

98-11-01a

As we continue our worship this morning, turn with me to Psalm 110. Psalm 110. We will be returning to this psalm a little bit later, and we'll also see its quotation in the New Testament in Hebrews.

But as we think about Abraham, Abram at this point, and his great victory over the coalition of kings that have come down from the north, deliverance of his nephew Lot, and all the people that have been captured, all the goods that have been captured from Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other three city-states there at the southern region of the Dead Sea, we find upon his return that he is met by Melchizedek, the king of Salem. And the other important place where Melchizedek occurs in the Old Testament is here in Psalm 110. This is a psalm of David, which is doubly significant because his greater son, Jesus Christ, will be designated a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

So the linkage of kingship and priesthood is a thread that runs through all of these passages. Psalm 110. The Lord shall send the rod of your strength out of Zion.

Rule in the midst of your enemies. Your people shall be volunteers in the day of your power. In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, you have the dew of your youth.

The Lord has sworn and will not relent. You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. The Lord is at your right hand.

He shall execute kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the nations. He shall fill the places with dead bodies.

He shall execute the heads of many countries. He shall drink of the brook by the wayside. Therefore, he shall lift up the head.

Normally, we don't select cryptic passages of Scripture for Scripture readings. You like to have something that makes sense on a reading through. And if you're like me, looking at Psalm 110, most of this is opaque.

There are two concepts, because we're not studying Psalm 110 this morning, but there are two concepts that are relatively clear. Both of these are drawn out in the New Testament. One of them is quoted by Jesus Christ himself, and that's the first verse.

The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool. One of the purposes that this psalm serves in the New Testament and in our age is that it confirms the change in dispensation. Janelle brought me a newspaper Friday night that's a Christian publication here in the Metroplex.

And there's a full-page ad. I don't know if you saw that when I had it Friday night, but

there's a full-page ad that says, Dispensationalism, a wart on the nose of the bride. Or a wart on the bride's nose or some such thing.

And then it goes on to say, here are six main reasons why dispensationalism is bad and is disfiguring the church and so forth. And this ad was placed by a Baptist church here in the Dallas area. And what is dispensationalism in a nutshell? It is understanding the forward progress of God's plan through history.

And the fact that at different times, just as it says in Hebrews 1.1, in times past God in different ways has spoken to us. In these latter days He's spoken to us by a son. So He's doing something new, something different.

Paul in his letters goes on and on about the fact, I say on and on, it sounds like he's boring and redundant. But he makes a big point of saying that this truth that we study and that we live by in this age is new. It's a mystery that wasn't revealed in former times.

We have a different way of operating. We're not under the law. And we are not one with the people of Israel who did function under the law.

Most of us sort of take this for granted. We don't really want to wear the little round caps on our head and observe Passover and that sort of thing. We want to understand our place in God's plan.

Well, that's what dispensationalism is. Now there have been a lot of other things that have been attached to it. Not all of them are 100% correct.

There was a doctrine of the secret rapture and some other things that we don't have the time or the need to get into this morning. But here's the point. This psalm, Psalm 110, and the truth that it refers to, the truth about Melchizedek and this promise, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool.

These are two concepts in this little short psalm that tell us that there's a change in dispensation. That there is a change in the way God deals with humankind. The first one is one that Jesus himself mentions.

You recall that the Pharisees and the other opponents of Jesus during his ministry are upset because he seems to be implying, and in some cases coming right out and saying, that he is the son of God. He calls God his father and so forth. And so Jesus quotes Psalm 110.1 and he says, if David is the king, if he's the ruler in Israel, how can David say, it says, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool.

If you stop and think about this a little bit, they considered David to be obviously the archetype, the first king of Israel. Obviously Saul was the king. But David and the line of

David, they understood the Old Testament prophecy that the Messiah was going to be the son of David.

Ben Dawid is who they were looking for in terms of a Messiah. But they didn't want to make the connection that the son of David would also be the son of God. Son of man, son of God.

We've talked about that picture in the Bible of Jesus Christ as the God man and the human race itself filling in what some people have seen as a lack of feminine identity in the Godhead. Why is it you have God the father and you have God the son? Well, where's God the mother? Well, there isn't a God the mother and these people that pray to father, mother, God and so forth. It's all nonsense.

