

Remembering with Joy

Leviticus 25:1-12
SS Lesson for 05/20/2018

Devotional Scripture: Luke 4:16-21

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines the instructions and regulations of the Year of Jubilee and how we can benefit from it by **Remembering with Joy** how God provided it to the Israelites. The **study's aim** is to realize it is the Lord's way of life for us to rejoice in His possession and provision. The **study's application** is to remember daily that Jesus Christ has freed us from bondage and servitude to this world.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Lev 25:10

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.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

25:1-7. Much as people were to work six days and then rest on the **Sabbath**, so **the land** on which they lived was to be worked **for six years** (v. 3) and then allowed to **rest on the seventh** or sabbatical **year** (v. 4). No sowing, pruning, reaping, or harvesting was to be done during that seventh year (vv. 4-5). Any spontaneous yield of **the land** could be consumed for **food** by anyone (not just the owner), but there was to be no organized harvest and no selling of the produce to others (vv. 6-7; cf. Ex. 23:11). So for one-seventh of the time landowners and the landless were on an equal footing in living off the land. Thus the sabbatical year brought a cessation of all normal agricultural activity. A second purpose of that year is given in the supplemental passage (Deut. 15:1-11), the canceling of all debts. Also a freeing of slaves occurred at this time (Deut. 15:12-18; Ex. 21:2-6; but also see Lev. 25:39-55). The land of Israel was God's property and His people were its tenants (v. 23). Therefore the people's land ownership (understood in this sense) was not to be exploited for the enrichment of some and the impoverishment of others (see vv. 23-24). Indebtedness might separate some land from its owner, either through the sale (really lease) of the land (vv. 14-17), or by the owner selling himself as a slave (vv. 39-55), or both. But the land was not to be deeded away in perpetuity. There were several ways in which the land might be reacquired or redeemed (see vv. 23-28). The same principles applied to release of a Hebrew from slavery so that he might return to his land (vv. 41, 48-55).

25:8-13. Every seventh sabbatical year (i.e., every 49th year) was to be followed by a Year of Jubilee (*yôbēl*, perhaps originally meaning "ram" or "ram's horn," taken from the horn blown to announce the year, but the LXX took it to mean "release") which (though apparently begun on the first day of the seventh month) was officially announced by a **trumpet blast on the 10th day** (i.e., **the Day of Atonement**, v. 9). (For the inclusive-reckoning view according to which the 50th year was actually the 49th, see R. North, *The Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1954, pp. 109-12; for the "leap year" view that the Jubilee was a short year only 49 days in length inserted into the seventh month of the 49th year, see Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 319.) The motto for the year was to **proclaim liberty** (i.e., release) **throughout the land** with the primary purpose of getting **family property** and the family back together again (vv. 10, 13). This meant that all property (except in walled cities, cf. vv. 29-30) was to be restored to its original owners (i.e., tenants, cf. v. 23), and all Hebrew slaves were to be released to return to their family property. Also, as during the preceding sabbatical year, the land was to enjoy a second straight year of rest (vv. 11-12; cf. vv. 4-7).

25:14-17. While selling **land** was not ideal, it was sometimes necessary. Then it was to be done fairly, the price computed **on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee**, that is, computing **the number of years left for harvesting crops** until the next Jubilee would return the land to its original owner. In other words **what one was really selling** was **the number of crops**, a limited lease on the land paid in full in advance.

