

## **A TIME TO CHOOSE**

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Decisions. Who likes them? We all have them - every day. And, of course, we must face the consequences of them. Big decisions bring big consequences. Bad decisions come back to haunt us.

It is a solemn thought that by our present course of action we are deciding our eternal destiny. Why don't those of us who know what's right - do it? Do we feel that we will not have to face the consequences some day? The scriptures declare that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." When we fear God, we respect and honor him.

God wants to enter into an agreement with us. Remember that salvation is not based on a unilateral agreement. Oh yes, God died for every man, woman, and child that ever lived. But will all be saved? No. In fact, we know that only a relatively small percentage will be saved. What is it that makes the difference? It's quite simple actually. The saved choose to enter into the agreement (covenant) with God. The lost on the other hand either choose to go it on their own or deliberately choose not to be in partnership with God.

Is there any sign that we can know about or observe that would indicate that we are in covenant relation with God. Actually there are two. One is the Sabbath. The other is the tithe. God calls the Sabbath, "My holy day," (Isa. 58:13) and also a "sign between them [His people] and Me." (Eze. 20:12,20). He also calls the tithe holy. "All the tithe of the Land...is the Lord's. It is holy unto the Lord." "And concerning the tithe of the herd...the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord." Okay.

So both the Sabbath and the tithe are holy, and I can see that the Sabbath is a sign, but where do we learn that the tithe is also a sign or part of the covenant agreement? I find it in Malachi 3:10 where God says in effect, "You bring Me your tithe and I will pour out blessings on you."

I have been reading through the large green bound volumes of the **Review** articles by Ellen White and have found some amazing insights. She states in one article, "I entreat my brethren and sisters throughout the world to awaken to the responsibility that rests upon them to pay a faithful tithe. Do not allow lax principles to lead you to rob God. Keep a faithful account with your Creator. Realize fully the importance of being just with Him who has divine foreknowledge. Let every one search his heart diligently. Let him look up his accounts, and find out how he stands as related to God.

"He who gave His only begotten Son to die for you, has made a covenant with you. He gives you His blessings, and in return He requires you to bring Him your tithes and offerings. No one will ever dare to say that there was no way in which he could understand in regard to this matter. God's plan regarding tithes and offerings is definitely stated in the third chapter of Malachi. God calls upon His human agents to be true to the contract He has made with them. 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse.' He says, 'that there may be meat in mine house.'

She goes on to say, "Duty is duty, and should be performed for its own sake. But the Lord has compassion upon us in our fallen condition, and accompanies His commands with promises. He calls upon His people to prove Him, declaring that He will reward obedience with the richest blessings." (Review and Herald, Dec. 3, 1901).

There is another fascinating part of God's covenant with us. He says in effect, "You be faithful in returning to Me the tenth and I will provide you with pastors, Bible teachers, and evangelists!" Remember that in Old Testament times the Lord directly employed the Levites [ministers], and made provision for their support. He paid them with His own money -- the tithe, (Lev. 27:30), -- which was due Him from His people. He says, "I have given the children of Levi

all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle." (Num. 18:21).

How can we expect to see the work of God go forward with power until we stop robbing God? Neither can we expect to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; because the Lord plainly says that the Holy Spirit is given to all who obey Him. (Acts 5:32). I want to see the work finished, don't you? I want to receive the outpouring of the Spirit in my life to perfect my character and equip me for the work of ministry. How about you? Will you join me in renewing your covenant relationship with God? It's time to choose!