if Paul is willing to reach back to an Old Covenant support structure as the pattern for New Covenant giving, it is not unreasonable to read the tithe itself as the concrete expression of that same underlying, carried-forward principle, even though Paul does not use the word here.

Many who teach tithing today join this to Malachi's storehouse in one practical rule: the tithe goes to the local church, which is the storehouse, to support its ministry; anything given beyond that — to missions, to the relief of the poor, to other works — is an offering, over and above the tithe. On this view the church's support comes first and is fixed at a tenth, and every other kind of giving is built on top of it.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — weighs against this study, and is answered in Chapter 8 §§D-F.

G. A Practical and Historical Case

Beyond the textual arguments above, one further consideration is offered — not as direct scriptural proof, but as accumulated pastoral experience, and this study notes it plainly at that lower weight: historical and practical corroboration, not a scriptural claim in itself. Tithing has been widely taught and practiced across much of church history — from the sixth century it was enforced by church councils, and from Charlemagne's day by civil law (Appendix A §6) — and it is taught today across a great many denominations. Its defenders argue that whatever the precise exegetical question, a fixed and disciplined standard protects ordinary believers from the two failure modes an unstructured "as I feel led" approach tends toward in practice — giving too little, or giving inconsistently — and that a visible, communicable standard has, historically, sustained the material needs of gospel ministry at real scale.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — corroboration only by its own nature; weighed in Appendix A §6 and Chapter 9.

H. Summing Up the Case

Put together, the traditional case is not a single proof-text stretched thin. It is a converging set of arguments: an explicit claim of ownership (Leviticus 27:30), a pattern appearing before the Law existed at all and repeated independently by two patriarchs (Genesis 14, 28), wisdom literature connecting the practice to blessing (Proverbs 3:9-10), a direct and repeated promise phrased as an open invitation (Malachi 3:8-10), Jesus's own apparent affirmation (Matthew 23:23), an argument from Christ's own continuing priesthood (Hebrews 7:8), a New Testament pattern of supporting ministers traced back to the same Old Covenant system (1 Corinthians 9, 1 Timothy 5), and a long, practical history of the church's own experience. Taken at face value, and without yet examining any one piece in its fuller context, this is a serious case, held by serious and sincere people, and it deserves exactly that kind of serious answer.

That is the work of the chapters ahead — not to dismiss what has just been presented, but to take each piece of it back to its own setting: to ask what administration governs it, who it was actually spoken to, and what surrounds it on every side. Scripture interprets scripture. The next chapter begins where the case itself began — before the Law, with Abraham and Jacob.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — the cumulative case; this study's answer is gathered in Chapter 9 and Appendix B.

In Short

The case for the tithe is not one verse but many: God's claim of ownership, two patriarchs, Malachi's promise, Jesus' "ought," Hebrews 7, the support of ministers, and a long history. The chapters that follow take each piece back to its own setting.

Chapter 2 — Before the Law — The Patriarchal Administration

The traditional case leans heavily on the fact that tithing appears in Genesis, generations before Sinai — treated as proof that it cannot be merely Mosaic. That reasoning deserves to be tested carefully rather than waved off, because it turns on a real and important question: what actually governed Abraham and Jacob's relationship with God, and does either man's tithe belong to that governing basis, or stand outside it?

Scripture itself already answers the first half of that question, and answers it in the plainest possible terms:

> **Genesis 15:6** *And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

Paul returns to this single verse as the whole foundation of his own argument about how Abraham related to God, and states outright what that relationship did *not* include:

> **Romans 4:13** *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*
>
> **Romans 4:14** *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*
>
> **Romans 4:15** *Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.*
>
> **Galatians 3:17** *And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

This is not this study's own inference; it is Paul's own direct commentary on this exact period, and it could hardly be stated more plainly. Whatever governed Abraham's standing with God, it was credited faith, not any written code — and Paul goes further, insisting that the Law which came four hundred and thirty years later cannot be read back into the promise as though it had been a hidden condition all along. That is the frame this chapter has to test Genesis 14 and 28 against: not "does tithing appear here," but "does tithing appear here as part of what actually governed the relationship, or as something else."

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim P: Abraham's standing with God rested on credited faith, not on a code. No one disputes Genesis 15:6 or Paul's reading of it; the question is whether the tithes of Genesis belong to that basis, which the sections below test.

A. Abraham: A Single, Uncommanded Gift

The full account is short, and worth reading in its entirety before drawing any conclusion from it:

> **Genesis 14:18** *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.*
>
> **Genesis 14:19** *And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:*
>
> **Genesis 14:20** *And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

A few things about this scene are easy to miss on a first pass but matter directly to the question this study is asking. First, nothing in the text — not before this verse, not after it — records God instructing Abraham to give this tithe. It is Abraham's own act, in response to Melchizedek's blessing, not a command being obeyed. Second, it is a tithe of a very specific thing: "the spoils," as Hebrews later confirms —

> **Hebrews 7:4** *Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.*

— the plunder recovered from defeating the four invading kings (Genesis 14:1-16), not Abraham's own flocks, herds, silver, or gold. Genesis 13 had already described Abraham as "very rich in cattle, in silver,

and in gold" (13:2) before this battle ever took place; his tithe here comes from someone else's captured goods, recovered in a single military campaign, not from his own ongoing increase. And of the remaining spoils he kept nothing for himself; he gave them back to the king of Sodom:

> **Genesis 14:22** *And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,*
>
> **Genesis 14:23** *That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:*
>
> **Genesis 14:24** *Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.*

Third, and most tellingly, Abraham does not do this again. There is no second Genesis tithe, no standing practice described anywhere else in his long life, and no instruction to Isaac to continue it. Whatever this gesture meant to Abraham in that moment, scripture presents it as a single, one-time act — not the establishment of a repeated pattern.

It is worth being fair to how much weight the Melchizedek encounter can actually bear here, since interpreters disagree, sometimes sharply, on who Melchizedek was. Some read him as a christophany — a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son himself. Others read him as a genuine, historical Canaanite priest-king who happened to worship the true God, El Elyon, independent of Abraham's own line. Still others connect him with Shem, on chronological grounds. This study does not need to settle that question, and does not attempt to here — it is worth naming honestly as an open matter (per this study's own method of showing differing views), but nothing about the tithing question actually depends on resolving it. Whoever Melchizedek was, the text gives no indication that Abraham's gift to him was commanded, required, or repeated — and that is the only point this chapter is testing.

What Genesis does record as the actual terms of Abraham's relationship with God is entirely different in kind. Compare the tithe scene with what immediately follows it in the very next chapter:

> **Genesis 15:1** *After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

No tithe, offering, or condition of any kind is attached to this promise — only, a few verses later, the statement already quoted above: he believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness. The covenant God confirms with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 15:18-21, 17:1-8) is made entirely on God's own initiative, confirmed by God alone passing between the divided animals, as a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, after a deep sleep had fallen on Abraham (15:12-17) — a covenant made unilaterally, not one Abraham qualifies for by any percentage of anything. Genesis records the moment itself:

> **Genesis 15:17** *And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.*
>
> **Genesis 15:18** *In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:*

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim P: Abraham's tenth was a single gift from the spoils of war, not a standing practice. The other side can fairly answer that "he never did it again" is an argument

from silence, and that Hebrews 7 treats the gift as significant. The silence is the weaker point; the gift's source (spoils), its lack of any command, and Abraham's refusal to keep the rest are stated in the text.

B. Jacob: A Vow, Not a Command

If Abraham's tithe is a single uncommanded gift, Jacob's is something more pointed: a conditional vow, offered by Jacob himself, in response to a promise God had just given him unconditionally.

> **Genesis 28:13** *And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;*
>
> **Genesis 28:14** *And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*
>
> **Genesis 28:15** *And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

God's word to Jacob here is entirely a promise — protection, return, blessing, all stated as things God himself will do. Nothing is asked of Jacob in response; no tithe, no sacrifice, no condition is attached to a single clause of it. Jacob's own reply, though, is not simple faith:

> **Genesis 28:20** *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,*
>
> **Genesis 28:21** *So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:*
>
> **Genesis 28:22** *And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

Notice the grammar. God has just said "I am with thee" (v.15) — present tense, already true, unconditional. Jacob answers "*if* God will be with me... *then* shall the LORD be my God" — turning an already-given promise into a private contingency of his own devising. This is the language of a bargain, not the language of Genesis 15:6's simple belief. Scripture nowhere records that God required this vow. God does remember it — years later He calls Himself "the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me" (Genesis 31:13), and Jacob returns to Bethel to build an altar there (35:1-7). But scripture never records Jacob giving a tenth of anything to anyone; on the tenth itself, the text is silent. Whatever Jacob intended in that moment at Bethel, it is presented as his own proposal, offered under the stress of fleeing for his life from a brother who meant to kill him (Genesis 27:41-45) — not as evidence of a standing principle he and Abraham had both independently discovered. Both the danger Jacob fled and the call that later brought him back to Bethel are on record:

> **Genesis 27:41** *And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.*
>
> **Genesis 35:1** *And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.*

> **Genesis 35:7** *And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.*

Some read Jacob's "if" more kindly, as the language of a man taking God at His word — "since God will be with me." Either way, the tenth is Jacob's own proposal: a vow he chose to make, not a command God gave, and nothing in the text presents it as a pattern for anyone else.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for claim P: Jacob's tenth was his own conditional vow, not a command. The other side can fairly answer that God later remembered the vow (Genesis 31:13), and that Jacob's "if" can be read as "since." This edition concedes the first and withdraws the earlier argument that the vow was never honored; the tenth remains Jacob's proposal, not God's requirement.

C. What About Numbers 31?

One further comparison is worth making before closing this chapter, because it speaks directly to whether Abraham's "tenth" reflects some fixed, universal rate for spoils of war. Centuries later, under the Law, Israel again takes spoils in battle — this time against Midian — and God gives Moses very specific, very different instructions for dividing them:

> **Numbers 31:28** *And levy a tribute unto the LORD of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep.*
>
> **Numbers 31:29** *Take it of their half, and give it unto Eleazar the priest, for an heave offering of the LORD.*
>
> **Numbers 31:30** *And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites.*

One in five hundred from the soldiers' half for the priest, and one in fifty from the people's half for the Levites — about one-tenth of one percent and one percent of the whole spoil (Appendix A §2) — nowhere close to Abraham's ten percent, in the one other case scripture actually records God giving explicit instructions for spoils of war. If a fixed tenth had been the standing, universal rule Abraham was following, this would have been the moment for God to simply repeat it. He does not. This does not disprove that Abraham's own gesture was sincere or meaningful — but it does mean scripture itself, in the one place it revisits this exact kind of situation, treats the proportion as a matter for God's own specific instruction each time, not a fixed law already in force since Abraham's day.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for claim P: when scripture does legislate a share of war spoils, it sets the proportion afresh. The other side can fairly answer that Numbers 31 is under the Law and concerns a different kind of levy, so it cannot show what Abraham had in mind. Fair; it shows only that no fixed tenth of spoils was already in force.

