

First Fruits, Tithes and Offerings

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Editor's Note: This article is written by a brother being confronted with erroneous and false teachings about tithes and offerings, especially the "first fruits," and this writing is the result of his decision to research the Bible for himself. May there be many, many more such "noble Bereans"! (Acts 17:11) It is our prayer that many people would benefit from this brother's noble search for the truth and more people will be able to be released from bondage as they read. – NG

After studying the scriptures for myself. I see that according to the old covenant the people were bound by law. According to the New Testament it is not about law but the Spirit of God. Law says you must pay a tenth. The Spirit says give and it shall be given. If you give bountifully you reap bountifully and if you give sparingly you will reap sparingly. (2 Cor. 9:6) The scriptures have taught me that I should be a liberal giver, period. The book of Galatians sets us free! We came out of religion and into the freedom of Christ who has given Himself freely. It's about giving! Freely! Giving offers freedom and right of choice without a law attached. Tithing is a law of bondage, and many have been set free of this bondage to walk in freedom. That's why Christ is that freedom - the "**First Fruits.**" God blesses His children regardless of giving or tithing. **It's His promise.** (Gal. 3:10-14; 2:21) At the same time, many Christians refuse to submit to the biblical exhortations about making offerings to the Lord. Giving to GOD is intended to be a joy and a blessing.

Giving is the answer to support of spreading the Gospel. To give freely, "AS WE PURPOSE IN OUR HEARTS," or as the Holy Spirit leads us, is part of every believer's life in Christ. (2 Cor. 9:7) God loves a cheerful giver. However, our offerings, which provide for those in real need, are borne of love. This kind of giving is AGAPE – a requirement of the Moral or Law of Love towards our fellow man. For as long as believers live on earth, God's Moral Law of Love, of GOD first and then toward our fellow man, will remain unchangeable. (Jas. 1:14-20; Mt. 28:20b) The old (outward, ceremonial, ritual, or Old Testament Law or Old Covenant), which pertained to the old temple dispensation, as we know was for the Israelites. During the New Testament dispensation, **Jesus became the "Mediator of a better covenant for if that first covenant was faultless, then no place would have been found for a second covenant. In that He says, 'A New Covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what has become obsolete and old is ready to vanish away."** (Heb. 8:6-13 – also Glen & Renette Vermeulen)

First Fruits

"**First fruits**" was a Jewish feast held in the early spring at the beginning of the grain harvest. It was observed on Nisan 16, which was the third day after Passover and the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. First fruits was a time of thanksgiving for God's provision. Leviticus 23:9-14 institutes the first fruits offering. The people were to bring a sheaf of grain to the priest, who would wave it before the Lord. A burnt offering, a meal offering, and a drink offering were also required at that time. Deuteronomy 26:1-10 gives even more detail on the procedure of the feast of first fruits. No grain was to be harvested at all until the first fruits offering was brought to the Lord. (Lev. 23:14) The offering was made in remembrance of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, the Lord's deliverance from slavery, and their possession of "a land that flowed with milk and honey." The day of the first fruits offering was also used to calculate the proper time of the Feast of Weeks. (Lev. 23:15-16 – "What was the firstfruits offering?" Got Questions Ministries, n.d. Web., 9/15/12)

In the New Testament, the first fruits offering are mentioned seven times, always symbolically. Paul calls Epaphroditus and the household of Stephanas “the first fruits of Achaia.” (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15) His meaning is that, just as the first fruits offering was the first portion of a larger harvest, these individuals were the first of many converts in that region. James calls believers “a kind of first fruits of His creatures.” (Jas. 1:18) Just like the sheaf of grain was set apart for the Lord, so are believers set apart for God’s glory. **The first fruits offering found its fulfilment in Jesus.** “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15:20)

