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**BIBLE STUDY**

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**“THIS IS THE MANNER OF THE RELEASE”**

**Deuteronomy 15:1-11**

***Deuteronomy 15:1 "At the end of [every] seven years thou shalt make a release."***

Continuing the theme of caring for the underprivileged (14:28-29), Moses gave instructions regarding the Sabbath year. The Sabbath year was earlier mentioned (Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:1-22), whereby Israel was not to cultivate the land every seventh year. This may be an expanded exposition of the fourth commandment. At the end of every seven years every creditor shall grant a remission of debts that their fellow Israelites had incurred. This release seems to be a year that the creditor is to not exact the payment from the borrower. The borrower would, probably, not be able to pay, because of letting the land rest for a year.

***Deuteronomy 15:2 "And this [is] the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth [ought] unto his neighbour shall release [it]; he shall not exact [it] of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release."***

This is a sabbath for the land, and, also, a sabbath for the borrower. It is a time when labor is to cease. The creditor received his money in payments from the labor of the borrower. If the borrower did not labor that year, he would have nothing to pay with. This is the LORD’s requirement. The lender should take this into consideration when he loans. That sounds like an impossible way to run a country to us, but it was part of God’s original plan and will for Israel.

***Deuteronomy 15:3 "Of a foreigner thou mayest exact [it again]: but [that] which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release;"***

The foreigner would be able to work and earn money that year. He could, therefore, be required to pay. The release is for those who respect sabbath. Though a creditor could collect a debt from a foreigner, he was to forgive what he had lent to his fellow Israelites. This is a reminder that God’s kingdom does not operate according to the principles by which the banker downtown conducts business. While the practice of debt remission may seem unfair to the lender (especially if he were to lend out money close to the Sabbath year), several points can be made in defense of the practice. The overall theme of this passage focuses on God’s blessing the people, so it seems inevitable that God would richly bless the lender for his obedience, even if it made no financial sense to forgive a loan made so close to the Sabbath year. These verses also focus on the moral (not financial) principle behind the command to forgive loans. They were, in essence, debtors to God and morally responsible to likewise forgive debts to others.

***Deuteronomy 15:4-5***

***4 "Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee [for] an inheritance to possess it:"***

***5 "Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day."***

As a result of complete obedience to the Lord and His commandments there would be no poor among them since the Lord would bless them in the land and there would be more than enough for everyone. This is saying that the blessings of God upon them will be so great, that his brother would not need to borrow. This is speaking of there being no poor in the land. In the chance that he loans to his brother, God will bless the lender, if he follows the release of his brother. Blessings from God come upon them only when they keep His commandments. If the people would obey these principles of generosity, the Lord would bless them in the land, and he would ensure that there would be no poor among them.

***Deuteronomy 15:6 "For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee."***

If they keep God's commandments, the Israelites will not have need to borrow from anyone. They will be the lender to the rest of the world. They will not have an earthly ruler. Their King is God. They will not be ruled by other nations, but they will rule other nations. Moreover, if they were financially obedient, God would guarantee that Israel would lend to and rule nations, but they would never borrow from or be ruled by those lands. Sadly, history would show that Israel was unfaithful to God’s economic commands. Too often the church similarly fails to exercise biblical justice by taking action that helps the oppressed, transforms communities, and empowers the poor through opportunities. In fact, there would be so much abundance that they would be able to rule over many nations and make loans to them instead of the other way around.

***Deuteronomy 15:7 "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:"***

Moses continued the emphasis on compassion and generosity. He discussed a different situation. If a poor man was with them in any of their towns, then they were not to harden their hearts toward him. God commanded the Israelites to help the poor who were among them. They were not to be hardhearted or tightfisted. This is an encouragement to lend to their poor brothers, to help them get started. The person who has plenty, and does not need to borrow, must have compassion on those less fortunate, and be willing to lend to them.

***Deuteronomy 15:8-9***

***8 "But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, [in that] which he wanteth."***

***9 "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee."***

This is saying, that just because the year of release is near, is not a reason {in the sight of the LORD} not to lend to the needy. The heart full of greed is, also, a heart full of sin. God judges the heart of man. The person lending must not be tight-fisted. They must be open-handed to lend to those who need. Those who are blessed with wealth, must be quick to lend to those who have needs and wants. Instead, they were to be generous, lending him whatever amount he needed. Also, lenders were not to withhold loans simply because little time was left before the next seven-year release. God knew the human heart’s tendencies, so he had Moses add a stern warning. If someone realized that the seventh year, the year of canceling debts was near, and therefore chose not to give to a poor brother in need, that cheapskate would stand guilty in God’s eyes.

