

SPREADING THE WEALTH Sunday School- July 25, 2009

Unifying Topic: GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO JUBILEE

Lesson Text

I. The Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-21)

II. Stewardship Not Ownership (Leviticus 25:23-24)

The Main Thought: And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you: and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. (Leviticus 25:10 KJV).

Unifying Principle: The accumulation of property in the hands of a very few people means that some are wealthy while others have no chance to escape poverty. How can communities care for the poor in just ways? God gave laws for the just redistribution of wealth to provide for the poor and thereby to honor God who provides all.

Lesson Aim: As a result of this lesson, students should understand that God gave laws to ensure that resources would be divided so that everyone would have a means of substance.

Life aim: Students are encouraged to value and appropriate the biblical principles of economic justice and stewardship of God's creation.

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- 25:8 And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.
- 25:9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.
- 25:10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.
- 25:11 A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed.
- 25:12 For it is the jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.
- 25:13 In the year of this jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession.
- 25:14 And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another:
- 25:15 According to the number of years after the jubile thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee:
- 25:16 According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee.
- 25:17 Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God.
- 25:18 Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety.
- 25:19 And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety.
- 25:20 And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase:
- 25:21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.
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- 25:23 The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.
- 25:24 And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.

HISTORY:

The book of Leviticus, the third book of the Old Testament outlines the duties of the Levitical Priesthood and guidelines for the sacrificial system, purification, and feasts.

- in Leviticus 24 we learn that the house of Israel is preserved for the land of Canaan.
- in chapter 25 we learn that the land of Canaan is preserved for the house of Israel.

We have looked at God instructing Moses of the Tabernacle and the consecration of office of the Priesthood involving Aaron and his sons, and now God calls the people to Jubilee! The law of this chapter concerns the lands and estates of the Israelites in Canaan, the occupying and transferring of which were to be under the divine direction, as well as the management of religious worship; for, as the tabernacle was a holy house, so Canaan was a holy land.

Every seventh year should be a year of rest from occupying the land, a sabbatical year.

TERMS:

SABBATH DAY: The term "Sabbath Day" is derived from the word "stop, suspend, cease." When you think about it, it is a strange command. The Lord is commanding not to "Keep on working and don't be idle," but to "Stop working, Rest! You

must not work." In this way, *"In six days the Lord created the heavens, the land, the sea, and everything that is in them, and because the Lord rested on the seventh day, he blessed the Sabbath Day and made it holy," (Exodus 20:11).*

1. The seventh day of the week, Saturday, observed as the day of rest and worship by the Jews and some Christian sects.
2. The first day of the week, Sunday, observed as the day of rest and worship by most Christians.
3. **High Sabbaths** refer to the annual festivals recorded in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. Rather than the weekly seventh day Sabbath, these days of the Festivals of Unleavened Bread or Passover (Pesach), Pentecost (Shavuot), Atonement (Yom Kippur), Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), and Tabernacles (Sukkoth) may fall on various other days of the week.

JUBILEE: a year of rest to be observed by the Israelites every 50th year, during which slaves were to be set free, alienated property restored to the former owners, and the lands left untilled. The announcement came by a priest blowing a ram's horn on the Day of Atonement.

STEWARDSHIP: one who manages money or possession for another. It is accountability for deciding how best to spend the time, talents, and possessions God has given to us, empowered by the Holy Spirit, in the light of God's purpose as revealed in Jesus Christ.

OWNERSHIP: We don't own or possess anything. *"For every beast in the forest is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills."*
Ps.50:10

LESSON:

Leviticus 25:8-21: THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

POINT:

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| (1) began with repentance, | (5) provided rest, |
| (2) centered in release, | (6) meant relying on God, |
| (3) involved restoration, | (7) required the remitting of debts, |
| (4) brought about reunion, | (8) was a time of rejoicing |

God told Moses on Mount Sinai to tell the children of Israel that when they come into the land of Canaan, they shall have a **Sabbath year** for the land. He instructed the Israelites to sow, prune, cultivate, and reap their fields for **six years** but on the **seventh year** they must let the land lie dormant and untilled. In the **eighth year**, the year after the Sabbatical year, God instructed the people to eat from the old harvest, that is the harvest from the 6th year. In the **ninth year** they could eat from the crop they gathered.

