

MARCH 1

Welcome to March. If you have kept up, keep it going. Remember, it is more important to read your Bible than to read these notes. If you have a friend or two who will do this with you, it will help you to have the accountability. Then on the 17th you can meet together and celebrate your effort by eating something with corned beef and drinking some appropriate beverage. (For example, a McLeprechaun and a Shamrock Shake?)

Leviticus 24:1-25:46

Leviticus 24

Vs. 1-9 Along with the feasts and holy days, there were these two things mentioned. Although the emphasis has been on the yearly feasts, the people would remember too that each day, there were provisions being made for them that should lead to celebration.

I guess you don't have to be Einstein to figure out the symbolic nature of these. The light symbolized God's leading of the people and the *twelve loaves* symbolized His provision for the people. The people knew there were two things the Lord always provided for them. The one thing not mentioned here that also stood in the Holy Place was the altar of incense. This was probably to signify the prayers of the people constantly coming before God in gratitude for His provision symbolized on the other tables.

Notice that the people had to provide the oil for the lamps. I wonder where they got this oil in the wilderness. Maybe olive trees grow wildly, or maybe they bought it from merchant caravans. At this point they had been in the wilderness about a year, so I don't think they would have had a lot left over from Egypt. Since the people had to provide the oil, it might signify that they were grateful for the light that God gave them.

For us as disciples we don't have to bring olive oil or flour to the church for weekly symbolic ceremonies. God provides us with light and our daily provision and care. To receive God's light, all we have to do is come to Him and sit with Him and His Word. But therein lies the rub. Try to convince the average believer that they should sit for 20 minutes a day reading the Word and for 20 minutes praying and they will nod. Some may give a grunt of assent. But most will not do it. If you make this a requirement for leaders, you might have a mutiny or angry leaders. Most Christians are too busy to come to the light and sit quietly before the Lord. That cannot be the heart of a disciple. We don't bring a cow or lamb or oil. We bring ourselves, renounce everything and follow our Lord every day in the harvest. We all have busy lives, but how can we be too busy to spend time with the Lord? Read Luke 14:25-35.

Vs. 10-23 It seems to me that as Moses was writing this, on that day, this situation arose. It would be a case in point of obeying the commandments.

I don't think this guy said anything more than something you'd hear on TV or expect someone to say in a fight with emotions running high. God is a "good old boy" and just sort of shakes His head when we do this, right? Wrong. Here, God is stressing the point of His holiness among the people. They needed to remember (as we do) that He is always close and that He always hears this stuff.

Some interesting things here:

First, the man's father was an Egyptian. This might have had something to do with the lack of respect or the cause of the fight. Later we'll hear that the Egyptians who traveled with Israel created some discontent and rebellion that some people in Israel had to be punished for.

Second, the tribe of Dan is mentioned. In Judges, Dan will be the first tribe to fall into total idolatry. Probably for that reason, Dan is not listed among the tribes in the book of Revelation

that compose the 144,000. This guy is the first person put to death for violating one of the Ten Commandments. And he is of the tribe of Dan. ☹

Third, the repetition of *for I am the Lord your God*.

Finally, the people did as the Lord commanded Moses. Obedience, for now.

Leviticus 25:1-46

Actually this will all flow into tomorrow's reading. This is an awesome chapter, in that what is commanded here was never, ever done in the land, not once. No king did it, not even David or Josiah. The amount of dependence on God that this required was more than anyone could humanly muster up.

If we were doing a Bible study, I'd ask you to break this chapter into two main divisions and then each division into two parts. That's just an exercise to help people see the flow of a chapter (and keep them awake).

The main division is after v. 17. Verses 1-17 give a general description of the Sabbath year and the year of jubilee, and vs. 18-55 give specifics as to how to deal with various situations that might arise.

Vs. 1-7 and 18-22 have to do with the Sabbatical year. Everything else has to do with the year of jubilee.

I won't make a lot of comments here. Your own observations will be better than anything I can say. Reading the verses on the Sabbatical year and particularly 18-22, you understand that if the people couldn't trust God for this, they would never trust Him for the year of jubilee.

Vs. 1-7 This is the Sabbath year. Verse 2 says this is the land that God gave them. In all of this talk about the land, notice to whom the land really belonged. Notice in v. 5 that no one could harvest or sell the grain or fruit. Everyone was free to go into any field and take what they needed for that day. If you understand this, it was a year off from field work with complete dependence and provision from God. To think that the entire nation was to do this is incredible. Who needs four weeks of vacation when every seven years you get a year off?

Vs. 8-12 This 50th year was the year of jubilee. It began on the Day of Atonement in the 49th year, which was also a Sabbatical year. This means that the 50th year was also a Sabbatical year; that is, they were given two years in a row in which they were not to work their fields. This time off from work was one reason it was called the year of jubilee. They were supposed to celebrate.

Vs. 13-17 If you understand this, the land in Israel never changed possession, but if a person needed to they could lease the land. This would always be measured from one year of jubilee to the other, estimating how many harvests would come until the land was given back.

Vs. 18-22 This information was given for the people to trust God for every Sabbatical year. He would provide enough in the sixth year to get them to the ninth year. If Israel had obeyed the Lord, they would have been the talk of all the nations. This would mean that when the Sabbatical year was followed by a year of jubilee, God would provide even more and the people would have to trust even more.

Vs. 23-34 These were regulations regarding the leasing of land with respect to the year of jubilee when it all had to be returned. You'll find one interesting exception in this. Notice how v. 23 sets the tone for these instructions. This reminds me of something I was reading this morning that Jesus taught His disciples in Luke 16:12, *And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?*

Vs. 35-43 These regulations have to do with the poor people in Israel. They could become "indentured" servants until the year of jubilee.

