



FEED MY SHEEP

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The Jubilee Laws, Part 5: Liability

Our studies of the laws of jubilee now brings us to its culmination which is found in the last two verses of Leviticus, chapter 25. Previously, we saw various provisions made for the redemption of a man who had been sold into slavery to pay off his debts. If he were able, he could redeem himself. Or some close relative could redeem him, in which case, he then had to serve his redeemer. The obvious advantage is that the relative would treat him very kindly, whereas a stranger (non-relative) might not be so inclined. But if he could neither redeem himself, nor was he redeemed by a relative, he had this “catch all” (in more ways than one; it’s a pun¹) provision of the law to hope and rest assured in.

Leviticus 25:54 And if he be not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the year of jubile, both he, and his children with him.

The reason God gives for this provision is simply that men do not belong to other men. God claims ownership over all and especially over his chosen servant people, Israel.

55 For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am Yahweh your God.

One could even replace “brought forth out of the land of Egypt” with “bought out of the land of Egypt” because Yahweh bought Israel—He redeemed her with the blood of Egypt’s firstborn sons. This was for a release from *physical* bondage. Later, He would redeem her with His own blood to release her from *spiritual* bondage to the end that all might live eternally and without the corruption of sin. But we are getting

slightly ahead of ourselves—back to the literal provisions of the jubilee law.

What happens then in the fiftieth year when a man and his family are released from bondage? Are they thrown out into the streets to be homeless folk? Absolutely not! As verse 10 of this chapter stipulates, they return to their own ancestral estate which had been lost to them at some point in the previous 49 years. Their land inheritance is now restored to them free and clear, no strings attached—not even property taxes! There are no such taxes in God’s economic system. The man and his family now have property from which to produce a living and they have *no debt whatsoever*. Whatever the causes for their previous servitude, it is now erased. What a liberation!

God’s law is progressive and multi-leveled

As we commenced this series, we titled the first two installments “The Unknown Sabbath Laws.” And truly the seventh year and jubilee year are virtually unknown in America, even among long-time churchgoers. They recognize the seventh day sabbath (most of them observing Sunday)² which is the God-ordained rest from labors for the purpose of maintaining the health and welfare of both men and beasts. It is a day when man’s physical body is refreshed and renewed. Men (and women) who ignore God’s command to rest one day in seven eventually discover that their body and/or mind begin to deteriorate far more rapidly and far earlier than one would expect in the normal aging process. This is the curse of the law. Obedience to the law brings blessings; disobedience brings curses.

The seventh year sabbath is the God-ordained rest for the land. It labors for six years bringing forth fruit for the service of man. For its optimal production, God decreed that it should be given every seventh year in which to be refreshed and renewed. When a society chooses to ignore this sabbath law, the results are exactly the same; it just takes longer to become evident. The curse comes into play. The soil deteriorates and man's health along with it. But man thinks he knows better and can do an "end run" around God's law.

Thus, man plants hybrid seeds to increase production. Man blankets the soil with artificial fertilizers to try to draw more nutrition out of a depleted topsoil. Worse, man then sprays both soil and plants with chemical pesticides which inevitably end up in our food, causing untold health problems. Moreover, the chemicals on the soil seep through to the water table and run off the fields into streams and lakes, and thus the curse cascades throughout the entire ecosystem.

The ancient Israelites of the Judah kingdom ignored the seventh year sabbath for 490 years (i.e., they failed to observe 70 sabbath years) and so God sent them into captivity in a foreign land for 70 years, both as disciplinary punishment and so that the soil of Palestine could have its rest.

2 Chronicles 36: 20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

21 To fulfil the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

The progressive nature or multi-tiered structure of God's law is evident. The seventh *day* sabbath is a time of rest, refreshment and regeneration for man's physical body. The seventh *year* sabbath is a period of rest, refreshment and regeneration for the soil and ecosystem. The 49th year is another seventh year sabbath, but commencing on the tenth day of the seventh month of the that year, the year of jubilee is proclaimed.

