

(16a) GLOBAL ECONOMIC MELTDOWN: The Keys to Financial Security

Financial security! In a world of financial insecurity is this wishful thinking, or a real possibility? Given the importance of financial and material resources to humans, the Bible reveals how to handle finances and material benefits in a way that honours God and continues to place Him at the centre of our lives. At the same time it reveals how to be financially secure and make your money really go further.

When Abraham went to rescue some captives he took much plunder and gave 1/10th or a tithe of all he took to God's priest (Gen 14:20). He remembered God's grace and power to save.

When Jacob stole from his brother Esau, his brother planned to kill him. Running from home, he realized the enormity of his sin. But God sent him a dream of a staircase reaching from earth to heaven, which he understood represented the way to be right with God. He felt God's love and grace and knew He had forgiven him his great sin. Therefore he responded to God's grace, promising that he would give Him the tithe or 1/10th of all his increase (Gen 28:22).

Jesus told the Jews that they should not only give God's tithe but also have love in their hearts (Matt 23:23). Jesus upheld returning to God His tenth, and that's why we should return Him His tithe or tenth also.

But what is the purpose of the tithe in scripture? Firstly it is for the support of the gospel work. Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth of the Bible's use of the tithe in the Old Testament, explaining that the priests looked after the spiritual interests of Israel and that therefore they received some of their income from the temple (1 Cor 9:13; Lev 27:30). Then he applied the same principle of tithing for the Christian Church (1Cor 9:14). The tithe was to be used for the support of the gospel ministry.

Secondly the tithe is for the benefit of the giver. After Israel returned from the captivity in Babylon they began to build Jerusalem again. However they became neglectful in their support of the temple of God. God reminded them of their responsibility to His house or temple and the support of the priestly ministry, telling them that withholding tithes and offerings was robbery (Mal 3:8,9). He promised them that they would be blessed abundantly if they gave tithes and offerings (Mal 3:10). God does bless those who give Him the tithes and offerings. Tithes are a test of our faith in God. Great and wealthy business people like Woolworth, who began a worldwide retail chain of stores, Wrigley, who made chewing gum, Crowell of Quaker oats, Kraft of Kraft foods, and Heinz another food company all returned the tithe. Jesus was right when He said that to be generous with God and others brings many blessings to the

giver (Luke 6:38). It is much more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

God doesn't really need our money for He owns everything (Ps 24:1). He chooses to use this to help starve our selfishness. The more we give the more we want to give. The greatest blessing of giving tithes and offerings is that of partnership with God. He wants us to enjoy the blessings of helping save the lost, and in helping others in need. We receive a sense of wellbeing by helping others.

Because most humans place material things before God, the book of Revelation reveals that economics and materialism will play a vital part in leading nearly the whole world to receive the Mark of the Beast and thus give their worship or allegiance to the Beast and ultimately to Satan himself (Revelation 13:4,17). Ultimately those same financial resources, that have caused most humans to sell their eternal destiny, will slip through their hands like sand as end-time spiritual Babylon comes to its end and the world experiences Global Economic Meltdown (Revelation 18:11-19).

Jesus is coming soon. He wants our characters to be like His - generous, selfless, and gracious. He wants us to spend eternity with Him. By giving willingly and cheerfully we lay up treasures in Heaven. How can we not give what belongs to Him when He has done so much for us? "Though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, so that we through His poverty might be made rich (in eternal blessings)" 2Cor 8:9. God only asks 1/10th (tithe) and offerings. How generous of Him, when in reality He owns all. Won't you, out of love and gratitude give to Him what He asks of you? You will find He is faithful and you will be financially secure.