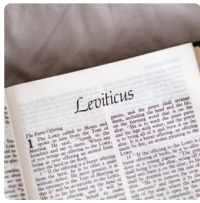


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Leviticus 24 - 25



Leviticus - Steve Gregg

Leviticus 24-25 discusses a range of topics, including the presentation of loaves of bread, blasphemy against the name of the Lord, the importance of the Sabbath year and the Jubilee year, land ownership, and the treatment of Jewish and pagan slaves. Steve Gregg provides insights into these matters, including the practice of using Adonai instead of God, how the Jewish tradition values rest for both people and land, and how redemption and forgiveness are present throughout the Bible.

Transcript

Leviticus 24 has seemingly a number of unrelated matters in it. Most of the chapters in Leviticus are kind of all about one thing or a group of related things within the same chapter, or even a body of chapters, a cluster of chapters, all about one thing. But chapter 24 is different than the rest in that respect, that it seems to pick up certain scraps that don't deserve an entire chapter to themselves and are not all necessarily directly related with each other.

One of the first concerns is to simply assign errand to the maintenance of the lampstands in the tabernacle. After all, the lamps are to be burning continually. There are seven lamps on this lampstand.

It's a seven-branched candelabra and, or menorah as they call it. Each of these lamps has a wick and needs to be fed with oil. Now, the lampstand has to be continually burning, but that doesn't mean that every lamp has to burn every moment.

It's possible for one lamp to be put out to manage it, to replace or to trim the wick, or to do whatever has to be done to keep it burning bright. And this maintenance had to be assigned to somebody. Any priest might have done it.

That is to say, any priest is allowed to go into the holy place and to be where the lamps are. But verses one through four of this chapter tell us that it's not to be the job of every priest, but of the high priest. It says, then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for light to make the lamps burn continually outside the veil of the testimony in the tabernacle of meeting.

Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the Lord continually. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. He shall be in charge of the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the Lord continually.

It doesn't really give any details of how the lamps are to be trimmed or maintained, but it simply tells who it is that will be responsible for that. And that is the high priest. And then there's the matter of the bread for the table of showbread.

We have been already told there is a table in the tabernacle on the north side and it has twelve loaves of bread on it, representing or corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. This just gives us more detail about that bread. It says you shall make fine, take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it, two tenths of any thought shall be in each cake.

You shall set them in two rows, six in a row on the pure table before the Lord and you shall put pure frankincense on each row that it may be on the bread for a memorial and offering made by fire to the Lord every Sabbath. He shall set it in order before the Lord continually being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant, and it shall be for Aaron and his sons and they shall eat it in the holy place for it is most holy to the Lord from the offerings of the pure of the Lord made by fire is a perpetual statute. Here we simply read that every Sabbath they put fresh bread there on the table of showbread.

The old bread would be eaten then by the priests. Now, bread that's seven days old is not extremely fresh, but I mean, some forms of cakes or bread have a pretty hard crust on them and the bread inside could still be soft, probably after a week's time, but it wouldn't be fresh bread by any means. But they replaced the old and eight and eight field on the Sabbath, and that's what we're told there.

Now, this is the next and only remaining story in the book of Leviticus. Besides the story of the consecration of the priest and the death of Nate Abbott of Bayou, which we had in chapters eight through ten. This is the only other historical anecdote that we find in the book of Leviticus.

It also has to do with the judgment. The first story had to do with at least culminated in the priest being judged for offering strange fires. Here we have the judgment of an Israelite or a half Israelite man who is guilty of blasphemy.

And so now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel and his this Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought each other in the camp. Now, we're not told what they were fighting about, but the Jewish tradition is that they were fighting about whether he could camp and pitch his tent in the region where the tribe of Dan pitched their tents. I'm not sure why this tradition arose.

Maybe it arose because it's true. It's maybe that the story was told orally and details were kept that were not written down and the Jews might know the facts. There's certainly nothing in the story to indicate that.

But the idea of the Jewish tradition is that this man who is only half Israelite, his father was Egyptian. He wanted to camp in the camp of Dan, the tribe of Dan, and they didn't want to let him. They got into a brawl about it into a fight in the midst of that fight.

The Israelite woman's son blaspheme the name of Yahweh and curse. And so they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shulamit, the daughter of Derby of the tribe of Dan.

Then they put him in custody that the mind of the Lord might be shown to them. It's not known where they put him in custody. They didn't have a jailhouse there.

They didn't have any buildings there. Remember, they were in tents. They probably just had guards guard him while Moses inquired of the Lord to find out what should be done.

Now, what does blasphemy in the name of the Lord mean? Well, it's hard to say. We sometimes consider a person to be, you know, using profanity or taking the name of the Lord in vain if they simply use the word God or the or the name Jesus Christ in a way that is as an expletive. It's probable that this man did something more than that, though what is not known.

