

Israel's Jubilee and the Issue of Lordship, a Paradigm for the Christian Community

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Abstract:

The economic system proposed by Israel's Jubilee is no longer relevant today but the principles of the Jubilee offer an instructive paradigm for Christian living. The issue of Jubilee concretizes the claim of Lordship over the lives of a believing community. This paper examines the concept of Lordship as the basis of covenantal relationship between Israel and her God. It focuses on Leviticus 25 and especially 26 to show that the Abrahamic Covenant that God established as an everlasting covenant illustrated God's unconditional obligation to Israel, but 500 years later God would establish a new covenant with them through Moses. This new covenant was conditional upon Israel's acceptance of Yahweh's claim of Lordship. Israel disobeyed and were scattered into exile. Yahweh restored them through their repentance and promised them salvation through a Messiah. The Messiah becomes the linkage between the people of Torah and the Gentiles of the New Testament.

Introduction

Concept of the Jubilee in ancient Israel's history has been the subject of much debate. The debate varies from historical analysis to eschatological predictions. (See Alf and Julie Saunders <http://www.pray4zion.org/TheComingShemitaJubileeYear57745.html> <http://www.creation-answers.com/chronoj.htm>). This brief article, however does not propose to delve into the historical and eschatological questions concerning the Jubilee. The approach taken is more of a biblical and pastoral approach to the meaning of the Jubilee in the context of Yahweh's demand on the covenant community. The argument is made that the center piece of the Jubilee celebration really was about Yahweh's claim to be Lord over his people. The issue of Lordship and the Jubilee has not garnered much attention in biblical scholarship; yet it is in that emphasis of Lordship that an instructive paradigm for Christian's today can be found.

The word Jubilee is a Hebrew word meaning, a musical instrument, like a horn or a trumpet. Figuratively, it speaks of a time of super celebration in Israel's history. The Israelites were instructed to have this celebration every 50 years. The year of jubilee operated within the context of Israel's kinship system for the protection of the clan's inalienable right to work their ancestral land, which they understood to be owned by God, to be enjoyed by them as a benefit of their relationship with him. (Theology of Works; <http://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/leviticus-and-work/#the-sabbath-year-and-the-year-of-jubilee-leviticus-25>). These social and economic conditions no longer exist, and from a biblical point of view, God no longer administers redemption through a single political state, neither do Israelites think land ownership is a theocratic gifting. According to Professor John Anderson, "The concept of Jubilee was an important institution by which Israel understood their theological identity and by which God provided protection against economic calamity." (<https://www.gordon.edu/ace/pdf/AndersonF05F&E46.pdf>). The principles of the Jubilee have many implications and applications to a Christian community that is referred to by Paul as branch grafted in the wild olive tree.

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"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, thought a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and how now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root do not boast over those branches." (Rom. 11:17) These implications will be developed later.

A Look at Leviticus 25-26

According to Leviticus 25: 1-7 of the Tanakh, and also the Christian bible, the instruction that Yahweh gave to the Israelites was that when they entered the land, he promised them- Canaan, they were to work the land for 6 years but on the 7th year they should leave the land to fallow. "The Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai, 'speak to the Israelites and say to them: when you enter the Land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord....'" (Lev. 25:1) In other words they should let the land rest. The concept of a period of rest or Sabbath was introduced from the first book of the Torah, Genesis. Yahweh created the world in 6 days and rested on the seventh. (Genesis 2:2) So this Sabbath command was one of the oldest divine commands given by Yahweh to his people. In verse 6 of Leviticus 25 God now multiplies this instruction seven times. He instructed them to count off 7 x7 which will equal 49 years. Then they ought to sound trumpets and set aside the 50th year for a special celebration called the year of Jubilee. This year served the following purposes as far as God was concerned:

- 1) It was a time of freedom – liberation. If you owe anything it is repaid. If you were a slave you should be free. (Lev. 25. vs. 10)
- 2) It was a time of restoration – you could return to your families at that time. So the kinship relationships should be kept in place.(Lev. 25vs. 11)
- 3) It was a time of rest and celebration (Lev. 25 vs. 12)

Now what really was the significance of this celebration? It is true that this economic system is no longer relevant today but this paper proposes to show that there is an instructive paradigm for Christians today. The issue of Jubilee concretizes the claim of Lordship over the lives of a believing community. Before we get too far into the development of this argument, a brief overview of the book of Leviticus might be helpful. Leviticus was written as a source book for the Priest and Levites. It outlines the types of ceremonies for which the priests were responsible and it covered their sacerdotal duties. The setting of the book was at Mount Sinai, the famous place for the giving of the Decalogue to the people of Israel. A brief examination of the book reveals some key terms and emphases around which the themes of the book are wrapped; themes such Lordship, Sabbath and holiness. For the purpose of this article only one of these themes will be examined - Lordship.