D. Closing: Two Acts, Not a Law

Read together, and read fairly, what Genesis actually supplies before the Law is this: one uncommanded, unrepeated gift of war spoils, made by a man whose entire relationship with God is

explicitly described elsewhere in scripture as resting on credited faith rather than any code; and one conditional vow, offered by a frightened man as his own proposal, with no record that its tenth was ever paid, in response to a promise that had already been given to him free of any condition at all. Neither is presented as a command from God. Neither is repeated. Neither is treated, anywhere else in the Patriarchal narratives, as an ongoing practice binding on Isaac, or on Jacob's own household afterward.

This is not a small point, because it is the very ground the traditional case stands on when it argues that tithing predates and therefore outlasts the Law. The two texts examined here do not supply what that argument needs. They supply two isolated human acts, inside an administration scripture itself defines by faith credited as righteousness — not a standing law this study can carry forward into the next administration, let alone into the church's own. The Law that follows at Sinai will supply what Genesis does not: an actual, detailed, commanded tithe. That is where this study turns next.

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim P: the tithes of Genesis establish no standing law. The other side can fairly answer that two patriarchs landing on a tenth may reflect a custom known in the ancient world. That may be so; a custom is not a command, and it does not become the church's law.

In Short

Before the Law, scripture records two tenths: Abraham's single gift from the spoils of war, of which he kept nothing for himself, and Jacob's conditional vow at Bethel. Neither was commanded, neither is recorded as repeated, and the administration they lived under was governed by faith counted as righteousness.

Chapter 3 — Under the Law — The Tithe as Administration-Specific Legislation

At Sinai, for the first time, God actually commands a tithe. This is where the traditional case's clearest ground is — and it deserves to be examined in full, in its own actual detail, rather than treated as a single flat "ten percent" rule floating free of everything around it. Read closely, the Mosaic tithe turns out to be a specific, structured provision, built for a specific purpose, tied to a specific people who had just vowed, audibly, to keep an entire written code:

> **Exodus 24:7** *And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.*

Everything this chapter examines was given within that vow — the governing basis of the administration this study's Introduction already named: not credited faith, but a covenant code, vowed to in full.

Weighing it: Direct statement — the tithe was commanded at Sinai, under Israel's covenant vow.

A. Why the Tithe Existed: A Landless Priesthood's Inheritance

The single most important fact about the Mosaic tithe is also the most overlooked in popular teaching: scripture states, directly and repeatedly, exactly why it existed. It was not a general discipleship principle. It was the Levites' substitute inheritance, given because they alone, of all twelve tribes, received no land:

> **Numbers 18:20** *And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.*
>
> **Numbers 18:21** *And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.*
>
> **Numbers 18:24** *But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.*
>
> **Deuteronomy 18:1** *The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance.*
>
> **Deuteronomy 18:2** *Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.*

Read this carefully and the whole shape of the provision comes into focus. Every other tribe received an actual allotment of land in Canaan — territory to farm, to build on, to pass down. The Levites received none. They were given forty-eight cities to live in, with pasture for their cattle, scattered among the other tribes (Numbers 35:1-8; Joshua 21:41), but no tribal territory to farm. In an agrarian economy where land was the basic unit of wealth and survival, that meant the Levites, uniquely among the twelve tribes, had no ordinary means of supporting themselves. The tithe was God's own stated remedy for that specific structural gap — "I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance." It is not described as a universal principle of worship binding on everyone who loves God; it is described as this particular tribe's wage, tied directly to their landlessness and to the specific service they performed at the tabernacle. The cities are counted in the Law, and again when the land was divided:

> **Numbers 35:2** *Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.*
>
> **Numbers 35:7** *So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs.*
>
> **Joshua 21:41** *All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs.*

Cities to live in, and pasture for their cattle — but no tribal territory to farm.

The system had a second layer built on top of the first. The Levites themselves, having received the tithe from the rest of Israel, were then required to tithe a tenth of what they had received, passing it up to the priests:

> **Numbers 18:26** *Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.*

A tithe of a tithe — an internal administrative mechanism for supplying Aaron's priestly line specifically, layered inside a larger system for supplying the Levites generally. This is not the picture of a simple, generic "give ten percent" instruction. It is a specific, two-tiered funding structure, built for one particular tribe's particular circumstances.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim L: scripture says the tithe was given to Levi "for an inheritance, for their service." The other side can fairly answer that the tithe also fed the offerer's household and the poor (§B). True, and the Levite is named in every form of it.

B. What Was Actually Tithed

The Law is equally specific about what counted as tithe-able in the first place — and it was not, as is often assumed today, ten percent of all income from every source:

> **Leviticus 27:30** *And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD.*
>
> **Leviticus 27:32** *And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.*

Seed of the land, fruit of trees, and herds and flocks — the produce of agriculture and livestock, specifically. There is no mention of tithing wages, trade profit, craftsmanship, or any other form of income an Israelite might have — and Israel's economy, even under the Law, included all of these. If the Law had intended tithing to reach every form of increase, it had ample opportunity and vocabulary to say so, the way it does elsewhere when it means to be comprehensive. It does not say so here.

The claim of Leviticus 27:30 — the tithe "is the LORD's" — reads the same way in its own setting. It is "the tithe of the land": the land of Canaan, of which God had just said, "the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23). The tenth of that land's produce was holy because the land was His, given to Israel on His terms. That is a claim about a particular land under a particular covenant, not a claim on every believer's wages in every nation.

> **Leviticus 25:23** *The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.*

Deuteronomy adds a further layer scripture's popular memory of "the tithe" usually leaves out entirely: a portion of the tithe was not handed over to anyone else at all, but eaten by the offerer himself, as a festive meal, in the presence of the Lord:

> **Deuteronomy 14:22** *Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.*
>
> **Deuteronomy 14:23** *And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.*
>
> **Deuteronomy 14:24** *And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:*
>
> **Deuteronomy 14:25** *Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:*
>
> **Deuteronomy 14:26** *And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household.*

This is worth pausing on, because it does not match the common picture of "the tithe" as money simply handed over and never seen again. Here, the tithe-holder converts his own tithe to money if the distance to the appointed place is too great, and then spends that same money on food and drink for a rejoicing meal shared with his own household before the Lord. And every third year, the pattern changes again:

> **Deuteronomy 14:28** *At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates:*
>
> **Deuteronomy 14:29** *And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.*

The third-year tithe is stored locally, not carried to the central sanctuary at all, and its purpose broadens explicitly to include the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow alongside the still-landless Levite. Many careful readers of the Law, across a long history of Jewish and Christian scholarship alike, have concluded from these differing descriptions that ancient Israel's "tithe" was not a single flat payment but at least two distinct obligations — an annual tithe eaten before the Lord, and a separate triennial tithe for the poor — a reading supported by Josephus and other ancient Jewish writers (Appendix A §4), though no single verse states the count outright. Whichever way that detail is finally reckoned, the larger point holds without needing to be settled: "the tithe" under the Law was a structured, multi-purpose system, not the single, uniform, cash-equivalent-of-ten-percent instruction it is often assumed to be today.

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim L: the tithe was on the produce of the land and the flock. The other side can fairly answer that the Law's silence about wages is an argument from silence, in an economy that was mostly agricultural. Fair; but the verses that define the tithe name only produce and livestock, and Leviticus 27:30 ties it to the land God called His own.

C. The Tithe Restored, and What "Storehouse" Actually Meant

Two later episodes in Israel's history show this same system in concrete operation, and are worth reading now because one of them will matter directly when this study reaches Malachi 3 in the next chapter. Under King Hezekiah, a genuine national revival included restoring the tithe specifically so the priests and Levites could return to full-time service:

> **2 Chronicles 31:4** *Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD.*

The purpose is stated directly: freeing the priests and Levites from the need to farm or labor elsewhere for their own support, "that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD" — full-time service, funded by the very system Numbers 18 established. Centuries later, after the exile, Nehemiah records the same structure being deliberately rebuilt, chamber by chamber:

> **Nehemiah 10:37** *...and that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.*
>
> **Nehemiah 10:38** *And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house.*
>
> **Nehemiah 13:12** *Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries.*

"The treasure house" (10:38) is the very phrase Malachi 3:10 translates "the storehouse" — Hebrew *beit ha'otsar* — and "treasuries" (13:12) is the same word, *'otsar*. Nehemiah's own account shows exactly what that word referred to in practice: literal storage chambers built into the temple structure itself, administered by appointed and named treasurers (Nehemiah 13:13), stocked with the literal produce of the tithe, for the support of literal Levites and priests actually serving at a literal temple in Jerusalem. This is worth holding onto carefully, because it will matter directly in the next chapter: "the storehouse" was not a figure of speech for wherever a believer happens to worship. It was a specific set of rooms, in a specific building, tied to a specific priesthood. Nehemiah's record names both the office and the men who held it:

> **Nehemiah 12:44** *And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited.*
>
> **Nehemiah 13:13** *And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren.*

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim M: the storehouse was a set of chambers in the temple. Nehemiah names the chambers, the treasurers, and the very phrase Malachi uses.

D. One Law, Kept Whole

The New Testament states a principle worth bringing in before closing this chapter, because it bears directly on how the tithe legislation relates to everything else Sinai commanded:

> **James 2:10** *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*
>
> **Galatians 5:3** *For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

The Mosaic Law was not a menu of separable rules, some binding and some optional, from which later readers could select the parts they found congenial. It was given, and vowed to, as a single covenant. The tithe legislation examined in this chapter is part of that same, single, comprehensive code — commanded in the same books, to the same people, under the same vow, alongside the dietary law, the feast days, the sacrificial system, and the priestly consecration rules. Anyone arguing that the tithe specifically carries forward unchanged into a new administration owes an answer to why this one piece of a single, indivisible code should be treated differently from the rest of it — an answer that will have to come, if it comes at all, from something that actually changes the legal basis itself, not merely from the tithe's own continued presence in the text of Exodus through Deuteronomy. Whether scripture supplies such a change is exactly the question Chapter 6 takes up, once Malachi and Jesus's own words have first been heard in full.