25:18-22. God's blessing **in the land** was promised for obedience to His **laws**, both freedom from want and freedom from war (v. 19; cf. 26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-14). This was particularly applied to the obvious fear an Israelite would have in the face of two successive years of neither planting nor harvesting his crops (Lev. 25:20). God promised an abundant harvest **in the sixth year**, sufficient to carry over **until the harvest of the ninth year comes in**.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Students of American history quickly recognize the first part of this week's text. It forms the well-known inscription on the Liberty Bell, which hung for years in Philadelphia's Independence Hall and is still a major attraction in its own pavilion across the street. The inscription on the bell became a call to political independence and freedom on the part of the American revolutionaries. The exhortation's meaning in its biblical context is just a little bit different! The proclamation of the biblical text has to do with the Israelite Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-13). God's people were instructed to set aside every fiftieth year (seven times seven Sabbath Years plus one year) as a year for releasing debts and restoring family holdings. The word "jubilee" comes from the Hebrew yobel, referring to the trumpet blown to mark the year's consecration. The Jubilee was intended to be a time of joy and celebration. The liberty that was to be proclaimed at the start of each fiftieth year was a nationwide release from debts and servitude. One of the harsh facts of life in the ancient world was that people could fall into debt to the extent that the only way out of it was to sell off their inherited property. If that did not suffice, they could be forced to sell themselves or their children into servitude—a form of slavery—for a period of time. The reality was that many people would never be able to work their way out of debt servitude. God, however, did not want a permanent slave class to develop among His people. Nor did He want families to permanently lose the inheritance that He had given them when the nation entered the Promised Land. Jubilee was His prescribed means of preventing these evils. This release was to have no exceptions; it was to be proclaimed to "all the inhabitants" of the land. Even if someone had gone into servitude or lost his property only a short time before the Jubilee Year, the release was to be applied. Creditors might claim that money or labor was still owed to them, but the Jubilee was to be a complete cleaning of the slate. "Ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." It is not clear how well Israel obeyed the instructions on Jubilee throughout their history—or that they ever did. However, the provisions clearly show us God's heart for His people, especially for the poor and downtrodden. He did not want people to remain trapped in servitude or deprived of their property. The story of Naboth and his vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-24) illustrates the importance God placed on preserving family inheritance. For New Testament believers, the Israelite Year of Jubilee can be a profound reminder that God does not want any of us to live in spiritual servitude. In Christ He has set us free from slavery to sin, under which we were held in darkness. And we do not have to wait till a fiftieth year comes by to experience our freedom. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Our freedom begins now; it will be complete when we see Him.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When we think about living by faith, we generally consider that to be a religious concept, meaning that one who lives by faith is trusting in God. But the fact is that everyone lives by faith, even the person who is not religious in the least! Why do we get on airplanes? Because we have faith that the pilot has the proper skills to get us to our destination safely. How do we know that the pound of hamburger we purchase at the store is indeed (1) a pound and (2) hamburger? Because we have faith that the grocer is dealing with us honestly. Why do we entrust a package to a delivery person? Once again, we are taking a step of faith. Devout Christians, strident atheists, and everyone in between takes such steps of faith. This is faith based on evidence; it is not blind faith. But imagine a world in which we could trust no one else because there was no evidence upon which to base that trust. How demoralizing that would be! Every action we took during any given day would be subject to incredible risk. In truth, none of us lives totally on our own. To survive in society, we must have a certain level of faith in the competence of others. This sometimes involves risk. Many portions of the Law of Moses challenged the Israelites to exercise a measure of trust and risk. But the basis of the Israelites' actions was rooted first and foremost in their trust in God.

Often the various regulations found within the Law of Moses are placed in three categories: civil (those that helped maintain an orderly society), ceremonial (those dealing with how God's covenant people were to express their worship to him), and moral (those dealing with right living). Whereas the first two groups applied only to Old Testament Israel (though there may still be general principles of conduct to be drawn from them), the moral laws continue to serve as standards of right and wrong behavior. Today's passage from Leviticus 25 falls primarily within the ceremonial category, since it concerns certain religious observances that do not apply to Christians (see Colossians 2:14-17), specifically the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee. These topics also have civil ramifications as well, since obedience to them was intended to help build a just society. But if the specific commandments of today's text no longer apply, then why bother studying them? The answer is hinted at above: because they speak to principles of conduct that are important yet today.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Remembering the Sabbath Year with Joy (Lev 25:1-7)

- 1 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.

Joy in the land Sabbath for restoration (1-4)

Restoration that cannot be hindered by distance (Deut. 30:4)

- 4 Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back.

Restoration that proves God's grace (2 Chron. 30:9)

- 9 If you return to the Lord, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."

