

What The Bible Teaches on **TITHES and OFFERINGS**

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Chapter 9: How are these gifts to be used? **Chapter 10: What is the punishment for failing to pay?**

9. How are these gifts to be used?

Exactly the same as for Old Testament tithes and offerings, Christian giving in the New Testament is used for many different purposes.

(a) Luke 8:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:1-14

It is clear that one main avenue of spending the offerings of New Testament believers is to support those who are involved in doing the work of God. We see this from the examples of the women who provided for the needs of Jesus Christ and His disciples out of their means, and from the teachings of St Paul. Even though St Paul himself often worked to support himself and his fellow-evangelists, he explains that it is the right of every worker, and also their family, to be supported through the ministry in which they are involved and by the people they serve. This, of course, is not to give the pastor a lavish lifestyle!

(b) Mark 10:17-22; Luke 12:32-34; John 13:29; James 2:14-17

The poor were a major beneficiary of the offerings of God's people in the New Testament. When Jesus asked the rich young ruler to sell all that he had, He directed him to give it all to the poor; and in His general teaching to His "little flock" when He told them to sell what they had it was also to give to the poor. In both cases, He said that this would be accounted to them as treasure in heaven.

During the last Supper, Jesus told Judas to go and do quickly what he had to do. This was misunderstood to mean that he was to go and give money to the poor because he was the Treasurer. This

misunderstanding could only arise because Jesus had given him such instructions before, and giving to the poor was already a well known practice.

James also teaches believers not to leave the poor with pious sermons but to provide for them their practical necessities.

(c) Acts of Apostles 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 5:3-16

The story of the problem which led to the appointment of deacons tells us that the gifts of God's people were used to support the widows. In his letter to the young pastor Timothy, St Paul explained that believers should always support their relatives who are in need, and especially widows. Older widows who do not have any relatives to support them were to receive support from the Church.

(d) Romans 12:13; 19-21

Jesus already taught His followers not to curse but to bless their enemies. St Paul now gives a practical idea of how this could be accomplished – by feeding them when they are hungry!

10. What is the punishment for failing to pay?

There is none!

Our God is not a vindictive god. He does not make us pay hospital bills, for example, because we failed to give to the poor or give to the Pastor! What is certain is that we shall lose the special blessings associated with generous giving.