Where a command found in the Law does bind the church, the New Testament restates it on its own ground. Paul gathers the commandments of the second table into the single word of love:

> **Romans 13:9** *For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

The tithe is never restated this way, anywhere in the New Testament.

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim L: the tithe cannot be lifted out of the one covenant it belonged to. The other side can fairly answer that the church does keep commands found in the Law, such as loving one's neighbor. Those are restated in the New Testament on their own ground (Romans 13:9); the tithe never is.

In Short

At Sinai the tithe became law: the produce of the land and the flock, given to a tribe with no territory of its own, eaten in part before the Lord, shared every third year with the poor, and stored in literal temple chambers. It was one part of one indivisible covenant.

Chapter 4 — Malachi 3 in Its Own Setting

No tithing text is quoted more often, or carries more emotional weight for people who have been taught to fear the consequences of not tithing, than this one. It deserves, more than any other passage in this

study, to be read slowly, in its own setting, before any conclusion is drawn from it — precisely because of how much weight has been placed on it. This chapter's aim is not to soften what Malachi actually says. It is to hear what Malachi actually says, to the people he actually said it to.

A. Who Is Being Addressed, and Why

Malachi is the last prophetic voice of the Old Testament, writing after the exile, after the temple had been rebuilt, into a community that had grown spiritually weary and careless. The book opens by naming exactly who is in view:

> **Malachi 1:1** *The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.*

Not a general word to humanity, not an address to a future church not yet in existence — a burden "to Israel," delivered through a prophet, concerning that specific covenant nation's specific covenant failures. The complaints that fill the first two chapters are concrete and particular: priests offering blind, lame, and sick animals in sacrifice, in direct violation of the Law's own requirements (1:6-8, 13-14); the priesthood's covenant with Levi itself under threat of correction (2:1-9); treachery and divorce among the people (2:10-16). By the time chapter 3 opens, Malachi has already spent two full chapters establishing that this is a covenant people being confronted over specific, nameable violations of a covenant code they already stood under. The first of those complaints, in Malachi's own words:

> **Malachi 1:8** *And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.*

Chapter 3 itself opens by returning to the priesthood directly, before it ever mentions the tithe:

> **Malachi 3:1** *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*
>
> **Malachi 3:2** *But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:*
>
> **Malachi 3:3** *And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.*

This is worth noting for its own sake: the New Testament does draw directly on this exact chapter of Malachi, quoting and applying it — but to this messenger prophecy, not to the tithing passage that follows it a few verses later. Jesus himself applies Malachi's messenger language to John the Baptist:

> **Matthew 11:10** *For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*

Mark and Luke quote it the same way (Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27), and Luke draws on Malachi's closing verses for John's ministry as well:

> **Malachi 4:5** *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*

> **Malachi 4:6** *And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*
>
> **Luke 1:17** *And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

This matters because it shows the New Testament was entirely willing to reach into Malachi 3 and apply its content forward when it judged that content to carry forward — and it did so for the messenger prophecy, not for the tithe passage that sits only a few verses later in the same chapter. That is not, by itself, a proof of anything; but it is a real and checkable fact worth having in view before this chapter goes any further.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim M: the book is addressed "to Israel."

B. A Covenant Lawsuit, Not a Floating Promise

Verses 6 and 7 supply the hinge the whole tithing passage turns on, and they are worth reading with real care:

> **Malachi 3:6** *For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*
>
> **Malachi 3:7** *Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?*

"Ye are gone away from mine *ordinances*, and have not kept them." The word is specific: an established body of commanded requirements, already given, already binding, that this generation has drifted from. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" is covenant-restoration language — the language of a relationship already established by prior terms, now being called back into alignment with those same terms, not a fresh universal principle being introduced for the first time. The tithe indictment that follows in verses 8-10 is presented as one specific, concrete instance of this broader pattern of having "gone away from mine ordinances" — not a freestanding topic Malachi happens to raise on its own.

This framework — a covenant people confronted over specific failures to keep an already-given code, with blessing and curse both explicitly tied to that keeping — is not new with Malachi. It is the Law's own structure, stated plainly by Moses as the terms of the covenant made at Sinai:

> **Deuteronomy 11:26** *Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;*
>
> **Deuteronomy 11:27** *A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:*
>
> **Deuteronomy 11:28** *And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day.*

Malachi's tithe passage sits squarely inside this Deuteronomic frame — blessing for keeping the covenant code, curse for breaking it — a frame that was itself part of the vowed, written covenant this study's Chapter 3 already located under the Mosaic Law administration's own governing basis. That context does not make Malachi's words any less real for the people he was speaking to. It does mean

that reading "cursed with a curse" and "prove me" correctly requires reading them as functioning inside that specific covenant-lawsuit structure, not as freestanding statements detached from it.

Nor does the reason Malachi gives for Israel's survival — **"I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6)** — make the covenant itself unchangeable. God's character does not change; the New Testament says plainly that the first covenant was made old:

> **Hebrews 8:13** *In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim M: the tithe passage sits inside a covenant lawsuit over the Law's ordinances. The other side can fairly answer that "I am the LORD, I change not" (3:6) makes the principle timeless. God's character does not change; covenants do, and scripture says so (Hebrews 7:12; 8:13).

C. The Passage Itself, Read in Full

With that context in view, the tithe passage itself reads exactly as it did in Chapter 1 — and it should. Nothing in reading it carefully changes a single word of what it says. What changes is what it is being asked to prove:

> **Malachi 3:8** *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*
>
> **Malachi 3:9** *Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.*
>
> **Malachi 3:10** *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*
>
> **Malachi 3:11** *And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.*
>
> **Malachi 3:12** *And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.*

"That there may be meat in mine house" — this is the same house, the same storehouse chambers, that Nehemiah's own account (examined in the previous chapter) shows being physically built, staffed, and stocked for a functioning temple and a functioning priesthood. "The devourer" being rebuked "for your sakes," so that "the fruits of your ground" and "your vine" are not destroyed — this is agricultural, land-based blessing, addressed to a farming nation whose whole economy Chapter 3 already showed the tithe legislation was built around. "All nations shall call you blessed… a delightsome land" — national, territorial language, addressed to Israel as a nation occupying a specific land, not to individual believers scattered across every nation, as the church now is.

None of this requires reading God's words here as insincere, or the blessing offered as unreal. It requires reading them as what they plainly are: a specific covenant LORD's specific restoration offer to a specific covenant people, tied to a specific temple, a specific storehouse, a specific priesthood, and a specific

land — issued within the very structure of blessing-for-obedience and curse-for-disobedience that Deuteronomy had already established as the terms of that particular covenant.

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim M: the promise of Malachi 3:10-12 is agricultural, national and temple-bound. The other side can fairly answer that God's generosity toward givers is affirmed again in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 9:8-11). Agreed — and there it is promised to cheerful, willing giving, not to a tithe.

D. A Word on Proverbs 3:9-10

Chapter 1 set Proverbs 3:9-10 beside Malachi as a second promise. It deserves its own answer, because it does not actually mention the tithe:

> **Proverbs 3:9** *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:*
>
> **Proverbs 3:10** *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*

"Firstfruits" under the Law were a separate offering from the tithe — given to the priests, and listed apart from the tithe wherever the two appear together (Numbers 18:12-13, 21; Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Nehemiah 10:35-37). In Numbers the firstfruits are the priests' portion, given in verses of their own, before the tithe is given to the Levites in verse 21:

> **Numbers 18:12** *All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.*
>
> **Numbers 18:13** *And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it.*

Proverbs names no proportion at all. What it states is a principle — honor God with what you have, first, and trust Him to provide — and that principle the Grace administration keeps in its own words: "he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). What Proverbs does not supply is a tenth.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for claim M: Proverbs 3:9-10 names firstfruits, not the tithe, and states a principle Grace keeps. The other side can fairly answer that wisdom literature speaks to all of life. Agreed; that is why its principle — honor God with your substance — carries forward, while the tenth, which it does not name, does not.

E. Closing: A Real Word, to a Particular People

Malachi 3's tithe passage is not a weak text, and this chapter has not tried to make it one. It is God's own direct, personal confrontation of a specific failure, offered with real warmth and a real invitation to be restored. But read in its own setting — addressed to Israel; hinged on the language of returning to already-given ordinances; structured by the blessing-and-curse terms Deuteronomy had already established for that same covenant; naming a storehouse that Nehemiah's own record shows was a literal set of temple chambers; promising agricultural and national blessing to a landed, farming nation — it is not a freestanding, timeless promise addressed to individual believers of every nation, detached

from the covenant and structure that gave it its original meaning. The passage was never quoted by Jesus or the apostles, even though the very chapter it sits in was quoted, for other content, more than once. Its own strongest reading is the one this chapter has just given it: a real word, from a covenant God, to a particular covenant people, about a particular covenant failure — not, on its own, sufficient grounds to establish a law for a people not yet in view when it was spoken.

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim M: Malachi 3 does not establish a tithe law for the church.

In Short

Malachi's words are real and warm, but they were spoken to Israel, about a storehouse in the temple, under the blessing-and-curse terms of the Sinai covenant. The New Testament quotes the chapter's messenger prophecy, never its tithe.

Chapter 5 — Jesus and the Tithe

Jesus mentions tithing three times, and all three deserve full, careful attention rather than the brief treatment they sometimes receive from either side of this question. Before looking at what he says, it is worth being precise about when he says it, because the timing matters more than it first appears.

A. Where This Falls in the Administrations

This study's Introduction located the Mosaic Law administration as running from Sinai to Christ's baptism. Between that boundary and the opening of Grace at Pentecost lies a further administration this library's broader framework identifies distinctly (*The Seven Administrations of Scripture*): Christ's own earthly ministry, opening at the baptism itself and running to Pentecost, under its own governing proclamation, "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That distinction matters here, but it needs to be stated carefully, because one thing does not change at the baptism: the Law's own binding legal claim on Israel. Jesus says so himself, in the plainest possible terms, during this very ministry:

> **Matthew 5:17** *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*
>
> **Matthew 5:18** *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

The Law's claim on Israel does not lift until it is fulfilled — an event scripture elsewhere ties to the cross itself, not to the start of Jesus's ministry:

> **Colossians 2:14** *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*
>
> **Ephesians 2:15** *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.*

The cross took the Law's claim out of the way, and after the resurrection and the Ascension the new administration opened at Pentecost. So for the entire span of his earthly ministry, Jesus is speaking to

people who remain, by their own nation's covenant vow, legally bound to the very code Chapter 3 examined — including its tithe. This is not a minor technicality; it is the key that unlocks everything he says on the subject. He is not announcing a new instruction to a church that does not yet exist. He is speaking, plainly, about a law still fully in force for the people in front of him. Paul says the same of Christ Himself, from His birth:

> **Galatians 4:4** *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,*

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim J: the Law remained in force until it was fulfilled, and Jesus was "made under the law."

