

Clough Deuteronomy Session 35

Deuteronomy 15:1-6; Israel's Distinctive Theocentric Faith in God's Economic Order-Part 2

Fellowship Chapel; 9 November 10

Go to Deuteronomy 15 and let's go back and if you'll look on the outline, the handout, you'll notice that last time we were on chapter 14:22-29 and the title there was a distinct culture of financial faith-rest. And tonight we're going to go on again economic aspects of the Deuteronomic text. And as we do this we want to realize once again the big idea, what's happening here. What's happening is that you have the Ten Commandments given very clearly in chapter 5, then chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, you have the mental attitudes that battle in the heart, primarily, over living for Yahweh, living for the Lord in that nation. But you don't get into details, all the little details in the culture. Beginning in chapter 12, that's where you see this. So last time we went into the tithing and so on and tonight we're going to go into the Sabbath concept. Both sections, chapters 14:22-29 and 15:1-18, both of them deal with the fourth and eighth commandments, the emphasis; now they deal with all the commandments, kind of, but the fourth and the eighth are critical.

Last week in the Q & A afterwards Wendy asked the question about the people groups, so I put that in there and there's a slide, we don't have a projector tonight so I've tried to put the slides on the back sheet of your handout. And unfortunately you have to have a magnifying glass to read them, but if we had a projector that's what you'd be seeing up here. Slide 1 is actually the table that you see on page 1 of your handout, where I have the People Group and the Status, and the importance of that breakdown in people groups is to see their legal relationship, and this is fundamental. You'll see underneath the table there some blanks; the distinctions are not economic, they are legal. And that's important because that's where the whole idea of economic implications come out and this is where we'll deal with that socialism problem.

The distinctions on these people groups have not to do with the economic but the legal, based upon their relationship to Yahweh and the historical revelation of distinction between the kingdom of God on the unsaved world blessings come via relationship to God. So the people, like the nokree, the foreigner, usually translated foreigner, the nokree has not made any overt allegiance to Yahweh, so he is not blessed with a lot of the blessings. The difference between the nokree, that's just the Hebrew word translated "foreigner," and the "resident alien" the ger, the difference is that the resident alien has agreed to live in Israel and to follow the ways of Yahweh, so it's like he's pledged his allegiance. Today maybe the nearest thing to that would be a naturalized citizen, one who has supposedly accepted the Constitution.

The problem I just noticed in some of the English translations this week is that ger is translated differently, depending on what chapter you go through. So I don't know, that's not really quality translation, but ger in my Bible is translated "resident alien," but then I was looking at another chapter and it's translated "stranger." To me it's not a good translation, because "stranger" you would think would be the nokree; you would think that would be the stranger. So all I can say is if you have a study Bible that has the Strong's numbers on it, before you make a

deduction about this people's group, check it, because for some strange reasons the translations don't seem to be consistent for these. The next thing we want to do on our outline here to understand is some commentators, for the book of Deuteronomy, like to organize the material from chapters 12-26 by a commandment, so if you see there, there's the relation; chapter 12 they think of the first commandment, the outworking of itself; 12:21-13:18, the second commandment work itself out, no graven images, false claims of revelation, remember that was the false prophet. 14:1-21 is the third commandment, maintaining the integrity of God's name, the distinctive view of diet and so on. And then in chapter 14, all the way through chapter 16, the section we're now in, they like to align it with the fourth commandment, Sabbath-keeping.

Well, I think that method has a merit because it makes you think in terms of when you read a chapter here you think wait a minute, which of the Ten Commandments am I looking at expressed here. So that's the good side of that approach. The problem I find, it's a little hard to justify excluding the nine other commandments in each section because the families are involved, education is involved, so you get the family, you get marriage, you get life, so I find it hard to just compartmentalize absolutely this chapter is the first commandment, this chapter is the second, this chapter is the third, this chapter is the fourth. What I think is going on is that maybe the first commandment is emphasized, or the second commandment is emphasized, like tonight clearly it's the fourth commandment that's emphasized. So I don't take it airtight like that.

Then also following our review, 14:22-29, last week, we dealt with tithing and we said that adds the cultural issue of money and wealth to views of death. And we said there were three tithes, the first one was for the Levites and it was not a social handout, it was there because the Levites had no capital assets. Remember, they had no inheritance.