The reason God has set up that picture is God is telling us the place that He has put the human race in His plan. God has united Himself with mankind, which serves as the feminine element in that picture. And the result of that union is the God man, Jesus Christ.

He's fully God. He's fully human. He is the embodiment of God's love that's expressed in John 3.16. God so loved the world, He sent His only begotten Son.

He didn't unite Himself with angels. There's not a half God, half angel or fully God, fully angel being in the universe. Even though mankind is created lower than the angels, God has looked on us in love, looked on us in compassion and has united Himself in His divinity with mankind and it's embodied and expressed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So this truth is beginning to be revealed when Jesus comes to earth. And people who are steeped in the law and who have made the law an end in itself can't cope with any advance in their understanding. They can't cope with the change.

And they say, well, Abraham is our father. We have the law of Moses. This is the priesthood.

This is the way God deals with mankind. There can't be any variation. There can't be any change.

There can't be any forward progress. And Jesus says, look at your scriptures. You claim to be students of the scriptures.

Look at Psalm 110.1. David is writing. It's a psalm of David. And David speaks and he says, The Lord said to my Lord.

Well, if David says that he has a Lord, there's someone greater than David. And this is obviously a reference to the Messiah. And everybody understood this passage as a messianic reference.

So then Jesus poses the question to them. Well, in Hebrew thought, in ancient Semitic thought, the father is always greater than the son, is superior to the son, has authority and so forth. So how can David, if this is speaking of the Messiah who is David's son, how can he be calling his son his Lord? Because in the human realm, the father has priority over the son, has authority.

The only way that David, as the father of the Messiah, can call the Messiah my Lord is if he has some attribute that raises him above the human level. And this is what Jesus is trying to break loose in the thinking of the Pharisees and the religious leaders of the day is, look, study your scripture, pay attention to the details. David, who is the progenitor of the line of kings from the tribe of Judah and ultimately the son of David who will be the Messiah, he calls him his Lord.

He has to have an attribute that makes him greater than the authority that comes from David. What is that attribute? He's the son of God. And if you go to Isaiah, they should have known this.

These men who claim to be steeped in the law and so forth should have known. So this is one aspect of Psalm 110 and you could spend probably weeks on this psalm. But this is one important aspect and the point here is, Israel should have known.

From this psalm alone, they should have known that when the Messiah came, He was going to be unique. He was going to be the Son of God. He was going to be the Son of Man.

And that with His coming, there would be a change in dispensation. There would be a change in the way God dealt with man. It says right here, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

Then something's going to change. You won't be seated at the right hand anymore. The enemies are going to be done away with.

Now the second part of this psalm that serves the same purpose in a different way is verse 4. The Lord has sworn and will not relent. You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Now, chronologically, Moses comes before David, right? You've got Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

You have the bondage in Egypt. And then you have Moses 400 years later. You've got the Exodus.

Israel comes out of bondage, heads for the promised land. God comes down on Mount Sinai and delivers to them the law. The law.

What does the law have to say about priesthood? Who are the priests to the nation of Israel? Sons of Levi. Specifically, the sons of Aaron. You have the Levites who don't have

a land inheritance and so forth.

They are servants of God. The Lord is their heritage. So they don't own land.

They're focused on the service of the tabernacle. Within the Levites, you have the sons of Aaron. You know, there were other Levites besides Aaron.

But Aaron's sons are the priests. That's where the high priests come from. That's where the ones who offer the sacrifices enter into the Holy of Holies and so forth come from.

Well, this verse, Psalm 110, verse 4, says that the Messiah, David's greater son, the Lord spoken of in verse 1, is declared to be a priest according to the order of Levi? According to the order of Aaron? According to the order of Eliezer, the son of Aaron? No. According to the order of Melchizedek. Well, this is not a Levitical priesthood.

What does that tell us? The Levitical priesthood is going to be set aside and there's going to be a different priesthood. So, verse 1 and verse 4 alone, aside from anything else spoken of in the Psalm, should have told Israel, and this is clear back in 1000 B.C., a thousand years before Jesus comes, a thousand years before the promised Messiah arrives, Israel has the word, look, this law of Moses that you're functioning under is not a forever thing. It's going to come to an end.

