

Don't Cheat Yourself!

*Are you still cheating yourself out of some of God's blessings?
Many of you are and don't realize it. Here is why!*



Cheating Yourself

God has commanded His people to attend the Feast of Tabernacles and to rejoice there. But, many of you are still CHEATING YOURSELVES from enjoying these wonderful festivals.

God tells us many times in His Word that by obeying His commands, happiness and joy and all kinds of blessings inevitably result. There is a joy in serving God, and keeping all of His commandments. By obedience to God's commands, we not only receive spiritual and physical rewards in this life and in the world tomorrow, but others of God's Church share in our blessings as a result of our obedience. But not all are obedient!

You may ask, "What am I disobeying?" Some of you do not follow God's vacation plan for His people. Most of you already know about this vacation plan, and have read about it in the GOOD NEWS Magazine. If you KNOW to do God's will and do it not, TO YOU it is SIN!

Others of you have been baptized more recently and would not yet know about this wonderful plan. We need to examine God's Word on this vital subject so that we may all know and practice it.

God's Vacation Plan

God has commanded His people to assemble on His annual festivals. But how can we afford to go to these festivals? The answer is found in Deut. 14:22-27.

God here instructs you to save out for yourself a tenth of your income—a "second tithe"—for you to spend at His festivals. This second tithe is for you! It is a different tithe from the first tithe as explained in the July GOOD NEWS. The first tithe commanded of each Christian goes to the support of the gospel work. The first tithe does not belong to you! It is for the spreading of the gospel to the world as a witness before the end comes.

The "second tithe" is for an entirely different purpose. Notice! "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there . . . and if the way be too long for thee . . . then shalt thou turn it into money . . . and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose" (Deut. 14:22-25).

Some say that the way is too far for them and do not go. God knew this. That is why He made provisions for those who live far away to turn their second tithe into CASH (verses 24 and 25). They are not to stay at home to keep these festivals. They are to use this cash to go to the place God has chosen and to rejoice there in God's presence with the brethren.

Yet, many of you did not go and rejoice as God has commanded you at this recent festival.

What was your excuse? You probably can think of a thousand and one reasons why you could not obey God, but the fact remains, it is only by obeying God in all of these things that we will receive the eternal reward and joy that comes from obedience.

Consider this test of your spiritual growth.

Are You Growing Spiritually?

Each year those on the baptizing tours come in contact with various scattered members of God's Church, who have been baptized in past years. They report that the ones who are not attending God's festivals are usually not growing spiritually.

Yes, they have all kinds of excuses why they don't come. And yet these excuses do not "excuse" them in God's sight! In a few cases, of course, it is not physically possible for a person to come to the Feast. God understands. But these few cases are exceptions.

God specifically commands all of the men in His Church to appear before Him (Deut. 16:16). They are given first responsibility of attending. But they are to go there and rejoice with their families.

In some cases, God has not yet called the husband, but has called the wife to repentance and conversion. Even in such cases, it is still possible for many of the women to come to the festival. Their husbands are not antagonistic and would willingly permit them to go to the festival.

On the other hand, some wives have husbands who are completely antagonistic to God's way of life. Such a man may not permit his wife to go to the festival.

God has called us to live at peace with all men where that is possible. He has also commanded that the women be in subjection to their husbands, in the Lord. Since God has not absolutely commanded all women to go to the festival, those women may have to remain at home if such a problem exists.

God has also called some of the poor of this world. As a result, a few of those in God's Church do not have each year an adequate amount of second tithe to

pay the necessary expenses of going to the festival. It requires money to travel a distance, and it also costs additional money to supply family needs away from home. In such a case, where a man has *faithfully* saved *all* of his second tithe, if there is still not enough money, he should save this money and go the following year.

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Others, however, should be saving this second tithe and do not do it. If you are such a one, you are *cheating yourself!*—and disobeying God!

You may believe that you have so many expenses that you are not able to save this tithe.

In other words, you feel that God has commanded something that is impossible to do. How wrong! God does not command anything from us that is impossible for us to do, assisted and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

If you have not been saving your tithe because of this reason, you need to sit down and analyze your problem very thoroughly. If you think you are not able to save a second tenth of your income, then you are *living beyond your means*. You have made a very serious mistake somewhere. Possibly you are living in a home which costs more than you are able to afford with your income.

Possibly you are spending too much for food. Many people are very wasteful with their food, and spend a lot of money on things which do not nourish them, and yet are very high priced. Such foods as prepared cereals, canned goods, expensive meat cuts, delicacies, and desserts should be eliminated by a person who cannot afford them. In fact, many of these things can be eliminated from everyone's diet, and better health would result. If you have been spending too much money on expensive "processed" foods, you should plan to spend your money for less "de luxe" living. Often, less expensive cuts of meat are more nourishing. Some families have been able to cut their food bills in half by just following these simple suggestions.

Others spend too much on clothes. By being a wise thrifty buyer, clothing expenses can sometimes be cut drastically. Where a person has a low income, he can often find satisfactory clothing, which still has much wear, in some of the used clothing stores.

