

# Leviticus 25

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[ 0 : 00 ] We continue this morning from Leviticus chapter 25, our series in the book Drawing Near to God.

! It's one of the most historic and iconic symbols in America.! We're weighing in at more than 2,000 pounds, with a large crack in it.

Actually, it's the second crack because back in 1751, when it was first created, it cracked upon delivery.

It was melted down and rebuilt only to crack again several years later, with technicians attempting to actually repair it by making it whiter.

It's an engineering logic that did not work. The symbol known as the Liberty Bell was said to have been rung at the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

[ 1 : 19 ] And it became a rallying cry for abolitionists wishing to end slavery and assemble for everything from women's suffrage to civil rights. This bell, though heavy, weathered, broken, and now silent, still somehow speaks as it sits in the Liberty Bell Center in Philadelphia, and is viewed by more than a million visitors every year.

But what is most interesting about this bell is that inscribed on the side of the bell is, wait for it, a verse from Leviticus chapter 25.

I know you're amazed. It's like they knew hundreds of years ago that I'd be preaching this sermon today.

It's specifically on the side of the bell. It's verse 10. Proclaim liberty throughout all the land and to all the inhabitants thereof.

Here is the command of God inscribed on something now broken, used to shout freedom to the nation.

[ 2 : 52 ] This verse proclaimed liberty to the nation of Israel in our text. It proclaimed liberty to our nation back in 1751.

And it is proclaiming liberty to all of us today. With this liberty in mind, follow me this morning.

Better yet, just get in the car with me as we now take the Jubilee Road to rest and redemption.

I spoke about it a couple of weeks ago from Leviticus chapter 23. How God established a yearly rhythm of sorts for the nation of Israel by putting in place major feasts, festivals or holy days that they were commanded to observe.

These holy days were prescribed by God to help his people not only put their busy lives on pause, but in order to reflect, remember and celebrate what the Lord has done.

[ 3 : 59 ] And also to mark their blessed privilege of being the people of God. The foundation to all of this was the Sabbath, a holy day, a holy convocation that was set apart on the seventh day of every week.

Not only for solemn rest, sincere reflection, sacred gathering, but also as a constant reminder of God's relationship with his people. And for extra credit, let me remind you that in the new covenant every day is a day of Sabbath rest in the finished work.

God, Jesus fulfilled the purpose and plan of the Sabbath for us and in us. Jesus is our rest. In our text today, we also begin with a commanded Sabbath.

But this time it's not a weekly Sabbath on the seventh day. It's a year long Sabbath in the seventh year.

And it's not the regular personal Sabbath. No, it's a Sabbath for the land. The land, agriculturally speaking, was to receive rest one year out of seven.

[ 5 : 24 ] Now, this command was already mentioned back in Exodus chapter 23. But here, for the sake of emphasis, God repeats it in Leviticus 25. And specifically, he says, verse 2, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord.

There was to be no planting, no pruning, no harvesting. This is powerful for a few reasons. First, farmers will tell you even today, this is why they rotate crops, why they use fertilizer, whatever it takes to keep carbon in the soil, because the land can be depleted of all its vital nutrients over time by constant use.

Yes, the land gets tired. So, to allow the ground to remain fallow for the year, to give it its own Sabbath actually helped the land to reset and replenish what was lost so that it can again produce.

Let me also say to you pastorally as a quick aside that you are designed in the same beautiful way.

God made you to be programmed for rest. I've heard people say that you can borrow from sleep, but you can't in the end steal it.

[ 6 : 57 ] Meaning, you can get into a season where you've got kids up at night, where you have to cram for some assignment, or to get work done, and you can borrow from sleep, and you can go for a stretch, but the Lord has made us that eventually your body will make you make up for the rest that you're not taking.

You'll break down maybe mentally, maybe physically, maybe both. So church, take time to rest and recharge.

And another caution. You must be mindful of this both physically and spiritually. Spiritually, where there can be a tendency to go our own way, living by our own efforts, abandoning spiritual disciplines like praying and reading scripture, and not resting and rejoicing in the Lord, where we can be connected, renewed, revived, and replenished.