B. "These Ought Ye to Have Done"

The fullest of the three statements is worth reading in full, including the verse the traditional case's shorter quotation usually stops just before:

> **Matthew 23:23** *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*
>
> **Matthew 23:24** *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*
>
> **Luke 11:42** *But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

Chapter 1 was right to note that "ought" is a word of real obligation, not neutral description — and this chapter is not backing away from that. The Pharisees genuinely did owe the tithe, at that moment, under the still-binding Law they lived under, exactly as Matthew 5:18 says they must until it is fulfilled. What "these ought ye to have done" cannot supply, on its own, is an answer to a different question entirely: whether that same obligation continues to bind a people living after the Law's fulfillment, under a different administration's own governing basis. Jesus affirms the Law's present claim on the Pharisees in the same breath he rebukes them for missing what the Law itself considered weightier. That is a statement about their standing under a still-active code — not, by itself, an instruction carried forward to the church.

This is confirmed by how Jesus treats the rest of the Law during this same period. When he heals a leper, he does not tell the man that the ceremonial law is now optional; he sends him directly into full compliance with it:

> **Matthew 8:4** *And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

"The gift that Moses commanded" — full Levitical compliance, instructed by Jesus himself, during this same pre-cross ministry. No one reads this verse as evidence that Levitical animal sacrifice continues to bind the church today; it is read, correctly, as Jesus upholding the Law's claim on Israel for as long as that claim remained in force. Matthew 23:23 belongs to the same category. The consistent pattern

across Jesus's earthly ministry is full support for the Law's binding force on the people in front of him, right up until the point scripture elsewhere identifies as the moment that force ended.

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim J: Jesus' "ought" upheld the Law for people still under it. The other side can fairly answer that what Jesus affirmed ought to stand for His followers. Matthew 8:4 answers it: He affirmed the Levitical offering in the same way, and no one carries that into the church.

C. The Parable Where Tithing Is Not the Point of Commendation

The third and final mention is the one most often passed over, and it may be the most directly instructive of the three, because for once Jesus is not describing what the Law required — he is telling a story about two men standing before God, and only one of them mentions tithing:

> **Luke 18:9** *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*
>
> **Luke 18:10** *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*
>
> **Luke 18:11** *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*
>
> **Luke 18:12** *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*
>
> **Luke 18:13** *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*
>
> **Luke 18:14** *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

Luke states plainly, in verse 9, exactly who this parable is aimed at: those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous." The Pharisee's tithing is not offered by Jesus as an example to imitate; it is placed directly inside the mouth of the man building his own case for self-righteousness, listed alongside his fasting as evidence he presents on his own behalf. And the man God actually justifies is the one who offers no religious résumé at all — no fasting record, no tithe, nothing but an honest cry for mercy. This is the only time in the Gospels that Jesus places the tithe inside a direct comparison between two people's standing before God, and in that one direct comparison, tithing does not tip the scale in the tither's favor. If anything, the parable's whole force runs the other way: whatever a person brings to God in the way of religious performance, tithing included, it is not what justifies him.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for claim J: the parable shows that tithing does not justify. The other side can fairly answer that the parable is about self-trust, not about tithing, and does not say tithing was wrong. Agreed; it is cited only for what it shows, and it does not show tithing to be wrong.

D. Closing: A Real Requirement, for a Time That Ended

Jesus's three statements on tithing, read together and read fully, add real weight to what Chapter 3 already established: tithing was a genuine, binding requirement of the Law, right up to the cross, and Jesus himself treats it that way without qualification. What they do not do — what nothing in any of the

three statements claims to do — is instruct a future church, living under a different administration, to continue a practice tied to a code Jesus himself says will remain in force only "till all be fulfilled." The one time Jesus does compare a tither's standing before God to someone else's, the tither is the one Jesus does not justify. The question this leaves open is the one the next two chapters take up directly: does anything in scripture actually mark that fulfillment, and does it say anything about what happens to the tithe when it comes?

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim J: nothing in Jesus' words carries the tithe past the cross.

In Short

Jesus upheld the tithe as He upheld the whole Law, for people still under it, until the cross took it out of the way. The one time He compared a tither with another man before God, the tither went home unjustified.

Chapter 6 — Hebrews 7: An Argument About Priesthood, Not a Command to Tithe

This is the one New Testament chapter that discusses tithing at any length, and it deserves the same close, unhurried reading this study has given every other passage so far — verse by verse, following the argument exactly where it goes, rather than lifting a single verse out of the middle of it.

A. The Shape of the Argument

Hebrews has spent its opening chapters building a single case: Jesus Christ is a greater high priest than any priest the Old Covenant ever had. Chapter 7 makes that case by first establishing that Melchizedek — the same priest-king Abraham met in Genesis 14 — was himself greater than the entire Levitical priesthood, so that when Psalm 110:4 prophesies the Messiah's priesthood, it is prophesying something greater than Levi's order, not a return to it:

> **Psalms 110:4** *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

Hebrews quotes the verse three times (5:6; 7:17, 21), spelling the name as the Greek does, Melchisedec.

> **Hebrews 7:1** *For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;*
>
> **Hebrews 7:2** *To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;*
>
> **Hebrews 7:3** *Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*

Verse 3 is doing careful, deliberate work with what scripture does *not* say. Genesis records no genealogy for Melchizedek, no account of his birth, and no account of his death — a striking silence, given how

carefully Genesis usually traces genealogies, especially around priestly and kingly figures. Hebrews uses that silence typologically: Melchizedek is "made like unto the Son of God" specifically in the way the text is silent about his beginning and end, prefiguring a priesthood that does not pass, the way every Levitical priest's office necessarily passed to a successor at his death.

The argument then turns directly to the tithe, using it as one link in a larger chain:

> **Hebrews 7:4** *Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:5** *And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:*
>
> **Hebrews 7:6** *But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:7** *And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:8** *And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:9** *And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:10** *For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.*

The logic runs in a clear, single line: Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and "the less is blessed of the better" (v.7) — so Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. Levi, Abraham's own great-grandson, was still "in the loins of his father" when this happened, so in a representative sense, Levi himself paid tithes to Melchizedek and received his blessing (vv.9-10) — so Melchizedek is greater than Levi, and by extension, greater than the entire priesthood descended from him. That is the whole purpose the tithe serves in this passage: a supporting link in an argument about which priesthood is greater. It is never, at any point in verses 1-10, turned into an instruction about what anyone should do.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim H: in Hebrews 7 the tithe serves an argument about which priesthood is greater.

B. Reading Verse 8 in Its Own Context

Chapter 1 raised verse 8 as a potential argument that Christ, as a living priest, continues to receive tithes today. Read in its actual place in the paragraph, that reading runs into a real grammatical problem: every "he" and "this man" in verses 1 through 7 refers to Melchizedek, and verses 9 and 10 turn to Levi — not to Christ. Nothing in the passage signals a shift to Christ in the middle of verse 8, and "there," set against "here," points back to the Genesis scene the paragraph has been describing. Read in context, "there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth" is making the same point verse 3 already made: unlike the Levitical priests, of whom scripture always records death and succession, no death is ever recorded of Melchizedek — the text simply bears witness, by its own silence, "that he liveth." The contrast being drawn is Melchizedek (a priest of whom no death is recorded) against the Levitical priests (who are explicitly "men that die," v.8) — not a claim that Christ, up in heaven, is

presently collecting a tenth of any believer's income. When the writer finally does sum up the whole argument, a few verses later, tithing does not appear at all:

> **Hebrews 8:1** *Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

The sum of the whole argument is Christ's priesthood and his position at the Father's right hand — not tithing. That silence, at the exact point the writer chooses to summarize his own point, is itself worth weighing.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for claim H: "he liveth" refers to Melchizedek as Genesis presents him. The other side can fairly answer that "of whom it is witnessed that he liveth" may point to Christ, the priest "for ever" of Psalm 110:4. Even so, the verse describes the Genesis encounter, gives no instruction to give, and the writer's own summary (8:1) leaves the tithe out.

C. The Payload: A Change of Priesthood Requires a Change of Law

The chapter's real force for this study arrives a few verses later, and it is worth reading slowly, because it speaks directly to the very structure Chapter 3 already established:

> **Hebrews 7:11** *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*
>
> **Hebrews 7:12** *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:13** *For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:14** *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:18** *For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*
>
> **Hebrews 7:19** *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.*

Read this against what Chapter 3 of this study already established. The tithe existed, by the Law's own explicit statement (Numbers 18:20-21), specifically because the Levites held no land and needed another means of support tied to their particular tribe and their particular service at the altar. Verse 13 states plainly that Jesus "pertaineth to another tribe" — Judah, not Levi — "of which no man gave attendance at the altar." He is not merely a better version of a Levitical priest; he is, by the Law's own terms, structurally ineligible to hold that office at all. And verse 12 states the consequence of that fact as directly as scripture ever states anything: "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." Not an optional change, not a change limited to ceremonial detail — "of necessity," because the priesthood the Law had built its provisions around no longer functions the way the Law assumed it would.

Verse 18 goes further still: "a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." The commandment establishing that former structure is not described as continuing quietly alongside the new priesthood. It is described as disannulled — set aside, its force ended, because "the law made nothing perfect" (v.19). The tithe legislation examined in full in Chapter 3 was part of exactly that commandment — provision built for a priesthood tied to Levi's tribe, land, and altar-service. When the priesthood changed, by this chapter's own explicit statement, the law built around the old priesthood changed of necessity along with it.

The writer has already made that connection himself. In verse 5 he calls the Levites' right to receive tithes "a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law" — and verse 18's "disannulling of the commandment going before" uses the same word, *entolē*, "commandment" (Appendix A §8).

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim H: the commandment that gave Levi the tithe belongs to the law that Hebrews says is changed and disannulled. The other side can fairly answer that 7:12's "change of the law" might mean only the law of priestly succession. Verse 5 answers it: the writer himself calls the Levites' tithe "a commandment... according to the law" of that same priesthood.

