



FEED MY SHEEP

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The Jubilee Laws, Part 3

We are continuing our study of God's sabbath laws with our primary focus on the seventh year sabbath and, in the past two issues, on the laws of jubilee. Although there are certainly "religious" aspects, and most assuredly, there is prophetic significance to these laws; in their literal application, they are essentially part of God's economic system.

In this issue we will continue our study of God's laws of jubilee by comparing and contrasting our present economic system to God's system. Implementing the laws of jubilee will be a major part of instituting God's kingdom on earth—the Utopia man has yearned for through the millennia.

In God's perfected system, the natural world will be in harmony and order. The desires of the New Agers for harmony with "Mother Earth" will find expression, but only under the rulership of Jesus Christ and the laws He gave us (especially and including the laws of jubilee). At that time, the natural world will know no drought or other major weather disasters. There will be years of plenty, followed by years of plenty, followed by years of plenty. Everyone will prosper and benefit under God's perfect economy. If only we would try it. Ancient Israel never did implement the jubilee laws, nor has any society since then applied God's laws *in toto*. But we believe that day is coming soon.

The laws of land redemption under the jubilee (see previous issue of FMS) were designed by God to prevent a landed aristocracy—meaning the buildup of land holdings by individuals, groups, cartels, corporations, trusts, etc. Here in America, our Constitution forbade titles of nobility (e.g., baron, dukes, earls, etc.

such as found in the British system), but there is certainly a landed aristocracy in this country—and it is not the family farmers. Listen to how Isaiah excoriated the people in ancient Israel for land monopolies.

KJV Isaiah 5:8 Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they [the monopolists] may be placed [remain] alone in the midst of the earth!

Is it any different today? Drive through any city, any countryside, any state in America and notice the fences which denote the boundaries between properties. Then ask yourself: Who really owns field after field after field? Or in the cities, who owns townhouse after suburban home after condominium? Who owns the vast majority of them? The banks and mortgage companies do. The owners of those organizations are the landed aristocracy and they are in violation of Isaiah 5:8.

But someone will claim that he owns his property "free and clear" because he paid off a 20 or 30 year mortgage. But the truth is that as long as there are property taxes, he does not own it free and clear. And if he takes issue with that statement, let him get in arrears on his property taxes and then he will see how free and clear his ownership really is! As long as someone else (including the government) has a claim on "your" property (for a mortgage, taxes or otherwise), then it is not owned free and clear. Via the property tax, the "owner" is, in essence, paying rent to the government. God's law does not allow for property taxes!

Because no society has ever implemented God's jubilee laws, it is no surprise then that throughout history, there has almost always been a landed aristocracy. Our ancestors in Europe during the Middle Ages were either on one side or the other. Perhaps as many as 97 percent of our ancestors were serfs, while a mere three percent had ancestors who were lords of the manors and, generally, the oppressors of the serfs.

The feudal system disguised

Although we have a very high standard of living today with many wonderful conveniences and labor-saving devices, the fact is that the vast majority of the American people are so debt-ridden that we are essentially a feudal society. We are modern serfs laboring for the new "lords of the manor," the corporate "plantation," the moneylenders, and of course, for Uncle Sam himself.

Because we have such a high standard of living and we have a plethora of entertainment media (designed to keep the serfs preoccupied with trivial and banal pursuits¹), it is difficult to convince the average American that he is indeed a modern serf. Leaving the issue of home mortgage debt, auto loans, credit card debt, etc. aside for the moment; just consider the level of taxation on the average American worker.

What he sees as he glances at his paycheck stub is the amount of federal, state, and local income taxes removed from his pay before he even has it in his pocket. This is followed by deductions for Social Security, perhaps union dues, and perhaps other taxing authority deductions from his paycheck. This is bad enough, but the unseen and generally unthought-about taxes raise the government-legalized theft to well over 50 percent. It is our studied opinion that probably closer to 75 percent of our earnings goes to taxes! "Preposterous!" say our fellow serfs. But consider the following exercise.

Think about the price of a loaf of bread as representative of all food products. Of course, at this point in time, the supermarket price is well over a dollar—actually around two bucks in many areas of the country. But let's use the one dollar figure for the sake of easy percentages. Let's trace the production of a single loaf of bread. Begin with the farmer.