Number two was for rural Israelites prosperity test, remember, that's where they took the second tithe and they just blew it on a Yahweh party. You know, that sounds strange but it was just one commentator and I think it was great phraseology, holy wastefulness, the idea of taking this and you can imagine the economic stress on a farmer, because he's having to plan his crops for the next year and here he is, taking ten percent of his profits and he's just blowing it at this party, it's all dedicated to Yahweh, and God says just have a blast but have it right here in My presence. I want you to not do it in your town, I want you to come to Jerusalem and I want you to rejoice before Me, and so it was a test of whether they could trust the Lord by blowing ten percent of their profits, could they trust the Lord for the next year. And this wasn't easy for them to do. So this thinking came up every year.

The third tithe was sharing production locally with the people who did not have inheritance; some of them probably would be poor people, but the issue was they shared, the widow and the orphan shared because they couldn't hold title to land. So this was, in one sense, yes, this was a sort of relief to the poor but it wasn't compelled by the government, that's the point, it wasn't done by coercion, it was up to the individual belief. So the objective was to create a culture willing witness to Yahweh and His work. And I point out in the notes, it's not a socialist counterfeit for two reasons; number one, the socialist scheme would use

government coercion through taxation; government coercion would be the element that socialists would have to use. In the Bible this was individual choice. Now you probably were looked down upon in the community if you didn't do it, but they didn't have an IRS confiscating your money and then using it through some inefficient bureaucratic process.

The second thing is not only was it not a scheme using government coercion and the goal in socialism is to level economic inequalities; that was not the purpose here; the purpose was practicing godly justice. So in that little paragraph there, there are two things to watch for; whenever you see socialism in action you will see they rely not upon individual free choice, they rely upon coercive power of the state. And the second thing is the agenda is not justice biblically, the agenda is to equalize economic inequality. Now they never seem to accomplish that, that's another story.

Now we go to the overview of the sabbatical principle, and if you'll turn to Exodus 20:8 I want to show you how this commandment is reworked or restated differently between Exodus and Deuteronomy so there are two principles here. When God spoke this in Exodus 20:8 he says: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor the strangers who are within your gates." See, "the strangers within your gates," now there's an example of the ger. Okay, [11] "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them and rested the seventh day." So clearly it's related to creation week.

So now if you look at the outline, the first way the fourth commandment is stated in Exodus is to remind Israel that it's rooted on God's labor pattern. Labor is required and I give you three quotes from the pagans. Now these guys, these aren't little Johnny Cute Pagan out in the street, these are key thinking people who articulate the pagan view in history. Now just look at those quotes and look how they view labor. There's a world of difference between their view of labor and the biblical view of labor. And this is important because their view, what's common to Greeks and Aristotle, Seneca and the Roman Cicero? What was common to all those societies with regard to labor? Slavery. To them, manual labor was appropriate only for a slave. If you were a free person, you were a full citizen it was beneath your dignity to be engaged in manual labor; that's slavery work, that's not real work. So there's a dominion, there's an attitude here about labor. And the Bible does not hold to this, the Bible is completely different, starting out with the fact that God Himself is the key laborer.

But there's more to it than that, on the seventh day God rested, the labor was finished. And this is picked up in Hebrews, that's that passage, let's turn to Hebrews 3:7 where the author of Hebrews looks back at creation week, and he picks up on a theme here, he's talking about the work of Christ, and he says, [verse 6] "but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are ; if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm to the end," talking there about sanctification, not salvation. Then he says, [7] "Today, if you will hear His voice, [8] Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the

wilderness, [9] Where your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, they saw My works [forty years]. [10] Therefore I was angry with that generation, ...They always go astray in their heart. And they have not known My ways. [11] So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest."

So the author of Hebrews picks up this rest of God and that's a component of this idea of Sabbath. Six days God labored, then His work was finished, period! It was done. Now that says something about labor, biblically. In the Bible labor doesn't go on forever, it's not... in the pagan idea, you know, labor was just there because death is always there, suffering is always there and labor is always there. It's sort of like a meaningless, constant repetition, it never ends. But that's not the biblical view; the Biblical view is that labor has a purpose and a goal and once the purpose and goal is reached the labor stops. And, of course, you have to do that in your personal life by just petitioning jobs in bite-sized portions and then you stop, you do this job and you stop, and God wants us to do that so that we, in between the stops there, we rest for a bit. And during that rest we're thinking about Him and enjoying what we've worked for. The idea there is God enjoyed what He did. Remember, what does it say He did at the end of the sixth day. He looked at His work and He said gee, this is pretty neat, this is very good. And a craftsman will do that, you see somebody who really likes his work, and I think we all face that problem, is when you finish your work, gosh, you like to walk off the job each day thinking I've really accomplished something. And it's very frustrating to walk off the job and not have that satisfaction that I did something today, but it was just... you know, it was just a goat-rope all day long and you don't walk away with satisfaction. But our hearts crave that satisfaction. So the idea comes out of the way we're built for God.