As noted above one of the key phrases that is observed throughout the book is "I am the Lord." In fact it is found about 50 times in the book. The following is a brief sampling of some of those references:

Leviticus 11:45 "I am the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt to ..."
 Leviticus 11:44 "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and ..."
 Leviticus 18:2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'I am the ...'"
 Leviticus 19:2 "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to ..."
 Leviticus 19:4 "'Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for ..."
 Leviticus 26:13 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of ..."
 Leviticus 20:7 "'Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am ..."
 Leviticus 20:8 "Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD ..."
 Leviticus 22:31 "Keep my commands and follow them. I am the LORD.
 Leviticus 25:38 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of ..."
 Leviticus 26:2 "'Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my ..."
 Leviticus 20:26 "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am ..."

In the examples cited above one will notice that the phrase “I am the Lord” covers a wide cross-section of the community’s life. They needed to be reminded that it was the LORD who brought them out of Egypt. In fact this sentiment was repeated a number of times. As people of God they needed to be reminded that they should consecrate themselves before they came into the presence of the LORD. They must be careful not to worship idols.

This was a refrain that also introduced the Decalogue in Exodus 20 vs. 1, “I am the LORD.” It is imperative for them to keep the commands of the LORD, this included the Sabbath as well. Finally, they must be holy because Yahweh is holy. So embedded in the book of Leviticus is the claim that Yahweh is Lord. This was a theme epitomized in the Jubilee celebration.

A more detailed look at the issue of Lordship requires examination of some of the specific references to the phrase: “I am the Lord.” Figure 1 below summarizes these references.

I am the Lord References and Themes in Leviticus
Figure 1

Themes	References
I brought you out of Egypt	Lev. 11:45; 23:43; 25:38; 25:55; 26:13
Concerning the Sabbath	Lev. 19:30
Concerning Justice	Lev. 19:16, 18; 25:17
Concerning the Priesthood	Lev. 21:8, 12, 15, 23; 22:2
Concerning His Providence	Lev. 19:25
Concerning His Holiness	Lev. 11:44; 19:1; 20:7, 26; 22:3
His intent to Restore	Lev. 26:45
Against Idolatry	Lev. 18:1, 19:3, 4; 19:31; 26:1
Concerning His Laws and Statues	Lev. 18:4, 5, 6, 21, 30; 19:12, 28, 37; 20:8; 22: 8, 9, 16, 33
The community’s obligation to the poor	Lev. 19:10, 34; 23:22; 24:22
Fear and Reverence	Lev. 19:14, 31

Five times the author of the book reminds the reader that it was Yahweh who brought them out of Egypt. In the first instance, Lev. 11:45, the reference was made in the context of Yahweh’s requirements that the people not defile themselves. “Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. I am the Lord your God: consecrate yourselves and be holy for I am holy.” The emphasis here is that the people not merely remember Egypt as a place of slavery but as a place from which Yahweh delivered them. The deliverance by Yahweh established his claim on their lives. Later on in chapter 23:43, in the long pericope on the different festivals that Israel was required to keep i.e., the first fruits, feast of weeks, day of atonement and the feast of the tabernacles Yahweh again emphasized the fact that He was the Lord who brought them out of Egypt. So these celebrations were intended to ritualize Yahweh’s claim to Lordship over their lives.