Jesus’ resurrection has paved the way for our resurrection. Significantly, if Jesus was killed at Passover, then His resurrection on the third day would have fallen on Nisan 16 – the Feast of First Fruits. The first fruits offering is never directly applied to Christian giving in the New Testament. Paul did teach the Corinthian believers to set aside a collection “on the first day of the week” (1 Cor. 16:2) but that does not make it a “first fruits offering.” And, just as the offering of first fruits was an occasion of thanksgiving, so the Christian is to give with gladness without compulsion, but in the fullness of Joy and Love. In summary, first fruits symbolizes God’s harvest of souls, it illustrates giving to God from a grateful heart, and it sets a pattern of giving back to Him the first (and the best) of what He has given us and this certainly does not belong to an “apostolic source” or “set man” or “spiritual father,” it should be used for the advancement of the Kingdom of God to win souls (the greatest commission here on earth) and not for him to do as he pleases or as he sees fit. Not being under the Old Testament Law, **the Christian is under no further obligation than to give cheerfully and liberally.** (2 Cor. 9:6-7)

Many Christians struggle with the issue of tithing and giving. In many churches tithing, offerings and now the new term “more excellent giving” of one’s “first fruits” to the “set man” is over-emphasized. God’s sons are spiritually abused because of the “set man” theology. My understanding of biblical leadership is where the Lord is exalted and not the leader “set man.” Leaders of these churches occupy positions of unique privilege (when they should simply be open and transparent) and often the praise and thanksgiving meant for GOD falls on the “set man,” “apostle,” “pastor,” etc. No one argues the point of respecting and blessing their pastor. But a line soon gets crossed and the pastor, the “set man” has now become the entire means for blessing and cursing. The “set man” takes all the glory for himself and shuts Christ out of the picture. We create our **very own** “golden calves.” (see Ex. 32:24, 1 Ki. 12:28, 2 Chr. 13:8) Yes, the man of God should be credited for his ministry but all GLORY must be placed on Christ where it belongs. Biblical leadership is not imposed; it is recognised and submitted to. Leadership is to be demonstrated by loving sacrifice even as Christ Loved and gave Himself for the church. (Eph. 5:25) This teaching of the “set man” is rooted in Numbers 27 but they fail to teach that Aarons sons were killed immediately on the altar before the people because they took the glory from God and tried to emphasize what their flesh is capable of. (Lev. 10:1-3)

Tithing is an **Old Covenant** concept. The tithe was also a requirement of the law in which all Israelites were to give one tenth of everything they earned and grew (farmed) to the Tabernacle or Temple. (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:26; Dt. 14:24; 2 Chr. 31:5) In fact, the Old Covenant required multiple tithes which would have pushed the total to around 30 percent, not the 10 percent which is generally considered the tithe amount today. Old Covenant tithe was a law to provide for the needs of the priests and Levites in the sacrificial system. The New Covenant, New Testament Church, nowhere commands, or even recommends, that

Christians submit to a legalistic tithing system. Paul only states once that believers should set aside a portion of their income in order to support the people of Christ. (1 Cor. 16:1-2) Nowhere in scripture did Paul ever claim the tithes, offerings or even first fruits for himself but distributed everything he received to all that were in need. **“Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.”** (1 Pet. 5:2)

For someone to get a salary (wages) for his work in the gospel **is biblical** but not mandatory. For Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.” (1 Tim. 5:18) **In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it.** (1 Cor. 9:14) But nowhere in the New Testament is the ‘apostolic source’ or ‘set man’ (phrases which cannot even be found in the New Testament at all) still entitled to the tithes, offerings and first fruits to keep for himself? Please explain this “principle” and the math as well: 25% of one’s first salary, etc. is to go to the “set man.” (Where is this ever recorded in scripture?) **“From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit.”** (Jer. 6:13) In my understanding this is **Love of mammon** and one big Pyramid scheme, whereby the “spiritual father” (especially those who climb to the rank of “super apostle” or “patriarch”) receives all the tithes and first fruits and in turn he returns to his ‘spiritual father’. Once one has reached a certain, unspecified level of “spiritual maturity,” he (the “super apostle”) is to be regarded as a “patriarch” and no longer needs a “father” over him. This is only humanistic or traditional theological ideas behind what this teaching represents. **“In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.”** (2 Pet. 2:3) In fact, one can only rightly conclude that they simply make all this up as they go along – or else we must conclude that these are truly partaking of the teachings of demons as Paul prophesied that many would do in the end times. (Neil Girrad – see 1 Tim. 4:1)

Abraham’s Tithe to Melchizedek Before the Law

Many abusers of the Old Testament Law twist the meaning of Hebrews 7 in an attempt to sustain legalistic tithing as a New Testament commandment. When we look at this passage in context, however, we find in it a much deeper meaning than ‘tithing,’ which greedy, legalistic or even simply un-renewed, fleshly minds easily ignore. Jesus, or Melchizedek, represents the New Order of spiritual priests, and the emphasis of Hebrews 7 is on JESUS CHRIST and His ministry, not on legalistic tithing.

