

tasks. They had to offer other types of offerings as well. They had to serve in the worship of Israel. They had to give thanks and lead the people in praising God. All those things required time and money and people.

If you look at the progression here, you'll notice that the first step in renewing your relationship with God is ridding your life of idols—the things that you worship other than God. And the second step is regularly worshipping the true God according to the instructions found in his Word. That's exactly what Hezekiah did in order to bring the people back to God. It's never enough to not worship the wrong things, because our relationship with God is not ultimately about what we don't do. If we are not worshipping God according to his Word, then we can be sure that we're worshipping someone or something else—maybe it's self, maybe it's job, maybe it's comfort. So how do we consistently worship God in the ways he has told us to? And how do you sustain that worship over the long haul? Let's see what happens next.

#### **Tithing (vv. 3-4)**

King Hezekiah personally contributed the animals necessary for the daily morning and evening sacrifices, the Sabbath sacrifices, and the special sacrifices called for in the Law. The King had a stake in this and he himself contributed. But he also called the people of Jerusalem to contribute to the Priests and Levites so that they could devote themselves to the Law of God.

Israel got caught in a disastrous cycle. When Israel stopped tithing the Priests and Levites could not afford to devote themselves to leading the people in biblical life and worship. When the Priests and Levites did not devote themselves to the Law of God, then Israel's worship became sloppy, and eventually blasphemous, until God stepped in and judged them for their wickedness. But when the Israelites tithed, then the Priests and Levites were

able to devote themselves to leading Israel in worshipping God properly, which led to God's blessing. That was how the tithe functioned in Israel.

#### **The Response (vv. 5-8)**

The people's response to Hezekiah's call is astounding. There was no grumbling or complaining, but instead an instant and excessive response of obedience. The people began to tithe on everything they brought in—grain, new wine, oil, honey, and all that their fields produced. They brought a tithe of their animals as well as things set aside for God, whatever they might be. And they gave so much that they began to stack everything up in heaps. When Hezekiah saw the heaps, he praised the Lord and blessed God's people for their willing obedience.

#### **Plenty Left Over (vv. 9-10)**

When Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps, they responded by saying that all their needs had been met, and there was plenty left over because the Lord had blessed the people. There was once again a cycle taking place, but it was a wonderful cycle, not a vicious one. As the people were obedient to give a tithe to God, God blessed their lives, and as God blessed their lives, their tithe became more, and pretty soon there was a heap. So, what do we take away from this passage of Scripture? Let me point out just a few things.

#### **Conclusion**

One, although tithing is an act of obedience, it's not an end in itself. God doesn't actually need the money because everything belongs to him. Tithing is a means by which God sustains his church, provides direction to his people about how to live a biblical life, and leads his people to experience his blessing.

Two, when understood correctly, tithing may be a sacrifice, but it shouldn't be a burden. The people wanted to know how to live a life that would invite God's blessing and protect against his judgment. They understood that in order to do so, they had to provide for those that would lead them in such a way.

Three, tithing and giving is so much easier and enjoyable when we remember that everything belongs to God anyway. Literally, the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. Tithing is one way in which we recognize who God is.

Four, giving and tithing, like so many other commands in Scripture, is a matter of surrender. I was thinking earlier this week that I could have preached this message in the series we did called Nearer Still. Not recognizing God as the owner of all things is an enormous obstacle to drawing nearer to him.

Five, If we all give a tithe there will be plenty for everything with some left over. If all of God's people all over the world would give a tithe of what they have, the church could afford to send missionaries to every unreached people. It could afford places to worship and people to lead them. It could take care of the poor.

Six, if we're actually trusting the destiny of our eternal soul to God, trusting him with 10% of our income doesn't seem like it's as big a deal as we originally thought. I know some will say that they wish they could give the money directly to God instead of a church, which is led by humans. Fair enough. But the church is what God has chosen and Christ died to establish. So, by all means make sure that the church you give to is clear and transparent in its use of funds, but then trust the Lord.

# BACK 2 BASICS

## TITHING

**April 11, 2021**

Pastor Jared Stoner



[www.wcag.org](http://www.wcag.org)

## Back To The Basics

April 11, 2021

Pastor Jared Stoner

Good morning. For the next few weeks, I want to talk about some basic things that need to be talked about on a somewhat regular basis. This morning, I want to preach on tithing—what it is and why we practice it. You might wonder why I would preach on tithing instead of giving. Well, when it comes right down to it, I believe tithing is the foundation for all Biblical giving.

