

# ZOOM STUDY: IMPORTANT BIBLICAL TERMS

## TITHES & FIRSTFRUITS

1.) Generally speaking, what is the public's view of paying taxes? How is this assumption somewhat misguided?

2.) What do you already know about the tithe? What about firstfruits?

**Deuteronomy 14:22** "Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year."

**Deuteronomy 18:1** The priests, who are Levites—indeed the whole tribe of Levi—are to have no allotment or inheritance with Israel. They shall live on the offerings made to the LORD.

**Leviticus 27:30-33** "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. ...The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the LORD. He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed."

**Exodus 23:19** "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God."

**Deuteronomy 18:4-5** "You are to give [the Levites] the firstfruits of your grain, new wine and oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep, for the LORD your God has chosen them and their descendants out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the LORD's name always."

**Deuteronomy 14:28-39** "At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."

3.) What did the tithe and firstfruits offering say about who was the real owner of one's land, flocks, and goods? What did these offerings declare that God deserved?

4.) When the Israelites offered the firstfruits of their crops and herds to the Lord, of what could they also be confident?

5.) How did the following benefit from the tithe?

- The Israelites themselves
- The spiritual leaders (priests and Levites and their families)
- The poor, alien, and the fatherless

6.) How do your offerings provide similar blessings to others?

7.) Christ has fulfilled the entire Old Testament law for us, including the stipulations around tithing 10%. However, what underlying principles of tithing and firstfruits still apply to us as Christians?

**Galatians 6:6** Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

**1 Corinthians 9:11,14** If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ...In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

**James 1:27** Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

**2 Corinthians 9:6-9** Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

**2 Corinthians 8:12** If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

8.) Again the Old Testament used pictures and symbols and the New Testament offers higher spiritual realities. How does God connect the picture of the firstfruits to Jesus Christ and to us?

**1 Corinthians 15:20-23** But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

**James 1:18** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

**Revelation 14:4** These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.

*Closing Prayer: Jesus, firstfruits of God's family and forerunner of our own resurrection, thank you for securing our eternal life and making us God's own in this life. Through your lavish grace bestow on us a rich measure of your Spirit, so that we joyously and generously give of our possessions and our very selves to you and our neighbor in need. Amen.*