These were not merely community festivals; they were divine dictates given to the people by Yahweh; Lev. 23:9 “The Lord said to Moses, speak to the Israelites . . . bring to the priest a sheaf of first grain” - Celebration of First Fruits. In the feast of the First Fruits the priest was required to wave two lambs before the Lord as a waive offering (Lev. 23:20). Again in 23:23 we see specific instructions from Yahweh concerning the feast of trumpets, “The Lord said to Moses... On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blast.” The same sentiment is recorded in verse 33 concerning the fest of Tabernacles. So these celebrations were not merely community gathering, Yahweh placed his stamp on the festivals as he established Lordship over his people. The festivals should be celebrated under the guidance of the God who is Lord over Israel. The rest of the references from the figure above magnified various aspects of who Yahweh wanted the people of Israel to be and how they ought to related to him. These themes, as we will see later, were central to Jubilee. They should remember the Sabbath, the oldest of the divine commands that Yahweh gave. Not only was Yahweh God of space, since he created space as in creation, he was also God of time so he rested and ask his people to rest as well. Central to the Jubilee celebration was the reminder that Yahweh was a God of Justice.

Hence when they reap their fields that they did not plant in the 7, 49 and 50 year they should leave some for the aliens and the marginalized Lev. 23:22, Lev. 25:17). The priest were consecrated to the service of Yahweh and so they must be holy because Yahweh is holy; "Regard them as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I am the Lord am holy – I who make you holy" (Lev. 21:8). Central to the theme of Jubilee is the exclusivity of Yahweh. In Lev. 18:1 Yahweh reminded the people that he was their God they must not do as the Egyptians did, following idols. This sentiments was also raised again in the Jubilee periscope of Lv. 26:1; "Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves.... I am the Lord."

The Demands of Jubilee

In Leviticus 26 and verse one Yahweh gives the instructions "Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone, for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. **I am the Lord your God.**" This section opens with the reminder that Yahweh alone should be worshiped. Hence no idols will suffice. For the people of this covenant community Lordship meant exclusivity in worship. Yahweh is one, and as the Decalogue stated, there is no other God besides him.

This reminder was necessary because Israel was coming from a very polytheistic country called Egypt. In fact scholars have stated that the judgment God unleashed on Egypt in the form of the ten plagues was precisely a contest with the different gods of Egypt (John I. Durham, Word Biblical Commentary, Exodus: 98). The Exodus was really a contest between Yahweh as supreme God and gods that were made to stand upright and gods that had inscriptions delineating what power they had. God would have none of that. He is the only God and his power is not limited.

Exclusivity in Worship

It is important to understand that prior to Judaism religion was polytheistic (see Karen Armstrong, A History of God 1994, Michael Molloy, Experiencing World Religions, 2014). The concept of monotheism was first introduced to the world by Judaism. Judaism, of course, was not the oldest religion. There was Hinduism that dated some 2500 years earlier but it was polytheistic. They saw Brahma, Siva and Vishnu as comprising the Trimutri. Buddhism that was considered an axis age religion did not recognize God. Hence they were considered atheistic. Zoroastrianism was common on the Arabian Peninsula but it also was seen as polytheistic. So the concept of monotheism was very new to the Israelites. It was for this reason that Yahweh had to underline his exclusivity over and over and over. They were to worship him only. He was not just God of creation and God of the Exodus he was God Supreme. "I am the Lord your God" – literally "I am Yahweh Elohim."

It is a serious crime to defy the creator of the universe and the God of all history. The ultimate reason for the prohibition of idolatry is succinctly expressed in the ("self-introduction formula"): "for I am Yahweh your God." This formula is the key phrase in Leviticus 18–26. The contrast is self-explanatory. Yahweh's inherent and exclusive authority makes idols worthless, powerless, another egocentric, and void of any spiritually redeeming value. There is no room for divided loyalties. Yahweh insists upon exclusive Lordship in the lives of His people. Awareness of Yahweh's existence, identity, and presence is central to the covenant relationship that Israel enjoys. In the same way Yahweh wants exclusive authority over all lives. There is no room for divided loyalty. Awareness must lead to exclusive worship. It is not enough to be aware of God he must be worshiped.

Reverence the God of Time and Space

In verse two of Leviticus 26 Yahweh reminded the covenant community to obey the Sabbath. The Sabbath theme requires much more discussion than this article allows. However, a few brief points will be made that have bearing on the contention of this expose'. We have already mentioned that the Sabbath was the oldest divine command that Yahweh gave. He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. He inscribed observance of the Sabbath in the 10 words or Decalogue.