I mean, cursing God, blaspheming God can mean, of course, a blasphemy can be to insult God in some way. It can be even as in the case when Jesus was accused of blasphemy. It can be to claim that you are God.

This man, I'm sure, did not claim that he was the Lord and therefore probably he said something that is derogatory about the Lord. And that was seen as blasphemy. And it was not something that would be permitted to go unpunished.

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, take outside the camp him who is cursed and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head and let all the congregation stone him. Then you shall speak to the children of Israel saying whoever curses his God shall bear his sin and whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death and all the congregation shall certainly stone him the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death.

And we read of the fulfillment of this down in verse 23. It says, then Moses spoke to the children of Israel and they took outside the camp him who had cursed and stoned him with stones. So the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Now the procedure was to stone him after the witnesses had laid their hand on him. Now, presumably the witnesses, the ones who heard him do it, had already verbally

testified that they at least somebody had reported it. So in the ceremony, Moses would say, anyone who heard this man say such and such a thing, come forward and put your hands on him.

Why? Well, because he's going to bear his guilt for it. If you hear blasphemy, it might be somewhat blasphemy would be defiling to you to hear it. And so by laying hands on it's like we're going to put that back on you again.

You're the one who blaspheme, not us. The guilt of this can be on you. We're not going to have this, this thought of blasphemy defiling us.

So we're putting our hands on you, imputing the guilt of your crime to you. We are the witnesses. We heard you do it.

And then everybody would participate in the stoning. This seems, I'm sure, severe to us, as do many of the capital offenses that are that are where the execution is actually carried out or ordered in the law. People are put to death for things that we wouldn't think to put someone to death for.

But as I said, God's law is perfect and God is just. And therefore, if we find ourselves out of harmony in thinking, OK, this penalty deserves is deserved for this particular crime, but it looks like God has a higher penalty for that crime than we would think, then it means that God sees that crime differently than we do. God sees that crime is having a greater magnitude of offense than we do.

And since God sees things as they really are and he's just, then we have to understand that we are the ones whose judgment is skewed. To the degree that we are human beings who sin ourselves, we do tend to be prone to justify human sin and to rationalize it and say, well, you know, the guy is in a fight. He spoke carelessly.

Well, Jesus said every careless word a man shall speak. He'll give account of it on the day of judgment. It's a little bit like Nate Avenue by you.

There must have been lots of people who spoke disrespectfully to God at one time or another in Israel over the years, but they weren't all caught. They weren't all stoned in all likelihood. Certainly there's been many people blaspheme God in the years following and they don't they're not put to death.

But God made an example of this man and did say that it was to be a precedent that others who blaspheme would be put to death also. And to blaspheme in the name of God is obviously not a small matter. It's amazing how lightly people today often do take the name of God and how little they think of it.

The Jews, in order to avoid such blasphemy, actually developed a habit of not uttering the name of Yahweh. In fact, they became so consistent at avoiding the utterance of the

name of Yahweh that it is now forgotten how it was pronounced. They considered it the unpronounceable name because it says in verse 16, whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death.

When the Septuagint was translated the Old Testament into Greek, the Septuagint says whoever utters the name of Yahweh will be put to death, which obviously is a bad translation. Blasphemy isn't the same thing as uttering the name to speak the name of God is not the same thing as the blasphemy of God. But because of that translation in the Septuagint, the Jews came to feel like it was sin even to mention the name of Yahweh.

And therefore, they started using the word Adonai when they spoke of God. They would use the word Adonai, which is a generic term in the Hebrew for my master, a master or a lord. So instead of his proper name Yahweh, they they use the name, a word that means my master.

And therefore, for many generations, Jews did not speak the name of Yahweh. And even my pronunciation of it is not known to be correct. We don't know if Yahweh is the correct pronunciation.

All we know is the consonants YHWH or JHVH would be the English characters that correspond to the Hebrew consonants. But how that's really pronounced, no one knows. I'm using what's kind of a common convention among modern Bible teachers and Bible scholars.

They usually pronounce it Yahweh, but it may not even be the correct pronunciation. Because the Jews were so careful, they didn't want to be put to death for the use of the name of God. Modern Jews often won't even use the word God, the English word God, which isn't a name at all.

God is a generic word for a deity. We only have one God, but the pagans have many gods. But and even the word Allah in the Arabic is the Arabic word for God.

It's not a proper name, although the Muslims in the time of Muhammad took the regular name Allah, which is the generic word for God in the Arabic language, and made it the name of the one true God. So that even the word God in monotheistic cultures becomes a like a proper name because there's only one God. Among pagans, the word God would not mean the name of any particular God because they have many gods.

But where you have only one God, then God becomes almost like a name in usage. And so modern Jews often won't even use the word God and won't even write it. They'll put the G and the D, the first and the last letters, and instead of writing G.O.D., modern Jews will write G-P.