There's going to be a different kind of a king. There's going to be a different kind of a priest. And Israel should have known this.

So, as we return now back to Genesis chapter 14, we find Abraham encountering Melchizedek who is the namesake of this priestly order, this priestly status that the Messiah will enjoy. Now, you remember the story. We had a coalition of four kings up in the north led by Keter Laomer and these other guys.

We don't have to get into the gory details, but they were all from the north and somewhat east of what we would call the land of Israel or the promised land. They come down. They come down the eastern side of that vertical line that's formed by the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea.

They sweep down and they just leave a path of destruction in their wake. They roll up these city-states. They take all the goods.

They enslave the people and they come marching like sherman to the sea all the way down and then they do a hooking movement like the letter J. They come around the southern edge of the Dead Sea and they roll up Sodom and Gomorrah and Adma and Zebuim and these other five cities. There's a five-king coalition down in the south that had rebelled and instigated this to begin with. So all of their people are enslaved.

All of their stuff is taken, or at least a good portion of the people are enslaved and their

stuff is all taken. And so then this coalition of four kings, they're full and laden down with all their booty and all these slaves and so forth. And so they're laboring their way back home with the spoils of victory.

A fugitive comes to Abram. Your nephew Lot has been scooped up in this big defeat and sack of the cities. And so Abram, along with his allies up there near Hebron, they march out and they cut them off at the pass.

The old westerns, well, we'll head them off at the pass. So Abram goes north and he goes up north of the Sea of Galilee. He doesn't cross the Jordan.

He doesn't go swooping around down towards Sodom. He heads northeast and he intersects with this victorious army. This coalition of four kings is undefeated.

Every single city state they've defeated. Abram with his band of 318 servants and his allies go up there and he splits his force, defeats them, routes them, pursues them 150 miles north of where Lot and the defeat first took place all the way up north of Damascus. Gets all the stuff back and marches home with it.

Then as he's coming back in verse 16 of Genesis 14, he brought back all the goods and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods as well as the women and the people. And the king of Sodom in verse 17 went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh. That is the king's valley.

And we get the idea that this was called the valley of the kings because of this encounter that we're about to read about where he's returning from the defeat of Keterleomer and the kings who were with him. Then Melchizedek, the king of Salem, comes out to meet Abram with bread and wine. He was the priest of God Most High.

Now you've heard my speculations about the identity of Melchizedek since at this time you have a family priesthood in effect and Shem is still alive and this would be the patriarch of the family. But you'll notice the Bible doesn't say oh by the way, Shem, the priest of the Most High God came down. He's called Melchizedek and his identity is left unstated.

There are other theories and I will tell you that my suggestion about Shem is only a theory or a hypothesis that has no support from Scripture. Scripture is very careful to not identify Melchizedek. It doesn't give us any statements of his origin.

It doesn't tell us what happened after Melchizedek. Did he have a son? Who ruled in Salem before or after him? He emerges out of nowhere to meet Abram in the plain. He shares this bread and wine.

He blesses Abram. He receives a tithe from Abram and then he disappears off the stage of biblical history never to be heard from again except in later references in Scripture

back to this passage. So, why does this happen? Why is it stated this way? Well, there are a couple of reasons.

First of all, we know from his name Melchizedek, Melchizedek, King, Melchizedek, Righteousness. He rules from Salem. You look at the consonants here.

Remember Hebrew is a consonant language when it's written down, so you've got S, L, and M. And even today the greeting in Hebrew is Shalom. And this is the root for the word for peace. So the name of the town where he rules is peace.

Salem means peace. So you've got the king of righteousness ruling and dwelling in the city of peace. Later on, the name of this town, after it undergoes various occupations by different people and so forth, will become Yerushalem.

Yeru, the prefix there, J-E-R-U in English, means, has the idea of possessing or maintaining a hold on. So Jerusalem means possession of peace. All of this is very significant.

