

LESSON 19: LEVITICUS 25 - 27

FEBRUARY 28, 2012

OVERVIEW

- . Jubilee – Leviticus 25
- . Rewards and Punishments – Leviticus 26 & 27

JUBILEE – LEVITICUS 25

- . The Sabbatical year – Leviticus 25:1-7
 - . Occurred once every seven years
 - . In the seventh year, the fields were to lie fallow to give the land rest
 - . Good agricultural practice
 - . In the sabbatical year, all Israelite debts were to be cancelled – Deuteronomy 15
 - . In the sabbatical year, Israelite slaves were to be set free – Deuteronomy 15
- . Jubilee – Leviticus 25:8-55
 - . The main purpose of the Jubilee was to liberate one both physically and spiritually from that which it is bound
 - . For someone deep in debt facing financial ruin, the Jubilee liberated them from their debt, by restoring their land
 - . For someone who had accumulated great wealth, through land acquisition, the Jubilee liberated them from the land and wealth and the desire to covet that land and wealth
 - . The Jubilee was meant to be the great equalizer that brought the Israelite community back into harmony with one another
 - . Announcement of Jubilee
 - . The sounding of trumpets on the Day of Atonement in the fiftieth year Leviticus 25:8-9
 - . The word Jubilee means “the blowing of the ram’s horn”
 - . The same root (Jub) also appears in the name of Jubal, the father of all musicians – Genesis 4:21
 - . The sounding of horns was meant as a proclamation of liberty
 - . “Proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof” – Leviticus 25:10
 - . Characteristics of the Jubilee
 - . To serve as a reminder of their liberation from Egyptian bondage by a miraculous display of divine power
 - . To serve as a reminder that they were now free citizens, living in a land given to them by God
 - . A reminder that they were bound to Him by a covenant

- . To serve as a reminder that their hearts and minds were to be set upon God, not the materialism of surrounding nations
- . The prescribed interruption in life, would furnish an opportunity for reflection, reminding them that man does not live by bread alone
- . Jubilee was a special sabbatical year – Leviticus 25:8-12
 - . Jubilee was linked to the Sabbath principle – a time to pause from daily life to reflect on the covenant relationship with God
 - . A central part of this principle is learning to trust in God and His ability to provide for our needs during this time of rest
 - . Challenges a year of rest presents for an agricultural society
- . Everyone was to return to his own property – Leviticus 25:13
 - . In an agricultural economy, land is the economic base
 - . When land is taken from the people, families are dispersed and family units break down
 - . Land existed for the people, was meant to keep families together
 - . A strong family unit meant a strong society
 - . Therefore, the Jubilee was designed to realign and reunite the families back in to their core units every fifty years
 - . Unfortunately the Jubilee was apparently never taken very seriously
 - . There is only one other mention of the year of Jubilee in all of scripture – Numbers 36:4
 - . There is no other reference anywhere to redistribution of land
 - . However, the territories and families seem to have been kept intact
 - . A great strength of Judaism is the traditional solidarity of the family
 - . Family solidarity helped Jews survive centuries of persecution
- . Sale (actually rent) of land was to be proportionate to the number of years remaining before Jubilee – Leviticus 25:14-22
 - . The principle here is that land could be transferred from one individual to another, for the years remaining until the next Jubilee, for a price proportionate with that period of time
 - . Prevent the rich from getting richer and the poor from getting poorer
- . The land was God's – Leviticus 25:23
 - . God's people were not to think of themselves as the owners of the land
 - . They were the beneficiaries of something that God entrusted to them
 - . Therefore they couldn't sell it, and someone else couldn't buy it
 - . It was to be distributed according to the will of its true owner, God
 - . Only in a true Theocracy, where God reigns supreme over all the laws, could this work
- . Land could be redeemed by a kinsman-redeemer – Leviticus 25:24-28
 - . If a family was poor and needed to sell (actually rent) the land, they didn't have to wait for the Jubilee to get it back
 - . The land could be bought back by a near relative or kinsman
 - . Or land could be bought back by family and the difference redeemed to the occupant
 - . This part of the Jubilee seemed to be practiced

- . In the book of Ruth, the family of Naomi exercised their right and bought back their land
- . Only land, not private property, was subject to the rules of Jubilee
 - Leviticus 25:29-34
 - . Homes in the cities, once sold, could not be returned to seller
 - . Personal property belonged to the owner and was not subject to automatic redistribution
 - . These verses establish the right of private property and therefore private ownership is established
 - . Someone forced to sell their home under adverse conditions had the right to redeem it within a period of twelve months
 - . After that, he lost right, unless buyer choose to sell it back
 - . The only exception to this were the Levites, who always had the right of Redemption
 - . Their homes were always to revert back to them in Jubilee
 - . This was probably the case because they were not given land
- . The poor were to be redeemed – Leviticus 25:35-55
 - . An Israelite who needs a loan – Leviticus 25:35-38
 - . Those who have resources are to help those in need of a loan
 - . The lender is not to charge interest
 - . This is considered a loan and expected to be repaid
 - . The intent is to help the poor so they can stay in the community and not allow the rich to exploit the situation
 - . An Israelite who indentures himself to another Israelite
 - Leviticus 25:39-43
 - . This is worse than the previous case, in that the person can not survive on a mere loan
 - . In this case, one can indenture himself to another and work
 - . He is treated kindly and released in the year of Jubilee
 - . Gentile slaves – Leviticus 25:44-46
 - . Rights and protections of Israelites did not pertain to gentiles
 - . Therefore, gentile slaves could be enslaved forever and passed on to Israelite descendants
 - . An Israelite who is indentured to a gentile – Leviticus 25:47-55
 - . By Hebrew law this person could not remain a slave permanently
 - . He had the right to redeem himself at any time
 - . A kinsman could redeem him
 - . He had to be set free in the year of Jubilee
- . Although we don't practice Jubilee today, the embedded reasons behind it serve as a warning to all of us today
 - . Money tends to corrupt – the more one has the more one wants
 - . The Jubilee was to curb greed
 - . The love of Money is the root of all evil
 - . We are to help those in need to maintain a strong society
 - . We are to be good stewards of what God has given us

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS – LEVITICUS 26 & 27

- . Many of the law codes of the ancient Near East ended with a section on rewards and Punishments
 - . Rewards for those who obeyed the law, punishment for those who did not
 - . Best known example, outside Bible, is the law code of Hummurabi
- . Rewards – Leviticus 26:1-13
 - . If the people follow God's decrees and obey His laws He will bless them
 - . Blessings of good seasonal rains and bountiful harvests
 - . Peace through victory over their many enemies
- . Punishments – Leviticus 26:14-39
 - . If they fail to obey, God will bring sudden disasters upon them
 - . He will withhold rains thereby diminishing crops
 - . He will allow hostile enemies to destroy them
 - . He will lay waste to their land and have them taken away in to foreign lands
- . Gods mercy – Leviticus 26:40-46
 - . Chapter ends with God stressing He will never abandon them, even when they find themselves in the hands of their enemies
 - . Chapter 26 is the end of God's promises to His people
- . The people's promise to God – Leviticus 27
 - . Chapter 27 deals with the dedication of the people, animals and property to God

NEXT LESSON IS TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2012: NUMBERS 1 - 10