

Genesis 4:1-16

Abel (a Shepherd) and Cain (a Crop Farmer) were brothers and they both presented gifts to the Lord. God accepts Abel's offering and rejects Cain's offering. This upsets Cain but he does not listen to the Lord's advice to do right and master his flesh and its capacity for sin. Cain kills Abel based on jealousy.

Observations:

- Abel gave his best, Cain gave "some"
- The overarching principal is that the Lord offered restorative advice to Cain despite His rejection of the offering.
- It is a warning of what jealousy and other unchecked sin can do to a person.

Genesis 14

Lot had moved to Sodom, a war broke out between Elam (with its allies Babylon, Ellasar & Goiim) and those who were revolting after 12 years of Elam's reign including Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela. The rebels were defeated during a final battle in the valley of the Dead Sea. The spoils of the war included Lot and all his possessions. Abram (Later God renames him Abraham) heard the news about Lot and rallied 318 warriors to strike back against Elam and rescue Lot. Abram uses the first recorded double envelopment flanking maneuver in history (about 1500 before the Athenian General Miltiades who is credited with the creation of it). Abram split his forces and attacked from 2 sides defeating Elam and among the spoils from the victory he rescued Lot and all his possessions as well as other freed captives and possessions.

Then we are introduced to the very intriguing character of King of Salem (Salem = Peace) Melchizedek, the first high priest of God Most High (El Elyon in the Hebrew). Melchizedek means Righteous King or King of Righteousness. Melchizedek is an archetype of Christ who is THE King of Kings, our peace and righteousness. David prophesied that the Messiah would be a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek breaks the bread and pours the wine (foreshadow of the Lord's Supper?) and blesses Abram saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth and blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you."

Then Abram gave 10% of all the spoils to Melchizedek and relinquished the other 90% back to Sodom; less an agreement that fed Abram's army and an offering to Abram's Allies. Abram kept none for himself so that Sodom could not say that they "made Abram rich."

Observations:

- Abram is an amazing tactician.
- Abram shows an understanding of leadership principles, almost like he had read the 21 laws of leadership by John Maxwell (the Law of Influence, the Law of Solid Ground, the Law of respect and the Law of Connection are all on display in this story)

- Melchizedek is an amazing character, can't wait to understand more about him on the other side.
- Abram is generous, giving not under compulsion or a command but freely what he had decided in his own heart (2 Cor 9:7). He seemed to have a great understanding that every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17).
- No rules or commandments, only the example of a man of extreme Faith.

Genesis 28

Jacob (later God renames him Israel), son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham after being blessed by his father he goes to find a wife. On his way, Jacob makes camp at Luz. There Jacob has a dream, commonly referred to as Jacob's ladder. In the dream, God confirms the covenant with Abraham will continue through Jacob. When Jacob awakens, he renames the place Bethel, erects a memorial and declares that he will give 10% of everything the Lord gives him.

Observations:

- Jacob, like his grandfather Abraham, is generous, giving not under compulsion or a command but freely what he had decided in his own heart (2 Cor 9:7). He also seemed to understand that every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17).
- No rules or commandments, only the example of a man of gratitude.

Exodus 25:1-9

This passage talks about offerings and obedience to build the tabernacle. The Lord said to Moses, "Tell the people of Israel to bring me their sacred offerings. Accept the contributions from all whose hearts are moved to offer them."

Observations:

- God is looking for generosity in His people; He does not want them to give under compulsion or a command. He wants them to give freely what they have decided in his own heart (2 Cor 9:7)
- No rules or commandments on giving here, only the principle of generosity.

Leviticus 27:30-33 and Numbers 18:1-32

The Law says, 10% of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit belongs to the Lord; every 10th animal (10%) belongs the Lord. In the establishment of the Levite priesthood, the Lord tells Aaron (of the tribe of Levi) that he and the rest of the Levites will be responsible for the sanctuary and for the "violations related to the priesthood." As priests, they will perform the sacred duties and rituals of the priesthood and they will be in charge of the offerings. The portions of the offerings not burned on the fire will belong to the priests as their provisions for food. Then, the Lord tells Aaron that the Levites will have no land or property for the Lord Himself is their inheritance and provision.

Observations:

- This tithe was a foreshadow to modern income taxes as we find it is used to fund the government particularly this will go to fund the provisions of the Levitical Priests; though they had BIG responsibilities they would have no inheritance in the land.
- We are not told what to do with the surplus from the offering yet, surely the Lord does not want them to engorge themselves.
- We need more details!