***Deuteronomy 15:10-11***

***10 "Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto."***

***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.***

What at first seems a harsh judgment toward someone who hadn’t robbed anyone but had only held on to his own money lest he make a poor investment boils down to this. God commanded his people to trust him and to be generous. This is an important kingdom principle. Giving to others as God commands is crucial because it shows how much you value him, and it expresses your faith in his ability and willingness to provide. The Sabbath year with its debt forgiveness and care for the poor was not about financial transactions; it was a test of whether God’s people would trust him even when doing so didn’t make sense on the ledger. Furthermore, to provide for someone in need is the fulfillment of the second most important commandment: “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:28-31). Don’t suppose that 15:11 contradicts 15:4. Verse 4 was a statement of God’s will for his people if they obeyed. Verse 11 is a sad mention of what God knew would become reality because of sin. He thus required his people to be generous toward the needy. To receive blessings of abundance from God, they must bless those in need around them. Let's look at what is said in the New Testament about this very thing.

***I Timothy 6:17-19***

***17 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;"***

***18 "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;"***

***19 "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."***

We must always help those who cannot help themselves. The Bible in the Old and New Testament openly acknowledges the fact of human poverty and inequity. But it also openly acknowledges that God has anointed believers to divinely help those who are poor and needy.

***Isaiah 58:6-7***

***6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?***

***7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?***

***Luke 4:18-19***

***18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,***

***19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.***

***Acts 2:42-47***

***42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.***

***43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.***

***44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;***

***45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.***

***46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,***

***47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.***

The book of wisdom, Proverbs, lays down the principle of giving to the poor and attaches it to a blessing:

***Proverbs 19:17 “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”***

***Proverbs 28:27 “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.”***

In the New Testament, Jesus and His disciples regularly gave to the poor, and Jesus commands that we follow His example and also care for the poor:

***John 13:29 “For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.”***

***Matthew 5:42 “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”***

***James 2:15-16***

***15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,***

***16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?***

The Bible does not shy away from the difficult and unpleasant reality that some people have experienced terrible setbacks and hardships in their lives, even to the point of becoming destitute. The Bible recognizes that poverty, social injustice, and homelessness are real problems that constantly plague society. Look what Jesus said about the poor.

***Mark 14:7 "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always."***

The Bible teaches that we are to be radically different from the world in how we view and treat our neighbors. In fact, we should go out of our way to provide for the homeless and others in need, trusting God to reward us in His time. Because God created all people in His image, everyone, regardless of social status or economic limitations, has intrinsic worth. Oppressing or exploiting those who are weaker or poorer than we are is wickedness. From cover to cover, Scripture says that we should show generosity, compassion, kindness, and mercy in practical, tangible ways.

***Luke 14:13-14***

***13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:***

***14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.***

However, scripture equally requires that we hold those who can help themselves accountable for their actions.

***2 Thessalonians 3:10 “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”***

This verse is set in the context which Paul warns believers against idleness and laziness. The focus of the command is against those who *refuse* to work rather than those who are *unable* to do so. The verses preceding the instruction to those unwilling to work relate a positive example. Paul and his companions did not come to the people of Thessalonica to take food or money from them but to share Christ with them. They were willing to work a side job to provide for their food. In contrast, if any Christian worker came to a church and refused to work, Paul says not to offer him food. This instruction also had application to people within their congregation. This is the Christian work ethic. Believers are to be known for working hard, not for a lazy attitude. Scripture often addresses sloth or laziness as sin.

***Proverbs 18:9 “He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.”***

***Proverbs 19:15 “Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.”***

***Proverbs 6:10-11***

***10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:***

***11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.***

Again, the admonition that “the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” concerns *unwillingness* rather than *inability*. There is a difference. James 1:27 describes true religion, in part, as “looking after orphans and widows in their distress.” Needy children and widows, the disabled, those with special needs, the elderly, and others who cannot earn a living are deserving of much help. As believers, it is important that we be known for our strong work ethic and helping those in true need and discernment of those who are not.

***Matthew 5:13-16***

***13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.***

***14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.***

***15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.***

***16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.***

***Matthew 7:6 “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”***

**QUESTIONS**

1. How often were they to make a release?

2. What is the release speaking of?

3. This is the sabbath of rest for the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Who requires this release?

5. Why is it alright to require a stranger to pay that year?

6. What time is verse 4 speaking of?

7. Blessings from God come upon them only, when they keep His \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

8. They shall lend to many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

9. How shall they feel about their poor brothers?

10. A person lending must not be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

11. What were they warned against thinking in verse 9?

12. God judges the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of man.

13. How will they receive abundant blessings from God?

14. Shall the poor cease out of the land?

15. Are Christians obligated to give to every poor person?