“Now observe how great a Personage this Melchizedek was, to Whom Abram the patriarch, [of the Old Testament], gave a tenth of the topmost or the pick of the heap of the spoils.” (Heb. 7:4) Abram responds to Melchizedek’s [Jesus’] office, generosity and blessing by giving Him a tenth of all the spoils that he gathered in the recent war. “And to the king of Sodom, who shared their banquet, Abram said: ‘I will not take a thread or a shoelace or anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich. Take all except only what my men have eaten and the share of my allies who went to war with me.’” (Gen. 14:22-23)

God never gave Abraham the charge to tithe – neither did He commend him for doing it. God only commanded Abraham to practice circumcision. That was the condition of God’s covenant with him. “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you; every man child among you shall be circumcised.” (Gen. 17:10) That’s

it! Why won't these who demand "the tithe" equally insist on the rest of the law too? (see Gal. 5:12)

"This chapter in the Old Testament represents the establishment of the Abrahamic Covenant," (the New Covenant, ultimately fulfilled in Christ, which includes all New Testament, Jewish and Gentile believers.) "Abraham represented Old Israel, (and the Dual, Old Testament Law; the Moral and Ceremonial Law,) when he paid tithes to Melchizedek." **This was not a tenth of Abram's earnings**, which he had to gain from the earth. **This was a spoil of war**, which represented his gratitude for God's victory over his enemies - and it foreshadowed the victory of Christ over Satan. This passage distinguishes Abram, not only as our patriarch of faith, but also as a mighty man of war, who fought against his enemies in the same way that **New Testament believers fight and stand against the entities of darkness - solely dependent upon God and His provision, living a grateful life of obedience in Him.** (2 Cor. 10:4-6; also see 2 Cor. 9:7 - "purposed in his heart" - "not grudgingly" - "not under compulsion." This is probably the foundational verse for all New Testament giving.)

During the time that Abraham was at war there was famine in the land and Melchizedek, king of Salem, gave Abraham food and drink (Bread and Wine). In the New Testament, **Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty."** (Jn. 6:32-35) New Testament/New Covenant believers are led by the Holy Spirit and are fed the word through Christ Jesus and not through a medium (the "set man"). Christ wants to have a direct relationship with His brothers and sisters and with our Heavenly Spiritual Father as we are the Sons of GOD Most High. This is what the LORD says: **"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD."** (Jer. 17:5)

The tithing law of the old covenant was God's provision for meeting the material needs of the priests from the tribe of Levi who were not to receive any land in the inheritance of Israel. (Num. 18:21; Dt. 10:9, 18:1) They needed support in order to minister in the temple and meet the needs of the poor. (Num. 18:26; Dt. 26:12-15) Therefore, when the Israelites failed to give the temple tithe, God warned, "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." (Mal. 3:8) Nowhere does this passage talk about "first fruits." This warning was written for the false prophets and teachers of the law who were robbing GOD and was not written for the New Testament Church of Believers and it was especially not written for those false teachers and prophets, "set men," who use the words of either Testament to fleece the flock for all they can swindle! ***"But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat."*** (1 Cor. 5:11)

"Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people, that is, their brothers, even though their brothers are descended from Abraham." (Heb. 7:5) The Levitical priesthood continued to serve in the temple throughout the earthly lifetime of Jesus. But after the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus, the structure of leadership changed: **"For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law."** (Heb. 7:12) **Christ is now our High Priest.** Christians are now