Now in Deuteronomy another idea comes up here. In Deuteronomy 5, when this fourth commandment is given, and this apparently it was the second time it was given, remember, it was given back... God did this twice with Moses, now look what happens in Deuteronomy 5:12. You'll see it's a little different than Exodus 20. In Deuteronomy 5:12 it says, "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. [13] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [14] but the seventh day" you won't do any work, and go all the way down to verse 15, now it's linked, not this time to creation week but this time it's linked to the Exodus, "And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath." And there is the idea that there is to be a distinction between work that is done as a free person, that can rejoice in the work, and the work's reward, salary, or product, or whatever, the result of that work is yours.

There's two words in the English language, owe, o-w-e, and own, o-w-n; there's a world of distinction between those two words and it's only one letter. Either we owe or we own; slaves don't own anything, by definition they're slaves. The Jewish slaves that built the pyramids didn't own the pyramids. So the point is there that God wants them to remember that all that work you did in Egypt, you know, you never got to enjoy it, you were a slave. Now I've freed you, so now we have the second idea here is that we're coming into a dimension, an economic dimension here to the Sabbath.

So if you'll look at the notes, I've outlined a principle. You want to pick this up because I don't want you to think while I'm going through this that economics is separated from spiritual things. There's a danger here. I'm going through some pretty thick economic stuff here tonight in this section, but I don't want you to think of the economics as gee, why do we have to go through all this money stuff, interest rates and all the rest of it, what has that got to do with my spiritual life? So that's what this principle is: The realm of labor and economics is part of God's general revelation.... Now maybe you haven't noticed this but follow with me here; it helps understand the gospel and plan of salvation. We'll observe this at several points in this study.

For a preview, remember that the word that we so cherish in our soteriology is "imputation." That isn't an economic word, it's an accounting term. It was first used to log price actions and the fact is that we live in an economic world, it's all around us. And if you as a believer will see that, wait a minute, all this activity going on around me that's economic, that's teaching principles that the gospel uses. That's what we want to see as we go through this thing. For example, "imputation" is a word, and if you want to translate that into an everyday word it means "account." It's accounting, it's accounting to value. So, you know, you're in business, you have books and you have a balance, you have assets, you have liabilities, you have cash flow, and you log the value. And when you do that, that's the word impute, you're imputing value to that column on your bookkeeping. Well, when Paul picks this word up, an economic term, he brings it over into theology. And what he's saying is what you do in a business relationship of logging value is what God has done for us in the gospel; He logs Christ's righteousness to our account; He values us to that high level because of Christ's righteousness credited to our account. This is not some little vague theological thing and Paul picks it up because he's talking to Jewish people and Jewish people are in business. So he says if you want to see what God has done for us in Christ, think of what you do in your business, what do you do when you log value.

So another word that is not fundamentally theological but has become so is the word "redeem." "Redeem" is an economic work procuring the desired object that historically came over into theology to refer to God's saving work in procuring our salvation, analogously to someone buying the freedom of a slave. When Paul is talking to Romans who lived in a society of slavery, when he was talking that way, he had in his mind, and I'm sure the people who heard him had in their minds, oh, so and so, Mr. Brown bought that slave, and the Christians would sometimes buy slaves and free them. So Paul picks this up, he brings it over theologically and says see, that's what God has done for us; He's bought us out of the slave market of sin and given us salvation. So that's a second economic term that was everyday language on the street, that is picked up theologically.

So 1 Corinthians 7:21-23 that I quote here, look at the text. It shows you that God wants His believers not to live like slaves. "Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it, for he who is called in the Lord while a slave is in the Lord's freedman. Likewise, he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become the slaves of

men." In other words, if people had the chance to be free, Paul says, do it because that makes you able to live the way God designed you. Philemon is an epistle that deals with the whole issue of slavery. So, the Sabbath principle, then, of the Sabbath is that whether weekly or yearly it expresses the ultimate purpose of and finished nature of God's work using the general revelation of economic relations.