He then created this super Sabbath called the Jubilee that was celebrated after 7 Sabbaths and in the 50th year. In the observance of the Sabbath the believing community must recognize the following principles: 1) as God designated a time of rest they also must rest as well (Lev. 25:1). In fact the Sabbath has been re-signified in the New Testament as the Lord's Day.

2) The Sabbath also taught that God is not just God of space since he created space, he was God of time as well (Lev. 25:4). He control time and so he set aside a portion of time for rest. 3) The Sabbath reminded the believing community of God's providence. (Lev. 25:20) He takes care of his people even when they are not working. This idea was magnified in the Year of Jubilee. The Israelites left the land to fallow. They did no work on it, but it produced. 4) The Sabbath, especially the Year of Jubilee, was a time for the community to ensure that the needy among them are taken care of (Lev. 26:6). The fields should be left so that the aliens and marginalized could come and reap from the Land. The observance of the Sabbath was a ritual reminder of God's Lordship of both time and space. It was a reminder that he was also Lord of the believing community's lives. He had a keen concern for all of humanity. He had a concern for every aspect of human lives.

Commentator Ray Stedman observes about the Sabbatical years and the year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25: Liberty, God says, is being freed from inner bondage, inner shackles of guilt and fear and anxiety and hostility Liberty, God says, is for each person to regain his lost inheritance, and to have his broken relationships restored. It is to get back what God intended you to have, to return to your property, to be able to be and act as God intended men to be and act when he made them in the beginning, to gain back all that was lost in the fall of Adam. It is to have all the broken, fragmented relationships restored, have all the middle walls of partition which have separated men and kept them apart broken down, to have all the differences of skin color and culture and class evaporated, and to return to your family. That is the beauty of this picture. And it is to be a Sabbath, a year of rest. (Jesus our Sabbath Rest, by Ray Stedman, <http://ldolphin.org/sabbathrest.html>)

The Sabbath honors the Lord of time by teaching the Israelites to trust the Lord of all things for their provisions. Thus lordship is the core of the sabbatical principle. By trusting the Lord to provide for the seventh day, the seventh year, and the forty-ninth and fiftieth years, Israel gives tangible witness to God's power and wisdom. He who provided in the wilder nesshadal read ypro claimed the sabbatical principle while Israel was still at Mt. Sinai. The instruction for God's people is simple: "Trust me to provide. I am Yahweh. I will not lead you where I cannot care for you." God never demands what man is unable to do. Rather, He provides the way of service and blesses the path of obedience. Sabbath in the Old Testament is more than an expression of the vertical relationship to the Lord of all creation; it is also an expression of concern and care for those who are fellow participants in the covenant (cf. Leviticus 25).

Reverence His Sanctuary

In verse two Yahweh also encouraged the people to reverence his Sanctuary (vs. 2). In the Old Testament the word reverence means to fear. Fear in the Old Testament has two connotations 1) love and respect 2) justice and right. To fear God is to recognize both aspects of his nature. He is love and he is holy. From his love we see Him reaching out to humanity to bring them back into a right relationship with him. From his justice we see punishment for sin. So we cannot have one without the other.

For the people of Israel however, the sanctuary was a visible reminder of God's presence among the people. At no point should they be tempted to take it for granted. At no point should the presence of God become so familiar that it is tamed. To reverence God is to be constantly reminded of how much he loves them and how much they ought to respect him. But it was also a reminder of how much they ought to fear him because he is a consuming fire and hates sin. So the Lordship that God wanted the people to recognize was to worship him only as God, to be reminded that he is God of both space and time and, yes all of life. They must also embrace and be mindful of the nature of God. He is both love and justice. He both saves and judges. He is full of compassion but also is a terrible fire.

