

## BIBLE CLASS STUDY GUIDE

## LEVITICUS 25

## THE SABBATH YEAR

Just as every seventh day was a day of rest (Sabbath), every seventh year was to be proclaimed a Sabbath year. During this year the land was to have a rest. The fields were not to be sown nor reaped. The people were told to eat only “whatever the land yields.”

- ! How might the Sabbath year serve to bring the people closer to their God?
- ! How might it cause them to be more dependant on God?

## THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

After seven Sabbath years had passed, the Israelites were to observe a *year of jubilee*. The fiftieth year was therefore consecrated (set aside) as a special year of liberty and freedom throughout the land. It was to remind them of the way that God had freed them from their slavery in Egypt. The year of jubilee began with the blowing of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement.

During the year of jubilee, special laws were to be in place. Several of the most prominent were these:

- ! Each family was to return to their own family property (v 13)
- ! There was to be no working of the fields. Only what was taken from the fields directly could be eaten (v 12)
- ! If property had been “sold,” it was to return to its original owners during this year. The value of property when buying and selling it was therefore based on the number of years until the jubilee (vv 14-17). The return of property would, in theory, mean less difference between the rich and the poor. In practice (because of the sin of men), it didn’t always work out this way.

Read vv 18-22

How did the jubilee year provide a test of Israel’s faith?

Read vv 23-24

How were the people supposed to view the land on which they lived?

How are we to view the land in which *we* live?

## **REDEMPTION OF PROPERTY**

Leviticus 25:25-34

The word *redemption* means to “buy back.” If someone became poor and needed to sell property, a close relative was expected to buy it. If there were no close relative at hand to redeem the land, it could be sold to a non-relative. If the seller later gained sufficient money to buy it back, he had a right to do so. Otherwise, he would have to wait until the year of jubilee when he would be able to get his land back. Exception: Houses in walled cities were not returned to the original owners during the year of jubilee. If a man sold his house in a walled city, he had one year to redeem it if he were able. After one year, it became the permanent property of the new owner. The Levites, however, were allowed to redeem their houses in Levitical towns at any time, and their houses were returned in the jubilee year. The pastureland belonging to the towns of the Levites was not to be sold at all. It was a permanent possession.

## **CARING FOR THE POOR**

Leviticus 25:35-38

If an Israelite became poor and unable to support himself, others were expected to help him by providing him with interest-free loans and food at-cost. The Lord had given the land. He had a say in determining how it was distributed to the poor.

! What does the Bible say about helping the poor?

## **SLAVE REGULATIONS**

Leviticus 25:39-55

Sometimes an Israelite would become so poor that he would need to sell himself into slavery in order to support his family. Masters of such slaves were not to be abused. They were to be treated as hired workers or temporary residents. In the year of jubilee, they were to be given their freedom.

Male and female slaves who came from surrounding nations (not Israelites) became the property of their owners, yet they were not to be abused either.

If an Israelite sold himself into slavery to a non-Israelite, he retained the right of redemption. In other words, he could buy himself back out of slavery– or one of his blood relatives could redeem him. The price for the redemption was to be based on the number of years from the year of jubilee. In the year of jubilee, the Israelite who sold himself into slavery was to be released.

## **FREEDOM**

The theme of the year of jubilee was “freedom.” Land was returned. Slaves were freed. Each Israelite got to start with a “clean slate.” It was to remind the people of the freedom God had given them when He released them from Egypt. It was also to remind the people that He was the true owner of property and goods– they were only stewards. Finally, it also encouraged faith and trust in the Lord -- How are Christ’s words in Lk 4:18-19 connected to the year of jubilee?