He pays property taxes on his farm, on his trac-

tors and other equipment. He pays taxes on the wheat seed.² He pays taxes on the fuel to run the tractor. He pays matching social security taxes and unemployment taxes and workman's compensation taxes for any employees he might have to help run the farm. He is a surrogate tax collector for various governmental authorities, withholding out of the paychecks of his employees.

In order to stay in business, he must include all these taxing costs of doing business into what he gets for a bushel of wheat. Unfortunately, the farmer has little control over what price he can get per bushel. Is it any wonder then that family farms are disappearing at an alarming pace every year and they are being swallowed up by, and become part of larger, corporate farms? It's Isaiah 5:8 all over again.

After months of arduous labor, the farmer harvests the wheat and takes it to the grain elevator in town where the taxing cycle begins all over again. Taxes on his land, buildings and equipment; taxes on his employees; taxes on his profits, etc. And he, too, figures all these taxes into the cost of the wheat which is now transported to the milling company. The tax cycle applies to the trucking company as well and is added to the cost of the wheat as it arrives at the mill.

The miller adds all his tax costs into the price of the flour as it is trucked to the baking company. Of course, the bakery has his taxes on land, building and equipment, utilities, employees and on his profits; all to be figured into the cost of a loaf of bread as it once more is transported to the second last link in the chain: the local supermarket. The grocer also must include in the price of the loaf of bread all his proportionate tax costs and then make a smidgeon of a profit on the loaf. (Supermarkets operate on extremely small margins—in the one percent range, we are told.)

In many states and localities, food is also taxed to the consumer at the checkout lane. So the next time you buy a loaf of bread and see that price, remember all the taxes figured into it—from the farmer all the way up the line and into your shopping cart. It is close to 75 percent taxes (or \$1.50 in hidden taxes on a \$2 loaf of bread!), according to studies that have been done. Now factor that across the board for *all* your food purchases! Then realize that it doesn't just apply to food; it applies to all consumer products!

Astonishing as it is, the essential truth of the

process of taxes-added cannot be denied; nor that the cost of consumer products is very heavily burdened with taxes. One need not be an Alan Greenspan to understand this. Hence our contention that we are indeed “serfs on the manor” in a modern feudal system. And the peculiar thing is that most Americans think they are free! From the viewpoint of the “lords,” this is the best type of bondage to put on people. It’s much tidier than a police state. There is practically no resistance or rebellion on the part of the serfs. In fact, even those who simply try to point out these facts are oftentimes called “kooks,” or even unpatriotic. “What?! Are you against our free enterprise system, you nutcase!”

What a brilliant system of slavery! It is so ingenious that the slaves don’t even realize that they are slaves. More bread and circuses for them! This fact that the populace is unaware of their own captivity is why the Bible calls this system of end-time economic bondage “Mystery, Babylon” (Revelation 17:5). The ancient empire of Babylon placed the ancient Israelites into a similar bondage and captivity for 70 years—except that the Israelites then were physically deported to the regions in and around Babylon, so that they had no illusions that they had been conquered and enslaved.

Nonetheless, despite the illusory comforts of “Mystery, Babylon,” it is an oppressive economic system. These great inequities of landed monopolies, of lords and serfs, result from our not following God’s laws, most prominently His jubilee laws for the land. Some may object to calling our system today a feudal system. Some may choose to call it socialism, fascism, even communism, corporate state capitalism, or even free enterprise (which, as we experience it today, is hardly *free* enterprise at all).

But if we were to apply God’s jubilee laws, such a feudal system could not exist. God is big on *private* property rights, and not just for the “lords,” the privileged few. God favors “liberty for all” and His Word declares that such private property and liberty will be enjoyed by all in his kingdom (Micah 4:4 *et alia*).

The jubilee and usury

At this point, we need to refresh some ideas we first brought out in FMS #32 (July 2001). We suggest readers re-read the entire issue. Along with the jubilee laws for land redemption, another linchpin law in

God’s economic system is His prohibition against charging usury in any form to brethren. That is a subject capable of lengthy exposition, but here we will limit ourselves to the immediate context of the jubilee laws. Despite the attempts of economics professors and deceived clergymen to claim that usury means “excessive” interest, the Bible is very clear that usury is *any* interest, period!