Restoration that is promised (Acts 3:21)

- 21 He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Restoration of the soul (Psalm 23:3)

- 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Restoration of joy (Psalm 51:12)

- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Restoration of God's pleasure (Psalm 85:4)

- 4 Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us.

Restoration through becoming slaves to God (Rom 6:22)

- 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Restoration through the crucifixion of the old self (Rom 6:6-7)

- 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Restoration through becoming slaves to righteousness (Rom 6:18)

- 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Joy in the land Sabbath for God's provisions (5-7)

Provisions for both physical and spiritual needs (Psalm 104:15)

15 wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.

Provisions when we are weak (1 Kings 19:5-8)

5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

Provisions when we are needy (2 Kings 4:2-6)

2 Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil." 3 Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. 4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." 5 She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing.

Provisions that are supernatural (Matthew 14:17-21)

17 "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. 18 "Bring them here to me," he said. 19 And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Provisions for good works (2 Cor. 9:8)

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Provisions that satisfies when we are obedient (2 Ki 4:1-7)

1 The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves." 2 Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil." 3 Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. 4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." 5 She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. 7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

Provisions that sometimes are met through others (Ruth 2:14)

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.

Provisions that are divinely blessed and totally satisfies (Ps 78:25)

25 Men ate the bread of angels; he sent them all the food they could eat.

Remembering the Jubilee Year with Joy (Lev 25:8-12)

8 '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.

Joy in the jubilee year for the atonement (8-10)

Atonement so that we would have the right to be sons of God (Gal 4:4-5)

4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Atonement that was ordained by God (Eph 1:4-7)

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

Atonement through reconciliation (Col 1:19-20)

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Atonement through being a ransom for all (1 Tim 2:5-6)

5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.

Atonement that cleansed us (Heb 9:11-14)

11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Atonement that demonstrated God's justice (Rom 3:23-25)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—

Atonement that destroyed Satan's power of death (Heb 2:14-17)

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Joy in the jubilee year for its holiness (11-12)

Holiness because God's name and house are holy (Hab 2:20)

20 But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him."

Holiness because we are unclean before a holy God (Isa 6:1-7)

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Holiness because God's dwelling is holy (Zech 2:13)

13 Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling."

Holiness because anywhere God is, it is holy ground (Acts 7:30-33)

30 "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. 31 When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. 33 "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground.

Holiness through Divine retribution (Isa 35:3-9)

3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." 5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. 7 The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. 8 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Practical Outworkings of the Sabbath Year and the Super-Sabbath

According to the instructions God gave in Leviticus 25 the observance of the Sabbath year involved several things. First, the land must lie fallow and given its rest (v. 2). The seventh year, crops could not be planted, and those crops which were permanent (e.g. grapes, olive trees) were not to be pruned or cared for as they were the other six years (v. 3). The annual crops would re-seed themselves and thus there would be grain, and the perennial plants would continue to bear fruit. No harvests were allowed during the Sabbath year (v. 5). By this, I understand that the crops were not to be harvested for sale. This did not prohibit the people from eating the crops, however. In fact, all the people, especially the poor (and even the animals) could eat in the fields (vv. 6-7). Rather than having the corners of the fields in which to glean, the poor could eat from any portion of the field.

Elsewhere the Israelites were instructed to forgive debts which were owed them and unpaid by their Israelite brethren (Deut. 15:1ff.). Also in Deuteronomy 31 we learn that the Sabbath year was to begin at the Feast of Booths (31:10) and that the law was read at this time as well (31:13).

There was a great deal of faith required of the Israelites to follow these commandments pertaining to the Sabbath year. After all, letting the fields lie fallow for a whole year seemed like a waste, and put the Israelite in the position of having to trust God for his daily bread. In verses 18-22 of Leviticus 25 God assumed that some would have their doubts about the Sabbath year observance, and thus He assured the Israelites of His provision. In addition, let it be kept in mind that in Exodus chapter 16 God instituted the Sabbath day observance with regard to the gathering of the manna. For some time, then, the people had been experiencing God's faithfulness in this matter. God gave the people a small test of faith before He gave a larger one. Israel was thus prepared for what God commanded here.