Because they want you to know they're referring to God, but they don't want to take the

risk of even writing his name blasphemously. And that all comes from this story. That all comes from, I think, a poor translation in the Septuagint of verse 16.

Now, in the course of giving this instruction that this man must be judged in this way, some other things are brought out which are not really related directly to the blasphemy. And for the most part, they are repetitions of laws. In verses 17 through 22, it says, whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death.

Of course, that means whoever murders a man, not whoever executes a criminal. Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, animal for animal. Apparently, that means if you kill somebody else's animal, you have to replace it.

But you don't have to be put to death for killing an animal. If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor as he has done, so shall be done to him. Fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

As he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him. And whoever kills an animal shall restore it. But whoever kills a man shall be put to death.

You shall have the same law for the stranger and for the one in your own country, for I am the Lord your God. Now, it's not known why these particular statutes are repeated here. They've been mentioned in other places in Exodus, but why they be mentioned here, along with the stoning of this man is not clear, except maybe just because this was the first time that Israel executed anybody.

It's the first time that an actual execution, according to the commands of the law, was carried out by the Jews. It was an occasion where he reminded them of some of the general rules about executing and not executing people. If someone kills someone, you execute them.

This man hadn't killed anyone, but he had done something else that was worthy of death, and it gave occasion. While we're talking about executing people, let's clarify and remind ourselves that anyone who is a murderer should be executed, as this man who's not a murderer for this other offense is executed. But killing an animal is not murder, so he shouldn't be executed for that.

And disfiguring or injuring another person isn't murder, so it shouldn't be killed for that. That's an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth kind of a deal. So clarification is being made about what is and what is not a capital crime.

And the occasion here seems to be simply because this is the first time Israel is carrying out an execution on a capital criminal. So it kind of gives occasion to reconsider the whole issue of when people should and when people should not be killed. What kind of offenses warrant execution? What kind warrants some lesser penalty and not execution? Now, chapter 25 is a quite a long chapter, and it's entirely about what we call years of

release.

The Sabbath year was actually mentioned in, I believe it was in Exodus chapter 31, but we have more treatment of it here. And essentially, what is said about the Sabbath year in chapter 25 verses 1 through 7 is that the land should not be farmed every seventh year. And this is, of course, looking forward to the time that the Israelites would be in the land.

They were not there yet, but they anticipated being farmers. And once they had their lands and their farms, they should farm them six years and then leave the ground unfarmed until leave it fallow for one year. The Sabbath year.

Whatever would grow on the land during that year would be just from seed that had accidentally been dropped during the previous harvest or something. There'd be just a little bit of crop here and there to grow up. They were not supposed to cultivate it.

Though the poor and anyone else who wished could eat it, even the animals could eat it, but they could not be harvested. And that was to give the land rest. The land is almost personified here as if it's a person needing rest, just like people need to rest every seventh day.

So the land every seventh year we read it in verse 1. Moses. The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, Speak to the children of Israel and say to them when you come into the land which I give you, then the land should keep the Sabbath to the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field.

Six years you should prune your vineyard and gather its fruit. 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. What grows of its own accord of your harvest, you shall not reap nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is the year of rest for the land. Now, it says you should not reap or harvest or gather the grapes, but it does mean you can't eat it.

It means you can't go out and just do a general harvest and bring it all in like you would a normal year. It's rather, you know, you can anyone can just kind of pick the grapes and eat them, but you can't harvest because the Sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you. For you and your servant, for your maid servant, for your hired servant, for the stranger who sojourns with you, for your livestock and the animals that are in your land, all its produce shall be for food.

So it can be eaten, but it can't be harvested. You don't go out there. For example, someone who anticipated the Sabbath sabbatical year might deliberately kind of drop a little more grain in their harvest of the sixth year, thinking that way during the Sabbath year.

I can go and harvest it, even though I'm not sowing new grain, there'll be more there for me if I drop a little bit extra here. But he says it won't do you any good to do that. You're not allowed to harvest.

People can go and forage in it. They can eat the grapes or eat the wheat that grows on its own, like foraging, but not harvesting, not gathering in a systematic way. Now, that year is also discussed in Deuteronomy and additional things are suggested that almost make the seventh year sound like kind of like a jubilee year because it was to be a year of the release of slaves also.

And that's not mentioned here. But the seventh year in Deuteronomy is also referred to not only as the Sabbath year, but as the year of release, because debts, were forgiven and slaves were released. Now, we come next to the jubilee year.

And in some ways, it's not easy to see a great difference between the jubilee year and a Sabbath year, because it also was a year of rest. It also was a year of release of slaves and of debtors. But it also, unlike the Sabbath year, the jubilee was a year where all land was returned to its original owner.