God's temple and His royal priesthood. (Heb. 4:14-15; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 2:9-10) *Why is it that Jesus never preached to His followers that He is the source (High Priest) that nourishes them, they should give Him the tithes, first fruits and offerings?*

Our **High Priest Christ** Jesus ministers the new covenant to us (God's law written on our hearts – Heb. 8:10-11) by giving us the Holy Spirit. (Heb. 12:24; 10:16) This law operates powerfully, causing us to love others with Spirit-produced love. (Gal. 5:22-23) That is why John writes, “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 Jn. 3:17-18) Because God’s love compels a true Christian to give, none of the New Testament epistles command or recommend that Christians pay a tithe. Rather than being a requirement, giving spontaneously results from a Christian’s love for God and for his brothers.

Christians may, if they choose, give a tenth of their income to whomever the Lord so leads, meeting spiritual and material needs in their destitute world. Some will be instructed and choose to give less than a tenth; some will be instructed and choose to give much more than a tenth. Paul recommended giving at the regular assembly of the ekklesia (which they had chosen as Sunday because that was the day the Lord rose from the dead – Acts 20:7), saying: “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income” (1 Cor. 16:2) but even this was to meet a special need among the Jewish Christians in Judea and is **shaky ground** for any routine or all-inclusive practice. Christians should never hoard but are to give as much as God directs – even if, as with “the rich young ruler” whom Jesus commanded to sell all. (Mt. 19:21) It is all God’s money. His rewards outweigh the cost. “Remember this: **Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.** Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make **all grace** abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” (2 Cor. 9:6-8)

The Context of Malachi 2 and 3

God was rebuking His backslidden religious priests when He said in Malachi. 2,

“I will send the curse upon you and curse your blessings... For a priest’s lips should guard and keep pure the knowledge of My Law, and the people should seek instruction at his mouth... But you have turned aside out of the way; you have caused many to stumble by your [false, twisted] instruction in the Law; you have corrupted My covenant with the people. [The leaders perverted God’s truth and made it into manmade doctrines to profit themselves.] You do this with double guilt, covering My altar with tears, shed by your wives, whom you divorced that you might take heathen wives, and with your crying out because I do not regard your offering any more... Yet you ask: Why does He reject it?” (Mal. 2:2-8, 13-14)

These priests were swindlers operating from the “spirit of mammon.” “Nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Cor. 6:10) The false doctrines, idolatry, greed, adultery and sexual perversion of this backslidden, Old Testament, RELIGIOUS GOVERNMENT is the context where God earnestly warned, “Will a man rob God? Wherein? In tithes and offerings. [God’s taxes and supplement charity for the poor.] You are cursed with a curse...” (Mal. 3:8-9)

The corrupted Old Testament, religious priest/leaders were the ones who were misusing and squandering God's monies. They were the ones defrauding GOD - even robbing Him of His alms, which they collected from the citizens of Old Israel, but **neglected to distribute among the poor**. Yet the weightier of their sin was their blatant disregard of God's Royal Law of agapaö (love for God), and agape (love for people). They have leapt into twisting of the Holy Scriptures; idolatry, disobedience, adultery, divorce and **robbery**, but they were still asking: "Lord, why do You reject our offerings?" (Mal. 2:14) *Their deliberate transgression of the Moral and Ceremonial Law brought them under the entire curse of Deuteronomy 28, which is why God cursed these religious leaders "with a curse."* By confusing and fusing the Old and New Testaments (**mixing NEW WINE in OLD WINSKINS**), which are two different dispensations, wolves in sheep's clothing have indoctrinated Jesus' blood-bought, New Testament disciples to believe that they should pay the tithes or taxes of Old Israel, FIRST FRUITS included, to the "setman" to "earn" "**super natural**" blessings from God! Thus, according to this blatant lie, God "curses them with a curse." (Gal. 2:21) Jesus still says to His followers, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed [the spirit of mammon]; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Lk. 12:15)