You need Sabbath rest also. So God not only commands that there is a Sabbath for the land, but another powerful observation here is where this land is coming from and who it ultimately belongs to.

Verse 2 again says, when you come into the land that I give you. Make no mistake.

[ 8 : 25 ] This land is not your land. This land is not my land. From California to the New York Island.

This land is God's land. Through this Sabbath commandment, God is clearly establishing that this belongs to me, and I will give instructions as to what is done with it and how it is to be cared for.

You know this principle. You know this principle. Stewardship still pertains today. Everything we have, God has given us.

We hold it in trust as stewards, and therefore, when we deal with what God in his mercy and grace has allotted to us, we have to remember where it came from.

[9:36] Those things we've gotten because we made better deals than the other guy. We voy voy  
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in and out of my room, especially when I wasn't there.

My dad comes home and he was not so impressed. He sees it and he says, notice the verbiage, who put this lock on my door?

Well, whatever happened next is not really important. It's not relevant to our discussion. What is important is that later he said to me, all the doors and rooms in this house belong to me.

But never forget your resource. Never forget where it all comes from. God wanted to reiterate through this Sabbath year that this land and later on, he would say, even all of you belong to me.

Think about it. You can hear Israel saying, OK, God, we think we understand your command. You want us not to mess with the land in the seventh year.

We're going to be starving. If we're not planting or reaping anything, how are we going to eat? And of course, the answer that's given initially in this passage is that everything that grows spontaneously on its own in that year is going to be free for gleaning for everyone in Israel.

What a gracious, loving, caring God. And what a glorious lesson for us.

I get it. For many of us, this isn't the most natural thing in the world to just let go and trust God. We want to be able to be in control.

[ 14 : 19 ] We want to be able to take care of things ourselves. We've got a plan if this happens or if something goes wrong. And okay, planning is good. But your ultimate trust shouldn't be in your plan.

Your ultimate trust should be in the one who has the master plan. God Almighty. The children of Israel have seen God's faithfulness as he provided for them in the wilderness.

Christ Church Chicago has seen God's faithfulness as he provided for us just this past week. And each of you have seen God's faithfulness over the course of your lives as he has provided for you time and time again.

Don't stop trusting him now. God wanted his people then and his people now to live their lives by faith, trusting in him.

Our daily prayer should be, Lord, I'm going to live my life honoring you, obeying you, serving you, and putting you first. And God says, if you do that, I will take care of you.

[ 15 : 34 ] This year of Sabbath rest reinforced the necessity to depend on God's providence.

Now we began with the provision and command for the Sabbath year, but there's even a more grand, more glorious celebration that is to come in this passage.

Not once every seven years, but once every 50 years, there would be the year of Jubilee. Let me set it up here by again reading the introduction starting in verse 8.

You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you 49 years. You didn't realize you were going to brush up on your math this morning.

God not only gave the mathematic answer, he showed his work. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the 10th day of the 7th month, on the day of atonement.

[ 16 : 40 ] You shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land, and you shall consecrate the 50th year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.

There's that verse on the liberty bell again. It shall be a Jubilee for you when each of you shall return to his property, and each of you shall return to his clan.

So here it is. It's the day of atonement. There is a trumpet blast, which actually is the literal meaning of Jubilee in Hebrew.

The trumpet was to blast and sound and announce that Jubilee, that liberty, that freedom was here.

Not only was there the wiping away of the year's sins. Remember, that's what happened on the day of atonement with the goat sacrifice and the scapegoat into the wilderness.

[ 17 : 38 ] There was also a second year of Sabbath rest for the land. Then additionally, 50 years of potential financial ruin and debt were wiped away.

Those who had been enslaved were set free and returned home. And property, land, was returned to its original owner as given by God.

It was really a righteous reset of sorts. So in Jubilee, there were really two main aspects.

It was a Jubilee with regard to land or property. And it was a Jubilee with regard to people. With respect to the land, starting at verse 13 and going several verses thereafter, God gives a set of intricate directives for all my financial advisors out there, dealing with fair prices, percentages, proration, and redemption as it pertains to land and property.

