

MALACHI 3:7-12
God's Disgust with Israel's Failure to Tithe

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This section deals with Israel's failure to pay her tithes to God and God's disappointment with her. NOTE: The Church is distinct from Israel and has a different method of giving. However, there are many principles that are the same.
- B. The overemphasis upon money and the unscriptural methods for getting people to give has brought a great disgrace to God's name in the average Christian church. Much of the problem is that people do not know what the Bible teaches about giving, and are duped by "high-pressure business tactics" rather than being led by the Spirit.

II. THE EXHORTATION (3:7)

- A. **"Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them."** In 3:6, we were told that the reason Israel was not destroyed was because of God's immutability, for He does not change. God had made promises to Israel and He would not fail her even if the vast majority of Jews turned from Him. God always had an elect and regenerate remnant to which He fulfilled His promises. But the entire history of Israel is the record of ever recurring departing from, and rebellion against, God's unchanging laws and regulations for His covenant people. They were experienced in evil but not in righteousness. NOTE: Israel had a long line of failures and unfaithfulness, yet God was and is always faithful (II Tim. 2:13).
- B. **"Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."** God should have destroyed these rebellious Jews, but He had covenanted with Israel and desires that they should repent. God makes a gracious invitation for them to repent, for He does not desire to cast off His people. No matter how severe their sin or the duration of their rebellion, He is willing to receive them if they repent. NOTE: They are invited to repent but only God can turn them to Himself; therefore they must cast themselves wholly on the grace of God to turn them (Jer. 31:8; Lam. 5:21; Ps. 85:4).
- C. **"But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"** These Jews were blinded by self-righteousness and could not see their wicked spiritual condition. They saw no sin in themselves that needed to be repented of, for they thought themselves pure in their own eyes.

III. THE SIN (3:8)

- A. **"Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me."** This question is raised by God to counter their question in 3:7, "wherein shall we return?" One way for them to return to God is to stop robbing Him of the monies that rightfully belong to Him. This is irony, for will a puny, impudent man try to rob an infinite God, and think he can get away with it? Such is the arrogance of man. NOTE: Robbing God is an awful sin and He can be robbed in many ways. Men may rob Him of honor, devotion, service, time and money, for men rightfully owe Him all these things.
- B. **"But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."** These "holier than thou" Jews did not have the slightest idea how they had robbed or defrauded God. But God takes them to the issue of their tithes and offerings. A Jew tithed about 20% of his income every year, for he actually gave two tithes (Lev. 27:30-33 cf. Deut. 12:18). Every third year he gave another 10% to the poor (Deut. 14:28-29). The "offerings" were love gifts given over and above the required tithe (Deut. 18:4). They had robbed God by failing to give their tithe or by decreasing their tithe because of "bad times" in the nation. NOTE: The tithe is never mentioned in the New Testament and is not God's method of giving for the Church. Christians are to give as God has prospered them (I Cor. 16:2), and the ratio of giving is based on one's income. God asks the Christian to give graciously, liberally and systematically that His work may be carried on in the world. Christians are also to give with the right mental attitude (II Cor. 9:7). If a person feels forced to give or gives grudgingly, He is not giving out of love for Christ. A person will never give liberally to God until He has first given himself to God (II Cor. 8:5). NOTE: No local church or Christian organization has the right to pressure people or to stir up their emotions in giving. NOTE: Tithing is not God's method for the Church although there is nothing wrong with it, for tithing was practiced before Israel came into existence (Gen. 14:20). Giving a tenth is a good place to start,

but New Testament "grace giving" is a higher principle, for Christians are left with the choice as to how much they will give. The amount one gives as he has been prospered tells something of his real heart devotion to God. NOTE: Christians rob God when they fail to give to Him what is rightfully His. The question for the Christian is not how much shall we give but how much shall we keep?

IV. THE PUNISHMENT (3:9)

- A. **"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me."** For their rebellion towards God in the tithe, God brought a curse on them. Their excuse for not bringing a full tithe or any tithe at all was that hard economic times had hit the nation. But why these hard times? They had failed to obey God and this brought them their impoverished condition. NOTE: Low income is never a proper reason for failing to give God His due. Remember, God blessed the widow when she gave 2 mites!
- B. **"Even the whole nation."** The entire nation was cheating God. Lack of personal integrity and honesty had become an accepted way of life in Israel. NOTE: Failing to give was a sin not against Israel, not against men, not against spiritual leaders, but against God.

V. THE CHALLENGE (3:10-12)

- A. **"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house"** The "storehouse" was the temple treasury. The Jews brought all their tithes to this one place that the Jewish nation as a religious and political entity might continue to exist. NOTE: There is no New Testament basis for "storehouse tithing" as taught by some Christian groups. Where a Christian puts his money is entirely his business, but it stands to reason that every local church needs money to operate and every Christian has a financial responsibility to the local church he attends. To say, however, that a Christian must give all his money to a local church has no Biblical basis.
- B. **"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."** God puts a challenge before these Jews to prove or test Him to meet their financial obligations to God, and God promises great blessings, for he will bring rain and the crops will be great and their material prosperity will be more. By faith, they were to put God to the test (II Cor. 9:6).
- C. **"And I will rebuke the devourer of 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."** God promises to protect their crops from locusts and every injurious thing if they would be obedient in their giving. NOTE: The Christian who faithfully gives of his monies will see God meet his needs and there will be blessing beyond the basic necessities. Shoes will last longer, the washing machine will not wear out so quickly, bargains will be seen unexpectedly, money will come from sources unknown, etc. God protects His own who are obedient.
- D. **"And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."** In the way of obedience and as a result of the blessing of God upon them, all nations would call them blessed. Both God and man would find delight in Israel. NOTE: The Christian who gives liberally to the work of the gospel of Christ shall be blessed of God, so as to gain the praise of God and the respect of men.

. . . Don't give till it hurts: give a little more . . . till it feels good!