Paul explained in Galatians 3:10-14, that New Testament believers already live in a state or position of blessedness through their faith in, and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself "**became a curse**" so that His sincere believers could "**inherit**" all the blessings of Abraham." Sincere believers are born again from a state of damnation and cursedness, into this position of salvation and blessedness in Christ. Thus they "**inherit**" the entire state or position of blessedness which the old patriarch of faith in God, Abraham, had enjoyed in Him. As the entire old, ceremonial law pertained to a completely different dispensation, (the Old Testament temple-era which Jesus came to fulfil, annul and destroy by ushering in the New Testament era of the spiritual temple, the people of Christ), the old prophet Malachi was not speaking to New Testament, blessed believers in Christ. The Old and the New Covenants or Testaments will forever remain two completely different dispensations. **The first is a shadow, a foretaste, a glimmer of incomplete pictures – the latter is the reality, the outpouring, the way of attaining to every greater heights of glory in Christ Jesus our Saviour and Redeemer.**

Jesus never commanded New Testament believers to adhere to the Ceremonial Law of tithing as "New Testament tithing" cannot rescue fallen humankind from their desperate position under the curse of the Law. (see Galatians chapters 2 & 3) In the same way, Jesus never commanded that animals must be sacrificed to atone for sin as believers of the New Covenant live under an entirely different dispensation from that of the Old Testament Israelites. Abraham practiced animal sacrifices, polygamy, and circumcision amongst other things. Would they all be valid in today's church because they were all done before the law? If today's clergy (pastors, set man, apostolic source, spiritual father, etc.) choose to keep one law, (Tithing, Offerings and First Fruits) to "earn" blessings from God, they must keep the entire Ceremonial or Ritual Law, and thereby proclaim that they do not need the Lord Jesus and His **complete atonement**. They then actually reject **the grace of God in Christ!** (Gal. 3:10-14; Gal. 2:21) The only New Testament Law which Jesus and His disciples ever commanded was the Moral Law of Love for God and fellow man (which naturally relates to offerings) but the New Testament never mentions tithing and first fruits, except in the view of those who abuse Scripture non-contextually to reinforce their manmade or demonic doctrines of greed - **the spirit of mammon**. (Mt. 22:37-40; 2 Cor. 9:7; Rom. 8:14)

Believers already pay personal taxes, sales taxes, petrol-, toll-, property taxes, etc. Governmental taxes are compulsory (as were the tithes of Old Israel) because they pertain to our physical life on earth, and governments are responsible before God to use these taxes to govern the country's secular structures and welfare services. (1 Pet. 2:13-14; Mt. 22:21) The abuse, misuse, and twisting of God's Word is an abominable sin! **Jesus rendered obsolete the entire physical, Old Testament temple with its Levitical priesthood at Calvary, and sincere believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, became the spiritual New Testament temple of God!** (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19) Thus "there was a need for a [spiritual,] New [Testament] priesthood, for there should rise another **High Priest, [Jesus,]** according to the Order of Melchizedek, and not according to the order of Aaron, [the Old Testament priesthood.] For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the [temple] law..." (Heb. 7:11-12) For Jesus Christ "has redeemed us [every sincere believer in Christ] to God by His blood out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation, and have made us **[spiritual] kings and priests** to our God." (Rev. 5:9-10)

Yet the New Testament church clergy, "set man," "apostolic source"/"spiritual father" claims rights to the financial support of the Levitical, thus transforming themselves back into the **obsolete priestly government of Old Israel** which ministered in the physical Old Testament temple. This **counterfeit "priesthood"** actually insists that they have the **"legal right"** to 10% of every believer's income including first fruits, as well as very generous offerings, in order to keep up their luxurious lifestyles, elaborate church buildings and huge houses with massive pools which they don't (cannot!) even use for the advancement of God's Kingdom. While they teach their members **"to give until it hurts,"** the entire Old Testament concept of the physical temple, physical altar and hierarchical, Levitical priesthood, were totally done away with in Jesus Christ at Calvary. (Gal. 3:10-14; 1 Pet. 2:9-10) God does NOT dwell in "temples made with human hands, as the prophet says: Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool, what house will you build for Me? Says the Lord." (Acts 7:48-49)

It's ALL About Christ!