D. Closing: The Chapter Answers Its Own Question

Hebrews 7 was never written to instruct the church on giving. It was written to prove Christ's priesthood is greater than Levi's, and the tithe appears in it only as one link supporting that larger argument — never as a command, a suggestion, or even a description of New Covenant practice. But in making that argument, the chapter ends up answering, directly and in its own words, the very question this study has been building toward since Chapter 3: what happens to a Law built around a specific priesthood when that priesthood itself is replaced. Hebrews 7:12 answers it without ambiguity. A change of priesthood necessitates a change of the law tied to it. The tithe was tied to it. What remains, once that specific legislation has been disannulled along with the priesthood it supported, is the subject of the next chapter: what scripture actually says the church's own giving is now built on.

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim H.

In Short

Hebrews 7 uses Abraham's tithe to prove that Christ's priesthood is greater than Levi's. In doing so it says that a change of priesthood makes necessary a change of the law, and that the commandment going before — the commandment that gave Levi the tithe — is set aside.

Chapter 7 — The Grace Administration's Own Pattern of Giving

If the tithe legislation was disannulled along with the priesthood it was built to support, the question this study owes an answer to is not merely what ended, but what the church actually lives by instead.

Scripture does not leave that question unanswered. The Grace administration has its own, extensively documented pattern of giving — and it is worth saying plainly, before looking at a single verse, that this pattern is not a loosening of the standard. Where it can be measured, it exceeds the tithe. It is simply built on an entirely different foundation.

A. The Earliest Church: Giving Beyond a Fixed Rate

The very first description of the church's own giving, in the days immediately following Pentecost, already shows something that a fixed ten percent could never produce:

> **Acts 2:44** *And all that believed were together, and had all things common;*
>
> **Acts 2:45** *And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*
>
> **Acts 4:32** *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*
>
> **Acts 4:34** *Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,*
>
> **Acts 4:35** *And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.*

No percentage is named because no percentage could describe what is happening here. This is giving driven by need on one side and by love on the other, not by a fixed proportion applied uniformly regardless of circumstance. Nor was even this a law. When Ananias brought part of the price of his land, Peter told him plainly that the land and the money had both been his own:

> **Acts 5:4** *Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*

His sin was lying about his gift, not keeping part of it.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim G: the earliest church gave by need and by love, and Peter says the gift was the giver's own to decide. The other side can fairly answer that the shared purse at Jerusalem was not made a rule elsewhere. Agreed; it is cited to show giving without a fixed rate, not as a pattern to copy.

B. Paul's Instruction: Proportional, Personal, Unforced

When Paul gives the church direct, practical instruction about a regular collection, the standard he sets is deliberately open rather than fixed:

> **1 Corinthians 16:1** *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.*

> **1 Corinthians 16:2** *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

"As God hath prospered him" — proportional to actual circumstance, decided by "every one of you" individually, with no number named at all. Paul's fullest teaching on giving, in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, develops this same principle at real length, and it is worth reading closely, because it shows exactly what does govern the church's giving in place of a fixed law.

> **2 Corinthians 8:1** *Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;*
>
> **2 Corinthians 8:2** *How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 8:3** *For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;*

The Macedonian churches are held up as the standard, and the standard is not a rate — it is a direction that runs *past* what could reasonably be expected, "beyond their power," offered "willing of themselves," out of "deep poverty." No law required this. Nothing in the text suggests they were tithing; they were giving more than their own means could easily bear, entirely of their own will. Paul then states the actual measuring principle directly, in contrast to any fixed proportion:

> **2 Corinthians 8:12** *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

Willingness, and what a person actually has — not a percentage applied without regard to circumstance. And the chapter that follows returns to exactly the note this study's Introduction opened on:

> **2 Corinthians 9:6** *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 9:7** *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 9:11** *Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 9:13** *Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men.*

"As he purposeth in his heart" is the standard — a decision made by each believer, before God, not a rate handed down from outside. "Not grudgingly, or of necessity" rules out exactly the two postures a fixed, feared law tends to produce: reluctant compliance, and compliance driven by obligation rather than love. What replaces the tithe's fixed proportion, in other words, is not the absence of a standard. It is a different, higher standard: cheerful, proportional, willing, and — in the one concrete New Testament example scripture actually gives, the Macedonians — capable of exceeding what any fixed law would have required.

One thing about these chapters needs saying plainly, because the next chapter depends on it: the collection Paul is directing in 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 was not the upkeep of the church at Corinth or of its teachers. It was **"the collection for the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:1)** — relief for poor believers at Jerusalem. The principles Paul gives for it are stated as principles of giving as such — **"God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7)** — and this chapter reads them that way. What the collection was, and why that matters, is the subject of Chapter 8.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim G: "as God hath prospered him" and "as he purposeth in his heart" are Paul's own words. The other side can fairly answer that these words were written about a relief collection, not about the church's regular support. True (Chapter 8 §B); but the principles are stated generally, and the same objection takes 1 Corinthians 16:2 away from any teaching of a weekly tithe.

C. Closing: Not a Lower Standard, a Different Foundation

Put together, the Grace administration's own pattern of giving is proportional rather than fixed ("as God hath prospered him"), willing rather than compelled ("not grudgingly, or of necessity"), assessed by what a person actually has rather than a percentage applied without regard to it ("according to that a man hath"), and — in the New Testament's own clearest example — capable of exceeding what any fixed law would have demanded. This is the positive answer to the question this whole study has been building toward. The tithe did not simply vanish, leaving nothing behind. It was replaced with something built on a different foundation entirely: not vowed obedience to a written code, but grace, freely given, freely received, and — exactly as this study's anchor passage said from its very first page — freely, cheerfully returned.

Weighing it: Strong inference — for claim G.

In Short

The church's giving is built on grace, not a rate: as God has prospered, as each purposes in his heart, willingly, cheerfully, and sometimes beyond what anyone could ask. Where that giving went is the next chapter's subject.

Chapter 8 — Where the Giving Went: Relief for the Saints, and Support for Those Who Minister

Ask most believers where Christian giving goes, and they will give one answer: to the church, for the support of the church. That is how giving is usually taught and usually practiced, and it is the assumption the tithe teaching rests on — a tenth to the local church, for its ministry. Scripture's own record of the Grace administration's giving shows something wider. The previous chapter looked at *how* the church gave. This chapter looks at *where* the giving went, and *what it was for*.

Two purposes stand out, and the New Testament keeps them distinct. The first is **relief** — meeting the bodily needs of saints in want, and doing good to others besides. The second is **the support of those who minister the word** — the apostles, evangelists, elders and teachers whose labour is the gospel itself. Both are scriptural. Neither is the other. And the passages most often preached on giving to the church belong, in fact, to the first.

A. Even Under the Law, the Poor Had Their Own Provision

The distinction is not new with the church. Chapter 3 showed that the tithe was given to Levi "for an inheritance, for their service" (Numbers 18:21). The Law also provided for the poor by other means, in commands that name no Levite and no tithe at all:

> **Leviticus 19:9** *And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.*
>
> **Leviticus 19:10** *And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.*
>
> **Deuteronomy 24:19** *When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.*
>
> **Deuteronomy 15:11** *For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.*

The third-year tithe, shared between the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, quoted in Chapter 3 §B), joined the two purposes in one gift. But the corners of the field, the gleanings and the forgotten sheaf were the poor man's by right, and the open hand of Deuteronomy 15 was a command to every Israelite toward his own poor brother — measured by need, not by a tenth.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim R: the Law provided for the poor apart from the Levites' support. The other side can fairly answer that the third-year tithe served the Levite and the poor together. Agreed — and the gleaning laws and the open hand stood apart from any tithe.

B. The Collection for the Saints

The earliest church's giving, already read in Chapter 7, was relief from the start: the goods were parted **"to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:45)**, and **"distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts 4:35)**. Within a few years that daily distribution had grown large enough to need servants of its own, and the apostles themselves drew the very distinction this chapter is drawing:

> **Acts 6:1** *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.*

> **Acts 6:2** *Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.*
>
> **Acts 6:3** *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*
>
> **Acts 6:4** *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

"Serve tables" on one side; "the ministry of the word" on the other. Both were the church's work, but the apostles would not let the first swallow the second, and they appointed separate men to it.

The first gift recorded from one church to another was relief as well, and it was given by the standard Paul would later teach — according to ability:

> **Acts 11:27** *And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.*
>
> **Acts 11:28** *And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.*
>
> **Acts 11:29** *Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:*
>
> **Acts 11:30** *Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

When Paul's calling to the Gentiles was recognised at Jerusalem, the one request made of him concerned the poor:

> **Galatians 2:10** *Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*

That is what the collection of 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 was. Paul's instruction to lay by on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2, read in Chapter 7 §B) goes on to say where the money was going and who would carry it:

> **1 Corinthians 16:3** *And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 16:4** *And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.*

He names its purpose in every place he mentions it:

> **Romans 15:25** *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.*
>
> **Romans 15:26** *For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*
>
> **Romans 15:27** *It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.*
>
> **Romans 15:28** *When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 8:4** *Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*

> **2 Corinthians 8:13** *For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:*
>
> **2 Corinthians 8:14** *But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:*
>
> **2 Corinthians 8:15** *As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 9:1** *For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:*
>
> **2 Corinthians 9:12** *For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;*

And years later, standing before the governor Felix, Paul described the journey that delivered it:

> **Acts 24:17** *Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.*

"The collection for the saints." "The poor saints which are at Jerusalem." "The ministering to the saints." "The want of the saints." "Alms to my nation." The collection was relief — food and necessities for believers in poverty, in another city, carried there by men the churches themselves approved. It was not the upkeep of the church at Corinth, nor the support of its teachers. That matters, because the two texts most often preached when a church asks for regular giving — the weekly laying by of 1 Corinthians 16:2 and the cheerful giver of 2 Corinthians 9:7 — were both written about it. Romans 15:27 even speaks of a debt: the Gentiles had received Israel's spiritual things, and **"their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things" (Romans 15:27)**. Yet the debt is paid as relief to the poor, not as a tenth to anyone.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim R: Paul calls the collection "for the saints," "for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." The other side can fairly answer that the principles Paul gives for this collection reach all Christian giving. Agreed, and Chapter 7 reads them that way. What does not follow is that the collection itself was the support of a church or of its ministers.