Now, what we have to understand is that almost all people's wealth in those days was in their real estate and in their livestock. The real estate was valuable because they could grow crops on it. The livestock was valuable because you could eat it.

And in an agrarian society, land and livestock are your wealth. I mean, some people had gold and silver and gems and things like that. Kings and other very wealthy people might have those things.

And obviously, they would use those to trade for things like livestock and land, because that was the wealth. You can't eat gold and silver, but you can eat grain that grows on land. You can eat livestock.

So people's wealth was often in their land. Now, when the people went into Canaan and conquered it and Joshua divided up the land to the different families of Israel, to different tribes, each family had a portion that they would leave to their descendants. And it was like an ancestral piece of property.

Generations later, people would still be living on the same land that their ancestors had received when they had conquered Canaan. Although sometimes a person might fall into hardship and realize that they didn't have any other way to survive, but to perhaps sell their land. Now, they couldn't sell it permanently.

And the reason it couldn't be sold permanently is that God didn't want there to be land barons who gathered up all the land from the poor people. And eventually, we just have a group of, you know, barons and serfs. You know, you've got the barons who own all the land, because over the generations, the richer people who don't need to sell their land

take advantage of poor people who do need to sell their land.

So they say, I'll buy your land from you. And then they keep it. Eventually, they gobble up all the land and everybody else is just like a slave to them.

This was to keep all the people free. Every 50th year, land would go back to its original owners, even if it had been sold. So if you were a poor person and you had some ancestral land that your family had always had, you could sell it to a richer person.

But 50 years from then, or not from then, but whenever the jubilee year came, which was every 50 years, it might only be a year from the time you sold your land, or it might be 20 years off, or 30 or 40. But whenever the jubilee came, the land would go back to your family. You might be dead by then, of course, 50 years later, you might be a dead person, but your family would still get the land back.

So the person who bought your land really was only leasing it. He paid for it, but he had to give it back in the jubilee year. In fact, the price that land would be sold at, the price of land was determined by how many years it would be till the jubilee year.

Because they had to estimate the amount of crops that they would get before they had to return the land to the original owner. And so the jubilee was like a Sabbath year, but more so. Slaves were released, debts were forgiven, and land was returned to its original owners without them having to pay a price of redemption.

Now, what this chapter goes into is the kinds of things that people might surrender and that they could redeem them with money. But if they didn't redeem them with money, they could buy them back. When they got enough money to buy back their land, they could do so.

But if they didn't, they'd get it back for free in the year of jubilee. And by the way, the word jubilee is from a Hebrew word that means the sounding of a trumpet, a trumpet blast. It says you should count seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years.

And the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to 49 years. Then you should cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month. That'd be the first day of the 50th year.

On the day of atonement, you shall make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And you should consecrate the 50th 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 his possession to his possession.

As you go back to the land that you may have lost previously, and each of you shall return to his family. That is, anyone who'd been sold as a slave by their family will be

returning return to their family as free. That 50th 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, for it is the jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You shall eat its produce from the field.

Same as a harvest. Now, there are more details given about how the jubilee impacts the sale of property and so forth, and that's what much of the rest of the chapter is about. Let me just say some things about the jubilee.

First of all, you can see the emphasis on the number seven throughout the whole festival calendar of the Jews. When we looked at chapter 23 and saw that there's seven days of unleavened bread, there's seven days of the Feast of Pentecost, there's seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. There's also seven weeks counted after the Sabbath of the Passover.

Seven weeks are counted, and the next day after the seventh week, the 50th day, is Pentecost, which means the 50th. Here we have seven years to a Sabbath year, and then seven Sabbath years makes 49 years, and the beginning of the next year, the 50th year, is the jubilee. So everything is related to the number seven here, as are many other things in the Bible besides these feasts.

The number seven is the number that speaks of completeness to the Jewish person. And so we see that we've talked about weekly, monthly, and annual holy days, and now we're talking about holy days that happen less frequently than annual. Once every seven years, once every 50 years.

So it's kind of a continuation of the discussion of chapter 23, although chapter 24 intervened between these two chapters. It's like an ongoing discussion of the holy days that happen even less frequently than the festivals in chapter 23, the holy years, actually. And so we see that the jubilee is proclaimed on the Day of Atonement with the sounding of a trumpet, and the trumpet blast is the jubilee.

With that sound of the trumpet, not only are the people atoned on that day by the high priest's actions in the Holy of Holies, but it's a day of liberation. That must have been a great day of celebration for people who had had to sell their children into slavery, or themselves into slavery, or had had to sell their family property, and so they had had to work as servants on someone else's property to survive, or something like that. They now got to go back to square one.

It's like hitting the reset button every 50 years. Once every generation, essentially, there'd be the reset button. Whatever financial or economic damage you'd fallen into, which had hurt you financially and hurt your life, you just get to go back to square one.