God cautioned the people to obey His laws and regulations, promising that if they did, the land would yield its fruit and supply their needs, they would eat until they were full and they would live in safety.

God instructed the Israelites to have a Jubilee year by counting seven Sabbath years. Since the **Sabbath year comes every 7th year** they were to count **7x7 Sabbath years, which would be 49 years**. On the Day of Atonement God instructed the Israelites to sound the trumpet throughout their land signifying a consecration of the **50th year** and **proclaiming freedom** for all the people in the land. Every title to land would revert to its proper owner.

So if a person had mortgaged or leased his land, on this year it was free from any burden. This was not unfair because everyone knew when the Jubilee year was to come. Also any person who was sold into or who had sold himself into slavery was set free. All debts were forgiven.

During the Jubilee year the land shall have a Sabbath rest. No one could sow or reap the land and the people were to eat the produce that spontaneously grew on the land. The Sabbath year and the High-Sabbath, the year of Jubilee, are one of God's gracious provisions for His people, especially the poor.

God told the Israelites not to sow their fields or prune their vineyards during the Sabbath year. Whatever grew on the land spontaneously was not personal property and was not to be reaped or gathered. Whatever the land produced was food for **all** the people, their families, servants, hired help, strangers, livestock and beasts in the land.

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God said, "I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years". The practice of allowing the land to lie fallow, crop-free, seedless, every seventh year taught the Israelites a dependence on God. During this Sabbath year, their regular labor of tending to the land was suspended. The children of Israel had time to focus on GOD and to understand their dependence on God. Giving the land a year of rest also strengthens the productivity of the land.

Leviticus 25:23-24: Stewardship Not Ownership

The land God was bringing the Israelites belong to God, in contrast to the land in Egypt belonged to the king.

Thus, the Israelites were guests or tenants in God's land. Once the Israelites entered the land, God would divide it amongst the 12 tribes and each tribe would hold their land forever. No one had the power to sell permanent title to his assigned land. We hold and make decisions about land personally and in our communities, but we have an underlying responsibility to care for that land on God's behalf.

"The land shall never be sold in eternity. It cannot be possessed forever. We don't really own our land. In fact, if we don't pay taxes on it we will lose the right to it, of that we do have. We don't own it as individuals, the government owns it. But even the government doesn't own it....

POINT:

The land is God's. It doesn't belong to anyone else. "You are strangers and sojourners with me." You are only passing through, you are pilgrims, heading on to an infinitely glorious arena of life. What we are doing here is not the end. This life is schooling us for the life which lies ahead. Wrap not yourself in the material things around you and live only for them, but live only for God.

"And in all the country you possess, you shall grant a **redemption** (deliverance, release, recovery) of the land." God living and ruling among his people, intended for them to live: every seventh year, let the land rest, and every fiftieth year, grant a jubilee, when everyone would return to their own land (**restored to their the original owner**), when all personal property would be restored, when slaves would be set free, etc. And this is a very representation of the fact that God knows that even in such a condition there would still be inequities and injustices. So He says that they must allow the right to recover from injury and damage and loss of personal property. This is an indispensable principle in government. Governments must face up to the fact that they have the responsibility to grant the right to recover from a low economic state.

SUMMARY:

God's Jubilee laws were designed to prevent potential land barons from accumulating vast amounts of property and inflicting economic slavery on those who had been compelled to sell the property. Jubilee promised the destitute a new start.

Jesus projected His ministry as a "spiritual jubilee" (see Isaiah 61:1, 2; Luke 4:18, 19). Concern for the poor and destitute is still to be a trademark of God's people.

Obedience to God was the key, was all that God expected, and it was to bring forth everything the Israelites needed. God owned and provided as always, teaching them that by dividing their substance it would provide wealth that could be spread among all. It especially reveals the grace of God and His compassion for the poor and the oppressed.