Names in the Bible almost always give us a key to understanding something important in the passage. But he comes out of nowhere and says he is the priest of the Most High God. In Hebrew this is El Elyon, God Most High.

Elyon means high in elevation, higher than anything else. So here's the thing. All the way in the last two or three chapters, Abram, we came down, we studied all the way from Adam down through Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth and so forth.

We see God dealing with different individuals and they're worshipping God, they're calling on the name of the Lord and so forth. We follow this line all the way down through Nahor and Terah and so forth and we get to Abram. God speaks to Abram and says, Get thee up from thy kindred and out of thy father's house and so forth.

I will make you a great nation. I will take you to a land that I will show you and you and your descendants will inherit and possess it forever. So God is dealing with Abram.

Through you, Abram, all the families of the earth will be blessed. So the focus and the spotlight is on Abram. He seems to be the point of entry, the point of contact between the human race and God at this point.

And it's something of a startling development that here Abram, who has just won this great victory and comes back, is met by this king priest. He is a priest of the Most High God. There have been people who speculated, well, you know, the later Canaanites, they worshipped a God called El, but it wasn't the God of Israel, it was someone else and this is some sort of a guy that serves a pagan deity.

But that won't wash because look at verse 22. When the king of Sodom comes up and

says, let me have the people back and you can keep all the spoils, Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have raised my hand. This is a figure of speech for I have sworn, just like you do in court.

Raise your right hand and swear. I have raised my hand to the Lord God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth. This is the very same title, the very same phrase that Melchizedek uses up in verse 19 when he blesses Abram and says, blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.

So the same God that Abram serves in verse 22 is the God that Melchizedek serves and is priest for in verse 19. This is the Lord God. And you find this also in chapter 15 verses 1 and 2 when the word of the Lord comes to Abram and Abram says Lord, God, Adonai, Yahweh.

These are the other titles for the very same God. Each of these titles serves a function. Now this title, God Most High, Melchizedek ties to the phrase possessor of heaven and earth.

You may recall that elsewhere in our studies we have seen that Yahweh is God's personal name that he reveals to Israel. He says previously you have known me as Elohim. You have known me as God, El, Elohim.

But now you will know me as Yahweh. This is his covenant name with Israel. It implies a closer relationship, intimacy, fellowship.

This is the name that Abram is going to use when we get to chapter 15. But here, this is his formal role as creator, as the highest authority in the universe. He is the possessor of heaven and earth.

The word here for possessor is interesting because this is the verb kanah. It comes from the verb kanah, Q-A-N-A-H. We have seen this word before, kanah.

I don't know if you remember, but look back at Genesis 4, verse 1. Eve has a child. It's the first child ever born. The first childbirth that has ever taken place in the human race.

And Eve uses this verb when she names her son. Adam knew his wife Eve in Genesis 4, verse 1. And she conceived and bore Cain. And she said, I have kanah, a man, from the Lord.

Well, it's translated possessor when we get over to chapter 14. God most high possessor of heaven and earth. But that doesn't quite make sense here in Eve's speech, does it? I have possessed a man from the Lord.

This word is difficult to render. This word group, actually, there are verbs and nouns from this root. But it has both the idea of origination and the idea of possession.

You'll find some English translations over in Genesis 14 that translate this creator of heaven and earth. And it's a legitimate translation. You can find places in the Old Testament where that seems to be the sense.

But it has both ideas of originating something and of possessing it or having authority over it. This is also found in Exodus 15, verse 16. And it's important for us to understand this title because this is the link.

This phrase and this view of God is the link, the shared viewpoint of Melchizedek and Abram. So over in Exodus 15, verse 16, Moses is singing the song of the redeemed. This is after the Egyptians are drowned in the Red Sea.

Remember the big Cecil B. DeMille thing? The Israelites cross on dry ground. Pharaoh and his chariots, actually Pharaoh's chariots, attempt to follow. And the horse and rider are drowned in the sea.

You go back to 1430. Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Their bodies are washing up in the ripples.

So they sing this song of victory. And in chapter 15, verse 11 of Exodus, Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods, among the Elohim? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them. You in your mercy have led forth the people whom you have redeemed.