Let me see if I can kind of summarize it for you this morning. What would happen is that over the years, sometimes people would have to sell some of their land.

[ 18 : 55 ] Why? Well, because they might have run out of other options. Perhaps someone died and they couldn't make the harvest or locusts destroyed part of the land or robbers came in to steal part of the crops or maybe the family just didn't do the work and they were poor managers.

Whatever the reason, you might have to sell off some of your land just to make ends meet and put food on the table. In God's brilliant economic plan for his people, that price for the land would be set according to how many years were left until Jubilee.

Jubilee, when everyone would ultimately get their property back and go back to their original land allotment. So really, when you think about it, it wasn't so much selling their land as it was leasing their land.

Why all this? Well, God reiterates what he said before back in verse 2 here in verse 23 by saying, The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, meaning forever, for the land is mine.

We saw this earlier. This land is God's land that he allotted for a specific people and a specific season to ultimately accomplish his specific purpose.

[ 20 : 20 ] Additionally, it's critical to note that there was always the open-ended option that if you had to sell one of your family, a kinsman redeemer could come by and redeem the property to keep it in the family.

Think about Ruth and the kinsman redeemer. Then I need you to think now about how Jesus redeemed you with his own blood.

Yeah, Pastor Joe, they're talking about land and property here. Okay, I hear you. I got you. Philippians chapter 3 verse 20 says that you are citizens of heaven.

This world is not your home. There is a place being prepared for you right now. The day will come when you will hear another trumpet blast, Lord Jesus, and get to go back home to your true home.

Thank God for the Jubilee Road to rest and redemption. Now, yes, there were a number of special cases, exceptions, and scenarios in this passage, but the basic principle here is straightforward.

[ 21 : 39 ] You have a land allotted to you by God. For some unfortunate reason, you have to sell it. You're really leasing it off. You can always buy it back or have a family member redeem it.

But worst case scenario, all of the pieces of the puzzle get put back in their original place on year 50, the year of Jubilee.

Now, with respect to people, starting at verse 35, the text says, if a person still finds himself in financial trouble prior to the year of Jubilee, and he has no more property to sell, then he can try to secure a loan, and the person giving the loan can't charge him interest.

But if that doesn't work and things remain bad, one might even sell himself. Now, again, it's important to provide some context on this concept of slavery found here in our passage and how somehow these particular texts keep falling to me.

In the time of ancient Israel, slavery was often an economic arrangement, not the racial or dehumanizing institution it was and still is in some places in more recent Western history, like the transatlantic slave trade.

[ 23 : 09 ] Here, people would sell themselves in servitude when they were in extreme poverty or debt. It was a form of indentured servitude, a survival mechanism in a world with no banks, no bankruptcy laws.

If someone lost their land or couldn't pay a debt, they might enter the service of a wealthier individual to survive. Now, keep in mind that just as it was with the land, you could be redeemed at any time by a family member or maybe even yourself if you'd saved up enough money.

You always had the option for someone to buy your freedom. This might be a great time to remind you, lest you are tempted to look down on this situation, that all of us at one point in time were in bondage because of a debt we couldn't pay.

We needed a wealthy benefactor, a savior to redeem us and pay our debt. Thanks be to God for the Jubilee Road to rest and redemption.

If then finally all else failed and you were not redeemed, you would come to the year of Jubilee. Verse 54.

[ 24 : 37 ] And if he is not redeemed by these means, then he and his children with him shall be released in the year of Jubilee. For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants.

They are my servants who I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. God said, hey, they can't continue to be anyone else's servants because they belong to me.

I brought them out of Egypt and I am their God. This, saints, is the year of Jubilee. All debts were to be erased.

All those who were enslaved were to be set free and return home to their families and all land was to be restored. Now the word Jubilee has been co-opted by our culture in many ways.

Churches, festivals, streets, clinics, desserts. Even babies have gotten in on the action and are using the name.

[ 25 : 52 ] Some use Jubilee to champion social justice and financial equity. And there are lessons about how we are to care for the poor embedded in this passage.

But none of that captures the true significance of the word. In order to capture the true relevance and power of the word Jubilee.