Deuteronomy 14:22-29

Ahh, the details! Two out of every three years, the people of Israel are commanded to bring the tithe (10%) of the crops into the place of worship, but they are also told they can eat it there in the presence of the Lord. Again, they are told to feast and drink in the presence of the Lord. They are told not to neglect the Levites, so in the third year bring the entire tithe into the Levite's storehouse and the Lord will bless them.

Observations:

- Two of every three years the tithe was partially burnt offerings and partially eating and drinking (partying?) before the Lord.
- Every third year is where the Levites provision will come.

1 Samuel 8:11-22

The establishment of a Theocratic Monarchy. Israel will no longer be a theocracy, but now a monarchy based on a theocracy, and will be shown to be an uneasy balance of prophets, priests and kings.

Observation:

- Man was never meant to be the King of God's people.

2 Chronicles 31:1-21

Hezekiah had started a reformation to restore Israel and Temple back to God, this passage details the removal of pagan shrines and altars and the restoration of devoting Israel to the Law of the Lord including the law concerning tithes and offerings.

Observations:

- The commandments of tithe and offering are confirmed and restored.
- No new laws of commandments

Nehemiah 10-13

Nehemiah's story is similar to Hezekiah, he as Governor of Judah, rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. He also promoted the Law of Moses (including tithes) with Ezra. He left Jerusalem and after a while came back to find the people of Israel rejecting both God and the law again; to which he became upset and reinstated the law of Moses and enforced its observance.

Observations:

- Again and again the commandments of tithe and offering are confirmed and restored.
- No new laws of commandments

Psalm 50

Here God says, He has no complaint about the people's offerings, but wants to make it known that He doesn't need them; ultimately He owns it all. God says, "make thankfulness your sacrifice" and "keep your vows", and He will rescue them from trouble and they will give Him glory. God tells the wicked to beware because pretending to obey Him does them no good. He ends by saying "giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors me" and keep on the "path and I will reveal to you the salvation of God."

Observations:

- God seems to be saying that He prefers thankfulness to the offerings.
- No new laws of commandments, no reversal of the laws concerning tithe and offerings.

Proverbs 3:9-10

"Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce, then He will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine."

Observation:

- God wants His children to be generous and He will generously bless them.

Amos 4:1-13

Uh Oh, God is very upset with Israel's failure to learn from their mistakes. He calls them out for oppression of the poor and the needy; saying judgment is coming. He tells them to go ahead offering their sacrifices to idols and disobeying. The people are doing more for the idols than He ever required of them, saying they, "offer sacrifices each morning" and they bring "tithe every 3 days". He ends by warning them, "prepare to meet your God in judgment" the almighty God and Lord of Heaven's armies.

Observations:

- Israel seems to be dumb time and again trading blessings in for curses, just like the modern church
- As discussed earlier in Deuteronomy 14:22-29, God asks for a full tithe every three years and even though Israel is not faithful to that, they bring their tithes to idols every three days? And offerings every morning?
- A rejection of the people so utterly disgusting they are defying God and His armies.

Malachi 3:1-15

Israel is filled with sorcerers, adulterers, cheaters and liars. Filled with oppression of the poor and needy, Israel is about to be put on trial. God says if it wasn't for his covenant, they would have been destroyed. In verse 7, we see a Love that is hardly explainable. God says, "Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me and I will return to you." Wow, even now he is offering redemption, reconciliation and restoration. He goes on to say they are robbing Him in tithes and offerings. He says they are under a curse for this theft. Again, lovingly He says if they will stop this robbery, He will generously bless them. God accuses them of saying terrible things about Him. The people say there is no use in honoring or obeying God but they will imitate evil men and get rich like them.

Observations:

- This is where the modern church goes to present the entire understanding of tithes and offerings.
- This is THE passage that pastors preach when church giving is on the decline, they use it as a compulsory text for people to give more.
- This is the only curse in the Old Testament that preachers are seemingly excited to teach. You don't hear them teaching an eye for an eye, or to stone disobedient children to death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), but this is something they can really get behind.

In this instance, we often hear, "if you don't tithe you'll be under a curse," I wonder why?

Matthew 6:1-4

Jesus teaches us to be discreet in our giving and good deeds; and not loud and obnoxious about our charity like the hypocrites do where their reward is earthly appreciation. He says, our Father sees our private charity and He will reward us.