Hit the button, it's reset. Now you're back to where you were before that problem

happened. You get to start fresh, and hopefully not have to go through that again.

And so this was the way that God kept Israel free, and not to be slaves of each other, and kept the land evenly distributed among different families, rather than allowing the rich people to gather up over periods of generations more and more, and eventually own all the land. Now this Jubilee probably was not kept on a regular basis. As a matter of fact, we never read of it being kept.

Except, I think, if I'm not mistaken, after the exiles returned from Babylon, I believe in the time of Nehemiah or Esther, I think they may have kept the Jubilee then. I'm a little rusty on that, but we don't really read in the books of Samuel and Kings and so forth, the period of the pre-exilic history, we don't read of them keeping the Jubilee. They might have.

They might have kept their Sabbath years and Jubilees, but I don't think they did. And the reason I don't think they did is because the Bible indicates that during the time they were in Babylon, that the land was allowed then to keep its Sabbaths, which had apparently been denied. In fact, in chapter 26 of Leviticus, when there's a recitation of judgments that will come upon Israel if they do not keep the covenant, there is this threat given of exile, which was fulfilled, of course, in the Babylonian exile.

But the threat is given in chapter 26 of Leviticus. Verse 33, it says, I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword at you. Your land should be desolate, your cities waste, then the land shall enjoy its Sabbath as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemy's land and the land shall rest and enjoy its Sabbath as long as it lies desolate, it shall rest.

For the time it did not rest on your Sabbaths when you dwelt in it. So it is saying that Israel, it is anticipated, will fail to obey these instructions of the Sabbath year. Why? Well, because they're going to want more money.

They're going to want more crops to give up a whole year's worth of income every six, every seven years is quite a sacrifice. I mean, think about it. That's more than 10 percent of your income.

That's one. I'm sorry, it's less than 10 percent. It's one seventh of your income.

But the point is, it's close to another time besides the time you have to give. It's it's it's a diminishing of your overall accumulation of wealth. And so people were tempted to go ahead and break that Sabbath year and did.

And apparently they never kept it. So God anticipated that says, well, then the land will keep it stable while you're away. I'll send you into exile.

And if you look at Second Chronicles, which is in the last chapter of Second Chronicles,

talks about the Jews going into captivity and Babylon, it connects it with the Sabbath year issue. In Second Chronicles, Chapter 36, verses 20 and 21, it says, And those who escaped from the sword, he Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah. It's referring to Jeremiah, Chapter 25, where it was predicted that they would go into Babylon for 70 years.

Until the land had enjoyed her Sabbath, as long as she lay death, but she kept Sabbath to fulfill 70 years. So it seems to be saying that the Jews had neglected their Sabbath years, at least for 490 years. There were 70 Sabbath years they failed to keep.

So now we don't know what those 490 years were, because their history from the time of Moses to the time of the exile was certainly more than 490 years. It was more like probably 700 years or something like that. But the way it's worded there at the end of Chronicles, it sounds like there were 70 years that should have been Sabbath years that were not kept.

And that would mean that at least 490 years the Jews had neglected to keep Sabbath years. And so God allowed the land to catch up on those in the 70 years of the exile. So anyway, if they didn't keep the Sabbath years, you're probably safe and assume they didn't keep the Jubilee year either.

The Jubilee would be even more costly to them. But they might have, because it did have to do with property rights, it might have been more enforced. I don't know.

We just don't have record of it being so. Now, in reading about the Jubilee, we realize that like all other festivals and special holy days and years and seasons, it had a spiritual significance. And in this case, it's not difficult to know what it is, because it says in verse 9, it says, You shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the 10th day of the seventh month on the Day of Atonement.

You shall make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And verse 10 says, You shall consecrate the 50th year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. Now, to proclaim liberty is what one does on the Jubilee.

In Luke chapter 4, Jesus was preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth. And they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. And the passage to read that week was from Isaiah 61 verses 1 and 2. And so Jesus read the passage.

And it says in verse 17, Luke 4, 17, He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he opened the book, he found the place where it was written, Isaiah 61, 1, The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach

the acceptable year of the Lord.

Now, the quote is, of course, from Isaiah 61, where the language of it is clearly proclaiming a Jubilee year. Maybe not the literal Jubilee year, since Jesus then says he closed the book and he gave it back. It says in verse 21, he began to them today.

This scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. In other words, Isaiah 61 verse 1 was fulfilled when Jesus preached it. What did it say in Isaiah 61, 1? It says the spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor and in verse 1 of Isaiah 61 says to proclaim liberty to the captives.

The actual language of the Jubilee is here. And to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the Jubilee year was the year of the Lord when liberty was proclaimed. And so Isaiah is clearly saying that he speaking in the person of the Messiah is anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the spiritual Jubilee.

