

15. This land is God's land

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The battle for the spiritual land still wages fiercely in the hearts of people all over the world. What am I talking about? The enemy of God, satan, is fighting and will fight to his last moment to deceive the hearts of as many people as he can. He does not care about actual real estate lands, but the hearts, the souls and the spirits of people. He knows that whenever an unbeliever dies without Jesus in his or her heart, it hurts our God.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

The focus in chapters 25-26 is about the land of Israel. As a matter of fact, the word 'land' was used 39 times in these two chapters. But I believe that the Lord has far more spiritual instructions than a simple real estate law.

As the new occupants of the Promised Land, the Israelites had to understand a few basic principles from the Lord.

- 1) God owned all the land.
- 2) God had every right to dispose of it as He saw fit.
- 3) God owned the people of Israel, because He redeemed them out of Egyptian bondage.
- 4) Since they belonged to Him, they were to treat one another as brothers and sisters and not take advantage of one another.
- 5) The people of Israel had to live by faith in Him, His Word and His promises.

Come to think of it, these five principles are still true for all the believers of Jesus Christ as well.

- 1) God owns the whole universe including earth.
- 2) God has every right to dispose of it as He sees fit.
- 3) God owns the born-again believers, because He redeemed them out of satan's bondage through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- 4) Since they belong to Him, they are to treat one another as brothers and sisters and not take advantage of one another.
- 5) The born-again believers have to live by faith in Him, His Word and His promises.

A. SABBATH YEAR

Leviticus 25:1-7 And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD. 3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; 4 but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. 5 What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. 6 And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, 7 for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food.'

In chapter 23, when we studied the Jewish Calendar, we noticed that it was based on a series of seven. Of course you all remember that seven represent 'completeness', not 'perfection' in all occasions, if you will.

During the time of creation of the universe, God rested on the seventh day. Not because He needed rest, but because He completed His creation. He showed it as an example for us and wanted His people to spend a day in the worship of Him and rest.

The seventh day is for man, and the seventh year is for the land. Sabbath means "rest". In its ultimate meaning it refers to the rest of redemption.

Hebrews 4:9-11 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. 11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

During the Sabbath Year, everyone including the field and farm animals rested. Then what would they eat? Whatever the land produced naturally without organized agricultural effort.

Leviticus 25:18-22 'So you shall observe My statutes and keep My judgments, and perform them; and you will dwell in the land in safety. 19 Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill, and dwell there in safety. 20 'And if you say, "What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?" 21 Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years. 22 And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat of the old harvest.

Unfortunately, we have no biblical evidence that the Jews ever celebrated the Sabbath Year. In fact, the Bible tells us otherwise. According to 2 Chronicles 36:21, the Lord allowed the Babylonians to invade Israel and exile all the people out of the country so that the land rested seventy years since they didn't keep the Sabbath Year for over 490 years.

It's a basic principle of life that whatever we rob from God, we can never keep and enjoy ourselves. Some people choose to ignore it and they face consequences all the time.

B. THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Leviticus 25:8-17 'And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. 9 Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. 10 And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. 11 That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. 12 For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field. 13 'In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. 14 And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another. 15 According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbor, and according to the number of years of crops he shall sell to you. 16 According to the multitude of years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewer number of years you shall dimin-

ish its price; for he sells to you according to the number of the years of the crops. 17 Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 25:23-24 'The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me. 24 And in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption of the land.

The Hebrew word for 'jubilee' is 'yobel' and it means 'blowing of ram's horn'. When we studied chapter 23, Gary Hurley asked me if it was a ram's horn they blew for the trumpet. I said, "It was a silver trumpet." I was wrong because during the time of the Feast of Trumpet they blew a ram's horn to announce the new year Rosh Hashanah. Silver Trumpets were for different occasions.

Numbers 10:2 Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps.

Every fiftieth year, at the close of the celebration of the Day of Atonement, the horns were blown again to announce that the Year of Jubilee had begun.

It would require a great deal of faith for the people to celebrate this special year, because the previous year – the forty-ninth – would have been a Sabbath year when the fields, vineyards, and orchards would not have been cultivated. The Jews had to trust God to provide for them for the forty-ninth and fiftieth years, and also during the fifty-first year while they waited for the harvest. God certainly wouldn't fail them. But there's no evidence in Scripture that the nation of Israel ever celebrated the Year of Jubilee according to God's way.