You have guided them in your strength to your holy habitation. And this sort of deliverance is in essence what God has done for Abram, isn't it? He has delivered Lot. He's delivered these people from bondage through Abram, giving Abram victory.

Verse 14 of Exodus 15, The people will hear and be afraid. Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be dismayed.

The mighty men of Moab trembling will take hold of them. All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away because of the glory of God's victory here. Verse 16, Fear and dread will fall on them by the greatness of your arm.

They will be as still as a stone until your people pass over, O Lord, until the people pass over whom you have connod, whom you have, it says in the New King James, purchased, whom you have possessed, whom you have brought forth, whom you have originated. You can see that this word has a range of meanings that it's difficult to pin down with just a single translation in English. The kanah is used here.

God is the one who kanahs, who originates, who possesses, who rules over the heavens and the earth. And a final passage where we find this term used is in Deuteronomy 32.6. Of course, there are many others, but this is helpful to us. Once again, this is a song of Moses.

He uses this word and he says after the Israelites corrupt themselves, they are not His children because of their blemish, a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus deal with the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father who bought you, who kanahed you, who originated, delivered, possessed you, who chose you for His own possession? Has He not made you and established you? You can see that kanah here is used in parallel with two other Hebrew verbs, kun and asah, made and established. So, these are all shades of meaning that we find in this very brief but potent statement that Melchizedek makes in Genesis 14.

God most high, possessor, originator, the redeemer in a sense, the purchaser of heaven and earth. So, let's just stop and think about this for a minute. You've got Abram.

He's the man of God through faith. He's pleased God. He's left his home.

Everything is happening with Abram. The covenants are going to come through Abram. Abram, Isaac, Jacob, the nation of Israel.

All this stuff is happening with Abram. You have this outsider coming out to meet him as a priest of God most high who sees God for who He is, the possessor, creator, ruler of heaven and earth. Out of nowhere, coming from Salem, he comes out bringing bread and wine, the royal meal.

And these seem to be peculiar to the priesthood of Melchizedek, the symbols of his office as priest in particular, priest and king. He comes out and blesses Abram. He pronounces a blessing.

Once again, if you have the authority to bless someone, this indicates that you have a station where you are in a position to bestow or to grant or to endow someone with something that you have authority over. So he blesses Abram and pronounces blessing on him. Blessed be Abram of God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God most high who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

So, Melchizedek recognizes that this great victory that Abram has achieved comes from God. The God. The one and only God.

So then, and this is sort of a grammatical, there's been all kinds of commentary and discussion and so forth over this next phrase in verse 20, He gave him a tithe of all. Well, there's two pronouns here. Some English translations even put in the word Abram, but these are all pronouns.

He gave him a tithe of all. And there was some debate over, well, did Melchizedek give Abram a tithe or did Abram give Melchizedek a tithe? Well, if you go to Hebrews 7, the question is answered. It says clearly in Hebrews 7 that Abram gave Melchizedek a tithe of all.

Grammatically here in Hebrew, it seems like the reverse. But obviously, the goods that are in question here is all the booty that has been brought back from the victory. Now, this whole concept of tithe is brought up here.

This is the first mention of it. By the way, this is also the first mention of priesthood in the Bible. The Melchizedekian priesthood.

And you have this idea of a tithe. This is a tenth. What is the principle in operation here? Because this is before the law of Moses.

We say, well, we don't consider it to be proper teaching to say that people owe God a tithe, that they need to take 10% of their income right out of check and give it to the church. Because this is largely something taught in the Levitical code, in the law of Moses. And because we understand dispensations and we know that we are not under the law but under grace, just like the other regulations of the law of Moses, we don't feel under obligation to render a tithe.

However, here you have Abram rendering a tithe. And of course, he's not under the Levitical code either. This is before all of that.

So what's the principle here? Should we, in fact, feel some obligation for tithing? Well, the tithe is an expression here. Well, I'll ask you, what do you think this is an expression of? This is the first time that we have seen it rendered. There's no mention of Abram tithing anywhere else.

Who would he give it to? Abram wasn't a member of the First Church of Palestine or anything. So if he was going to sit down and write out a check, where would he send his tithe? To whom would he give it? Because as we see when we look at the law of Moses, this is not just a matter of going and sacrificing an extra animal. Turn with me.