C. Doing Good to All, and Giving Hand to Hand

Not all of the New Testament's relief passed through a collection. Much of it is commanded of each believer directly, toward whoever is in need in front of him:

> **Galatians 6:9** *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*
>
> **Galatians 6:10** *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*
>
> **Ephesians 4:28** *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*
>
> **Romans 12:13** *Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*
>
> **James 1:27** *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*
>
> **James 2:15** *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,*
>
> **James 2:16** *And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

> **1 John 3:17** *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*
>
> **1 John 3:18** *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*
>
> **1 Timothy 6:17** *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;*
>
> **1 Timothy 6:18** *That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;*
>
> **Hebrews 13:16** *But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

Hebrews calls this kind of giving a sacrifice — **"with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16)** — the same language Paul uses of a gift sent to himself (§D below). And scripture sets an order for it. A believer's first charge is his own household, and the church's relief is kept for those who have no one else:

> **1 Timothy 5:3** *Honour widows that are widows indeed.*
>
> **1 Timothy 5:4** *But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.*
>
> **1 Timothy 5:8** *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*
>
> **1 Timothy 5:16** *If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.*

"Let not the church be charged" (1 Timothy 5:16) — the church's purse was not to carry what a family could carry itself. A great deal of scriptural giving, in other words, never passes through any church at all. It goes from a working man's hands to a neighbour in need, from a son to his widowed mother, from the rich man to whoever lacks.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim R: scripture commands giving directly to those in need, and puts the family's charge before the church's. The other side can fairly answer that these verses concern generosity, not how a church should be funded. Agreed. They show only that the field of giving is far wider than "the church," which the tithe teaching assumes is its whole field.

D. Support for Those Who Labour in the Word

The second purpose is just as scriptural, and the New Testament sets it out at length. Chapter 1 §F heard the traditional case draw on it; here it is read in full, in its own setting. Paul's fullest argument for it runs through 1 Corinthians 9:

> **1 Corinthians 9:4** *Have we not power to eat and to drink?*
>
> **1 Corinthians 9:7** *Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?*
>
> **1 Corinthians 9:9** *For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?*

> **1 Corinthians 9:10** *Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 9:11** *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*
>
> **1 Corinthians 9:13** *Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?*
>
> **1 Corinthians 9:14** *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

Soldier, vinedresser, shepherd, ploughman, thresher, priest — every picture Paul reaches for says the same thing: the one who labours lives of his labour. If he has sown spiritual things, it is no great thing that he should reap carnal things. And **"even so hath the Lord ordained" (1 Corinthians 9:14)**. The ordinance Paul has in mind is the Lord's own word when He first sent out His disciples — the same word Paul quotes again to Timothy:

> **Matthew 10:8** *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*
>
> **Matthew 10:9** *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,*
>
> **Matthew 10:10** *Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.*
>
> **Luke 10:7** *And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.*
>
> **1 Timothy 5:17** *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*
>
> **1 Timothy 5:18** *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*

"The labourer is worthy of his hire." In the Lord's own instruction the support was hospitality — **"eating and drinking such things as they give" (Luke 10:7)** — and it came with a command running the other way: **"freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8)**.

Paul states the same duty from the side of the one who is taught:

> **Galatians 6:6** *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

"Communicate" translates *koinōneō*, to share, to have in common — the taught and the teacher in fellowship, "in all good things." John praises the same thing in Gaius, a believer who welcomed travelling workers and sent them on their way:

> **3 John 1:5** *Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;*
>
> **3 John 1:6** *Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:*

> **3 John 1:7** *Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.*
>
> **3 John 1:8** *We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.*

And Paul records how one church did it, in the one place he thanks a church for supporting him:

> **Philippians 4:15** *Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.*
>
> **Philippians 4:16** *For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.*
>
> **Philippians 4:17** *Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*
>
> **Philippians 4:18** *But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.*

Here, across every passage that directly addresses supporting those who minister, is where the tithe would have to appear if it were the church's standard. 1 Corinthians 9 reaches all the way back to the temple — **"they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar" (1 Corinthians 9:13)** — and then says, not "even so let them tithe," but **"even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14)**. Paul argues from the soldier, the farmer and the ox; he never argues from the tenth, though the tenth was part of the very temple system he names. Timothy is told to count faithful elders worthy of "double honour"; the Galatians to "communicate… in all good things"; Gaius to bring workers forward "after a godly sort"; the Philippians are thanked for sending "once and again." No passage names a proportion, and none uses the word "tithe." It was not that the apostles were shy about it. On the evidence of every chapter of this study, it was simply no longer the operative category.

Weighing it: Mixed, stated per point — for claim R, direct statement: those who labour in the word may rightly be supported; for claim G, strong inference: the tithe is absent exactly where it would be expected. The other side can fairly answer two things. First, that this is an argument from silence. It is — but a silence across every passage on the very subject is not the same as a silence somewhere else. Second, that "the things of the temple" in 1 Corinthians 9:13 included the Levites' tithes, so Paul's analogy carries the tithe with it. The analogy carries the principle — the worker lives of his work — but Paul grounds it in what "the Lord ordained," not in what Moses commanded, and names no proportion when he applies it.

E. Paul's Own Choice: The Gospel Without Charge

The right to support was real, and Paul defends it. But he often chose not to use it:

> **1 Corinthians 9:12** *If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 9:15** *But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.*

> **1 Corinthians 9:18** *What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 11:7** *Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?*
>
> **2 Corinthians 11:8** *I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 11:9** *And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 2:9** *For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.*
>
> **2 Thessalonians 3:8** *Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:*
>
> **2 Thessalonians 3:9** *Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.*

And to the elders of Ephesus, in his farewell, he joined both purposes of this chapter in a single breath:

> **Acts 20:33** *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.*
>
> **Acts 20:34** *Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.*
>
> **Acts 20:35** *I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Paul worked with his own hands, supplied his own needs and his companions', and laboured so that he could **"support the weak" (Acts 20:35)**. The man who wrote "even so hath the Lord ordained" laid that right aside at Corinth, at Thessalonica and at Ephesus, and accepted support from Macedonia while he served Corinth. A right that can be laid aside for the gospel's sake is a different thing from a tenth owed by law.

Weighing it: Direct statement — for claim R: support of those who minister is a right that Paul could, and often did, lay aside. The other side can fairly answer that Paul's refusal was his own choice for particular churches, not a rule that ministers should go unpaid. Agreed — 1 Corinthians 9:14 stands. The point is only that a right which may be waived is not a law of a tenth.

F. Why the Distinction Matters

Set the two purposes side by side and the shape of New Testament giving is plain. There is relief: the collection for the saints, the daily ministration, the open hand to the neighbour in need, the widow cared for first by her own family and then by the church. And there is the support of those who labour in the word: the labourer worthy of his hire, the teacher with whom the taught share all good things, the travelling worker brought forward on his journey. The apostles kept the two distinct — they would not **"leave the word of God, and serve tables" (Acts 6:2)** — and appointed separate men for each. Neither

purpose was governed by a tenth. Relief was measured by need and by ability, **"every man according to his ability" (Acts 11:29)**; support, by the labour and by the willing heart of the giver.

This bears directly on the common teaching stated in Chapter 1 §F — the tithe to the local church as "the storehouse," and offerings beyond it to everything else. Chapters 3 and 4 showed that the storehouse was a set of chambers in the temple at Jerusalem. This chapter shows that the New Testament never divides giving that way either. It has no "tithe first, then offerings" — only two purposes, both freely given.

It also helps a believer give with understanding today. Many ministries gather funds to help others in need — the hungry, the widowed, the persecuted, the poor. A gift to that work belongs to the first purpose: it is relief, the counterpart of the collection for the saints. It is not "tithing," and it is not the same thing as supporting those who teach the word. Both are scriptural, and a believer who knows which one he is doing, and why, can give to each as he **"purposeth in his heart" (2 Corinthians 9:7)**. Whether any particular ministry handles its gifts well is a separate question, and this study does not take it up — though Paul's own concern is worth noting, that the collection be handled so **"that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us" (2 Corinthians 8:20)**.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference — for claim R: the two purposes are drawn from the texts; how sharply to separate them in a church's practice is a judgment. The other side can fairly answer that one local church may rightly do both — collect for relief and support its teachers. Agreed; the church at Jerusalem did both (Acts 6). The point is to know which is which, not to forbid either.

In Short

New Testament giving went to two places: the relief of saints in need, with good done to all men, and the support of those who labour in the word. The apostles kept them distinct, the best-known giving passages belong to the first, and no passage names a tithe for either.

Chapter 9 — Closing — Which Administration Governs the Church?

Every chapter of this study has been building toward one question, and it is time to answer it plainly. Not "was tithing ever real" — it plainly was, commanded by God himself, in real detail, for a real purpose. The question this study actually set out to answer was narrower and more important: which administration governs the church, and does the tithe belong to it?

A. The Answer, Stated Directly

The church does not live under the Patriarchal administration, governed by credited faith apart from any code — Chapter 2 showed that even that administration supplies no commanded tithe at all, only two isolated, unrepeated human acts. The church does not live under the Mosaic Law administration either, governed by a vowed, written code given at Sinai to a specific nation — Chapter 3 showed that the tithe

belonged to that administration specifically, legislated to support a landless Levitical priesthood's inheritance, structured around agricultural increase, a central sanctuary, and a storehouse that Chapters 3 and 4 both showed to be a literal, physical set of temple chambers. Chapter 6 showed that this same Law was, by its own New Testament commentary, necessarily changed when the priesthood it was built around was replaced by a priest "of another tribe... of which no man gave attendance at the altar" — the commandment "disannulled... for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof."

The church lives under the administration that follows: Grace, opened at Pentecost after Christ's death, resurrection and Ascension, governed — in the words already set out in this study's own Introduction — by "grace through faith, apart from law" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Chapter 7 showed what that administration's own giving actually looks like where scripture describes it in detail: proportional, willing, cheerful, measured by what a person has rather than a fixed rate, and, in the New Testament's own clearest example, capable of exceeding what any law would have required. Chapter 8 showed where it went: to the relief of saints in need, to doing good to all men, and to the support of those who labour in the word — each a real purpose, none of them measured by a tenth. Malachi's storehouse, Numbers' landless Levites, Hebrews' disannulled commandment — every one of them belongs to an administration the church does not live under. The tithe was never abolished as though it had been a mistake. It served exactly the purpose God gave it, for exactly the people and the priesthood it was given to, for exactly as long as that priesthood stood. It simply does not govern a people living, as the church now does, after that priesthood was replaced.

Weighing it: Strong inference — the study's cumulative conclusion on all seven claims. Appendix B sets out the weight of each part.

