

The Book of Leviticus

Lesson 15: The Sabbath Year, Jubilee, Blessings, and Vows -- Leviticus 25:1–27:34

Imagine being told that one year out of every seven, you must not plant your fields. No sowing, no reaping, no harvesting the vine. Just rest. The land lies fallow, and you live on what God provides. To a farming people, this sounded like madness, an invitation to starve. “And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase” (Leviticus 25:20). God’s answer was simply, “I will command my blessing” (Leviticus 25:21). The Sabbath year was a yearlong lesson in trust.

Then God scaled the lesson up to something even more astonishing. Every fiftieth year, after seven sevens of years, a trumpet would sound on the Day of Atonement, and Israel would “proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof” (Leviticus 25:10). This was the Year of Jubilee. Slaves went free. Debts were released. Land that had been sold returned to its original family. It was a great reset, a sweeping declaration that the people belonged to God and the land belonged to God, and no one could be permanently enslaved or permanently dispossessed.

Chapter 26 then lays before Israel the two roads that stretch out from the covenant. Walk in God’s statutes, and blessing will flow: rain in season, peace in the land, His presence in their midst. Despise His commandments, and curse will follow in escalating waves, ending in exile from the land. These are not magic formulas but covenant promises to a covenant nation, and they reveal both “the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22). And yet even there, God leaves a door open: if they confess and humble themselves, He will remember His covenant.

The book closes in chapter 27 with vows and dedications, the holy practice of giving persons, animals, houses, and fields wholly to the Lord, and the tithe set apart as holy to God. It is a fitting end to a book obsessed with holiness. Leviticus began with sacrifice and ends with consecration, with people freely giving themselves and their possessions to the God who redeemed them. As we finish this long study, we will watch all of it, the sacrifices, the priesthood, the atonement, the holiness, the liberty, gather and point forward to one Person, Jesus Christ, in whom every shadow finds its substance and every longing finds its rest.

Group Discussion: As a class, trace how the Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee both rest on one truth God states plainly: “the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me” (Leviticus 25:23). How should the conviction that God owns everything, including us, reshape the way we hold our possessions, our security, and our plans?

Personal Reflection: The Sabbath year asked Israel to stop striving and trust God to provide. Where in your own life is God inviting you to stop clutching and controlling, and to rest in His provision instead? What would that trust actually look like this week?

Read Leviticus 25:1–27:34

Study Questions

1. The Sabbath year commanded that the land rest every seventh year, with no sowing or reaping, and God promised, “I will command my blessing upon you” (Leviticus 25:1–7, 20–22). What does this command reveal about who truly owns the land and the people, and how did resting the land train Israel to trust God rather than their own labor?
2. Living one year in seven without planting required Israel to trust God for daily bread before the need arrived. Where in your life are you tempted to trust your own effort and planning rather than God’s provision, and what is one way you could practice deliberate trust this week?
3. The Year of Jubilee proclaimed “liberty throughout all the land,” releasing slaves, forgiving debts, and returning land to its original families (Leviticus 25:8–17, 39–42). How does Jesus’ announcement in the synagogue, “to preach deliverance to the captives... to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18–19), reveal that Jubilee was a shadow of the greater liberty He came to proclaim?
4. Jubilee meant no debt and no bondage could be permanent; everyone got a fresh start under God’s mercy. Is there a debt of bitterness or an old bondage you have been holding onto or holding over someone else? What would it mean to let the liberty of Christ release it?

5. God repeatedly grounds the laws of redemption and release in His own ownership: “the land is mine” and “unto me the children of Israel are servants” (Leviticus 25:23, 55). Why does God’s ownership of the land and the people form the foundation for both the Sabbath year and the Jubilee, and how does that same ownership apply to believers who have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)?
6. If you truly belong to God, body and possessions alike, because you were bought with the blood of Christ, what is one area of your life you have been treating as your own to do with as you please? How would surrendering it to its rightful Owner change how you live?
7. Chapter 26 sets before Israel the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience, escalating from rain and peace to exile and ruin (Leviticus 26:1–39). Why must we read these as covenant-historical promises to national Israel rather than a prosperity-gospel formula guaranteeing wealth and ease to faithful Christians today, and what do they rightly teach us about “the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22)?
8. Even in the warnings of judgment, God promises that if His people confess their sin and humble their hearts, He will remember His covenant (Leviticus 26:40–42). When God allows hard consequences into your life, do you tend to harden or to humble yourself? What would genuine confession and turning look like for you right now?
9. Leviticus closes with vows, dedications, and the tithe, persons and possessions devoted as holy to the Lord (Leviticus 27:1–34). While we do not bind the Old Testament tithe or these vows on Christians as law, how does this final call to wholehearted consecration point us to the New Testament’s teaching on generous, purposeful, cheerful giving (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7) and to the offering of our whole selves to God (Romans 12:1)?

10. As we close the entire book of Leviticus, look back across the sacrifices for sin, the priesthood that stood between God and man, the Day of Atonement that cleansed the people, the call to “be ye holy; for I am holy,” and now the liberty of Jubilee and the consecration of vows. In what one specific way has this study of Leviticus deepened your grasp of Jesus as your sacrifice, your High Priest, your atonement, and the One who makes you holy, and how do you want that to change the way you walk with Him?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Luke 4:16–21, Jesus proclaiming liberty and the favorable year of the Lord; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, you are not your own, you were bought with a price; Romans 11:22, behold the goodness and severity of God; 2 Corinthians 9:6–7, God loves a cheerful giver who gives as he has purposed; Hebrews 10:1–14, the law a shadow whose substance is the once-for-all offering of Christ

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com