Let's just take a look at the concept of tithe. Tithe in Numbers chapter 18. And you'll be relieved to know that there's really only two or three passages that even talk about tithing, so we won't belabor this point.

It's going to be pretty easy to analyze and summarize. Numbers chapter 18 is one passage where the instruction is given to Israel beginning in verse 20. Numbers 18.20. He's talking about the Levites, the duties of the Levites in general.

Remember, they're the ones who don't have an inheritance in the land. And then within the Levites, you have a subset that are the sons of Aaron and serve as the priests. So in verse 20, the Lord said to Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in the land, nor shall you have any portion among them.

I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel. Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which

they perform. The work of the tabernacle of meeting.

Other people in Israel will go and herd goats and herd sheep and grow crops and engage in various forms of manufacture or labor or the distribution of goods and services and they will turn a profit. That is their reward for their labor. The sons of Levi receive the tithe that is given by all of these other people in Israel as their portion.

That's their income. That's their means of support because their portion and their inheritance is not a chunk of the land. Other tribes will be assigned territory in Israel but not Levi.

There is no county or territory of Levi. Their inheritance is the Lord and their income is from the tithe. So this is what supports the Levitical priesthood in Israel is the tithe.

Verse 23, The Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. It says they shall bear their iniquity.

It seems like a strange thing. What this means is they are accountable for the cleansing of iniquity. This is what the priesthood does.

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Nothing is sanctified without the sprinkling of blood. A big part of the worship life in Israel is making an issue of sin.

This was the function of the law of Moses in general is to show us that apart from the power of God all we do is fall into sin. So they bear the iniquity. They bear the iniquity of the entire nation.

They perform the service that takes care of it. You can see the same thing if you go back to 18.1 The Lord said, Aaron, you and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary. And you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood.

The big function of the priesthood is coping with iniquity. It shall be a statute forever. Remember verse 23.

You have no inheritance. Verse 24. The tithes of the children of Israel which they offer up as a heave offering to the Lord I have given to the Levites as an inheritance.

Therefore I have said to them among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. So you can go on and the rest of chapter 18 talks about how the Levites function once they receive this tithe. This is their form of support.

So in a sense this is why the tithe has been compared to income tax. Our income taxes go to support the government that provides our security, our judging, settling of court cases, our military defense and so forth. Well a portion, a large portion, not all, a large

portion of the government in the nation of Israel this was a religious government.

And the priests and the Levites performed these offices. And so this is why the tithe has been compared and I think rightfully so to an income tax. Because these are civil servants in a sense.

They're serving the nation. They're bearing the iniquity of the nation. Performing the offices and serving the tabernacle.

Our second major passage and there are really only two major passages about tithing is found over in Leviticus chapter 27. Leviticus chapter 27 beginning at verse 30. We're in the rules and regulations.

Leviticus if you just think Levi is in that title. Leviticus gives you a bunch of information about the function of the priesthood in particular. So we're in a context of first born things, devoted things, things that are the result of a vow to the Lord.

Then in verse 30 of Leviticus 27 all the tithe of the land whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the tree it is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord. If a man wants it all to redeem any of his tithes he shall add one-fifth to it.

And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock of whatever passes under the rod the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord. This passing under the rod this is used poetically later on in the prophets. But this was an accounting method.

You've got your flocks and herds there and you funnel them down into a narrow pass and you have a shepherd standing there with a rod and he watches each animal pass under the rod and they count them and they tell how many ewes and how many rams how many goats how many lambs or baby goats I don't know what you call a baby goat whatever they were they passed under the rod. And every tenth animal you just get the herd and they come up in some sort of a random order every tenth animal you say well that's a tithe. So nine would go by they'd take the tenth one and put him in a pen.

Nine more would go by they'd take the tenth one and put him in a pen. Every tenth one belongs to the Lord. Well now I thought over in Numbers it said they belonged to the Levites.

Well, it belongs to the Lord who has in turn given it. He says you have me for an inheritance and I'm giving you my tithe to live on. This is your possession.

This is your income. This is your means of support. So this is the same tithe here.