Live out the Covenant Obligations

In verse three we note: "If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and, the trees of the field their fruit. The word covenant is used 8 times in Leviticus 26 (9, 15, 25, 42, 44, 45 etc.). It always denotes binding relationship between Yahweh and His people, Israel. This relationship provided Israel with a life which had a goal and with a history that had meaning. In this passage "covenant" promotes the concept of the sovereignty of Yahweh, the covenant-giver. In six of the eight uses of the term, "**my**" is attached (vv. 9, 15, 42,44). Yahweh Himself is always the antecedent, which implies the unilateral nature of the covenant. Yahweh Himself established the covenants. Yahweh's personal intervention in the history of Israel is a central theme of the covenants. Such intervention is not limited to the past; it has its place eschatological. His Lordship is personal and absolute. The covenant demands that Israel surrenders unconditionally to the will of God. Loyalty to the covenant must be more than outward acquiescence; it must be an inward reality. In this passage two covenants are being referenced. 1) The Abrahamic 2) Mosaic Covenants. William Barrick notes:

The promulgation of the Mosaic Covenant creates an apparent tension with the Abrahamic Covenant. Leviticus 26, however, explains the relationship between the two covenants and reemphasizes the exclusive lordship of Yahweh. In effect, the chapter declares that the Mosaic Covenant did not nullify the eschatological promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. That instruction took place fifteen centuries earlier than Paul's teaching in Gal 3:17 that "the law that came 430 years afterwards does not annul a covenant previously confirmed by God so that it voids the promise." (Barrick, The Eschatological Significance of Lev. 26, <http://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj16e.pdf>) Therefore in this section we will examine the relationship between the two covenants and their implication for the issue of Lordship. The argument is made that the Abrahamic covenant illustrates God's promised obligation to Israel, while the Mosaic covenant spoke to Israel's responsibility to Yahweh. Both then are intricately related.

The Abrahamic Covenant. – God's Part

In Genesis 12 Yahweh established a covenant with Abram (Abraham) (Genesis 17:1-4, 22:15-17). God made it clear that this would be an everlasting covenant and that it would be established with Abraham's second-born son Isaac, not with his first-born son Ishmael (17:18-21). "And I WILL make you a great nation, and I WILL bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing. And I WILL bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I WILL curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Gen. 12:4) Isaac had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. The elder brother, Esau, forfeited his birthright by selling it to the younger brother, Jacob, for some bread and lentil stew (Gen. 25:29-34). So the birthright, along with God's covenant, went to Jacob, who was renamed Israel by God (32:28). Jacob getting Esau's birthright also inherited God's covenant promise.

For centuries, the fact that God's covenant was not established with Ishmael (Abraham's first son) or with Esau, understandably, has been problematic for Arabs in The Middle East, most of whom embrace Islam. Many of them are descendants of either Ishmael (Abraham's firstborn) or Esau (Isaac's firstborn). When Isaac's son Esau forfeited his birthright, he relinquished possession of the land of Israel by his descendants. When Esau forfeited his birth right he also relinquished possession of the Land. So Yahweh's covenant with Abraham underlies their references to "covenant" in vv. 9, 42, and 44. In the Abrahamic Covenant the people could look forward to such blessings as:

- Being a great nation – That is power
- Multiplied blessings – That is wealth and prosperity
- A great name – That is influence
- Protection - That is security
- Generational blessings – That is posterity and legacy

There was really no condition to God fulfilling these promises to Abram who later become Abraham. And in this sense the Abrahamic Covenant was God's part to fulfill. The second covenant that is referenced in Leviticus 26 is the Mosaic Covenant.

The Mosaic Covenant – Our Part

Some 500 years after the covenant with Abraham, Israel entered into a covenant with God by agreeing to do everything the Lord had commanded them to do in the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:3,7). The latter, which includes the Ten Commandments, consists of all the laws and regulations that God had spoken to Moses and to the people at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20–23). It was an obligation that both sides had vowed to keep, forever.

However, the Israelites broke the covenant through disobedience and by spiritual unfaithfulness in following other gods (Judges 2:11-13; Jeremiah 11:10-13). This was precisely one of the key principles against which they were warned, both in the first of the Decalogue and again in Leviticus 26:1. The "last straw" of this was when the great King Solomon of Israel turned his back on God to follow the gods of his foreign wives. This displeased God greatly (1 Kings 11:9-11). It was now only God alone who could devise a plan to bring Israel back from her disobedience. This plan came in the form of the Messiah. We see in Isaiah 9 where God made this promise "a virgin shall bring forth a son. . ."