Now, notice also, if you if you look at Isaiah 61, there's another part of verse 2. Isaiah 61, 2 says to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. But the next line is and the day of vengeance of our God. Now, the day of vengeance of our God is the destruction that would come upon those who heard Jesus message and rejected it.

And Jesus spoke of the day of vengeance. Actually, he is the term days of vengeance because it was a period, not just a single day. But in Luke 21 and verse 20, he said that when Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies.

It's desolation to be near. And in verse 22 or 23, as he goes on to talk about it, he says, these are the days of vengeance that all things that are written may be fulfilled. So the days of vengeance were the destruction of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 61 talks about the Messiah being anointed to proclaim a double message to those who will hear it. It's the day of deliverance. It's the day of absolution of debt.

It's the day of freedom. It's the proclamation of liberty to captives. But it's also going to be followed shortly thereafter by the day of vengeance.

The days of vengeance, which will come upon those who reject the message that Jesus preached. But Jesus is saying today. This.

Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. He's saying, as I have just read this scripture, I have fulfilled it. I am proclaiming liberty.

I am preaching good news. To the poor, I am doing these things. This scripture is being fulfilled as you hear me.

And therefore, Jesus saw the Jubilee as beginning with him. And so it's not too surprising either, because the Jubilee then becomes another picture of the age we call the age of

the church, the kingdom age, the age where Christ has established his kingdom and liberated his people. Followed by a judgment of his enemies.

But that's what the Jubilee foreshadowed. Now, the rest of Chapter 25 of Leviticus really is details. And legal, you know, minutiae about how the year of Jubilee impacts the sale of slaves or property or things like that.

For example, in verse 13, it says in this year of Jubilee. Each of you shall return to his possession, and if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another, according to the number of years after the Jubilee. You should buy from your neighbor and according to the number of years of crops.

He shall sell it to you according to the multitude of years. You shall increase its price according to the fewer number of years shall diminish its price for he sells it to you according to the number of years of the crops. Therefore, you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God for I am the Lord, your God.

Now, it would be oppressive to gather up all the poor people's land because they fall in hard times and they had to sell their land and then you take their their possession from them and keep it. And therefore, the return of it is to prevent oppression. And the price of the land must be determined by how many years of crops it can be expected to produce before the anticipated year of Jubilee.

Everyone knew in advance when the year of Jubilee would be, because it would be 50 years from the previous Jubilee if it was kept. And therefore, it's obvious that if you bought a piece of land immediately after the previous Jubilee, then you could look forward to 49 or 50 years of harvest. That land is going to be worth a lot of money to you.

If you bought it 45 years after the previous Jubilee, well, it's only five more years to the next one. You only get five years of crops before you have to give the land back. So the price you pay for that would be less because you can't make as much on it.

That's what's being said there. Now, as far as the Sabbath year, it says in verse 18, so you shall observe my statutes and keep my judgments and perform them and you will dwell in the land in safety. Then the land will yield its fruit and you will eat till your fill, eat your fill and dwell there in safety.

And if you say, what shall we eat in the seventh year since we shall not sow or gather our produce, then I will command my blessing on you in the sixth year. And it will bring forth produce enough for three years. And you shall sow in the eighth year and eat old produce until the ninth year, until its produce comes in.

So you shall eat of the old harvest. So if you are obedient to God, he'll make your crop triple in the sixth year what it would normally be. That way you'll have it for the seventh

year and for the eighth year as well.

The eighth year would be, you know, you don't sow anything in the seventh year. So you have to wait till the next sowing season of the eighth year to sow it. And then, you know, you have to wait for the crops.

So you're going to eat old grain until then. So he'll give you enough for three years, the sixth, seventh and eighth year until harvest in the sixth year. Says the land shall not be sold permanently, verse 23, for the land is mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with me.

Now, this is an important principle. We observed it earlier when God was telling them that if they do certain things, the land will vomit them out. If they do the same things that were done by the Canaanites.

This was back in chapter 18 of Leviticus, verses 24 through 28. He said, if you repeat the abominations the Canaanites did, then I'll have the land vomit you out just like it vomited them out, making it very clear that the Jews do not have unconditional grant to the land. Why? It's not theirs.

It's God's. Yes, it's true that God said he'd give it to Abraham and his descendants, but his giving of it to them is really a conditional lease. And he makes it clear the land is mine.

Leviticus 25, 23, the land is mine and you're strangers and sojourners on my land. And keep it that way, so you can't just sell the land and never have it go back. I'm the one who determines where the land goes.

It's mine. And in the 50th year, it goes back. And in all the land of your possession, you shall grant redemption of the land.

Now, I'm going to summarize some of this so we don't have to read all the details, because it's a lot of details. But this portion here from verse 25 on. Essentially, it's saying that land, once you've sold land, you can redeem it at any time.

