

MARCH 3

Time to celebrate again! Today you will finish the third book in the OT and begin the fourth. You deserve a Blarney© Latte!

Leviticus 27:14-34

Vs. 14-25 The temporary donation or "vow" of a house or land will make more sense when we read Numbers. The Levites did not inherit any land. They had to live among the people. As the nation became more organized and social needs grew, people could "vow" houses and land to the Levites to use for themselves, or for the widows and orphans, for example, that the Levites helped. It could also be that some of these houses might have been used by the Levites for schools. You get the picture.

V. 19 If a person needed the house or land back, they could redeem it but all of this was done with respect to the year of jubilee.

Vs. 26-27 All firstborn animals belonged to the Lord, even the firstborn donkey or camel. These would have to be "bought back" from the Lord. It is interesting that they didn't call this a tax. It was a redemption, therefore having a very symbolic meaning that would become a part of their lives and culture.

Vs. 28-29 This is referring to things given permanently. This was different from something vowed for a period of time. A person devoted to death meant that he had committed a felony punishable by death, and therefore he could not be ransomed, but had to pay for his sin.

Vs. 30-34 Even the tithe of the crops could be redeemed.

One of the first blog entries I wrote in February of 2010 was titled "Who needs Leviticus?" The answer is, "We do." Because of the relational nature of Christianity today, we are tempted to treat God as common, like a buddy; and we forget how awesomely holy and separate He is. We imagine Him as just a big, mighty version of ourselves, who will even occasionally laugh at our crassness and bad habits. Not so. The fact that He loves us and helps us should be beyond our comprehension, considering how holy and majestic He is. Leviticus brings us back to a place of balance, understanding that our heavenly Father, our Lord and the Holy Spirit are holy and worthy of our complete and holy devotion.

Numbers 1:1-54

V. 1 The time marker here is very important. This is taking place one month after they set up the tabernacle. (See Ex. 40:2.) This means that everything in the book of Leviticus took a month.

Vs. 2-19 I wonder how they came up with the name for this book? Even though there had been a census when the people came out of Egypt, this is official and emphasizes the ordering of the nation before God. The people will be organized around the tabernacle and be given a specific organization for traveling to the land. The people should have been kind of excited.

One thing to constantly keep in mind is that they had the manna every day and they had the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. They lived in the presence of God and the supernatural. Also, notice that the only ones counted were men 20 and up. If you understand this, you realize that the size of Israel had to be in the millions. That the Lord was feeding them every day was amazing.

Vs. 20-46 Notice the size of the tribes. Which tribe is the biggest? How does this relate back to Jacob's parting words in Genesis 49? Now (and this is a trick question), who is the second largest? This also relates back to Jacob. In Jacob's parting words, Joseph receives a huge portion. Although Ephraim is given the firstborn designation, two tribes are counted here as the people of

Joseph. Judah is still bigger. In one very important event in Numbers, the tribes of Judah and Ephraim will be exalted in Israel, represented by two men.

Vs. 47-54 The Levites are given a great honor. God already had this planned, obviously, since both Aaron and Moses were of the tribe of Levi. But, remember when Moses asked who was on the Lord's side when he needed help regarding the golden calf? It was the entire tribe of Levi that came to him and helped to avert God's anger in the camp of Israel. Though the Levites would receive no inheritance in the land, they were given a special position in the nation, literally and figuratively, as mediators between God and the people.

V. 53 This means that the Levites would camp encircled around the tabernacle as a kind of buffer zone between God and the people. Again, there is great symbolism in God choosing this one tribe to have no inheritance on earth, but to be near the Lord and serve His people.

The church (Jesus' disciples following during this time of harvest) is also told it has no inheritance on earth. Jesus taught His disciples that as they abided in Him, their reward was in heaven and their commission was on earth to follow Him in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples. The disciple's role in assisting people to come before the Lord and worship Him has a sense of being a Levite or a priest. Look at 1 Peter 2:9 and then read how Paul saw his service to the Gentiles in Romans 15:16. It is clear that in order to serve, worship and follow Jesus now, we must have our inheritance in heaven and see our time on earth as service for Him in making disciples and leading the lost to Christ.

Mark 11:1-25

Vs. 1-11 This is Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people thought He was coming as the eternally reigning king, but He was coming as the Lamb of God.

Vs. 2-6 Notice that even though "disaster" would follow, Jesus was showing the disciples that all was divinely planned.

Vs. 9-10 Apparently *Hosanna* means something like, "God, come and save us." They misunderstood what this "coming" meant. Next time Jesus will be coming to reign over the world.