And so Paul, one of the "elders" of the New Testament clearly wrote, **"We did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and struggle we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden or impose on any of you."** (2 Ths. 3:8) He continued, "Not because we ["elders"] do not have a right to such support, but we wished to make ourselves an example for you to follow..." (2 Ths. 3:9) Paul also wrote, "For if I do this thing willingly [if I be a cordial co-operator with God], I have a reward, an incorruptible crown." (1 Cor. 9:25) If I freely preach the Gospel without being burthensome to any, I have a special reward; but if I do not, I have simply an office to fulfil, into which God has put me, and may fulfil it conscientiously, and claim my privileges at the same time; but then I lose that special reward which I have in view by preaching the Gospel without charge to any.

Paul continued, "For we gave you this charge: If anyone, [this would include 'ministers, priests, or pastors too], will not work, neither let him eat..." (2 Ths. 3:10) The practice of our giving, coming from the heart, would cause us to be moved by compassion, "give to him who has need." (Eph. 4:28) Paul had ample opportunity to bring up any "principle" or "Law of tithing" when he had needs both personally and for the people at Jerusalem. (2 Cor. 11:9) **Why didn't Paul teach them to tithe or give first fruits?** Paul talks about "wages" (2 Cor. 11:8; 1 Tim. 5:18) and he also talks about gifts (Phlp. 4:17) but he never talks anywhere about receiving tithes and first fruits.

The principle (law) of giving in the New Testament comes from the heart not from the commands of the law (2 Cor. 8:10) - "giving comes by desire," "purposed in his heart" - "not grudgingly" - "not under compulsion." (2 Cor. 9:7) **The church leaders must trust in the people hearing from God themselves. God puts His care in the obedient believer's heart.** (2 Cor. 8:16) **Man's way has always been not to trust the people but to lay down the Law.** Some can't join a local church without promising to follow their version of the outward dictates of the Old Testament law instead of following after the law God has written in their hearts. This is very close to charging for the word. **Paul left the example of "preaching without charge."** (2 Cor. 11:7)

If one pays his 10 %, he has something to boast about. Yet in the body of Christ, it is by grace and faith not by works of the law. (Gal. 2:16, etc.) "Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9) Your giving is between you and your GOD and you alone will bear the responsibility for how well you distribute whatever (much or little) He has given to you. Since He gave you everything you now have, we should not have a problem giving freely to GOD Most High. Any man, woman or child who benefits from our giving to God is simply another reason to rejoice in what God is doing in our midst. **God alone accurately determines the true value of our giving, a value which may be immensely different from an earthly, clergy's appraisal.**

Today's clergy ("apostolic source," "set man") teach, **"when you give your first fruits and tithes to your 'spiritual father' the first fruit becomes a tangible sign and symbol of your permanent covenant with him' as a 'spiritual son', and that his grace and anointing becomes mixed into your life, thereby flavoring and enhancing your life with that of God has richly endowed him."** This statement above is unbiblical! Nowhere does it say in the New Testament that you receive an anointing from your "Spiritual Father." Rather, the New Testament says, "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant are valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives." (Heb. 9:14-17) **Has your 'spiritual father' paid the price of death for you for you to make a covenant with him? Who is your Spiritual Father?** The answer is quite simple if you ask me. My **Heavenly Father, God** certainly is. What Jesus said to the Jews is also true of believers today - "If God is your Father, you would love Me, for I come from God and now am here. I have not come on My own, but He sent Me. Why is My language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire." (Jn. 8:42-44) If those who have a "spiritual father" do not love their brothers, especially those without or who reject "spiritual fathering," it is a clear sign of just who their father really is.

The most misquoted verse by the followers of the "spiritual fathers" teachings is this: *"For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me."* (1 Cor. 4:15-16) Many supporters of the "spiritual fathers" teaching stop there but Paul later completes that phrase, saying, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1) Paul was not trying to act as an intermediary between New Testament Believers and Jesus Christ, he was not telling them to 'imitate' him per se, but rather that they should submit to Jesus Christ just

as Paul himself had submitted to Jesus Christ. You only become an orphan or bastard when you allow your ‘pastor’, ‘apostle’ ‘set man’, etc. to take over the role of our Heavenly Father GOD Almighty through his Son Christ Jesus. Anyone who chooses to allow a man to be his “spiritual father” forsakes their only true Father, God, and will reap the horrific consequences. (Neil Gizzard) The leaders are commanded to serve without being “lords over those entrusted” to them. (1 Pet. 5:3) The younger are exhorted to submit to the elders but all are commanded to “be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility.” (1 Pet. 2:4-10) “a holy priesthood”, “a royal priesthood”, “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ and not through any other man! We are all “holy” and “royal” priests. There are no first or second class priests. There is only one class! (Steve Hill)

