

What Does The Church Need Money For Anyway?

Some people see the Church has a big fat lazy monster that consumes mega amounts of money but always needs more. In the United States, *Church* is the second biggest industry next to the car industry! Perhaps people are justified for thinking that the Church is bent on always getting money. Surely we don't need vast amounts of money to get people saved and discipled? The world is at times a voice to be listened to when it comes to issues of money- how its raised and how its spent.

1. What comparison about money handling did Jesus make in Luke 16:8?

2. How much money does it cost to witness to someone in your neighborhood?

In the Old Testament we observe that there were several different types of offerings made by the people of God and used differently. Some offerings were cash (Ex. 25:3), used in the furnishings of the Tabernacle (Ex. 26:19), some for trespass offerings (Lev. 5:15), or even some used to redeem people or animals (Lev. 27:3). In these cases the offerings for sin ultimately went to support the priests in their ministry. The donations of silver, gold and bronze were separate offerings especially given for the Tabernacle to be built. After the Temple of Solomon was built, it was maintained by a tax where people were required to give at the door as they entered. *This was separate from their tithe or normal offerings.*

3. What was Peter asked about in relation to Christ and the Temple? (Matt. 17:24)

Under the Old Covenant, the people of God focussed their communal worship experience either in a Tabernacle or a Temple. These were tangible objects that required money to be built and maintained. As well as this, the Covenant required that priests perform certain duties which necessitated them being professionals. There were therefore two main purposes for all Old Testament offerings- 1) the support of levites and priests in their ceremonial and teaching office, 2) the support for the communal place of worship (either a Tabernacle or a Temple).

4. According to Numbers 18:24, 26, who were tithes for?

5. From Deuteronomy 26:12 who else were to receive the benefit of the tithe which the Levites had charge over?

6. How does this compare with the action of the apostles in the first church? (Acts 4:34-35)

The New Testament Church, as seen in Acts, simply continued the system of Kingdom Finance as established under and around the Old Covenant. Even under the Old Covenant, there were those ordained by God to preach who were not priests, yet were called to fulfill that role professionally (paid full-time). These people were largely referred to as prophets or wise men.

7. Read 2Kings 4:8-10.
 - a) Who was being supported? _____
 - b) How was he supported? _____
 - c) What ministry did he have? _____

8. Did the first church have, build, or own buildings for communal worship?

9. Note the following passages and observe the use of the New Testament tithe and offering-
 - a) 1Tim. 5:17-18 _____
 - b) 2Cor. 9:5 _____
 - c) 1Cor. 16:1-2 _____
 - d) 1Jn. 3:17 _____
 - e) Acts 4:34-35 _____

Much of the income of the first church went to social welfare projects rather than wages for employees of the Church. It wasn't until the fourth century when "Christianity" became the state religion that the notion of having full-time paid workers for the Church became the popular position of the Church. This is not to say that there were no people financially supported by the church.

10. What would the passage in Acts 6:1-4 imply about where the apostles got their support from?

11. What right did Paul say that apostles had? (1Cor. 9:6-7, 11, 14)

12. Who else were being supported this way, and what was their motive? (Phil. 1:15-16; 1Tim 6:5)

The first church supported its missionary apostles and in some measure its local-based teaching elders (although the Bible doesn't specify how in their case). Paul saw the need to be full-time in the Word and prayer, as did the apostles at Jerusalem some years earlier. Much of the local church's income was spent on assisting the poor and promoting the Gospel through apostolic ventures. Today, the church should have the same focus.

Amen.