For the next twelve months, this *great sabbath* is a period of refreshment and regeneration for society and its other "ecosystem," its economic system. The

jubilee is the periodic "reset" for the benefit of the whole nation. All the dials are reset to zero. Debts are cancelled. Slaves are set free. Every man returns to his promised land inheritance.

Obedience to God's laws, especially including the jubilee laws, will produce the best possible society that mortal man can have. Yes, even the constitutional republic created by our Founding Fathers will pale in comparison. That republic is virtually gone at this point, but we believe that the best man can produce must die before God's system can come forth. We do not anticipate a return to the constitutional republic; we eagerly await and prepare for something better—the Utopia visionaries have dreamed of, the system which God's Word calls "the kingdom of heaven." It is to come on the earth. It will have the sabbath laws—all of them—as part of its constitution.

Along with God's laws for a just money system, the jubilee laws will prevent the rise of another feudal society. In a feudal society, a few people own all the land (read: wealth) while the vast majority (because they are landless) are in some degree of servitude to the few. This is the case in America today, as we pointed out previously, although it is not called "feudal." But with the great reset occurring every 49th year, every man possesses land (wealth) and no scheming or evil-minded men can obtain power over the masses.

There is a story in the Bible which occurs roughly near the midpoint of that 490-year period during which neither the Kingdom of Israel, nor the Kingdom of Judah applied the laws of jubilee. Had these laws been in operation, the tragic injustice to Naboth probably would not have occurred. It is a case of an evil-minded man, who happened to be "the government," assisted by his scheming wife, conspiring to steal a man's inheritance.

1 Kings 21:1 And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, Yahweh forbid it

me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? ...

...And the story goes on to relate how Jezebel caused Naboth to be falsely charged and put to death, after which she and Ahab confiscated (stole) his family property. But notice how even though the law of jubilee had never been implemented in all those years, the people still clung to the righteous concept of a family's right to their property. Biblical law links the concepts of family and their ownership (stewardship under God) of property as the basis for liberty. Thus, socialists and Marxists who seek the abolition of private property also seek the abolition of the family.

Grace, forgiveness and limited liability

Let us now examine the jubilee culmination in more detail. The essence of the jubilee principle is in v. 54 (p. 1). It is the principle of *grace* and *forgiveness*. It is grace because there is nothing the debtor/slave can do to effect or earn his own release at that point. He has not been able to redeem himself, nor has any relative stepped forward to pay his debt for him. But God, by His mercy and grace, provides unmerited favor. He sovereignly decrees that in such cases, there shall be a general amnesty (forgiveness) and total cancellation of all debts at the jubilee.

Therefore, *God has set the limit of a man's liability to debt*. This is why the jubilee is also essentially a law of limited liability. It is easy to see how the limited liability aspect of the jubilee would be applied to a debtor in the economic realm of society, but let us make the following analogy to segue to a higher level application of the jubilee laws.

Most of us have some understanding of the term "limited liability" as it applies to our modern automobile insurance practices. If I run into someone else's car and damage it as well as my own vehicle, my liability is limited according to the terms of the insurance policy that I possess.

For example, if I drive an old Chevrolet and run into a brand new Rolls Royce that costs \$100,000 and I "totaled" the Rolls while doing "only" \$4,000 damage to my old Chevy, there would be damage in the amount of \$104,000. If my insurance policy has a \$300 deductible, then what am I liable for? Answer: \$300.³ The point is that my liability for the debt is *limited*. In contrast, the insurance company is liable both for *restoring* the Rolls (by *replacement* of the entire vehicle in this case, since it was totaled) and for restoring my old Chevrolet. From my perspective, it is as though I had been granted *forgiveness of a debt* of \$103,700 (\$104,000 minus the \$300 deductible).

The jubilee as a type

Now let us apply the jubilee principles on a higher level and discover how the jubilee is prophetic of a greater fulfillment in many (no doubt, all) of its aspects. We will limit ourselves to only two in this monograph. Let us look first at the redemption aspect of the jubilee. Jesus is the great Kinsman-Redeemer. He redeemed us from the bondage of sin, and ultimately from its penalty: death. The jubilee principle holds that when a redeemer pays the creditor the redemption price, the debtor then serves the kinsman-redeemer. That then, is why we find a host of passages in the New Testament admonishing believers to *serve* our Lord. Just to cite two examples:

1 Corinthians 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

Rom. 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Since Jesus is our Kinsman, he is very inclined to treat us with the utmost kindness and love, unlike our previous master, sin and death. Hence, Jesus tells us to take upon ourselves His yoke, for it is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). Man will have a yoke. Man will serve one Master or the other. We are not independent, autonomous beings. We owe service to our Creator-Redeemer.