If you have the money. If you have the money to buy it back from the person you sold it to, they should sell it back to you. It is, after all, your ancestral land.

You sold it as a hardship case. You wouldn't sell your land unless you were in real hardship. But if something came around where you actually had a kinsman redeemer, someone who's a close relative, they could redeem it for you.

Not everyone could, but some closely related. He says in verse 25, if one of your brethren becomes poor and has sold some of his possession, and if his kinsman redeemer comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brothers sold. Or if the man

has no one to redeem it, he himself, if he becomes able to redeem it, he can do so and he can count the years since its sale and restore the balance to the man to whom he sold it.

That is to say, if the man buys it for a certain price and the man who now owns it gets a few years of crops off it, and then the guy who sold it to him comes up with some money, he doesn't have to pay the same price he sold it for because the owner has already gotten some profit off the land. So it's supposed to deduce the value of the crops that have already gone to the new owner from the price that the old owner has to pay to get it back. And in verses 29 through 30, it makes a distinction with homes that are sold in a walled city, as opposed to land farmland and also as opposed to village homes in a walled city.

If you sold your house, you could redeem it within the first year if you could afford to. But if you couldn't, then you lose it for good and it doesn't go back in the year of Jubilee. It is assumed that a house is not the same thing as property.

You make your living off of property. You just live in a house. You don't grow your food in your house.

And so a house doesn't have to go back. You sell your house, you've got a chance to redeem it in the first year after you sell it if you have a seller's remorse. And if you have somebody who can afford to pay it and buy it back for you.

That's what it says in verse 29 and 30. If a man sells his house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it's sold. Within a full year, he may redeem it.

But if it is not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to him who bought it throughout his generations. In other words, it shall not be released in the Jubilee. That's a very unusual exception because land would be returned and also homes in villages, unwalled villages, they would be returned in Jubilee.

We read that in verses 31 through 33. However, the houses of villages which have no wall around them shall be counted as fields of the country. They may be redeemed and they shall be released in the Jubilee.

Nevertheless, the cities of the Levites and the houses in the cities of the possession, the Levites may redeem at any time. And if a man purchases a house from the Levites, then the house that was sold in the city of his possession shall be released in the year of Jubilee for the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel. But the field of the common land of their cities may not be sold for it is their perpetual possession.

Now, we haven't yet read about the Levitical city, so this might be confusing to you. But

the Levites did not receive ancestral property like the other tribes did. The Levites were not farmers.

They were full time ministers and therefore they didn't need farmland. What they had instead were 48 different cities that were assigned to be Levitical cities, cities for them to live in. They had houses and they were city dwellers and they lived in these cities.

And then there was some common Levitical land on the outside of each city surrounding the city out a certain distance from the walls. Now, the Levitical cities were walled cities and therefore they need to be given special consideration because we've just been told in verses 29 and 30 that if a person in a walled city sells his house, he can only redeem it within the first year. And if he doesn't, he never gets it back.

That's not true of Levitical cities. So Levitical cities were walled cities and Levites had houses in them. But a Levite might be poor also.

He might sell his house. But unlike the average urban house, the Levitical urban house could be redeemed even after the first year. It could be redeemed at any time.

And if the Levite never had the money to redeem it, it does go back to him in the Jubilee. So the law is simply that if you are not a Levite, not in a Levitical city and you sell your house in a walled city, then you only have a year to redeem it. And if you don't, you've lost it forever.

But if you have a village home or if you're a Levite and sell your home in the walled Levitical city, you do have the right to redeem at any time and to get it back in the year of Jubilee. But the land around the Levitical cities, it says in verse 34, cannot be sold at all. That's because it's not the private possession of any one Levite.

A poor Levite can't sell off some of the land around the Levitical city because it's not his. It's the common land of all the Levites who live in the city. So it's not sold.

Now, verse 35. Basically, it's the rule here in verse 35 through 38 is not to lend with interest to your Jewish brother who needs to borrow because he's poor and you don't want to exploit him by adding interest to his loan. He'd have a hard enough time paying back the loan itself.

If one of your brethren becomes poor and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him like a stranger or a soldier that he may live with you. In other words, he should be like a visitor. You should let him live in your home with you if he's poor.

Take no usury. That means interest. Usury means excessive interest, but it says usury or interest from him.

So you can't even charge interest. But fear your God that your brother may live with you.

You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit.

In other words, you don't exploit his bad luck by saying, oh, I can make some money off this guy. I'll give you some food, but you have to pay me back some interest. So I make a profit off you, off your poverty.

I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God. Now, the rest of this chapter deals with slavery issues, and the law is essentially this, that if you were a Jew and you had a Jewish neighbor who became poor and sells himself into slavery, you can't treat him harshly as a slave. It says in verse 39, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave.

