

April 28

Scriptures: Read Leviticus 27

Key Verse: “And all the tithe of the land,... is the Lord’s. It is holy to the Lord. (Leviticus 27:30)

Overview

This final chapter of Leviticus deals with vows of consecrated things, vows of devoted things and tithes unto the Lord. The things vowed or solemnly promised to the Lord were not made as a requirement of obedience to any law, but given voluntarily out of devotion and thanksgiving to God.

A person could consecrate unto the Lord things he owned, such as animals, houses fields, or even himself and people for whom he was responsible. The priest would estimate the value and the person would donate to the sanctuary the money it was found to be worth. A poor person could still have this privilege, because the priest made the valuation according to his ability (27:8). There were a certain more than females, probably because of being physically stronger. The highest valuation was put upon those in the prime of life (between ages twenty to sixty), for they were more able and therefore obliged to do more in the service of the Lord.

Houses and fields could be dedicated to the Lord as well. It seems that a house would be given over to the priests to be sold and the proceeds given to the Lord’s work. Only part of a field of one’s possession (land allotted to his family from the first division of Canaan) could be dedicated to God (27:16), for the Lord did not want to see an overly zealous person cause the ruin of his whole family. The value of the field was estimated according to the cost to plant it until the next year of Jubilee (27:17-18), when the law required it to be returned to the original family (27:21).

The law was flexible and humane, for under certain conditions it allowed for the discharge of a vow of something consecrated unto the Lord. The consecrated thing could be redeemed, or bought back, by paying the price it was valued at plus an additional twenty percent penalty. This penalty would serve as an extra caution to encourage only serious vows and to protect the sanctity of the vow, for once a solemn vows made before witnesses, great care was to be taken that it be kept. In the New Testament, there are no such stipulations concerning vows made to God; however, it is made clear that a promise to God is a serious thing which is expected to be honored, be it the consecration of oneself to God, or a baptismal or marriage vow.

It appears that under a different type of vow, a person could “devote” things to God (27:28). The Hebrew word means the irrevocable giving over of something to the Lord. In such instances, it became most holy and wholly the Lord’s. Verse 29 is somewhat unclear, but “under the ban”, which are doomed or “devoted to destruction” (NIV). The Hebrew meaning implies the irrevocable giving over of a person or thing to the Lord by totally destroying them. It seems most probable that the ban came as a result of the Lord’s direct instructions, or the decision of all the congregation or elders of Israel, like the destruction of their enemies (e.g. the city of Jericho, Joshua 6:17; the Amalekites, 1 Sam.15:20).

Finally, before the book of Leviticus closes, the Israelites were reminded that "all the tithe of the land" belonged to the Lord (27:30) and was to be brought to the priests. To refuse to pay the tithe was, and still is, robbing God (Mal.3:8). There were various kinds of tithes, but here we see stressed the tithe of the produce of the land. Since God is the true owner (Lev.25:23), it is regarded as His due offering, expressing thanks for all His blessings. Believers today should not give any less to God than those in the Old Covenant. We also are to honor the Lord with our possessions (Prove.3:9) and give our tithes and offerings where we receive spiritual food so that the Lord's ministers may be supported, and to aid in the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 9:11, 14; 16:2; Gal.6:6, 10).

Prayer

Almighty God, we give ourselves to You. Keep us faithful in giving back to You that minimum which we owe, the tithe, and also help us to be liberal and generous givers of offerings over and above our tithes.