Observations:

- I don't want to be a hypocrite
- God sees all we do, good or bad.

Matthew 22:15-22

The Pharisees send their followers at an attempt to trip up Jesus. They first try to flatter Him by telling Him how honest, truthful and impartial He is. Then, they ask Him whether or not they should pay taxes to Caesar. He knew their motives and asked them whose picture is on the coin to which they reply, "Caesar." "Well, then," he said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

Observations:

- We should be faithful to God
- We should be faithful with each other in all our dealings

Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42

"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things."

Observations:

- Jesus reconfirms tithe to people still under the law
- Jesus says there are more important things than tithe, such as Justice, Mercy, Faith and the Love of God.

Luke 18:10-14

The passage compares the Pharisee (respected) and the Tax Collector (despised). The Pharisee prays an arrogant and boastful prayer, including bragging about how he tithes. The Tax Collector prays a gut wrenching prayer too embarrassed to even lift his eyes, he acknowledges his sin and begs for mercy. Jesus says that based on humility, the tax collector returns justified but the Pharisee does not, due to his arrogance and pride.

Observations:

- Even though the Pharisee tithes, he is not justified.
- Again tithe seems to be secondary even to humility.

Acts 2:42-47 & 4:34-35

Here we find examples of the first century New Testament church, devoting themselves to learning doctrine, to community, and sharing meals. They met in a place and shared everything they had. They sold everything they owned and helped those in need. Their hallmarks were worship, joy, generosity and multiplication.

Observation:

- No commandments here but certainly examples of fellowship, study, worship, joy, generosity and growth.

Acts 5:1-11

A couple in the church, named Ananias and Sapphira sold some property. They decided to donate some of the money from the sale to the apostles and claim it was all the sale's proceeds. Peter calls them out on their sin, he says they could have done anything they wanted with the property or the money but they chose to lie not just to people but to the Holy Spirit. They fell down dead, first Ananias and then his wife.

Observations:

- No new commandments, but a warning not to lie to or test the Spirit of the Lord
- They died because they lied to the Spirit of God, not because they didn't give. They could have done anything they wanted with the money.

Acts 11:28-30

After a prophecy of famine, the believers at Antioch gave "as much as they could" to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea. They trusted the delivery of this offering to Barnabas and Paul.

Observations:

- No % is spoken about, just that they gave what they could

Acts 20:35

"In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Observations:

- No % is spoken about, just the principle that we are blessed in our giving.

Romans 11:34-35

Here we are asked two rhetorical questions. The take away is that nobody knows the entire mind of the Lord, no one acts as His counselor, and no one has given the Lord anything that He must repay.

Observations:

- These verses destroy the teaching made popular by the word-faith crowd; that you give to get back or to obligate God.
- We do not give so we can be blessed, we give from a heart motivated by love.

1 Corinthians 9

Paul says he has given up his rights, the right that his needs be provided by the believers to which he ministers.

Observations:

- Here we find that ministers and their family's needs should be taken care by the church. See also 1 Tim 5:17-18
- Paul had given up these rights, what an example!

1 Corinthians 13:3

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Observation:

- Love is more important than giving

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Out of their need, we are told the churches of Macedonia gave generously. They gave according to their means, and beyond their means "OF THEIR OWN ACCORD" to take care of others who were needy. They also gave themselves to be used of the Lord through the Apostles.

Observations:

- Here the Macedonians give with amazing generosity compared to what they had
- They decided of their own accord to give above and beyond their means

Galatians 6:1-10

Paul teaches us how important it is to bear one another's burdens. To share in accountability to keep each other from sin. We who have been taught the Word, are told to share all good things. What we sow we reap, that which is sown in the flesh, will reap corruption; that which is sown in the spirit will reap Eternal life. Don't give up doing well, do good to everyone especially fellow believers.

Observation:

- We are to give our time, money and talent (all good things) to the work of the Lord.

1 Timothy 5:8

"But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers."

Observations:

- I have seen preachers and televangelists ask for you to give to the point of not being able to provide for your family.
- This verse encourages you that making provision for your family is your responsibility, if you don't then you are not really a Christian.

Hebrews 7:1-28

Here we are retold the story of Abraham and Melchizedek, how Abraham gave 10% of all the spoils to Melchizedek. Then the priesthood of Jesus is established in the order of Melchizedek as prophesied through King David.

- Here no new commandments are given, just a retelling of the story of Melchizedek and Abraham, showing Jesus is our Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.