So now we're prepared to come over to Deuteronomy chapter 15 and look at this sabbatical year thing, and we'll only be able tonight to get through the first six verses because there's an awful lot of implied economics here. Follow me as we read through the six verses: "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. [2] And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lord's release. [3] Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, [4] except when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance-- [5] only if you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today. [6] For the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you."

Now there's a tremendous amount of economic implications in those six little verses so let's work our way through these. I have to, I apologize for having to go through this socialism thing every time we turn around, but it's coming like a flood to our evangelical churches so I'm just preparing you, you will hear this, it is coming; you will read about it, you'll get videos or whatever. So here's what socialist says. "It is crucial to note that the Scripture prescribes justice rather than charity. The sabbatical release of debts was an institutionalized mechanism for preventing an ever-growing gap between rich and poor." Now that's the Christian position. Now the key word there is "it's a matter of justice rather than charity." Now what's important about those two words-justice and charity. If it's a matter of charity, that is, individual choice, does the government get involved? No. But if it's a matter of justice the government gets involved, and socialists always want the government to get involved in plans for redistributing wealth because they don't rely on personal love, personal charity, they have to compel it with a legalism.

So, I give you four verses that define biblically what justice looks like. So let's work our way through those four verses. Leviticus 19:15 is a critical verse; "You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor." Now if you were to summarize the thought of Leviticus 19:15 what would it be? It'd be something like this: justice, social justice, biblically, means that God's standards are applied impartially. You have to have a standard in order to make it work, but then after you have the standard you've got to be sure you don't compromise it, either out of concern for the poor or concern for the wealthy. And so there's a very clear-cut definition and you can see that cuts across a lot of socialism today. Notice the phrase, "You will not be partial to the poor," now God loves the poor, but when you talk about justice we're not involved in welfare. The whole welfare problem is

something separate from justice. Now what's going on today is a little word magic, people are taking the word "justice" and moving it over and using this to manipulate a socialist program.

Deuteronomy 24:17, "You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge." Now look at the word "stranger." The standard of God has to be applied across the board, including the "stranger," or the ger, the person who lives there, who is not a Jew, who is a Gentile but he's a naturalized citizen, he's one who's agreed to submit to Yahweh. And he is to receive justice, when you're talking about justice. This is crucial because I'm going to flip a thing on here in about a minute and you'll see why I'm going to disprove socialism.

Leviticus 19:35-36, now look at what this deals with, we're going to use this again in economics. "You will not do injustice in judgment, or in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah," which was a dry measure, "and an honest hin," which was a liquid measure. You want to pay attention to that when we get involved with money. Romans 13:7, "render all their due," that's the idea, everyone is to receive what his due. Now these are all economic legal principles, they have economic implications in a moment but they are legal, they are legal principles. Now if we can grasp this, what justice means, then this clarifies what sin is. It doesn't matter whether we're rich, whether we're poor, whether we're educated or whether we're not educated, God's holy righteous standard is the same across the board. So once we grasp what justice is, then that levels everybody as far as salvation goes because we have to meet God's standard. And there's only one person who's ever met that standard this side of the fall and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. So that's the righteousness that He has created, and so He meets that standard. So that's why ordinary judicial proceedings looked at biblically are a revelation of the background for the gospel.

Now, the Sabbath Year regulations were not applied impartially. Look at Deuteronomy 15:3, "Of a foreigner you may require it;" so there's discrimination in how the Sabbatical Year was applied, depending on your status. Well, if this is justice, according to the socialist, you've got a conflict here because now you've got partial justice, not impartial justice, you've got a discrimination; you're applying a standard to different classes of people in a different fashion. So how can you argue that the Sabbatical Year is a judicial thing and not something else? They were part of a unique witness to Yahweh.

Okay, then finally, point 3, the Sabbatical Year regulations do not appear to be enforced by a central civil government. They spelled out the fourth commandment so that the issue with every Israelite was whether they would obey the Lord or not.

Now let's go to the text; Deuteronomy 15:1, "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts." Now this was taken very seriously by God, not only was there a release of debts but in the seventh year, elsewhere in the Bible, and the background for this section, verses 1-6, what else was happening besides the release of debt in the seventh year; what was happening economically? All agricultural production was

shut down, the land was laid fallow for that seventh year. Now if that's the case, what happens to the economic produce in the seventh year? It goes down. Therefore, if you owed money, if you were a poor person and you owed money and you were depending on, say your salary, maybe you were out there in the field, you were a hired hand, what are you going to use to pay your payment for in the seventh year? You don't have any money, so you go deeper into debt. So what God is doing, not only does He make the land lie fallow but He also cancels the debts, so during that period there's not this financial stress to pay down these debts. We'll get into what kind of debt that is in a moment. But God took this very, very seriously.

