

Malachi 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say,
Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Analysis

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

This verse poses one of Scripture's most shocking questions: **Will a man rob God?** (אָדם אֶלֹהִים, ha-yiqba' adam elohim). The verb קָבַע (qava') means to rob, defraud, or cheat—deliberate theft, not mere negligence. The rhetorical question expects the answer "No, surely not!"—robbing God seems unthinkable. Yet God's accusation follows immediately: **Yet ye have robbed me** (וְאַתֶּם קֹבְעִים אֵתִי, ve'atem qov'im oti).

Again the people respond with feigned ignorance: **Wherein have we robbed thee?** (בְּמָה קִבְּעוּנָה, bameh qeva'anukha). Their spiritual blindness continues—they can't see their own sin. God's answer is specific and concrete: **In tithes and offerings** (הַמַּעֲשֵׂר וְהַתְּרוּמָה, ha-ma'aser vеха-terumah). The tithe (מַעֲשֵׂר, ma'aser) was ten percent of crops and livestock, belonging to God and designated for Levites (Leviticus 27:30-32, Numbers 18:21-24). Offerings (תְּרוּמָה, terumah) were freewill gifts beyond the required tithe.

Withholding tithes wasn't merely financial stinginess but theological rebellion—declaring that produce and livestock belonged to them rather than acknowledging God's ownership. The tithe system embodied covenant relationship: God gave the land, rain, and harvest; Israel returned a portion in grateful acknowledgment. Failure to tithe revealed hearts that didn't trust God's provision or honor His

lordship. This principle continues in new covenant giving—not through legalistic tithing requirements but through generous, proportional, cheerful giving that acknowledges God's ownership of everything (2 Corinthians 9:6-7, 1 Corinthians 16:2).

Historical Context

The post-exilic community faced economic hardship—drought, poor harvests, and general scarcity (Haggai 1:6-11, Malachi 3:11). In these circumstances, people rationalized withholding tithes to preserve what little they had. They failed to see the connection between their disobedience and their economic troubles. Nehemiah encountered this same problem—returning to Jerusalem after an absence, he found the temple storerooms empty, Levites and singers forced to abandon temple service and return to farming to support themselves because the people had stopped bringing tithes (Nehemiah 13:10-12). When worship infrastructure collapsed, spiritual life declined further. Nehemiah rebuked the officials, restored the tithe system, and appointed faithful treasurers (Nehemiah 13:11-13). Malachi addressed the same crisis, calling Israel to test God's faithfulness by returning to obedient giving (3:10). The pattern holds throughout history: spiritual declension often manifests in decreased giving to God's work.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does withholding financial resources from God's work reflect deeper issues of trust and lordship?
2. In what ways might we be guilty of robbing God—not just financially but with our time, talents, and devotion?
3. What does the concept of God's ownership over everything mean for how we view our possessions and resources?

Interlinear Text

קִבְּעֵנִי וְ	אִךְ מִ	אֱלֹהֵי יְ	כִּי	אֲתָם
Wherein have we robbed	Will a man	God	H3588	H859
H6906	H120	H430		
קִבְּעֵנִי וְ	אֲתָּי	וְאָמַרְתָּ מִ	בְּמִה	קִבְּעֵנִי וְ
Wherein have we robbed	H853	me But ye say	H4100	Wherein have we robbed
H6906		H559		H6906
הַמַּעֲשֵׂה לְ	וְהַתְּרוּמָה:			
thee In tithes	and offerings			
H4643	H8641			

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 22:21 (References God): They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Psalms 29:2 (Parallel theme): Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Mark 12:17 (References God): And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

Romans 2:22 (Parallel theme): Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

Romans 13:7 (Parallel theme): Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Joshua 7:11 (Parallel theme): Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.

Malachi 1:13 (Sacrifice): Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

Luke 20:25 (References God): And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

Malachi 1:8 (Sacrifice): And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.