The Mosaic Covenant required of the people the following:

- Obedience to the theme of law– Obedience (Lev. 26:3)
- Justice and fairness to people – Human responsibility (Lev. 27:17)
- Respect for the Sabbath – Lordship (Lev. 26:2)
- Reverence for the Sanctuary – Fear (Lev. 26: 2)
- A recognition of divine sovereignty - His Exclusivity (Lev. 26:1)

The author of the text intertwined both covenants here for one purpose; one cannot be achieved without the other. Yahweh will always do his part, but we have a part to play as well. Blessings are often conditional. We must obey, serve, worship and make Yahweh Lord. The covenant community of Israel will not have the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant without keeping the Mosaic covenant. Lordship means that the God who promises blessings is also the God who demands obedience. The point is that the revelation concerning law is equal in authority to the older revelation concerning promise. In order to receive the Abrahamic Covenant's promised blessings, Israel must obey the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant.

The blessings recited in Lev 26:4-12 are, at least in part, a fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham. Those blessings fall into six categories:

- (1) Productivity (vv. 4-5; cf. Gen 24:35; 27:28; 30:43)
- (2) Peace (v. 6; cf. Gen 22:17)
- (3) Power (vv. 7-8; cf. Gen 22:17)
- (4) Population growth (v. 9; cf. Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:6)
- (5) Provision (v. 10; cf. productivity, above),
- (6) Presence (vv. 11-12; cf. Gen 17:7, 8).

So the bottom line is the covenant community must understand that when they make Yahweh Lord of their lives, there are blessings that follow.

Jubilee Lordship a Paradigm for the Christian Community

Professor William D. Barrick notes about Leviticus 26 that the chapter has profound significance to the mission of Jesus in the New Testament. The chapter pivots on the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.

It also speaks of the land promised to Israel under the Abrahamic Covenant, of Israel's exile and eventual salvation, preservation of the covenant by Yahweh though breached by Israel, of the prohibition of idolatry, of Sabbath observance, of the Lord's presence with Israel, of His promises to bless obedient Israel, of Israel's obedience and disobedience, of retribution and chastisement, and of future exile and repentance. Though the NT (New Testament) has only one direct reference to Leviticus 26, application of the chapter to believers of every era is obvious: faith is the binding requirement for anyone to have is relationship to the God of Abraham. (The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26, Barrick, <http://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj16e.pdf>)

God's blessings are always contingent on our obedience. Look at the experience of Israel. Because of disobedience Israel was scattered into exile. During the Exile God put aside the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant and they fell victims to the punishments arising from the Mosaic covenant.

- Rather than possessing the land (Gen 12:1; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8), Israel was dispossessed from the land (Lev 26:33-38).
- Instead of being nationally great (Gen 12:2) they were humiliated, made inferior and insignificant (Lev 26:29, 32, 36-37; Duet 28:43-44).
- Instead of blessing (Gen 12:2; 22:17) they had curses (Lev 26:14-38; Duet 28:15-68).
- Instead of being a blessing (Gen 12:2-3; 22:18), Israel became a curse (Lev 26:32, 36-37a; Duet 28:25, 37).
- Instead of multiplication (Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:4-6; 22:17) they were dispersed (Lev 26:22, 29, 38; Duet 28:18, 20-22, 53-57, 62).
- Instead of having success over their enemies (Gen 22:17) they were defeated at the hand of their enemies (Lev 26:16-17, 32, 36-38; Duet 28:25, 31, 48, 52, 68).

Promise was turned to privation. Covenant vengeance consisted of the removal of all privileges and protection together with all attendant prosperity. The principles of how God dealt with New Testament believers by means of justice – rewards and chastening are similar as the principles by which He dealt with Israel under the covenants. We should not however construe this as some kind of direct parallelism or some direct transference of Old Testament Covenant obligations to New Testament Christians. The similarity is due to the fact that both Old Testament Israel and New Testament Christians are worshipping and are obligated to worship the same God, not to the same covenant. The very nature of God (justice and mercy) demands that the natural consequences of sin be exacted from His people in all ages (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; Gal 6:7-10). The same God provides lessons for believers in every era, based upon His historical deeds (cf. Rom 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11-13). The same God blesses in practical ways those who are faithful (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6-15). The same God is loyal-love even in the face of His people's disloyalty (cf. Phil 1:6; 2 Tim 2:11-13). The same God is Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). The same Lord requires confession, humility, and restitution (cf. Phil 1:25; 1 Pet 5:5-7; 1 John 1:9). The same God promises that obedient service will be rewarded (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58).