The super-Sabbath was similar to, but not identical with, the Sabbath year. The year of Jubilee commenced with the sounding of the ram's horn on the annual day of atonement (on the tenth day of the seventh month). It would seem that the land had to lie fallow for 2 years since the year of Jubilee was the 50th year, following on the heels of the 7th (49th) year. Some have questioned this, suggesting that the Sabbath year and the Jubilee were observed simultaneously. These discussions are hypothetical and conjectural. The bottom line is that God is able to provide for a one or a two year period.

On the Sabbath year the all debts were canceled, but in the year of Jubilee the Israelite who has sold himself to another is released, and the land which has been leased (since it cannot be sold, v. 23) to another is restored to its original owner. Only houses which were in walled cities were exempt, and after a redemption period of one year, it became the permanent possession of its purchaser.

Parenthetically, one can imagine that the aggressive promoter types would have been inclined to buy such houses (in walled cities) since they were one of the few properties which could be accumulated permanently. I think that the "widows houses" which the scribes and Pharisees were accused of devouring (Matt. 23:14), were those houses in walled cities. Where would a widow wish to live out her last days, if not in the security of a walled city? And who would an unscrupulous Pharisee find an easier prey than a helpless widow? The letter of the law was meticulously observed, but the spirit was greatly violated, and thus the stern rebuke of our Lord.

There is an interesting and very obvious contrast between loans which were made to a needy Israelite and the lease of an Israelite's land, until the year of Jubilee. Loans were to be made without any consideration of how many years were left to repay the loan (Deut. 15:7-11). Leases, however, must be made by calculating the number of years remaining until the Jubilee (Lev. 25:14-16; cf. 26-28). The difference is not so much that between the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee, but between a loan and a lease. One is an act of generosity, which is considered more as a gift than a loan, while the other is a business arrangement, which is therefore very carefully governed so that a fair deal is struck. This is important since people are often taken advantage of in times of dire financial need.

The Purpose of the Sabbath and Super-Sabbath

Several purposes are evident in the commandments given here regarding the observance of the Sabbath and super-Sabbath.

(1) The Sabbath and super-Sabbath were a reminder of the fact that God owned the land. There is a folk song that goes something like this, "This land is my land, this land is your land ..." This is a song which the Israelite could not sing. God clearly stated that the land was His, and that the Israelites were His tenants (v. 23). The Israelites would need a very practical and pointed demonstration of this from time to time, and the Sabbath regulations did this beautifully. Let's face it, the things we own we attempt to maintain, and we attempt to restrict their use. If the Israelite really owned the land, he would feel obliged to maintain his fields, and he would be inclined to post "No Trespassing" signs, keeping out others, especially strangers. God's regulations forcefully underscored the fact that the Israelites did not own the land because they were prohibited from maintaining the land for one year out of every seven, and they were also instructed to allow their neighbors to come onto their land and to partake of their crops. The poor and the aliens were included here (cf. vv. 5-6). Those who own something feel free to use it when and how they like. The land could not be used other than in the ways God prescribed. Thus, the Sabbath and Jubilee regulations proved the land was God's.

(2) It made it possible for the people of Israel to become the recipients of divine blessing. Remember that a large part of the blessings which God promised His people consisted of the rain and the crops which God would give His people. To be a recipient of God's blessing, one must have his own land by which means he will be benefited.

(3) The commands related to the observance of the Sabbath and Jubilee years were tests of the Israelite's faith and obedience, and the basis for God's blessings or discipline.

(4) The regulations regarding the use of the land were a provision for the poor, providing them with food in times of need and with the possibility of a new beginning.

(5) The “laws of the land” were designed to hinder materialism and to keep in check those who would try to accumulate vast land holdings, at the expense of others. If these land laws were followed, there would be little incentive for one to lease the land of another, since the land would ultimately be returned to its owner, and since the price of the lease was directly tied to the value of its crops. There were no speculation land deals in that day, not if God’s laws were obeyed.