The truth that God is our Heavenly Father and we are his children is one of the greatest revelations in the New Testament. Being a child of God, we are adopted in Christ as His very own. (Eph 1:5) This is a great honour and the privilege of our salvation. (Jn. 1:12, Gal. 4:7) This is the basis for our faith and trust in God (Mt. 6:25-34) and our hope of glory for the future. As God’s children we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. (Rom. 8:16-17; Gal. 4:7) God wants us to be increasingly made aware through the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of Sonship” (Rom. 8:15), that we are His children. The Spirit produces the cry “Abba, Father” in our hearts (Gal. 4:6) and gives us the desire to be “led by the Spirit.” This is the foundation for our discipline by the Father (Heb. 12:6-11) and this is the reason we live to please God. God’s ultimate goal in making us His children is to save us forever – “For God so Loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” (Jn. 3:16) – and to conform us to the likeness of His Son. (Rom. 8:29)

This is the pattern that the New Covenant, New Testament believers must follow and which true leaders must guide younger believers into. “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.” (Acts 20:28-30) Those men teaching that a man is supposed to be your “spiritual father” is only influenced by ambition to build their own kingdoms of love of money (spirit of mammon), power and status, imposters in the church who distort the original gospel of the Father and Son through what the Holy Spirit recorded in the Gospels, Acts, the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3), who established the apostolic pattern for the church.

Tragically some of today’s church has departed from the Bible and modified God’s heavenly pattern according to human earthly ideas and ‘set man’ principles. If the church of Jesus Christ is to experience again the full plan, power and presence of God, we the bride (church) of Christ must turn from our own ways and embrace the teachings of the original apostles’ New Testament/New Covenant apostolic pattern as God’s timeless standard for His church and certainly not that of the modern day “set man,” “spiritual father” principles.

“Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!” (Heb. 12:9) That is our Heavenly Spiritual Father, God! Yes, we do have Church leaders and their duty is to guide you in your PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with Jesus Christ so that you receive directly from the Lord and relate with Him personally, not to serve as intermediaries between you and Jesus Christ. John wrote, “As for you, the anointing you received from Him (**Christ Jesus**) remains in you, and you do not constantly need anyone to constantly teach you. But as

His (Christ's) anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, **not counterfeit** - just as it has taught you, remain in Him." (1 Jn. 2:27) The teaching on "spiritual fathers" is about placing a level of trust in a human being but that is disastrous to your spiritual faith as you will discover that humans fail and therefore your true "tutor" must be Jesus Christ and what He taught and said. Apostles and prophets are foundational. Foundations are hidden. They hold up the rest of the building and push it into the sky. They are not the covering! (Steve Hill)

Have you ever asked the question why neither Moses nor Elijah nor Paul had a 'spiritual father' apart from our Heavenly Father, GOD Almighty? Paul even uses that fact as part of the validation of his message and apostleship! Paul wrote, "But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles - only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: 'The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they praised God because of me." (Gal. 1:15-24) The only 'son of man' I know of who has a 'Spiritual Father' is Christ Himself and we should follow His example, and acknowledge our Heavenly Father, GOD as our "Spiritual Father" through Christ His Son!

The truth is that the **spirit of mammon** has taken over and **various sorts** of doctrines are being spread as the Gospel truth. An example of this is whereby the believer is compelled to give to the one who "distributes" the "bread and the wine" - that is, he must give the "apostolic source" or "set man" his Tithes and First Fruits. This 'apostolic source' or 'set man' can do anything with the Lord's money as he sees fit! Even if it means they can use it for a pleasure trip to Mauritius, one cannot question it. Jesus came to carry our burdens and lighten our yokes, not to add to it.