For our second example of the jubilee as a type, we turn to the epistle to the Hebrews. In the 3rd and 4th chapters, the writer speaks constantly of entering into the "rest" of God. First, the writer gives the Old Testament example where many of the Israelites in the wilderness were not able to enter into God's rest due

to hardness of heart and unbelief.

The metaphor of “rest” was a reference to entry into the literal Promised Land of Canaan. The writer then goes on to say that there is a “rest” for us (who live in New Testament times) which we should strive to enter into. It is another rest, of which the Promised Land of Canaan was merely a type and a shadow. The fact that this “rest” was not brought at the first coming of Christ is evident in these verses:

Hebrews 4: 8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

What is this rest? It is the same thing portrayed typically (i.e., as types and shadows) in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. It is the entrance by the believer into the Holy of Holies which signifies crossing the threshold from a sinning, mortal condition to the time when the believer is awarded an immortal body with no more capability of falling into corruptibility through sin.

As the writer of Hebrews spoke of the Israelites entering the old Promised Land as entering into “rest,” so this great sabbath “rest” is no less than our entry into immortal bodies. For we are made of the dust (soil, earth, land) and our ultimate Promised “Land” is a flesh and bone body (as was the Savior’s after His resurrection) in which we will dwell eternally.

Seeing that the sabbath is a type of a better “rest” to come, it follows that the highest level of the sabbath laws, the jubilee, is also a type and shadow of something greater than its literal application. Keeping in mind the analogy of the auto insurance, we can all rejoice in the fact that when it comes to salvation, God is our insurer and there is no deductible. Furthermore, He has paid all the premiums! That is to say, there is no part of our salvation that we can pay anything toward. The law of jubilee is God’s law of grace, forgiveness and limited liability. God not only wrote the law, but He made Himself the surety (the insurance company) for all His creation (Romans 8:19-23 *et al.*).

When we recognize that *all sin is reckoned as a debt*,⁴ the ultimate meaning of the jubilee begins to dawn in our hearts. For then we are not just talking

about the financial debt of one man to another which is forgiven and wiped out by God’s gracious jubilee law, we are talking about all the sins of man against God being completely forgiven and ***that there is a limit to the liability of man for his sins!*** One of the most immediate and obvious implications of this is that no man’s sins of a 70-year or 120-year or even 930-year (Adam’s) lifetime can *ever* merit an eternal punishment for those sins! The doctrine of *the eternal, burning hellfire is thereby seen for the heinous fraud that it is.*

Other ramifications of the application of the jubilee on the higher level are beyond the scope of this brief monograph series, but we have given a multitude of those ramifications and implications in great detail in the series of Bible studies on tape in our tape album numbers A-101, A-102, A-103 & A-104. (See the God’s Plan for Man syllabus page or our tape catalog pages.) The word *jubilee* is derived from the Hebrew *yobel* which initially meant simply “a ram’s horn.” Later it came to signify “a trumpet,” as sounded to proclaim wonderful news evoking jubilation and rejoicing.

If the reader finds great cause for jubilation in the simple realization that there is no eternal, burning hell; then he will find cause for many magnitudes of greater rejoicing when he comprehends the much greater applications of the laws of jubilee as set forth in the tape series. Give God the glory, for His mercy endureth forever!

ENDNOTES

1. The jubilee law “catches all,” i.e., everybody is set free.
2. As we have stated before, our purpose here is not to debate which day is the sabbath.
3. For the sake of illustration, we ignore the inevitable rise in insurance premiums which I would be asked to pay due to the accident.
4. See Matthew 6:9-15 where “debt” and “trespasses” are equated and both signify “sin.”

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