I came across something this week that I think might describe your feelings on the topic. One of the books that many theological libraries carry is a theological dictionary, which is really a study of some of the most important words that you'll find in the Bible. It helps you understand the different types of love or the history of some obscure word. So what? So, if you go to the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, a three-volume work, and you look up the word tithe, you will find that the word tithe immediately precedes the word torment. For some of you, a sermon on tithing truly leads to torment, but I hope you'll come to see it differently. And you can relax—since I don't know what anyone here gives, you have no reason to think I'm judging you. So, where do we start? Let's start with Psalm 24:1-2.

### Psalm 24:1

If you've ever heard me preach a message on giving of any kind, you've heard me quote Psalm 24:1-2. It says, *"<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; <sup>2</sup>for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters."* Biblically speaking, we are stewards of our money, not owners. What does that mean? It means that God owns everything, but graciously shares with us part of what he owns. To say it another way, when we give, we're

deciding how much of God's money to give back to him, not how much of our money to keep.

Stewardship isn't fund-raising. Messages on stewardship are not a necessary evil in order to keep the lights on. Stewardship isn't the ploy of pastors to find some biblical ground to extract money from a congregation. Stewardship is a direct result of who God is—the one who created everything, who owns everything, who gives us everything we have. He's also, then, the one who tells us to give back to him part of what he has given us as a way to acknowledge that it all really does belong to him. Tithing then, is one of the principles of biblical stewardship. Tithing shows up in a number of places in Scripture, but this morning I want to take a look at a passage in 2Chronicles and see what was happening in the life of Israel that led to a discussion on tithing.

### 2Chronicles 29-32

Let me give you a little context before we get going. The narratives of 1st and 2nd Chronicles largely parallel the narratives of the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel and 1st and 2nd Kings. The history recorded in Chronicles stretches from the end of King Saul's reign to the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom of Judah. 2Chronicles 29-32 describes the attempts of King Hezekiah to turn the hearts of the people toward God, and to turn away the wrath of God because of the people's disobedience. So, the story of 2Chronicles 29-32 is really a story of revival, not in the sensational way we sometimes think of, but in the fact that God's people were turning their hearts back to him and renewing their walk with him.

If we look at Hezekiah's revival campaign, if we can call it that, we see some of the practices that needed to change. In 2Chronicles 29:1-11, he called the people to purify their place of worship to the Lord because they had been run down and filled with unholy things (29:1-11). In 2Chronicles

29:12-36, he called the people to renew their temple worship, which had become slack and even non-existent. In 2Chronicles 30, he called the people to start celebrating Passover once again, one of the most important celebrations recounting God's deliverance of the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians. In 2Chronicles 31:2-21, he once again appointed priests and Levites to serve in the temple and restore biblically sound worship and instruction. The reforms Hezekiah instituted were sweeping and required the full participation of the people. 2Chron 31:1-10 and see what we can learn about tithing and about spiritual renewal.

### 2Chronicles 31:1-10

*<sup>1</sup>When all this had ended, the Israelites who were there went out to the towns of Judah, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. They destroyed the high places and the altars throughout Judah and Benjamin and in Ephraim and Manasseh. After they had destroyed all of them, the Israelites returned to their own towns and to their own property. <sup>2</sup>Hezekiah assigned the priests and Levites to divisions—each of them according to their duties as priests or Levites—to offer burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, to minister, to give thanks and to sing praises at the gates of the LORD'S dwelling. <sup>3</sup>The king contributed from his own possessions for the morning and evening burnt offerings and for the burnt offerings on the Sabbaths, New Moons and appointed feasts as written in the Law of the LORD. <sup>4</sup>He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion due the priests and Levites so they could devote themselves to the Law of the LORD. <sup>5</sup>As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. <sup>6</sup>The men of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of*

*their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them in heaps. <sup>7</sup>They began doing this in the third month and finished in the seventh month. <sup>8</sup>When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the LORD and blessed his people Israel. <sup>9</sup>Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps; <sup>10</sup>and Azariah the chief priest, from the family of Zadok, answered, "Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the LORD has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over."*

### Smashing Idols (v. 1)

Verse 1 of chapter 31 describes how the Israelites went out to the towns of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh and smashed the sacred stones, which were idols that had been carved from a rock. The Israelites pulled down the Asherah poles, which were trees or wood that had been carved into the image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah. They continued by destroying the high places, which were thought to put the people closer to the gods they worshipped. And finally, they destroyed the altars that had been set up to make sacrifices, some of them human sacrifices, to other gods. When they were done, they returned to their cities and their homes. So, the first thing the Israelites did to return to God was to rid their lives of idolatrous worship. God is simply not content to be added to a list of other gods to be worshiped and served part-time.

### Reinstating True Worship (v. 2)

Hezekiah had to do the same thing David and Solomon did—to appoint priests and Levites to carry out the functions of Israel's worship. They had to offer burnt offerings in the morning and in the evening every day, and double that on the Sabbath—that required people devoted to those