Vs. 44-46 These slaves were real slaves. Those slaves who would belong to Israel were treated with a respect and with rights that no other nation gave their slaves. These rules were for Israel as a nation ruled by God. Eventually, Paul and the Spirit would say that people should not become slaves, thereby beginning the end of slavery.

In thinking of the Sabbatical year and the year of jubilee, any of us would have been deeply challenged to do what these people were asked to do. Thankfully, God no longer requires this. But, true obedience is always costly and radical. Being a follower of Christ in this harvest means a dependence on God and a willingness to give things up. Jesus is our sacrificial example. Because we hold on to things and see our security as coming from credit cards, jobs and people, I have a feeling that we're missing very obvious things related to the Great Commission and the harvest. Therefore, not as many prisoners and slaves of sin get set free.

Mark 10:13-31

Vs. 13-16 Poor disciples. Where are all these kids coming from? This tells me that when Jesus taught or healed, the disciples did crowd control. The disciples had all these deeply needy people in lines like kids waiting to see Santa, and then these moms showed up. This "kid" situation seemed low priority to them. The kids weren't sick; they were just kids. They learned a lesson about needs and the value of simple wide-eyed faith and trust.

V. 15 is a very important verse, and we're about to see an example of the danger mentioned here.

Vs. 17-22 This is the rich young ruler.

Again, what great training for the disciples. You could have a class on "the dangers of riches and idolatry" and never get the point across like here. Here the Father is showing the disciples what happens when someone loses their childlike faith.

V. 20 Notice that this guy was serious and had lived a good life according to the requirements of the law.

V. 21 Somehow in this, Jesus actually communicated love so that Peter (Mark's source) noticed this. Jesus put His finger on this man's real god.

Vs. 23-31 Notice now that Jesus teaches the disciples from this incident that the Father arranged.

V. 24 Notice that the disciples fully understood Jesus and realized that salvation would be next to impossible if v. 23 were true. Notice that Jesus calls them *children*. Look back up to vs. 13-16. Very interesting.

V. 25 This is a sewing or surgical needle.

Vs. 26-27 Now if these verses are a true picture of the reality, then "stuff" really is a problem. Money is bigger than we think. Being saved and being disciples doesn't shield us from this temptation and influence any more than being a Christian keeps us from getting a cold. Our "treasure in heaven" determines how we use our time and how we focus our lives. It determines our faith. Are we so secure with our holdings in heaven, that we could pour out and "waste" our lives on earth for Christ, following Him in the harvest? The "acceptable" answer is "yes," but not many are doing it. Yeah, I feel bad, too; but that's why we're encouraging one another to go in the right direction together.

Vs. 28-31 Peter and the others had given up their careers to follow Jesus. This is why they were "children." In Jesus saying what He says here, He is speaking to all of us. We follow for other reasons, ready to spend our lives in the harvest. We don't follow to gain. We gained the minute we believed. Now we follow out of love and obedience. But, there is blessing. Note that Mark is the one who mentions persecutions. Jesus warns them that the *first will be last*, etc., suggesting they may not always understand God's standard of fairness. We are simply to love and trust our

Lord like children as we follow, making disciples, who make disciples. Do you see the connection back to verses Mark 10:13-16? Simple, childlike faith trusts and follows.

Psalm 44:9-26

The sons of Korah were appointed by David to lead singing in the tabernacle in Jerusalem, but whenever a godly king arose, he always gathered the descendants of Korah and put them in charge of the worship of the temple. The only historical situation I can think of that would fit with the lament here is during the days of Hezekiah. At that time Assyria was taking all the surrounding nations captive, on their way to becoming a world power. As Assyria captured the northern kingdom of Israel and swept into Judea, taking villages captive and taking the people away as slaves, Assyria thought that God had turned His back on His people. It was through this hardship that godliness was shaped and strengthened in Judea and especially in Jerusalem where all the people ran for protection. The people were following a godly king, yet Judea was being defeated by their enemies.

Just like Job, God allowed these people to endure hardship to teach them something and to warn them. The prophets Hosea and Isaiah were used by God to convey this warning and Hezekiah and the people listened to the Lord.

Vs. 9-16 As we will soon be reading in Deuteronomy, the mark of God's blessing was that Israel would never have to turn their backs on their enemies and that they would be held in honor by their neighbors. Only sin would cause God to let Israel be humiliated. "Falling away" had been the history of Israel leading up to the historical events that gave birth to this psalm.

Vs. 17-22 Verse 17 was true in that a revival of faith was going on during the reign of King Hezekiah, but it was after years of drifting from God. The spirituality of the nation was paper thin and would be torn to shreds by Hezekiah's son, Manasseh.

V. 22 Paul quotes this verse in Romans 8 and ends it, *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.* In the context of Romans 8, we don't know why God does what He does, but we do know that God produces good **as He uses** those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. *For good* might be that we don't understand His purpose and die, but we trust that God knew what He was doing and used our death for His good plan.

Vs. 23-26 The Spirit is inspiring the writer to cry out to God. This is God's will for us when we don't understand. It is this holding to our faith and hope and looking to God that defeats the enemy. It is a power the enemy cannot understand or resist. Many Christians in many times and many countries have endured deep oppression and injustice and cried out to God. Their only victory was clinging to Christ and they won.

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (Rev. 12:11)

Proverbs 10:20-21

Just for fun, try to put these two Proverbs together: 20a and 21a / 20b and 21b.