Tenth one shall be holy to the Lord. Verse 33 He shall not inquire whether it is good or bad. This is not the same as choosing an animal for sacrifice.

It doesn't matter if it's a brown one or a white one. It doesn't matter if it's spotted or

striped or limping or anything else. Every tenth one is set aside as they pass under the rod.

Now you can redeem the tithe if you need or desire to keep the animals. You can redeem them for their value plus 20%. So you can redeem it for its value plus a fifth.

You find that in verse 31. If any man wants at all to redeem any of his tithes, he shall add one fifth of the value. So if you have a big basket of grain there that would have been your tithe that's 10% of your thing.

You say I really need that to get through the winter. You could basically buy that at 120% of its value and give the money, shekels or whatever, in lieu of giving the actual grain. You could buy the animal for 120% of its value and give that to the Levites who are the custodians of these things that belong to the Lord.

So the primary function of the tithe is to support the priests. Give them something to live on. There is another function.

And I said these are the two major passages. There is another minor passage that is necessary for us to look at. And this is Deuteronomy 26.

Now this may or may not, looking at this tithe closely, may or may not be important to you now. But if you haven't already, at some point you will encounter people who are really big on tithing and will tell you all the benefits and will tell you that it's scriptural and that you're out of line if you're not tithing and so forth. So this does have a bearing on our function even today.

Deuteronomy 26, verse 12. This is talking about the law of the offerings of firstfruits. If you look at the caption of chapter 26, when you've gathered your harvest, when your lambs and so forth have been born, you do an accounting because the firstfruits belong to the Lord.

And you get down to verse 11. It says, You shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you and your house. Remember in the New Testament when it says, Each man as he purposes in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, not out of necessity.

The accounting of the firstfruits here you can imagine that a lot of people say, Oh, I had a bumper crop. Look at the best of these figs and the best of these grapes and the best of these goats and sheep and so forth. It might pain them to say, Well, I've got to take the firstfruits and the best and go haul that off to the Lord.

The law is making an issue of attitude of heart. People tend to think, Well, it's just a bunch of regulations. But many, many times, and this is one of those passages, verse 11, you're supposed to rejoice in these good things.

Look at what the Lord God has given you. It's a small thing to render the firstfruits. It ought to be a time of rejoicing to recognize what do you have that you did not receive? It all came from the Lord.

You and the Levite and the stranger who is among you. Now this is important. The end of verse 11 there.

You shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you and your house. You and the Levite and the stranger who is among you. Why are the strangers mentioned at this point? Well, look at verse 12.

When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing. We need to stop here and explain a little bit. It says the tithe of the increase.

Some people sort of misunderstood how the tithe works. Every year, the Israelites didn't look around and say, well, a tenth of everything I have has to be taken out and go to the Lord. It's of the increase.

It's sort of like your taxes. Once you've been taxed on income once, you don't get taxed on it in a subsequent year. If you got \$1,000 this year and paid taxes on it so that you have \$400 left, you put that in the bank.

Well, next year, you don't have to look at that and say, well, I'm in the 20% tax bracket so I've got to take 20% of that \$400 and send it off to the government. It's already been taxed. It's the same thing in Israel.

Once they got cranked up and rolling here, their flocks and herds and so forth, the only thing they look at in terms of tithing is the increase. Where are the new animals that I didn't have the last time tithing time came around? These are the ones that are accounted for the tithe. It's the tithe of the increase.

The new crop of grain. You might have silos full of grain from previous years. Joseph spent seven years gathering grain in Egypt before the big famine.

Then they lived off that grain for seven more years. Some of that grain toward the end of the famine was 14 years old, you would guess, or at least seven years old. But you could store grain.

Well, you didn't have to go back and tithe all of your stored grain every year. It was the new crop that came in. This is why the first fruits is what's being looked at here.

So when you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase, and then it says in the third year, remember the principle of the Sabbath. Everything in Israel is organized by sevens. You have every seventh year is a Sabbath year.

Every seventh day is a Sabbath day. Every seventh year is a Sabbath year. And every seven sevens, after 49 years, the 50th year is a year of Jubilee.