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# GIVING IN The Season OF THE LORD'S RETURN



**DR. PATRICK OLIVER**

**U**nderstanding Bible prophecy and discerning the signs of the times indicates we are in the season of the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The signs of nature (Luke 21:11), the condition of society (2 Timothy 3:1-4), the spiritual condition of the church (2 Timothy 4:3-4), the state of world politics (Matt 24:6-7), technology (Luke 21:26), and most importantly Israel being back in her land (Zechariah 12:3), all shout the message that He is coming soon. Given that fact, we should all consider how living in the season of the Lord's return should impact our giving. As Christians we need to live with an eternal perspective.

## **BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP**

Biblical stewardship requires the handling of time, talents, and trea-

sures according to the instructions of God. The foundational principle of biblical stewardship is that "God owns it all." If you keep all of it or hold something back, then you are acting as the owner. Giving cheerfully to God engages both His blessings to a faithful steward and His hedge of protection. Jesus also gave several warnings about the sin of materialism. "And He said to them, 'Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions'" (Luke 12:15).

## **TITHES AND OFFERINGS**

The meaning of the word tithe is "the tenth part." Today, some Christians use the word tithe to describe all giving to the church. You can give 3%, 5%, or 7% of your income, but you can't tithe unless it is at least 10%. The tithe represents the least portion a person should return to God and not the maximum. Leviticus

27:30 states, "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD." There are three key applications of the tithe here; it "belongs to the LORD", it is "holy", and is "set apart" to be presented to God, and therefore not used for any other purpose.

I believe that tithing is not part of the Law because the practice began long before the Law was given to Moses. Abraham tithed to the high priest, Melchizedek, (Genesis 14:20) 430 years before the law was given to Moses. Jacob promised a tithe to the LORD (Genesis 28:22). This principle of giving back to God who blesses us represents what is best for the people of God, at all times, under all circumstances.

Every individual or family operates on one of four levels of financial giving. The first level of giving is offerings—any giving that is less than



**FOR FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST LIVING IN THE SEASON OF THE LORD'S RETURN, THE TIME TO GIVE IS GROWING SHORTER EVERY DAY.**

10% of your increase or income. The second level of giving is to give 10%, which is the tithe. I believe biblically this belongs to the church. The third level of giving is tithes and offering.

This means that beyond the tithe, offerings are given to the church, Christ-centered ministries, or the poor, needy, widows, and orphans. This level of giving is described in the book of Malachi.

The fourth and final level of giving is proportional giving, which increases as God prospers us financially. When God provides additional financial resources, we increase our giving to the church, Christ-centered organizations, and individuals to even higher percentages. Paul lauded such giving by the believers in Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:2).

**HOW NOW SHOULD WE GIVE?**

In Matthew Chapter 6, Jesus provides some important instructions on biblical stewardship that we all should understand. Jesus tells us: "Do not store up for yourself trea-

asures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal."

**BUT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST DESTROYS, AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN OR STEAL; FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO.**

**MATTHEW 6:20-21**

Why are earthly investments so fleeting? Because your wealth on earth is temporary. It will leave you while you live, or you will leave it when you die.

The Bible contains 2,350 verses that discuss the handling of money or possessions. I believe money is mentioned so much because it is the number one competitor with Jesus Christ for our love and devotion. Je-

sus himself said, "No one can serve two masters; for he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24).

There is a strong relationship between how someone handles money and how they live out the Christian life. How you handle money is an external visible indicator of the condition of your heart and your relationship with Christ. Therefore, it is important to know that how you handle money is a spiritual matter of the heart. Proverbs 27:19 indicates, "As water reflects the face, so a man's heart reveals the man."

In this season of the Lord's return, we should increase our giving because of the imminent expectation of the Lord's return for the Church. A good question to ask yourself is, are you storing up money beyond what you need or what is reasonable? We as Christians need to pray about this and do as the Holy Spirit leads us.

The Lord considers our motives and our means when we give, just as He did the poor widow who gave all she had in Mark 12:43-44. He offers us this important warning, "If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

For followers of Jesus Christ living in the season of the Lord's return, the time to give is growing shorter every day. ♦

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