The same God demonstrates that the believer has been delivered from bondage into a servitude that is totally unlike the bondage of fear and the curse (cf. Acts 26:18; Rom 6:12-23; Col 1:12-13; Heb. 2:14-15). The Lord who by means of Leviticus 26 revealed to Israel the continued authority and perpetuity of the Abrahamic Covenant after the ratification of the Mosaic Covenant, also confirmed that testimony in Gal 3:17. New Testament believers must recognize that the authority of one covenant does not annul the authority of a previous one. Any exceptions are clearly revealed by God (e.g., Heb. 7:11-14). The epistle to the Galatian churches teaches that Abrahamic faith in Yahweh was not replaced by law under Moses. Therefore, faith is still binding upon anyone's relationship to the God of Abraham. So we walk by faith and not by sight.

Implications for today

As New Testament believers we must recognize that Christ is our inheritance not the physical land. It is not surprising, then, that when our Lord appeared as Israel's Messiah, He spoke of Himself and His ministry in "jubilee" terms and imagery. In the fourth chapter of Luke's gospel our Lord read from Isaiah 61:1-2a in the synagogue and said that these words had been fulfilled in the hearing of His audience (Luke 4:21).

Jesus was claiming to be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, as well as to being the antitype of the year of jubilee. In fact in Isa. 61:1, from which Jesus was quoting, the word used for "release" ... is the same as that found in Lev. 25:10. It seems quite likely, therefore, that the prophetic description of the "acceptable year of the Lord" was partly inspired by the idea of the jubilee year. The messianic age brings liberty to the oppressed and release to the captives. It is not the land that gives the believing community rest any more. Rest is found in Christ. The Hebrew writer sees this as the superior rest. "So God again ordains a certain day, "Today," speaking through David after so long a time, as in the words quoted before, **"O, that today you would listen as he speaks! Do not harden your hearts."** Heb. 4:7

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus notes in the beatitudes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Matt. 5:3) This also conveys the concept of jubilee. Who were more blessed than the poor and oppressed, for whom jubilee was to provide deliverance and a new beginning.

Christ brings the believing community rest not the land. The special place of God's dwelling is now Christ Himself, not a land, not a temple, not a tabernacle (although the terms tabernacle and temple are referred to by our Lord, cf. John 1:14; 2:19). In the Old Testament, especially in the Book of Deuteronomy, Israel's blessings were spoken of as "rest," while her cursings were spoken of in terms of "no rest." Rest was to be given in the land, while no rest was to be experienced outside the land. In light of the relationship of "rest" to the "land," think of the claim which the Lord was making when He said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). The Jews were in the land of promise, but they did not have rest. Jesus offered them rest, in Himself, not in the land. Rest is now something which is found in Christ, not in a physical location.

So, too, worship is something which is no longer to be limited to a certain place, to the land of Israel or to designated places of worship in the Promised Land, to the tabernacle or the temple. When Jesus was talking to the "woman at the well" in John chapter 4, she raised a very tender point of dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans, a dispute over which mountain was the place where God was to be worshipped (cf. John 4:20). Jesus' answer to this woman was that worship is no longer a matter of place, but of a person. The worship of the Father is to be done through, the Son. It is therefore not the place—the holy land of Israel—which is so important in the New Testament, but the person of Christ. God dwells in Him, and it is in Him that we are saved, secure, and blessed. So the Lordship principles of the Jubilee continue in the New Testament. We make Jesus Lord when we accept him as Messiah and worship him.

Conclusion

If the Old Testament saints looked on the land of Canaan as the special place of God's presence and His blessing, the New Testament teaches emphatically that the dwelling place of God and the place of security, peace, and prosperity is none other than Jesus Christ. If the Old Testament saint delighted to be in the land, the New Testament saint delights in being "in Christ." The great dangers of which the New Testament saints are warned are those which tend to draw them away from the centrality of being in Christ. The early chapters of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, all focus on the centrality of Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broken down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:13-22).

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