B. What This Does Not Mean

This conclusion is easy to hear as permission to give less, and it is worth being just as direct about what it does not say as about what it does. Nothing in this study's own findings reduces the seriousness of a believer's giving. If anything, the opposite is true. A fixed law can be satisfied at ten percent and no further reflection required. Grace offers no such ceiling — the Macedonians, in the one full example scripture gives of the Grace administration's own giving in practice, gave "beyond their power," not up to a line and no further. Freedom from a law does not mean freedom from love, and love, scripture consistently shows, tends to give more than law ever required, not less.

Nor does it mean that those who labour in the word should go unsupported, or that the relief of the poor is optional. **"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14)**, and **"let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10)**. Freedom from the tithe removes a rate, not a responsibility.

Nor does this conclusion suggest that anyone currently giving a tenth, out of a sincere and settled conviction before the Lord, is doing something wrong. 2 Corinthians 9:7's own standard — "as he purposeth in his heart" — leaves that decision exactly where scripture places it: between each believer and God, decided willingly, not imposed as a rule to be enforced or a fear to be carried. A person who gives a tenth because that is what a cheerful, willing heart has settled on before God is living out this

study's own conclusion, not contradicting it. What this study has found no scriptural ground for is teaching the tithe as a binding requirement, carrying a warned curse for falling short of it — because that requirement, and that curse, belonged to a covenant code this study has now traced in full, from the reason it began to the moment scripture itself says it was disannulled.

Weighing it: Narrative — a pastoral guardrail; carries no weight on the question itself.

C. What Would Change This Study's Mind

A study that cannot say what would overturn it has not really tested itself. Here are four findings that would, each specific enough that a reader could go looking.

First: a text written to the church after Pentecost instructing believers to tithe, or naming a tenth as the church's standard — whether for the support of those who teach or for the collection for the saints. None exists that this study knows of. Such a text would overturn claims G, R and L.

Second: a text in the Law or the Prophets extending the tithe beyond the produce of the land and the flock, or to the nations. Such a text would weaken claims L and M.

Third: a text showing that the tithe passed from Levi to Christ or to His ministers when the priesthood changed. Hebrews 7 is where such a text would be, and it says the commandment going before is disannulled. A text to the contrary would overturn claim H.

Fourth: a text in Genesis showing Abraham or Jacob tithing as a regular practice, or God commanding it before Sinai. Such a text would overturn claim P.

Weighing it: Method, not argument — states what would count against the study.

D. Closing on Where This Study Began

It seems right to end where this study's very first page began, because nothing in the intervening chapters has moved this study away from it — if anything, every chapter has moved toward it:

> **2 Corinthians 9:7** *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

That is not a lesser standard than the tithe. It is the standard the tithe itself was always a temporary provision beneath — suited, as every administration's own provisions are suited, to the people and the moment God gave it to, and superseded, in its own time, by something built not on a rate but on a relationship. The church does not owe God a fraction. Scripture's own last word on the subject is that the church, in Christ, has been given everything, and is asked, in turn, not for a percentage of what it has, but for a heart no longer giving out of fear of what withholding might cost, but out of love for the God who withheld nothing from it first.

Weighing it: Narrative — closes the study; adds no new argument.

In Short

The tithe belonged to the Law and the Levitical priesthood, and both have given way to Grace. That frees no one to give less. It asks for a willing heart, and leaves the amount between each believer and God.

Appendix A — The Details Behind the Narrative

The chapters state these findings in a sentence so that the reader can keep reading. The full detail is here.

1. The Words for "Tithe" (Introduction §D)

Hebrew: *ma'aser*, "a tenth," with the verb *'asar*, "to tithe." Greek: the noun *dekatē*, "a tenth" (Hebrews 7:2, 4, 8, 9), and two verbs — *apodekatoō*, "to pay or take a tenth" (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12; Hebrews 7:5), and *dekatoō*, "to receive or pay a tenth" (Hebrews 7:6, 9). Outside the three Gospel passages and Hebrews 7, the New Testament never uses any of these words.

2. The Spoils of Numbers 31 (Chapter 2 §C)

The spoil was divided in half, one half to the soldiers and one to the congregation (Numbers 31:27). From the soldiers' half, one in five hundred went to Eleazar the priest (31:28-29); from the congregation's half, one in fifty went to the Levites (31:30). As a share of the whole spoil, that is one in a thousand (0.1%) and one in a hundred (1%). The previous edition gave the figures as two-tenths of one percent and two percent, applying each fraction to the whole instead of to one half. Afterward the officers also brought a freewill offering of gold (31:48-54), which the Law did not require.

3. The Levites' Cities (Chapter 3 §A)

The Levites received no tribal territory, but they were given forty-eight cities with their surrounding pasturelands, spread among the other tribes (Numbers 35:1-8; Joshua 21:1-42).

4. How Many Tithes? (Chapter 3 §B)

The Law describes the tithe in several places: the Levites' tithe and the tithe of the tithe (Numbers 18:21-28); the tithe eaten before the Lord at the central sanctuary (Deuteronomy 12:17-18; 14:22-27); and the third-year tithe stored locally for the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow (Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 26:12-15). Ancient Jewish writers read these as more than one tithe. Josephus describes three — one for the Levites, one for the feasts in Jerusalem, and one every third year for the poor (*Antiquities of the Jews* 4.8.22) — and the book of Tobit describes a first, second and third tithe (Tobit 1:7-8). These are outside witnesses, not scripture, and are cited only as corroboration.

5. The Storehouse (Chapter 3 §C; Chapter 4)

Malachi 3:10's "storehouse" is *beit ha'otsar*, "the house of the treasure." Nehemiah 10:38 uses the same phrase, "the treasure house," for the temple chambers into which the Levites brought "the tithe of the tithes." Nehemiah 12:44 records men appointed "over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes." Nehemiah 13:4-13 records one of those chambers emptied and given to Tobiah, then cleansed and restocked, with four named treasurers set over it.

6. The Tithe in Church History (Chapter 1 §G)

History cuts in more than one direction, and none of it carries scriptural weight. Irenaeus, writing late in the second century, contrasted the Jews, who "had indeed the tithes of their goods consecrated," with Christians, who "set aside all their possessions for the Lord's purposes" (*Against Heresies* 4.18.2). The Second Council of Mâcon (585) ordered tithes to be paid on pain of excommunication, and Charlemagne's capitulary of Herstal (779) made the tithe a civil obligation across his empire. Tithing has been widely taught since, in many traditions.

7. Malachi in the New Testament (Chapter 4 §A)

Malachi 3:1 (the messenger) is quoted at Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2 and Luke 7:27. Malachi 4:5-6 (Elijah) stands behind Luke 1:17 and Matthew 17:10-13. Malachi 1:2-3 is quoted at Romans 9:13. Malachi 3:8-12 is not quoted or alluded to anywhere in the New Testament.

8. "Commandment" in Hebrews 7 (Chapter 6 §C)

The Greek *entolē*, "commandment," appears three times in Hebrews 7: the Levites "have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law" (7:5); Christ is made priest "not after the law of a carnal commandment" (7:16); and "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before" (7:18).

9. The Collection for the Saints, in Order (Chapter 8 §B)

Scripture traces the relief of the Jerusalem saints across several books. In the order the events occurred: the disciples at Antioch send relief to Judaea by Barnabas and Saul, in the famine Agabus foretold (Acts 11:27-30); the leaders at Jerusalem ask Paul to "remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10 — whether that meeting is the visit of Acts 11 or of Acts 15 is debated, and nothing here depends on it); Paul orders the churches of Galatia and Corinth to lay by on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-4); he urges Corinth to finish what it had begun "a year ago," holding up the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 8:1-10; 9:2); he writes to Rome that Macedonia and Achaia have made their contribution and that he is about to carry it to Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-28); and before Felix he describes that visit as coming "to bring alms to my nation, and offerings" (Acts 24:17).

Appendix B — Weight of Each Argument

Every load-bearing argument in the study, grouped by the claim it bears on (Introduction §E). The last group lists what earlier editions said and later editions withdrew or corrected. They are kept in view on purpose, so that a returning reader can see what changed and a later edition does not bring a broken argument back.

Claim P — The tithes of Genesis establish no standing law

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
1	Abraham's standing rested on credited faith, not a code	Ch. 2	Direct statement	Not disputed
2	Abraham's tenth came from war spoils, uncommanded, and he kept none of the rest	Ch. 2 §A	Direct statement	Hebrews 7 treats the gift as significant — agreed, for its own argument
3	Abraham never tithed again	Ch. 2 §A	Reasonable inference	An argument from silence — conceded as the weaker point
4	Jacob's tenth was his own conditional vow	Ch. 2 §B	Reasonable inference	God later remembered the vow; "if" may mean "since"
5	Numbers 31 sets the share of spoils afresh	Ch. 2 §C	Reasonable inference	A different law for a different levy — agreed
6	Two patriarchs, but no command and no law	Ch. 2 §D	Strong inference	A tenth may have been an ancient custom — a custom is not a command

Claim L — The commanded tithe was Mosaic Law provision for Levi

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
7	The tithe was Levi's inheritance "for their service"	Ch. 3 §A	Direct statement	It also fed households and the poor — true, with the Levite named in every form
8	The Levites had cities but no territory	Ch. 3 §A	Direct statement	Not disputed
9	The tithe was on produce and livestock, not wages	Ch. 3 §B	Strong inference	An argument from silence in an agricultural economy
10	"The tithe of the land is the LORD's" because the land was His	Ch. 3 §B	Strong inference	Ownership language may be read as universal — Leviticus 25:23 ties it to Canaan
11	The tithe was a structured, multi-part system	Ch. 3 §B	Direct statement (the texts); corroboration only (the count)	How many tithes is debated — agreed, and nothing rests on it
12	The Law is one covenant, kept whole	Ch. 3 §D	Strong inference	The church keeps some commands found in the Law — those are restated in the New Testament

Claim M — Malachi 3 addresses Israel under the Sinai covenant

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
13	The storehouse was a set of temple chambers	Ch. 3 §C	Direct statement	Not disputed
14	Malachi is addressed "to Israel"	Ch. 4 §A	Direct statement	Not disputed
15	The New Testament quotes Malachi 3's messenger, never its tithe	Ch. 4 §A	Corroboration only	An argument from silence — agreed, and not leaned on
16	The passage is a covenant lawsuit under Deuteronomy's terms	Ch. 4 §B	Strong inference	"I change not" makes it timeless — God's character, not His covenants
17	The promised blessing is agricultural, national and temple-bound	Ch. 4 §C	Strong inference	God still blesses givers — agreed, as 2 Corinthians 9 promises to willing giving
18	Proverbs 3:9-10 names firstfruits, not a tenth	Ch. 4 §D	Reasonable inference	Wisdom speaks to all of life — agreed, and its principle carries forward

