

The Kingdom of God
Lesson 6: It's Constitution and Laws
(Continued)

What will life look like under the reign of Christ on the earth? By studying the plan He put into place with ancient Israel will give some clues as to what we might expect.

I. General Economic Principles of the Kingdom

- a. The principles of economics pronounced by God to be employed in the Mediatorial Kingdom are both **novel** and realistic.
- b. As laid out by these principles God did not envision a perfect **utopia** in which all men would be equal in ability and possessions.
- c. In fact, God's plan acknowledges the problem of continuing **poverty** among some of the people of God even though the nation was ruled directly by the God of all blessing and bounty. Deut 15:11 *For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. KJV*
- d. The fact of poverty extant amidst a nation of blessing illustrates four apparent principles that are part of God's design for the **economic** activity of His human creation within His Kingdom.
 1. God designs men differentially so that some are industrious, some are not so. Some are creative and artistic and some are not. Men are not equal in their **abilities**.
 2. God values **freedom of choice** as to the economic pursuits of individuals in line with their God-given talents and abilities.
 3. A natural consequence of this freedom is that it is inevitable that there will be disparate results as men exercise their economic freedom: some men will gain and some men will lose. There will be an unequal **distribution** of wealth.
 4. Within this system of economic freedom God built in safeguards that would accomplish His purposes with regard to handling the inequalities and **spiritual issues** deriving from man's economic activities. Ex 20:17 *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. KJV*

Think About It: What are some possible reasons that God might find it desirable to allow poverty among His people?

II. Real Estate

- a. With the exception of the Levites, **every family** in Israel was given an original allotment of land. To these grants of land there were attached some interesting conditions. Num 26:53-54 *Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. 54 To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him. KJV*
- b. The **absolute** title to all the land belonged to Jehovah Himself and so His disposition was His absolute right. Lev 25:23 *The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. KJV*
 1. With each parcel of land thus allotted, there was an assigned **right of inheritance** so that the proper heirs were made secure against any future confiscations or loss.
 2. The owner of the grant had the freedom to use his land, sell it, trade it, mortgage it, farm it, rent it or even abandon it **conditionally**.
 3. The one thing that the owner could not do was to surrender **permanently** the title, either for himself or for his descendants, to any other person.

Think About It: What effects might such an arrangement have on one's ability to amass a fortune in real estate holdings?

III. Handling Poverty

- a. Since every human owner had the right to sell or mortgage, etc. (temporarily) it is **inevitable** that the issue of impoverishment should arise as the right of use of property changed hands.
- b. The Law did not address the **causes** of one's poverty IE: slothfulness, disability, unwise financial decisions etc and made no attempt to blame the poor or to assess guilt for their personal condition.
- c. Instead, the Law provided **various means** by which the condition of poverty was to be treated.
 1. When crops were being harvested, some portions of the grapes and grains were to be left in the fields where they could be gleaned by those **in need**. Lev 19:9-10 *And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. 10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor KJV*
 2. If the poor person was given a loan, **no interest** could be charged. Lev 25:36-37 *Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. 37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. KJV*
 3. The creditor of the poor person was not permitted to hold as security any personal property **essential** to the welfare of the borrower. Ex 22:26-27 *If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: 27 For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious. KJV*
 4. Every seventh year (the Sabbatical year) no planting was to take place and what grew up **naturally** was not to be reaped or gathered by the owner but left for others and especially for the poor. Ex 23:11 *But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard. KJV*
 5. Every seventh year as the soil received a period of rest, so too, the borrower received a one year **grace period** in which no payments were to be collected. The logic of this provision becomes clear when you consider that the debtor would have less opportunity to earn wages in a Sabbatical year.
 6. The greatest safeguard against the permanent intergenerational impoverishment of a family in Israel was the law of the **Jubilee Year**.

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7. When **seven** sabbatical years had passed the nation was commanded to declare the year of the Jubilee.
8. The Jubilee year allowed for every slave to go free, all debts incurred in connection with real property were **cancelled**; every man could reclaim his original allotment of land. (Houses within walled cities excepted).
9. The 49th and 50th years were Sabbaths of rest for the land so there was to be no sowing and reaping of fields. God promised to bless the increase of the fields **sufficiently** to provide for the entire three year period.
10. Thus, the liberty proclaimed in the jubilee year was **fourfold**: liberty from personal bondage; liberty from debt; liberty from hunger; liberty from arduous toil.
11. The Jubilee year guarded against the evils of great **concentrations** of wealth in the hands of a few, with the consequent hopeless impoverishment of many others.

Think About It: What values are being inculcated in a people who live in accordance with these principles?

IV. The Law of Redemption

- a. For the man who lost his original land estate, whether through misfortune or economic imprudence, there was always the law of **redemption**. Lev 25:24-54
- b. A near kinsman could exercise the right to redeem the property which had been lost, simply by paying the holder a **fair price** based upon the average possible income from the land during the number of years yet remaining before the jubilee year.
- c. If any near kinsman had the financial ability to redeem the property of his relative, it was his **duty** to do so. (see Book of Ruth)
- d. If the man were without such relatives, he could exercise the right of redemption for himself **whenever** he had accumulated sufficient resources.
- e. The same right of redemption was also available to anyone who had sold himself into **bond service**. Therefore there was always some hope for the poor man even before the arrival of the Jubilee year.

Think about it: Practically, what would be the effect of the Law of Redemption upon family members?

V. The Physical Benefits Bestowed Supernaturally

- a. Extraordinary **fruitfulness** was promised to Israel in the productivity of their fields, their flocks and herds, and even in their own progeny of sons and daughters. Deut 7:13-14 *13 And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. 14 Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. KJV*
- b. During their desert march which lasted forty years, the nation was given food from heaven which did not cease until the **day** Israel crossed over into the promised land. Josh 5:12 *And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year. KJV*
- c. The people were provided **water** in the desert, supernaturally through Jehovah's providential care. Num 20:8 *Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. KJV*
- d. While people did in fact die from natural causes, Israel was promised that Jehovah would keep them **disease free**. Ex 23:25-26 *And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. 26 There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. KJV*
- e. In fact during their entire forty year sojourn neither their clothing nor their shoes wore out and they lacked **nothing**. Neh 9:21 *Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. KJV*

Think About It: What does such miraculous provision for daily needs say about the God of Israel?

VI. The Moral Aspect of the Kingdom (morality is beliefs regarding appropriate behavior, while **ethics** is the formal study of morality)

- a. The Mosaic Code struck at two dangerous errors. First, the ancient notion that a true religion could exist **apart** from morality, and second the belief that morality can stand upon its own base without any religious foundation.
- b. The constitution and Laws of the mediatorial kingdom also made the vital connection between human welfare and the moral conduct of the people. God imposes divine penalties for breaches of His moral law, often through **secondary causes**.
- c. Over and over again it is made clear in the Divine Record that "it will be well with thee" only if Jehovah is properly honored as King and the people are **obedient** to His revealed will. Deut 28:1-2 *If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: NIV*
- d. Since the Jew had been given priority in glorious blessings, he had a corresponding responsibility for **morality**. Rom 2:9-10 *There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. NIV*

Think About It: Most people appear to have no fear of God's judgment and punishment for immoral behavior. What contributes to man's lack of fear of the wrath of God?

VII. Application

- a. Given these Kingdom principles of economics, what should the believer's attitude be regarding: Wealth / possessions; the poor; our real needs; responsibility towards family

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