But the next verse says, but as a hired servant and as a sojourner, he shall be with you and he shall serve you until the year of jubilee. So there's a difference between the privileges given to slaves and those of a hired servant. Now, the man sold himself, so he is a slave, but he's not to be treated like other slaves.

He's supposed to be treated like a fellow Jew. Now, it's made clear in verse 44 that the rule is different for pagan slaves. Pagan slaves become perpetual possessions.

They're not released in jubilee and they can be treated like slaves, like property merely. But your Jewish brother who becomes poor and has to sell himself, he becomes rather an indentured servant rather than a slave. He serves only until, well, an earlier legislation said he has to be offered his freedom after seven years of service.

But if the year of jubilee happens to fall sooner than that, let's say he sells himself into slavery three years before jubilee, well, then he has to be released at jubilee. So his sale of himself into service is only for three years instead of the normal six. The Exodus said that if a Jewish servant serves you for six years, you have to offer him his freedom in the seventh year.

If he rejects his freedom and wants to remain a servant, then you pierce his ear and put a ring there and he's a servant for life. But presumably not if the jubilee happens to follow within the rest of his lifetime. Obviously, many people will be servants for life and never have a jubilee fall in their lifetime after that.

Let's say a guy who's 30 years old sells himself into slavery for life. Well, if there's been a recent jubilee, he's not going to see another one. You know, he's going to serve for life.

But if the jubilee did fall within some time in the remainder of time, he'd be released even though he was a slave for life. So these are the rules here. Jewish slaves, they're treated like hired servants, not like chattel.

And they are released at the jubilee. Heathen slaves, that's a different story. You can make them serve with rigor.

But it says at the end of verse 46, but regarding your brethren of the children of Israel, you should not rule over one another with rigor. Now, rigor means harshness or severity, and it's the word that is used back in Exodus of how the taskmasters treated Israel in Egypt. They made them serve with rigor, which just means they didn't just make them serve, as you might expect an employee or a servant in your household to do their work.

They had to do it with a lash as a threat over them. They had to move fast. They had to work harder.

It was not a leisurely service they had. They had to work with rigor. Now, you could do that.

You could require your pagan slaves to work hard like that. But your Jewish slave, your Jewish servant, you couldn't make him serve with rigor. Because you, as a Jew, have come from a people who were abused that way, and you're supposed to have sympathy on each other and not make the descendants of your ancestors serve with rigor under you as they had served under the Egyptians.

Verse 47, now, if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich and one of your brethren who dwells with him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner. So here's a third situation. The first situation is where a Jew sells himself to a Jewish family as a servant.

The second situation is where a Jewish family buys a heathen slave. But this third situation for a heathen buys a Jewish slave. Now, this is assuming the heathen is in the land of Israel.

It's a foreigner who has come to live in the land of Israel. He has to live under the laws of Israel, even though he's not a Jew. And therefore, the law is essentially that he has to observe the year of Jubilee.

Even the heathen has to observe it if he buys a Hebrew servant. The Hebrew servants are going to be released in the year of Jubilee, whether they are owned by Jewish people who are observant Jews or whether they're owned by pagan people who live under the Jewish order in Israel. That's essentially what this last part of this chapter is talking about, how that even a heathen owner has to obey the Jewish law about the Jubilee and release his Jewish servants.

And the details of verses 50 through 55 are simply about the price that would be expected to be paid to redeem him, because he doesn't have to wait to the year of Jubilee. If he's sold into slavery to a pagan, he can be redeemed out of slavery even before the year of Jubilee. And then, of course, it says in verse 54, if he's not redeemed in these years, then he should be released in the year of Jubilee, both he and his children with him for the children of Israel are servants to me.

They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh, your God. In other words, they can't be permanently servants of people.

They can't be servants of heathen or even permanently servants of Jews as long as there's a Jubilee observed. God is the one who decides what his servants will do, and he proclaims they have to be released at a certain time. And the release from slavery, the release from debt, the return of one's inheritance, these all have their spiritual counterpart, of course, in what Jesus has brought.

We're released from the slavery of sin and the debt of sin, the guilt and the penalty of sin. The penalty and the slavery of sin were released from by Christ. And our inheritance, which was forfeit by Adam and Eve, has been repurchased for us by our kinsmen, redeem them, because Jesus was not an angel.

He was a man. He became one of our kinsmen. He came and became a human being so he could be related to us, a close relative, so he could redeem us from the fall.

And so we have lost our inheritance with God through our ancestors. But through the redemption that is in Christ, we return to our inheritance, which is our relationship with God. So all these things about the Jubilee year have sort of a, they foreshadow and are a type of the spiritual salvation in Christ.

So Christ announced at the beginning of his ministry that he had come to proclaim that liberty, which is the Jubilee year, spiritually speaking.