V. 11 This is interesting. It was apparently late so Jesus just looked around to get the lay of the land and prepare for the next day.

Vs. 12-14 This passage has always puzzled me. When Jesus curses the fig tree, why does Mark mention that it wasn't the season for figs? That sort of makes Jesus' expectation unrealistic and the curse senseless.

What I understand is this. If it had been fig season, Jesus could have seen the fruit, or lack thereof, from a distance. This explains why he went to the tree to look. It wasn't fig season. It was, however, common food for people to eat the buds where the figs would grow. These came out first and then were covered by the leaves, making them invisible. People ate these buds. Jesus assumed there would be buds but couldn't see them. He could have seen the figs. He had to go and look, because it wasn't fig season, so he couldn't see that there were no buds to eat. The absence of the buds meant no figs later in the year and that the tree was unfruitful.

Vs. 15-19 This was the second time Jesus cleansed the temple. He did it at the first Passover of His ministry and now at the final Passover of His ministry.

V. 17 It is interesting that Mark mentions that the temple was meant to be *a house of prayer for the nations*. It will be in the future.

V. 18 Jesus taught right up to the end and the people were astonished at His teaching. The astonishment of the people made the leaders fearful. How funny.

Vs. 20-25 Now, after reading about Jesus cleansing the temple, we can see how symbolic this sign was. The nation was the unfruitful tree. Within 40 years, that generation would be judged for their lack of faith and unfruitfulness. The temple would be destroyed and the city left in ruins, and many of the Jews would be killed by the Romans.

Vs. 22-24 So, why does Jesus give the disciples, what appears to be, a lesson on faith that can curse trees and move mountains? In the context of the harvest and in the coming commission to the church, they were given authority to use God's power. I think the lesson is regarding fruitlessness vs. fruitfulness. If we are working in the harvest and have faith as a mustard seed, we will never be fruitless. Our asking will be focused on the harvest and the Spirit will direct His power to the harvest.

V. 25 Jesus mentioned forgiveness frequently in the training of the Twelve. You cannot mediate forgiveness if you are harboring unforgiveness toward others. In that case, God withholds mercy from us for our failings, and we lack authority in His service. This is a very important thing for us as we work in the harvest. For the disciples, the events that would follow would stretch them in terms of being able to forgive others. My take on this.

Psalm 46

A probable time for Psalm 46, and the historical period for the other psalms written by the sons of Korah, is the reign of Hezekiah. Psalm 46 was probably written after the events recorded in 2 Kings 18-19. Jerusalem was surrounded by the invincible army of an arrogant king.

V. 1 This is the declaration, after the fact. What God did was amazing. One night, there was no hope. In the morning, there was no enemy.

Vs. 2-3 Compare the threat of the Assyrian army to the poetic threat of the raging seas, shaking the earth to its foundations, waiting with its mouth wide open, devouring mountains. The Assyrians had "defeated" all the other gods, and thus "devoured" all the other mountains or hopes or refuges of the surrounding nations. Now they made a mistake. They came to the wrong mountain, and to the wrong, actually the real, God.

Vs. 4-5 These verses are a contrast to the chaos outside Jerusalem and the situation in the middle of God's city on top of His mountain. A stream flows out from His throne, spreading throughout the city, bringing peace and a mellow, intoxicating joy. God is the cause, because of His presence. Deliverance will come in the morning, usually seen as the time of worship and prayers to God.

Vs. 6-7 The nations have to rage to make *kingdoms totter*, but God only needs to say a word. Verse 7 is God's victory and Israel's declaration, which will be repeated again.

Vs. 8-9 This tells the people to look and see what God did with a word. In 2 Kings 19 it says in very few words, almost anticlimactically, that God sent out an angel, and 185,000 soldiers were slain in their sleep. The Assyrians awoke; the camp was full of dead bodies, and they went home. There was a lot of supplies and equipment left behind, and the people used the weapons and chariots for firewood.

Vs. 10-11 This tells us what to do when we have no place to find refuge or help or hope. Amen.

Proverbs 10:23

Basically this Proverb is a gauge to see if we are fools or people of understanding. A fool gets "a kick" out of doing stupid stuff. It feeds his heart to frustrate a boss or get some silliness going. It's like telling a good joke.

For a person of understanding the same is true. It feeds his heart to find wisdom and to put it into practice, seeing it work through his family or group of friends.

It may be that we can say of ourselves that while we are not fools, we haven't yet learned to be persons of understanding. If finding and using wisdom doesn't yet feed our hearts, it needs to.