Conclusion

I wish to make three points of application as I conclude. First, let me remind you of the great continuity between the Old Testament revelation and the New. Those of us who are dispensationalists (I still include myself in this camp)¹⁵⁷ sometimes tend to look at the New Testament only in terms of its contrasts and “newness,” without acknowledging sufficiently its continuity, its “sameness.” Let us be careful to look for the continuity of teaching and application between the two testaments.

Let me attempt to illustrate my point by talking about one of my favorite subjects for a moment—computers. I happen to have had one of the first IBM personal computers. Since the purchase of this first computer, IBM has come out with several later versions, which are faster and more powerful. Naturally, I look at these with eager interest, even desire. But my point is that while the heart of the computer, the microprocessor (an Intel 8088), has changed (I like the 80386!), essentially the design of these different processors is so similar that the same software can be run on all machines. The Old Testament revelation is like that. It is definitely surpassed by the New, but there is still a compatibility, a sameness. Sometimes in our efforts to stress the “betterness” of the New, we imply a “badness” about the Old. This is not true, and it inclines us to miss much of the blessing which could be gained from a study and meditation of the Old Testament.

Second, if the place of God’s blessing is now a person, and this person is Jesus Christ, then you will only be blessed in Him. In other words, you have little right to ask God for His blessings if you are not in His Son. The message of the gospel is that forgiveness of sins and eternal life are the result of being “in Christ,” that is by receiving Him as your Savior, your sin-bearer, your righteousness, and your eternal life. If you are not “in Him,” I urge you to trust in Him today, to be “born again” (cf. John chapter 3).

Finally, for Christians, we should be reminded that our source of blessing and security is Christ and Christ alone. Satan would like nothing more than to distract and divert you from who and what you are “in Him” to virtually anything else. If you do not sense the nearness of God and His blessings, it may be because you have been seduced by someone or something other than Christ. The words of our Lord are clear, blessing and fruitfulness come from abiding in Him, the One in whom the presence of God has been manifested, the One in whom all blessings are found.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/19-super-sabbath-israels-land-and-its-lord-leviticus-251-34>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Did the Israelites ever practice jubilee as a nation? We don’t have any firm evidence that they did (Isaiah 37:30 is a possible reference to jubilee ideas). Although the generation that followed Moses rebelled against God (Judges 2:10-13), the lack of reference to jubilee in the historical narratives of the Old Testament does not mean that jubilee was not practiced. That would be an argument from silence. We simply do not know. Yet we do know that the prophets appealed to the jubilee ideal figuratively with reference to the coming kingdom of God. An example is Isaiah 61:1, where the Hebrew word translated freedom is the same word translated as liberty in Leviticus 25:10 (the only other places where this word is used are Jeremiah 34:8, 15, 17; Ezekiel 46:17).

When one considers what the Year of Jubilee signified for God's people in the Old Testament, it is not difficult to see a reference to a new jubilee in Jesus' declared intent "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free," as he quoted from Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:18. Jesus is the one who has made it possible for human beings, separated from God because of sin, to come home, to return to where we belong—with the Lord. The "liberty" of this jubilee is the freedom from sin that Jesus brought about by defeating the devil and releasing us from bondage to him (see Hebrews 2:14, 15). The jubilee that Jesus inaugurated at his first coming will reach its ultimate fulfillment and consummation when he returns. At that time a trumpet will sound (1 Thessalonians 4:16; compare Leviticus 25:9), and all Christians will be gloriously and finally liberated from the curse and the brokenness of sin—to dwell with our rightful owner in his home forever. A jubilee for eternity!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. God prepares His people to receive His blessings (Lev. 25:1-2)
2. There is a time to work and a time to rest. They are both important (vss. 3-5)
3. We show appreciation to God by being good stewards over what we have (vss. 6-10)
4. We cannot allow possessions to become more important to us than people
5. Resting and reflecting on the blessings of God brings joy (vss. 11-12)