In our primary jubilee text (Leviticus 25), we find this:

35 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: *yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.*

36 Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.

Do not be confused by the terms “stranger” and “sojourner” in v. 35. They must be understood by their context. In general, they can refer to either an Israelite or a non-Israelite. In this context, it must be referring to Israelites because the first line makes it clear that this poor man is a brother. Though many Christians today often speak of another person (regardless of their ancestry) as a Christian “brother,” such was not the case in the Old Testament. A brother referred to someone of the same family, clan, tribe or nation (i.e., ethnic group). Hence, the “brother” in v. 35 is an Israelite. However, he is called a *stranger* in this context because he is dwelling in the tribal territory of another Israelite clan or tribe. If he were to become poor, his neighbors are obligated by God’s law to assist him freely and without charging any interest (usury).

The next statute covers the situation where the brother has become so poverty stricken that he must give up much of his own freedom in order to pay his debts and provide for his family.

Leviticus 25:39 And if thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant:

A bondservant is a slave (*Black’s Law Dictionary*). Nevertheless, if an Israelite sells himself to another, although technically he is a slave, he is not to be

treated as a slave...

40 But as an hired servant [employee], and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubile:

If the reader recalls, in FMS #32 we noted that Bible scholars have debated for centuries concerning whether or not debts were cancelled *completely* in the seventh year, or whether payments were merely suspended for that year and then resumed in the eighth year. We hold to the latter interpretation and our primary reason is found in vv. 39 and 40 above. It deals with the case of a man in such poverty that he has to sell himself into bondage. His master (creditor) is admonished to treat the man as an employee, not as a slave.

But the clincher is that the debtor shall serve “unto the year of jubile.” In other words, the release of servants in the seventh year (Exodus 21:2) was a temporary suspension. It was a seventh year sabbath (i.e., “rest” from usual labors.) The bondservant enjoyed a year’s “vacation;” not that he would be idle for 12 months, but it would free him up to do things to better his position and possibly lead to an earlier payoff of his debt. But if he were unable to ever pay off his debt, every man was set free in the 50th year—the year of jubilee.

Leviticus 25:41 And then [in the year of jubilee] shall he depart from thee [the master/creditor], both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.

Although God, as Creator, owns all the earth and everyone on it; God asserts a special relationship with the children of Israel. They are His peculiar and specially prized possession.

42 For they *are* my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen [slaves].

43 Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy God.

In v. 43, the word “servants” and the word “bondmen” are the same in Hebrew. Yahweh redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt, and therefore all Israelites became *His* bondservants (slaves). Since even a poverty stricken Israelite is a bondservant of

God, God charges human masters to treat them as hired servants and not to rule over them harshly.

The laws which we have been discussing direct us to assist the poor of our kinsmen. We are to never charge interest to our Israelite kinsmen. Any fellow Israelite who becomes indebted to us, we are to treat kindly and properly and at the jubilee, he is to be forgiven the remaining debt and set free. *No matter how much he still owes, he goes out free!* This has awesome implications from the “type and shadow” prophetic perspective which we shall undertake to expound in due time. As a strong hint, though, remember that all sin is considered as debt.

The treatment of non-Israelites is different unless they have placed themselves under the Covenant. Today, “under the Covenant” means that they would be Christian believers and therefore agree to abide by God’s laws. In that case, we are to treat them as our brother. This is not to say that they are our brothers nationally (ethnically), physically, genetically; but we are to treat them *as though* they were. In theological terms, “brotherhood” is *imputed* to them.

However, if they are heathen, that is, if they are non-Israelites and have not placed themselves under the (New) Covenant by faith; i.e., they are not Christians, then God provides and directs His people to deal with them differently. That will be the subject of our next issue. It concerns slavery. God has laws for slavery and they fall under the jubilee laws.

ENDNOTES

1. Since I was not 100% certain that “banal” meant what I thought it meant, I decided to look it up. It means “lacking originality, freshness, or novelty: trite.” But imagine my surprise to find that its origin is from the Middle French and it meant “of compulsory feudal service”!!

2. What the farmer buys from the large seed companies is hybrid seed. God has laws forbidding the use of hybrid seed, but that’s another study in itself.

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of James W. Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts may be sent to P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.