

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

7-7-21

Leviticus 25

The Land And It's Sabbath - Verses 1-2

¹ The LORD said to Moses at Mount Sinai, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD.

25:1-2 The land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD: We are familiar with the idea of a sabbath of days, where one day out of seven is specially consecrated to God. This describes a Sabbath of years for the land, where the land receives a rest one year out of seven. This was good management of natural resources and reminded the people of God's control and provision for them.

Then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD: Obviously, this called Israel to a great deal of faith - they had to trust God that He would provide enough in the six years to see them through the seventh.

How To Give The Land Its Sabbath - Verses 3-7

³ For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. ⁴ But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. ⁵ Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. ⁶ Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, ⁷ as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

25:3-5 In the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land: This applied to both grain crops and fruit bearing plants; Israel was to do this as a radical demonstration that the land belonged to God, not to them.

25:6-7 And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you: It was also a powerful testimony of dependence on God; Israel was declaring their belief that God would meet their needs. It was also just plain good ecology! Giving the land a rest every seven years would help restore vital nutrients to the soil that normally would be depleted.

Today, many observant Jews find a way around the Sabbath year law; on the seventh year, they "sell" their land to a Gentile, work it, and then "buy" it back from the Gentile when the Sabbath year is over. The Gentile makes a little money, and the Jewish person can say, "It wasn't my land on the Sabbath year, so it was all right if I worked it."

The Year of Jubilee To Be Observed Every Fiftieth Year - Verses 8-12

⁸ "Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. ⁹ Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. ¹⁰ Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. ¹¹ The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.

25:8-12 The Year of Jubilee was meant to be celebrated every 50 years. It included canceling all debts, freeing all slaves, and returning to its original owners all land that had been sold. There is no indication in the Bible that the Year of Jubilee was ever carried out. If Israel had followed this practice faithfully, they would have been a society without permanent poverty.

In The Year Of Jubilee, The Land Went Back To Its Original Family - Verses 13-17

¹³ "In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property. ¹⁴ "If you sell land to any of your own people or buy land from them, do not take advantage of each other. ¹⁵ You are to buy from your own people on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And they are to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. ¹⁶ When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what is really being sold to you is the number of crops. ¹⁷ Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the LORD your God.

25:13 In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession: When Israel came into the Promised Land, the land was allotted according to tribes and families. These initial tracts of land would be the permanent possession of those families, and therefore land in Israel could never really be "sold" - it could only be leased, and the amount of the lease would be based on how many years there were left until the Jubilee. This assured that no family would be permanently prevented from having land. Every fifty years, every family would have the opportunity to start again.

25:17 Therefore you shall not oppress one another: Though this was extremely charitable and helpful to the families in Israel, this was not a socialist system, because only land was re-distributed. Most effectively, this helped protect against the existence of a permanent underclass in Israel.

God's Provision For The Sabbath Year - Verses 18-23

¹⁸ "Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. ¹⁹ Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. ²⁰ You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" ²¹ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. ²² While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop

and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in. ²³ "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.

25:18 So you shall observe My statutes and keep My judgments, and perform them; and you will dwell in the land in safety: God promised that if Israel obeyed Him, He would provide so much on the sixth year, that they will not only be supplied for the seventh year when they give the land rest, but they will also be eating the produce of the sixth year some three years later.

25:23 The people would one day possess land in Canaan, but in God's plan, only God's ownership was absolute. He wanted his people to avoid greed and materialism. If you have the attitude that you are taking care of the Lord's property, you will make what you have more available to others. This is difficult to do if you have an attitude of ownership. Think of yourself as a manager of all that is under your care, not as an owner.

The Role Of The Kinsman-Redeemer - Verses 24-28

²⁴ Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. ²⁵ "If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. ²⁶ If, however, there is no one to redeem it for them but later on they prosper and acquire sufficient means to redeem it themselves, ²⁷ they are to determine the value for the years since they sold it and refund the balance to the one to whom they sold it; they can then go back to their own property. ²⁸ But if they do not acquire the means to repay, what was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and they can then go back to their property.

25:24 In All The Land Of Your Possession You Shall Grant Redemption Of The Land: This redemption of the land was accomplished through the kinsman-redeemer (Hebrew: Goel). He was a designated close relative who had the right (and responsibility) to buy the poor out of their poverty and loss.

