



Biblical Tithing, Generosity and the IPHC, PART 1

How do we respond to those who say that tithing is no longer required by God in under the New Covenant?



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

The Fire-Baptized Holiness Church and the Pentecostal Holiness Church of North Carolina merged to form the IPHC on Tuesday, January 31, 1911, in Falcon, North Carolina. The delegates responded with worship and thanksgiving for the merger vote. As they sang and worshipped, the Holy Spirit moved on them to receive an impromptu love offering for Brother Edgerton, a man many of them knew “who had been sick for a long time.”

From our humble beginnings, a sensitivity to generosity and a care for others has been part of our spiritual DNA. In the very moment this church was founded, people reached into their pockets and gave.

Between 1911 and 1945, sermons and articles appealed to the biblical principle of tithing as the spiritual foundation for consistent giving and generosity. Then in 1945, the IPHC began to apply principles of tithing for all members and congregations consistently.

That decision at the 1945 General Conference, 75 years ago, remains part of the stance of the IPHC related to how individual Christians and IPHC congregations should give of their finances. Yet there are Christians today who hold that tithing was an Old Testament practice, is not required in the New Testament, and thus is not binding upon followers of Jesus. How do we answer those who insist that tithing is not an important part of the Christian journey?

The IPHC does not accept this interpretation of Scripture for several reasons. For the next few months, this series of articles in *Encourage* will address why the IPHC takes this stance and why tithing remains a source of blessing to those who will obey the Word of God.

A tithe is ten percent of something of value that one possesses. In biblical times it was often a tenth of a crop or a flock of animals. Many people today give a tenth of

their financial income. We tithe based on trusting God by faith and obeying His Word. Tithing is ultimately an expression of loving obedience and trust.

Tithing is first mentioned in connection with Abraham. The context is one of conflict and its aftermath. First, in Genesis 13, Abraham and his nephew Lot were conflicted over pastureland due to the size of their respective family groups. Lot moved to the then fertile plains of Sodom and Gomorrah, while Abraham remained in the high country of Judah, not far from Jerusalem.

Second, in Genesis 14, the Hebrew patriarch and his family found themselves in the whirlwind and aftermath of an international conflict. The conflict, in the ancient valley of Siddim, is the first international conflict described in the Bible. It described a revolt of five city/nation-states against four city/nation-states that had dominated them for twelve years. Sodom and Gomorrah were part of the rebellion, and thus Lot and his family were caught in the disaster.

The battle led to the defeat of the rebellion and the spoil of victory was carried into modern Syria (Genesis 14:10, 11, 15). Lot and his family, along with their possessions, were taken captive (14:12). In response, Abraham organized his family and workers into a militia that rescued Lot (14:14-16). Abraham then returned south towards Jerusalem from his successful rescue of Lot and the possessions.

As Abraham came to the King's Valley, he was met by the king of Sodom, who had managed to survive the first battle. They met near Jerusalem in an area known as the King's Valley (14:17). Once Abraham arrived in this area, he was met by the king of Jerusalem, a man named Melchizedek, king of Salem.

Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness," and his kingdom means "peace." He was the priestly/kingly ruler of the ancient city that became

Jerusalem. His name is mentioned eleven times in Scripture (twice in Genesis, once in Psalm 110:4, and nine times in Hebrews).

Melchizedek brought "bread and wine," along with a blessing, to Abraham. In recognition of the superiority of Melchizedek (who is a type of Christ), Abraham paid tithes to him (see Genesis 14:20 and Hebrews 7:2).

The significance of Abraham tithing to Melchizedek is seen in the contrast of what the king of Sodom demanded of Abraham. The king said: "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself" (Genesis 14:21). Abraham, with no reservation, rejected the claim of the king of Sodom regarding the property (Genesis 14:22, 23).

The main points in this tithing narrative are evident:

1. When we tithe, we recognize there is one greater than us (see Hebrews 7:4). When

we tithe to our local church, we are actually tithing to the Lord—not to people or an institution.

2. Our tithe is an affirmation that we are dependent upon God as our source and our strength.

3. Our tithe is a rejection of the spirit of the world ("the king of Sodom"), which wants to be our source and strength.


4. The spirit of the world offers a compromise. The world says: You can be rich in things ("take the goods for yourself," Genesis 14:21), but it wants what is most precious, "the persons" (Genesis 14:21). By tithing we reject this evil deception.

5. Abraham tithed in faith.

Hebrews 7:4-10 makes it clear that when Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, he was acting in faith and not by demands of the law. The author of Hebrews reminds us that the law was not given to Moses until many years after Abraham met Melchizedek (see Hebrews 7:1-10).

As followers of Jesus, we do not tithe because the law demands it. Instead, we tithe because we acknowledge that God is our source. This act of obedience is based on faith, and it releases faith for what God seeks to accomplish through us for His glory.

We believe tithing is the foundational act of faith that releases heaven's blessings, as well as the spirit of generosity, into every area of life. It is Malachi 3:10 that promises us: "'Take me now in this,' says the Lord of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.'" □


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