

among Israel in ancient days was to sustain the service of the house of God. The tribe of Levi was selected from amongst all the other tribes—as the Lord’s peculiar inheritance. In the division of the land of Canaan among the different tribes, the tribe of Levi was left without an inheritance. The eleven tribes had their portions of Canaan set apart to them under the direction of the servant of God, but the tribe of Levi had no inheritance given unto them. They were told by the Lord that they were his inheritance, and that which they should have as an inheritance should be the tenth of the product of all Israel: the tenth of the labor, the tenth of the cattle, the tenth of the gold and silver, the tenth of the fruits of the earth, and of everything that was produced in the land. And so strict was this law, that when an animal passed under the rod, to use the expression of Scripture, and thereby became a proper animal to be devoted to the service of God, though it were a choice animal, and one which the owner of it desired to retain, the law provided that it could not be retained: it was devoted to the Lord, and was holy on that account. And if the owner of it were to substitute another animal instead of it, they both became holy unto the Lord, and both became tithing animals and had to be dedicated unto him, so strict was the Lord in enforcing this law of tithing upon Israel. I often think of the practice which prevails among us in this respect, how differently we act to what ancient Israel did, and how it would pinch some of us if the law of tithing were enforced among us as strictly as it was among them. Not only was this the law of tithing, as I have rehearsed it, with regard to substitution; but if a man wanted to redeem that which was devoted

for tithing, a certain valuation was put upon it, and in addition to this valuation a certain sum of money had to be paid before it could be redeemed. In other words tithing had to be paid in kind, and if a man wanted to redeem his tithing he had to pay not only the money valuation of it, but an additional sum besides, before the redemption could be effected.

You can readily see, with a little reflection, the object the Lord had in being thus strict with his people: it was to prevent violations of that law, and to enforce the strictness in observing it which was necessary to secure the promised blessings.

I have said that a tenth of all the produce of Israel went to the tribe of Levi; the Levites also had to pay a tenth of that which they received, and that tenth was given to the priests, those who ministered in the priesthood in the midst of the people, so that there was in Israel a standing ministry—a tribe chosen from all the tribes of Israel, whose office it was to minister in the things of God, having been called specially by God to this service.

You doubtless recollect that the Lord also required his children—the people of Israel—to set apart the firstborn male in every family to be his. They had been redeemed in Egypt, or rather they had been saved from the scourge which fell upon all the families of Egypt. When God plead with Pharaoh, through Moses, to let the people go, destruction fell on all the households of Egypt, the firstborn in every one being slain. But among the children of Israel the firstborn were spared, and the Lord claimed them as his; but it was inconvenient for them to be used in the service of the Lord and he, therefore, after Israel had left Egypt, commanded that all their firstborn should be numbered; and after all of a cer-