

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-22 Christian Stewardship: Tithes

You have just completed three lessons on Christian character—humility, service, and showing love toward God and neighbor. Another part of living a life in obedience to God is stewardship—wise use of time and treasure. The following three lessons will discuss the giving of tithes, offerings, and a portion of your time to God.

The patriarch Abram was a man called by God. When he was 75 years old, God said to him, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.” He obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. He made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country. He and his family and his nephew Lot lived in tents and tended their flocks and herds. Abram built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

After some time, both Abram and Lot became very wealthy. The land could not support them while they stayed together, so they decided to separate. Lot chose the plain of Jordan to the east; Abram lived in the land of Canaan to the west. Again Abram built an altar to Yahweh and thanked him for all his blessings. Lot pitched his tents near the city of Sodom, where the men were sinning greatly against the Lord.

Now after being mistreated 13 years, the five kings of the plains where Lot lived went to battle with four enemy kings. The enemy kings defeated and chased the people from their cities. They seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, including all their food. They carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions too. One who escaped ran and reported this to Abram, the Hebrew.

This was bad news in Abram’s ear. But God was already forming a plan and Abram was willing to go. He gathered his small army of 318 trained men together and set off in pursuit of the enemy kings. They quickly went after Lot and his family for the rescue. With God’s help Abram would rescue the victims by dividing his men into two groups. He attacked and routed the enemy during the night, before they knew what hit them.

Good news! Abram recovered all the stolen goods. He brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people. It was a glorious victory that Abram knew was due to God’s help. God had brought this wonderful victory. There was great rejoicing in the camp as the army returned with their spoils. Abram knew that without God his battle would have been lost and with it his relative. The glory went to God. He wanted everyone to know that he gave God the credit.

Then Melchizedek king of Salem, came to congratulate Abram. He brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand” (Gen 14:8-20).

In ancient times, kingly and priestly duties were often performed by the same individual. The name Melchizedek means, ‘king of righteousness.’ King of Salem means ‘king of peace’—a shortened form of Jerusalem. These are Messianic titles. He offered food and drink as a show of friendship and hospitality. Abram identified the priest’s blessing as acknowledging the one true God, Yahweh. This king was “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever” (Heb 7:2-3). Scripture does not record any facts about his life.

Abram wanted to honor God Most High for victory. He chose to give God one tenth of all the spoils as a tithe. Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, accepted Abram’s tithe in honor of God. A tenth was the king’s share. The writer of the Book of Hebrews, later speaks of Melchizedek as a type of Jesus, our great high priest (Heb 6:20).

Abram had such trust in God to provide all he needed, that he gave God generously of his possessions. As a steward of God it was a great honor to sacrifice to God Most High. He was positive that God had granted him victory in the rescue of his nephew. God deserved much more than just a little offering. Abram joyfully gave a tenth with a heart of great gratitude.

Because he was truly a believer he was guided, empowered, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. His heart was to honor God in any way he could. In actuality Abram knew that all he had was flowing from God and he owed everything to him—even this great victory.

Moses later taught the Israelites that “a tithe [a tenth] of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord” (Lev 27:30). And Jesus confirmed Moses’ teaching when he said, “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone” (Luke 11:42).

As followers of Christ, we understand that “every good and perfect gift” comes from his hand. All we have is a result of God’s blessings. As we are faithful to honor him with our tithe and offerings, he will continue to pour out his blessings upon us. The ninety percent we have left will go much further than the 100 percent would if we have robbed God.

God spoke through the prophet Malachi to explain how the people of Israel were robbing God of tithes and offerings. He said, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe. Then all the nations will call you blessed” (Mal 3:10-11).

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us that it is a privilege to give God’s ten percent back to him with a grateful heart and a smile. From Old Testament times, God has designed that the tenth take care of the needs of the House of God. He will bless those who bless him.

The **main point** of this lesson is that God deserves what is his, a portion of what he has given to his people. Our possessions are given to us by him and we should honor him by giving him his tithe. We owe our salvation to his sacrifice on the cross. He deserves all we give him, our life, our offerings and his tithe. We give with a heart of gratitude.

Your **review** questions are:

1. In Abram's mind, who was responsible for the victory rescue of his nephew? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered: "God Most High was the one whom Abram knew had rescued the people and possessions," you have answered correctly.
2. What was Abram's response to God's high priest when he encountered him after returning victoriously from the battle to rescue his nephew? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "Abram's response was to worship God by giving him one tenth of the spoils," you are correct.
3. Why do you think it is important to have the right attitude toward our possessions, including money? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered that the correct attitude toward our possessions is important because it reflects the fact that God has provided all we have and we honor him by giving at least a tenth back to him and by generously giving offerings to his work, you are right.

Your **assignment** is to listen to the story of Abram four times, getting the main point so you can teach it to others. Each believer must come to a place in their spiritual life of loving God so much that our possessions are his. Begin tithing and go and tell the story in the next two days to four other people.