Claim J — Jesus' words uphold the Law for those still under it

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
19	The Law remained in force until fulfilled	Ch. 5 §A	Direct statement	Not disputed
20	"Ought" affirms the tithe as Law for the Pharisees	Ch. 5 §B	Strong inference	What Jesus affirmed stands — so does Matthew 8:4's Levitical offering
21	In the one comparison before God, the tither is not justified	Ch. 5 §C	Reasonable inference	The parable is about self-trust — agreed; it shows only that tithing does not justify

Claim H — Hebrews 7 records the change that ends the tithe's legal basis

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
22	The tithe serves an argument about which priesthood is greater	Ch. 6 §A	Direct statement	Not disputed
23	Verse 8's "he liveth" is Melchizedek as Genesis presents him	Ch. 6 §B	Reasonable inference	It may point to Christ — even so, no instruction to give follows
24	The writer's own summary (8:1) leaves the tithe out	Ch. 6 §B	Corroboration only	An argument from silence
25	A change of priesthood necessitates a change of the law	Ch. 6 §C	Direct statement	It may mean only the law of succession — see row 26
26	The tithe is named "a commandment… according to the law" of that priesthood (7:5, 18)	Ch. 6 §C	Strong inference	Not answered in the texts this study has examined

Claim G — The Grace administration's giving is willing and proportional

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
27	The earliest church gave by need and love; the gift was the giver's own (Acts 5:4)	Ch. 7 §A	Direct statement	The shared purse was not a rule elsewhere — agreed
28	"As God hath prospered him"; "as he purposeth in his heart"	Ch. 7 §B	Direct statement	Not disputed
29	The Macedonians gave beyond their power	Ch. 7 §B	Direct statement	Not disputed
30	"Tithe" is absent from every passage on supporting ministers	Ch. 8 §D	Strong inference	An argument from silence — but on the very subject

Claim R — The New Testament's giving runs to distinct purposes

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
31	The Law provided for the poor apart from the Levites' tithe	Ch. 8 §A	Direct statement	The third-year tithe served both — agreed; the gleaning laws stood apart from it
32	The apostles separated serving tables from the ministry of the word	Ch. 8 §B	Direct statement	Not disputed
33	The collection of 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 was relief for the poor saints at Jerusalem	Ch. 8 §B	Direct statement	Its principles reach all giving — agreed; its purpose was relief
34	Much New Testament giving passes hand to hand, outside any church purse, family first	Ch. 8 §C	Direct statement	These verses concern generosity, not church funding — agreed; they show the field is wider than "the church"
35	Those who labour in the word may rightly be supported	Ch. 8 §D	Direct statement	Not disputed
36	Paul often laid his right to support aside	Ch. 8 §E	Direct statement	A personal choice, not a rule against supporting ministers — agreed; 1 Corinthians 9:14 stands
37	The New Testament never divides giving into "tithe to the church, offerings beyond"	Ch. 8 §F	Reasonable inference	One church may do both — agreed; the point is to know which is which

Withdrawn or corrected from earlier editions

#	What an earlier edition said	Where	Status	Why
38	God never responded to Jacob's vow	Ch. 2 §B	Withdrawn	Genesis 31:13
39	Jacob's vow was unpaid, and so an example of the fool's vow of Ecclesiastes 5:4-5	Ch. 2 §B	Withdrawn	Scripture is silent on the tenth; Jacob returned to Bethel (35:1-7)
40	Numbers 31's shares were two-tenths of one percent and two percent	Ch. 2 §C	Corrected	Each applied to half the spoil: 0.1% and 1% of the whole
41	God's covenant with Abraham was "sealed by God's own oath" in Genesis 15	Ch. 2 §A	Corrected	Genesis 15 is a covenant ceremony; the oath is Genesis 22:16
42	The Levites received no land at all	Ch. 3 §A	Corrected	Forty-eight cities with pasturelands, but no territory
43	Luke 1:17 draws on Malachi 3	Ch. 4 §A	Corrected	Luke 1:17 draws on Malachi 4:5-6
44	Deuteronomy 11:26-28 was stated "at Sinai itself"	Ch. 4 §B	Corrected	Spoken on the plains of Moab, as the terms of the Sinai covenant

#	What an earlier edition said	Where	Status	Why
45	Every "he" in Hebrews 7:1-10 refers to Melchizedek	Ch. 6 §B	Corrected	Verses 9-10 speak of Levi
46	John Wesley taught and modeled tithing	Ch. 1 §G	Withdrawn	Not confirmed; replaced with documented history
47	Jacob was "a generation" after Abraham	Ch. 1 §B	Corrected	He was Abraham's grandson
48	Chapter 7 read 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 as the church's general giving, without saying they were a relief collection	Ch. 7 §B	Corrected (pod-V6)	1 Corinthians 16:1; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 9:1, 12 — now stated, and the purpose treated in Ch. 8
49	Psalm 110:4 quoted in Hebrews' wording and spelling	Ch. 6 §A	Corrected (pod-V6)	The Psalm reads "after the order of Melchizedek"

Appendix C — What Changed from the Previous Edition

For readers of the previous edition (pod-V5), here is every change of substance, in the order it appears. The changes made in pod-V5 itself are recorded in that edition; its withdrawn arguments remain listed in Appendix B.

Introduction. A seventh claim, R, added to §E for the new Chapter 8.

Chapter 1. §F now also states the common "storehouse" teaching — the tithe to the local church, offerings beyond it — so that it can be answered.

Chapter 2. Genesis 14:22-24, 15:17-18, 27:41 and 35:1, 7, previously cited by reference only, now quoted in full.

Chapter 3. Numbers 35:2, 7, Joshua 21:41, Leviticus 25:23, Nehemiah 12:44 and 13:13 now quoted in full. Romans 13:9, previously only in a weighing note, now quoted in §D.

Chapter 4. Malachi 1:8, Malachi 4:5-6, Luke 1:17, Numbers 18:12-13 and Hebrews 8:13 now quoted in full.

Chapter 5. Galatians 4:4 ("made under the law"), previously only in a weighing note, now quoted.

Chapter 6. Psalm 110:4 now quoted from the Psalm itself; the previous edition gave it in Hebrews' wording and spelling.

Chapter 7. Now treats how the church gave. §B states plainly that the collection of 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 was relief for the poor saints at Jerusalem. The former §C, on supporting those who minister, moved — much expanded, with every verse it named now quoted — to Chapter 8 §§D-E.

Chapter 8 (new). Where the giving went: the Law's own provision for the poor (§A); the collection for the saints, traced from Acts 6 and 11 through Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans to Acts 24 (§B); giving hand to hand, and the family's charge before the church's (§C); the support of those who labour in the word, with 1 Corinthians 9, Matthew 10, Luke 10, 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Galatians 6:6, 3 John 5-8 and Philippians 4:15-18 quoted in full (§D); Paul's refusal of support, with 1 Corinthians 9:12, 15, 18, 2 Corinthians 11:7-9, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9 and Acts 20:33-35 quoted in full (§E); and why the distinction matters for a believer giving today (§F).

Chapter 9 (formerly Chapter 8). §A takes in Chapter 8's finding; §B adds that freedom from the tithe leaves neither those who teach unsupported nor the poor unhelped; §C's first test now names both purposes.

Back matter. Appendix A §9 traces the collection for the saints in order. Appendix B adds claim R (rows 31-37) and two corrections (rows 48-49). The Scripture Index is rebuilt from the text.

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Sources Consulted

This study is built from scripture. The King James Version is the base text throughout, and every quotation has been checked against it. The works below were consulted for language, history and background. None carries scriptural weight.

The Holy Bible, King James Version. The base text.

James Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. For the Hebrew and Greek words for "tithe," "storehouse" and "commandment."

Matthew E. Narramore, *Tithing: Low-Realm, Obsolete & Defunct*. Used as a starting point to research against, not as a text to summarize or adopt. The structure, argument and conclusions of this study are its own, built from scripture.

Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 4.8.22, and the book of Tobit 1:7-8. Ancient Jewish witnesses to more than one tithe (Appendix A §4). Corroboration only.

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.18.2; the Second Council of Mâcon (585); Charlemagne's capitulary of Herstal (779). The tithe in church history (Appendix A §6). Corroboration only.

This library's companion study *The Seven Administrations of Scripture*. The administration framework used throughout.

Scripture Index

Genesis 14:18-20 Chapter 1 §B

Genesis 14:18-20 Chapter 2 §A

Genesis 14:22-24 Chapter 2 §A

Genesis 15:1 Chapter 2 §A

Genesis 15:6 Chapter 2

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Genesis 28:13-15 Chapter 2 §B

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Deuteronomy 11:26-28 Chapter 4 §B

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Deuteronomy 15:11 Chapter 8 §A

Deuteronomy 18:1-2 Chapter 3 §A

Deuteronomy 24:19 Chapter 8 §A

Joshua 21:41 Chapter 3 §A

2 Chronicles 31:4 Chapter 3 §C

Acts 20:33-35 Chapter 8 §E

Acts 24:17 Chapter 8 §B

Romans 4:13-15 Chapter 2

Romans 12:13 Chapter 8 §C

Romans 13:9 Chapter 3 §D

Romans 15:25-28 Chapter 8 §B

1 Corinthians 9:4 Chapter 8 §D

1 Corinthians 9:7 Chapter 8 §D

1 Corinthians 9:9-11 Chapter 8 §D

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2 Corinthians 8:1-3 Chapter 7 §B

2 Corinthians 8:4 Chapter 8 §B

2 Corinthians 8:12 Chapter 7 §B

2 Corinthians 8:13-15 Chapter 8 §B

2 Corinthians 9:1 Chapter 8 §B

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 Anchor Passage

2 Corinthians 9:6-7, 11, 13 Chapter 7 §B

2 Corinthians 9:7 Chapter 9 §D

2 Corinthians 9:12 Chapter 8 §B

2 Corinthians 11:7-9 Chapter 8 §E

Galatians 2:10 Chapter 8 §B

Galatians 3:17 Chapter 2

Galatians 4:4 Chapter 5 §A

Nehemiah 10:37-38 Chapter 3 §C
Nehemiah 12:44 Chapter 3 §C
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