If God has not yet prospered you, it may be because you are unwisely using the money that He has given you. Examine your budget, decide on a course of action and then carry it out.

There is no excuse for disobedience to God's laws. Your problems will not be solved by disobedience. They will be *solved* by obedience!

If you are one of those who do not come to the Feast of Tabernacles and yet could come, you should repent of this *sin!* How can you ever expect to enter God's Kingdom? You cannot grow spiritually as you should!

If you do not go to the Festival, you do not receive the "spiritual food" which is very necessary to your Christian development and training. You are not learning to live together in peace and harmony with God's people. If you are not learning such vital lessons, how can you ever expect to be able to go to a place of safety? Then, you will have to live with God's people twenty-four hours a day for three and one half years! You need to learn how to get along with God's people now.

Some still ask the question, "If we save God's tithe, also the second tithe, how will we have enough money to buy our clothes? Who will buy our food, pay the taxes, our insurance, and all the other bills which nearly every household has?"

God very plainly and explicitly states in Matthew 6:25-34 that if you are seeking His Kingdom *FIRST*, then *all* of these physical necessities will be cared for. Yes, if you obey God, if you seek His Kingdom first, if you obey the first, second and third tithing laws, you will have what is needful. God will supply you with the food, clothing and other necessities that you need.

Faith WITH Works

Along with this faith you must have works, too. You cannot spend or budget your money foolishly, and still expect God to rain down money from heaven. Each of us must do our part. Most, if not all, people have been taught wrong economics in the home. Money is not spent wisely. Many are financially involved beyond their ability to pay.

Some are *lazy* and can't hold a good job! We need to *repent of these grave sins*, and put our financial affairs in order.

The problem that many still have is that they are trying to serve two masters. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Yes, some of you are still serving the

Yes, some of you are still serving the god "mammon," that is *money*. Some still have the "love of money" (I Tim. 6:10). Are you one of these? Is the love of money and what it will buy keeping you from obeying God in regard to the tithing laws? If so, and you do not repent, you may find yourself completely shut out of God's Kingdom.

New Testament Example for Today

The New Testament Church faced the same problem that we do today in regard to the support of needy widows by the third tithe of the people. You will find this mentioned in I Tim. 5:16. "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the Church be charged; (burdened) that it may relieve them that are *widows indeed*."

From this it is plain that the Church is responsible to care for the financial need of the widows who cannot support themselves by any means. This cannot be done from the tithe which goes to spread the gospel to the world. Nor is it to come from the "second tithe." It must come from the "third tithe" fund.

If you are new in the Church, you possibly do not know that God has commanded an additional tithe. It may seem impossible at first that God could expect so much from His Church. And yet it is very plain and clear. Notice Deuteronomy 14:28-29:

"At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest."

Here is a tithe that is kept just once in three years. It is for the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner who are unable to support themselves. This cannot in any way be confused with the *first tithe* which is given to God's work, or the *second tithe* which is used by each person at the festivals.

God has even made it possible for us to have two years to set our "financial house" in order before we must pay that third tithe during the special "year of tithing." He does not require this of the Christian for the first year. Now is the time to prepare, if you are learning about these commands for the first time.

At first it may seem impossible to save both of these additional tithes, since for some it seems almost impossible to pay God *His* first tithe! What a lack of faith! God has plainly instructed us through Jesus Christ (Matt. 6:25-34) how to make ends meet, how to receive our food, clothing and necessities of life.

Notice the example in Acts 6. Here is an account of the Church taking care of the widows. Since the apostles needed to spend their time in prayer and study, deacons were appointed to take care of this matter. Here was the administration of the third tithe in action. Here was how the New Testament Church took care of the widows. God still uses this third tithe to take care of the needy widows in His Church today.

Holy to God

In spite of the plain and clear scriptures regarding the third tithe, some have still refused to obey this command. They have not removed from their premises the "hallowed things," which are *holy* to God (Deut. 26:13). Are you one that has held back this tithe that is *holy* and *sacred* to God, keeping it for *yourself*? If so, you had better fear and tremble before Almighty God, until it is removed and you are obedient.

Read Deuteronomy 26:12-15, where you will see the seriousness of this command with God. I hope that you will obey God in this, so that you too can rejoice before God, and ask God for the blessings that come from obeying Him.

A Lesson to Learn

The second letter of Paul to the Corinthians gives us many lessons regarding this matter of tithing, and offerings. Paul recounts to the Corinthians in chapter 8, how the churches in Macedonia, in spite of their "deep poverty" were liberal in giving for the needs of the Jerusalem Church. This was in addition to the tithes that God had commanded.

Paul further mentions in chapter 9 that if we sow sparingly, we will also reap sparingly. Verse 6. We should not give of our offerings sparingly, nor our tithes grudgingly. God loves a cheerful giver. He owns all things, and He can bless us far more with spiritual and physical blessings than we could ever expect, or ask.

Have you proved these promises of God? And have *you* proved to God that you will be obedient to Him in all of these things? It is time now to obey God in the second and third tithing laws.

Put God to the test, obey God regarding these tithing laws, and rejoice with us the next great festival of tabernacles. You will never be sorry you did!