I'm almost finished. My dad would say I feel my health right here. In order to capture the true relevance and power of the word Jubilee, we need to make just one more stop on the road to rest and redemption.

Just one more stop. And that stop takes us to Luke chapter 4. That's the last stop. It's Jesus' first day of public ministry as Luke records it.

And he's there in his hometown of Nazareth. And he enters into the synagogue. And he grabs the scroll and he begins to read it. Here's what he begins to read, church.

[ 26 : 57 ] The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives.

Recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And then he rolled up the scroll, handed back to the attendant, and sat down.

And the eyes of everybody in the synagogue were fixed on him. What just happened? And Jesus turned and said, Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Lord Jesus. In other words, Jesus says, Everything you've been reading, everything you've been looking for, you are now looking at.

Because I am the Jubilee. While an inscription of scripture on the Liberty Bell seeks to proclaim liberty to a nation, Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of all scripture, now proclaims liberty to the entire world.

[ 28 : 10 ] There's the ultimate mic drop. This good news, this year of Jubilee that Jesus announces, he says, is now fulfilled in your hearing.

Now that I'm on the scene, the year of Jubilee is upon you. He said it back here in Nazareth, and he says it here to you today, Christ Church Chicago.

Today can be the day of rest and redemption. For I am good news for those who are poor and in debt, because I am the Jubilee.

Make no mistake. The truth is, the truth is, we all are poor. We all have some indebtedness in some fashion to something that needs payment.

And our books need to be reconciled. Jesus says, I am the good news for the captives in chains, because I can set them free.

[ 29 : 12 ] But I'm even better news for those who are in spiritual bondage, because I died to be their deliverer. I'm good news for those who are physically blind, because I have the power to restore sight.

But I'm even better news for those who are spiritually blind, because I am the light of the world. And I will open their eyes to see the glory of God. I'm good news for the oppressed, because I hear their cries for justice.

But I'm even better news for the spiritually oppressed, because I've already conquered sin, Satan, and overcome the world. The year of Jubilee was once every 50 years in our text.

But now, every week from this pulpit, every day in some form or fashion, the trumpet is blowing to proclaim liberty.

And we have the opportunity for rest and redemption, if we'll only listen. No more debts? No loans to repay?

[ 30 : 18 ] Well, I can't forgive your student loans. I can't forgive your mortgage. You're going to have to take that up with Bank of America or Wells Fargo.

Or maybe just talk to Andy Hensel after church. I can't forgive your credit card debt or raise your credit score. But I can point you to someone who offers you freedom from another debt.

Jesus. It's a debt with a high interest rate. That should all your trespasses be counted against you, you could never pay in a thousand lifetimes.

You don't have to be in bondage to this debt. Jesus, our Jubilee, has already paid it. You can start over. You can get another chance.

You can have a righteous reset. Church, this text is such an encouragement to all of us.

[ 31 : 22 ] Because we get to walk in this glorious liberty. This freedom. This redemption. That has already been accomplished through the shed blood. Blood of our redeeming relative.

Our Savior. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Our Savior. Jesus Christ. Jesus, our Jubilee.

Who redeemed his people from slavery to sin. Jesus, our Jubilee. Who restores the inheritance of his people. Jesus, our Jubilee.

Who avenges us by defeating the one who came to kill, steal, and destroy. Jesus, our Jubilee. Who became man so he could draw near to humanity.

And humanity could draw near to him. We celebrate Jubilee now. But we look forward to Jubilee that is to come.

[ 32 : 24 ] On that final day of Sabbath rest. That will last for all eternity. All of this is yours.

Just follow the Jubilee road to rest and redemption. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for being our sacrifice.

For being our Savior. For being our kinsman redeemer. The one who paid the debt we owed but could never afford to pay.

Thank you for being our Jubilee. Thank you for the righteous reset that you performed by dying on the cross and shedding your blood.

Father, may we walk ever in the proclamation of liberty that has been made for us. Let us remember where our hope and our help comes from.

[ 33 : 30 ] It comes from you. Thank God for being our Jubilee. In your son's name, we pray. Amen. Amen.