

April 26

Scriptures: Read Leviticus 25

Key Verse: “And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants.” (Leviticus 25:10a)

Overview

This chapter is related to Leviticus 23 in giving regulations concerning the consecrated times of year. It extends the principle of the Sabbath, as one day in seven. To a Sabbath rest of the land every seventh year, and an additional Sabbath on the fiftieth or Jubilee year. During these years no land was to be cultivated in any manner, meaning there was to be no sowing, reaping, pruning of vines, or gathering of fruit. God, in His great wisdom, saw to it that the land had one year in every seven, and two years in a row every forty-ninth and fiftieth year, that it might be replenished and regain optimum fertility.

This legislation is an excellent agricultural and ecological practice in the conservation of natural resources. All the land is the Lord's, and He who is its creator knows what is best for it. This practice makes it clear to the Israelites that God is the owner of the land, and in a sense they are but tenants who were to follow His instructions concerning His land (25:23). If they would observe these years as God legislated, He would grant them the conditional promises: “you will dwell in the land in safety” (25:18), “the land will yield its fruit” and “you will eat your fill” (25:19), and finally, He promised to bless them in the sixth year with great abundance so they would have plenty for the seventh and even more than enough for the year of Jubilee (25:21).

As well as these years providing a rest for the land, they were also years when all debts among fellow Israelites were to be cancelled and all Hebrew slaves to be freed (Deut.15:1-15). The basic theme for these years of rest is liberation for that which was bound. The year of Jubilee was announced by joyous and loud trumpet blasts from the ram's horn every fiftieth year at the close of the Day of Atonement. At this point, they had just received divine freedom from their sin, and so it was a time to rejoice. They were to “proclaim liberty throughout all the land” (25:10). It was to remind them that they had once been slaves in Egypt, but God had miraculously set them free and redeemed them. With the agreement of entering into the covenant relationship with Him, they now became bound to God and only free to serve Him. Also, in the year of Jubilee, all land that had been sold during the course of the previous fifty years was to be returned to the original owner of inheritance (25:10). By this they were to learn that spiritual wealth and obedience to God was more important than material possessions.

These years may be said to symbolize the spiritual rest and liberation from the power of sin which all believers receive when they come to Jesus Christ (John 8:35-36; bGal.5:1). They are enabled and encouraged to learn to live by faith, depending totally upon God (Gal.2:20). A year free from responsibilities of the usual toil was not meant to make them lazy, but to give them opportunity to devote more time to the Lord, learning His Law and trusting in Him.

Observing these years would teach them to be generous and not forget the needs of the poverty stricken, but to share in the bounty of God's blessings. Whatever grew of its own accord was not

to be gathered in the usual manner. No one in particular was to put any claim on it, but all were free to eat that which went from hand to mouth. In such a way it served as provision for the poor, the servants, and the strangers in the land (25:5-7). We also find here a practical application of loving one's neighbor as oneself, for within the covenant community, no one was allowed to go hungry and those who were able were to lend to the poor without charging any interest (25:35-36). This, as well as the legislation demanding proper treatment of slaves, would ensure that the poor were not exploited, but rather treated with human dignity (25:43).

We were once enslaved to sin, but Jesus has become our kinsman redeemer who does a better work than those friends who paid the price to redeem their kin from bondage (25:49-49). He paid with His very life to redeem us. Jesus may have referred to that year in His explanation of the purpose for His coming. He brings true liberty to the oppressed and teaches the true meaning of the "acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19, 21).

Prayer

Lord, Your truth is that "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Help us by the power of Jesus' Name today and every day "to proclaim deliverance to the captives and to set at liberty them that are bruised."