The "storehouse" is not the "house" - it is the "store" that nourishes the "house"! You are that house that Christ lives in. He is the "store," the one who nourishes you through the word of GOD and covers you with the armour of GOD, Our Spiritual Father in Heaven who is our "spiritual covering."

I have come to learn and believe that no man can out give God. Any offering made in righteousness and holiness, will always receive a reward. Let us remember that man's doctrines are different from Scriptural commands, and in all my decisions I allow my understanding of the Bible, through the Holy Spirit resident inside of me to dictate my Christian life, **even if this is against popular church opinion and beliefs.**

Today if one challenges the viewpoints of their "church," the "pastor," "set man," "apostolic source" or "spiritual father," they are asked or even forced to leave the "church." This allows for no honest dialogue or study. If one strays from these man-made dogma that have been determined to be correct, he is cast out as an 'orphan' and shown the door and the dominant system remains intact and unchallenged. This is true of individual churches, institutes, Bible Colleges, and Apostolic Houses where intelligent but "man-made" doctrines and Bible interpretations have already been set by these "set men," and members are simply given a

package of these “doctrines” and there is no way to present individual viewpoints and bring correction when error is present. Instead, church members cleave to their “package” as unquestionable truth! This is not Biblical Christianity. This is not Christianity at all.

This is not the teaching of Jesus Christ. Does anyone really imagine that God sees these types of “set men” as His representative on earth? The evils so clearly and forcefully exhibited in unbiblical dictatorship and spiritual abuse are the direct result of issues such as this. It is nothing but a man-made, man-centered, church structure. Christ should be the center of it ALL. In Jesus’ day, He too had to contend with the religious authorities who claimed to have “the way of God.” Time and again He challenged the Pharisees and scribes with regard to their “extra-biblical teachings,” charging them with making “null and void the word of God because of your tradition.” (Mt. 15:6) The religious leaders of Jesus’ day protected their teachings, their interpretations, their agendas with a passionate zeal, and defended them with a vicious anger that plotted against and successfully murdered the Messiah!

The New Testament still says, *“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. **The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.**”* (1 Jn. 2:15-17) “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Mk. 13:31) Religion, even “Christianity,” can be the most worldly of pursuits but when all of men’s lies and errors are done, the truth of Christ will still be there for all who will believe and enter in to His kingdom of light and truth.

The systems of man’s doctrines and carnal thinking of the LAW are cold, fixed and non-relational (that is, institutional, bureaucratic). Salvation in Christ is a personal relationship and requires our openness by receiving God’s Grace in His Son that makes possible our relationship with Christ and is sufficient for sustaining us by the fullness of His Grace. I like the analogy that Jesus used about the vine and the branches. (Jn. 15:1-8) We the Children (Branch) who remain in relational union with Christ (Vine) are secure and have life. Should a believer harden his heart and choose to break this relational grace-union with Christ and turn away, that person may in the end perish eternally as an unbeliever. (Jn. 15:6) Through hardness of the heart (Heb. 3:8-13) and rejecting God’s way, we ignore the constant voice and admonition of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30, 1 Ths. 5:19-22) We must heed the warnings of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continues to speak the Words Christ speaks. (Rev. 2:17)

I like what Peter says: “To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” (2 Pet. 1:1-10) The love of our Heavenly Father and Salvation through Jesus Christ, His intercession for us in heaven, the indwelling of and baptism in the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints, (The Family of God), and God’s inspired Word are sufficient to meet all that believers need for life and godliness. (Mt. 11:28-30, Heb. 4:16) **No additional human wisdom, technique or theory is needed to complete the sufficiency of God’s Word that reveals our perfect salvation in Christ. The words of Jesus Christ, the New Testament Original Apostolic faith and God’s Grace were adequate in the early days of the church to meet the needs of the lost and they are most certainly still adequate for today’s church. Absolutely nothing and no-one can offer more height, depth, strength and help when Jesus Christ alone is the Way and the Truth of Life.** (Jn. 14:6)

If you **don't** stand for something, you'll fall for anything... May the Grace of Christ abound in you.