The Goel is also a wonderful picture of Jesus, our kinsman-redeemer who purchased us from the "slave market" of sin (romans 3:24, 1 Corinthians 6:20). The book of Ruth describes a kinsman-redeemer transaction; when Naomi returned from Moab, poor and in debt, her nearest kinsman-redeemer was willing to buy back the land for her, but stopped short when he found he would also have to marry Ruth and raise up an heir for the property. When this nearest kinsman-redeemer balked, Boaz was the next closest kinsman-redeemer, and stepped right in out of love for Ruth (Ruth 3).

The Exception For Urban Real Estate - Verses 29-34

²⁹ "Anyone who sells a house in a walled city retains the right of redemption a full year after its sale. During that time the seller may redeem it. ³⁰ If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and the buyer's descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. ³¹ But houses in villages

without walls around them are to be considered as belonging to the open country. They can be redeemed, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee. ³² "The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. ³³ So the property of the Levites is redeemable—that is, a house sold in any town they hold—and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. ³⁴ But the pastureland belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession.

25:29-34 If a man sells a house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold: The laws of property as described in previous verses did not apply to urban real estate (in a walled city); it applied to rural land where for most, the land was more than a place to live, it was a place to earn one's livelihood.

Lending To The Poor - Verses 35-38

³⁵ "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. ³⁶ Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you. ³⁷ You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit. ³⁸ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

25:35 The Bible places great emphasis on assisting the poor and helpless, especially orphans, widows, and the handicapped. In Israelite society, no paid work was available to women; thus, a widow and her children had no livelihood. Neither was there work available for the seriously handicapped in this nation of farmers and shepherds. The poor were to be helped without charging any interest. Individual and family responsibility for the poor was crucial since there was no government aid.

25:35-37 God said that neglecting the poor was a sin. Permanent poverty was not allowed in Israel. Financially secure families were responsible to help and house those in need. Many times we do nothing, not because we lack compassion, but because we are overwhelmed by the size of the problem and don't know where to begin. God doesn't expect you to eliminate poverty, nor does he expect you to neglect your family while providing for others. He does, however, expect that when you see an individual in need, you will reach out with whatever help you can offer, including hospitality.

When A Hebrew Becomes A Slave Because Of Debt - Verses 39-46

³⁹ "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves. ⁴⁰ They are to be treated as hired workers or temporary residents among you; they are to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ Then they and their children are to be released, and they will go back to their own clans and to the property of their ancestors. ⁴² Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. ⁴³ Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God.

⁴⁴ "Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. ⁴⁵ You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. ⁴⁶ You can bequeath them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly.

25:44 Why did God allow the Israelites to purchase slaves? Under Hebrew laws, slaves were treated differently from slaves in other nations. They were seen as human beings with dignity, and not as animals. Hebrew slaves, for example, took part in the religious festivals and rested on the Sabbath. Nowhere does the Bible condone slavery, but it recognizes its existence. God's laws offered many guidelines for treating slaves properly.

Redeeming A Hebrew Slave From A Foreigner - Verses 47-55

⁴⁷ "If a foreigner residing among you becomes rich and any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to the foreigner or to a member of the foreigner's clan, ⁴⁸ they retain the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them: ⁴⁹ An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in their clan may redeem them. Or if they prosper, they may redeem themselves. ⁵⁰ They and their buyer are to count the time from the year they sold themselves up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for their release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired worker for that number of years. ⁵¹ If many years remain, they must pay for their redemption a larger share of the price paid for them. ⁵² If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, they are to compute that and pay for their redemption accordingly. ⁵³ They are to be treated as workers hired from year to year; you must see to it that those to whom they owe service do not rule over them ruthlessly. ⁵⁴ "Even if someone is not redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, ⁵⁵ for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

25:44 After he is sold he may be redeemed again: As in the redemption of land, the kinsman-redeemer would buy the Hebrew slave out of servitude if he could, and the price was reckoned in relation to the year of Jubilee.

The children of Israel are servants to Me: God cared so much about the matters simply because first and foremost, each Israelite was to be the servant of the LORD.