Not only that, the Israelites were to repent of their sins, release their slaves or return the land to its original owners during the Year of Jubilee.

Jubilee provided a new beginning for the released slaves and the landowners, and this kept poverty and inequality to a minimum. The people were not to oppress one another, but to remember that the land was God's and they were only His tenants.

C. THE PROMISED MESSIANIC KINGDOM

Isaiah 61:1-3 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, 3 to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

The Prophet Isaiah saw in the Year of Jubilee a picture of the promised messianic kingdom when the Lord would release His people and restore them to their land and bless them abundantly.

Jesus used this Isaiah passage as the text for the sermon He preached in the synagogue in Nazareth in Luke 4, and He applied it to the "acceptable year of the Lord" that He was inaugurating by His death and resurrection.

Like the announcement of the Year of Jubilee, the Gospel is good news to the poor, because their debts have been paid and are completely forgiven. All they need to do

is receive the Savior and rejoice in a new beginning. Just as the debtors and slaves were set free to enjoy Jubilee, so sinners are set free when they trust the Lord to save them. Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is a "Jubilee" experience, because it restores broken families and lost blessings and brings "times of refreshing" from the Lord.

D. THE REDEMPTION BY THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER

From v25-55, the Lord explained to Moses about the redemption of land, house and the poor that underlines the redemption through Jesus Christ that fulfilled what God said in the Garden of Eden.

If a poor Jew had to sell himself or his property in order to stay alive, he didn't have to wait until the Year of Jubilee to regain either his property or his freedom. At any time, a kinsman who was willing and able to pay the price could redeem him or his land. However, there were three qualifications that had to be complied with.

1) The redeemer has to be a relative of the one who sold the land, house or himself.

This very law was practiced in the Book of Ruth. Boaz redeemed the land that was formerly belonged to Naomi's husband as well as Ruth when the nearest relative chose not to do.

The Kinsman-Redeemer is a picture of Jesus starting from the Garden of Eden. God, in His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge, knew that the man was going to sin.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

In other words, the Seed who was Jesus would come from the descendent of Eve. Jesus met the first qualification.

For a side note, the v15 of Genesis 3 said, "her Seed". This shows the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. Generally a woman does not have a seed, she has an ovum, which is fertilized by a man's seed. This only can be done by God, no one else.

2) The redeemer has to have enough wealth to purchase it back.

To purchase back what Adam sold to satan by committing sins against the Lord, the Kinsman-Redeemer must be sinless. No human being could do it, because we all are born with sinful nature and continuously sin against the Lord as long as we have these human bodies. It means that we are spiritually bankrupt before Jesus came into our hearts. There was only one person who was completely sinless – Jesus Christ. He met the second qualification.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

3) The redeemer has to have a willingness to purchase it back.

No one could force the Kinsman-Redeemer to buy the land, house or person back from the debtor. The Redeemer should do it in his own willingness. There are many verses in the Gospels that Jesus made it very clear to us that He came to die for our sins so that we may have eternal life in His own willingness. The Lord met the third qualification.

When Adam sinned, he gave up the right of the ownership, the title deed of this earth as well. So when satan claimed that he was god of this earth during the time of the 40 day temptations against Jesus in the wilderness, it was true for a change.

Revelation 5:1-7 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. 4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. 5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." 6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

Here we find the Lamb of God who is Jesus, taking the title deed of the earth back from the Father. In ancient Israel, when there was a real estate transaction, they would make two sets of identical title deeds. As they rolled the scrolls, they put seven seals on the seal. The owner gets to keep one and they keep the other in the temple. Remember, the tabernacle/temple on earth is a copy of the heavenly temple.

Hebrews 8:4-5 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

Generally, an Israeli title deed would be written only on the smooth side and sealed with a single seal. But if the owner became unable to meet his financial obligations, he would have to relinquish his title deed – upon the backside of which would be written his debts and upon which would be placed seven seals. If at any time during the ensuing seven years he could pay off his debts, the seals would be broken and the title deed returned.

Remember the emphasis is not on the content of the scroll, but on the One who is worthy to take and open it. Many great heroes and villains are willing, but they are not worthy. It has to be the one who is not only willing, but also sinless, willing and human. I believe that it narrows down very much the qualification of the person who can open the scroll – the Lamb of God, Jesus.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Whatever we rob from God, we can never keep and enjoy for ourselves.

2) Jesus is worthy in every aspect to receive our worship and praise. There is none like Him.