Leviticus 26:33-35, the passage I have in your notes, look at what it says, this is how seriously God took the Sabbatical Year. He says, "I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. Then the land," and here's the key, "Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies land; and the land shall rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall rest-for the time it did not rest on your Sabbaths when you dwelt in it." Do you get the picture here, that God is serious about this? Guess how many Sabbath years they ignored? Seventy. How many years did they go into exile? Seventy. That's where Jeremiah's prophecy, in Jeremiah 25:9-12, that's where Jeremiah got this seventy from; he got the seventy by tallying up, the priests probably had a record in the temple, seventy times they violated the Sabbatical regulation. Now if you look at the number of years, they had about two hundred Sabbath Years. But the point here is that seventy of those two hundred were ignored, so one third of the time these people were not following the Sabbath Year. And then, of course, it was Jeremiah 25:9-12 that Daniel read, and that's how Daniel knew to pray to confess and that started chapter 9 where all the prophecy is. So here the Sabbatical Year is no small thing. God, He was very concerned about it.

Also in your notes you'll see that after the exile, after the exile they got burned so bad that when these Jews came back into the land they decided you know, we may screw up, but I'll tell you what, we're not going to screw up on this again. So they were very religious about keeping the seventh year, so much so that when Julius Caesar ruled Rome and took over the land, he authorized no taxes for Jews in the seventh year. And I give you the reference, Josephus Antiquities [XIV, 10, 6]. That shows you that they were obeying the Sabbath regulation, at least in the time of Julius Caesar.

The other thing to note in a passage we'll come to later in Deuteronomy 31, at the end of the seventh year there was a national convocation, the Feast of Tabernacles which went on every year but in the seventh year something special would happen; every man, woman and child would have to come forward to a central sanctuary and the Levites would then read the entire Law. So they had to stand there, or sit on the ground, and listen, because they didn't have copies of the Bible. So every seven years they went through their constitution. Now wouldn't that be a revelation to do in our country. Every seven years every citizen in the United States would have to sit and listen, or sit and read an answer an exam on the

Constitution of this country. Would that change things a little bit, perhaps?
So that's the way God organized things in the Old Testament.

Finally, the loyalty, in this Leviticus 25:20-22, the loyalty of Yahweh to support the Sabbath Year. Let's turn to Leviticus 25 so you can say well gee, what did they do about foot. Well, here's an interesting thing and this shows you the supernatural controls that went along with Israel. In Leviticus 25:20, "And if you say, What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall now sow or gather in our produce? [21] Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three y ears. [22] And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year," now look how careful that is. Year number six they're going to get triple production because they've got to have the production for year number six, they've got to have production for year number seven, and God even gives them production enough for year number eight so they can get their crops started again to go into year nine.

So these details here show you the complexity of this Mosaic Law Code and how God did this. I kind of embellished this in your outline, I say "This must imply that He had control over the soil, the fertility, the minerals, the PH of the soil, He must have had control of the insects, I mean, they didn't have big pesticides then, and He must have had control over the climate, and He anchored all of these controls according to what perimeters? This gets away from legalism here, because you could say oh well, we're just going to keep the seventh year, it's going to automatically bless... no, no, what God says is you obey Me and I'll supply. So it was anchored on the vertical relationship that the people had toward God, but what this shows you is how, when these people honored the Lord He could come right down in surgical precision, with the climate, the soil, the bugs, the bees, everything, to make those crops triple in the sixth year, perfect timing, boom, boom, boom. Now see, that's why Israel is not the Church. Israel had a special relationship to God through nature; the Church doesn't have that.

Okay, then the question arises, is it the payments on the loan or is it the principle on the loan that was released, and you can read different commentaries and they'll split on this, but I take it it was 100% of the principle due to the fact that in the next section, which we won't get into tonight, God says beware, when you loan somebody don't sit there and count in your head, gee, if this is year four and if I want to loan the buy I should have loaned it to him in year one because then there'd be six years he could pay it off, now it's four and we've only got two years to pay off and gee, I don't know whether I want to make that loan. So God is going to address that in the next thing, so I don't think that would have been addressed if it was just merely stopping payments on a note.

So the next thing is what kind of loans were these; that gets point number three, the battle for economic liberation from economic servitude. There are two classes of loans that were involved; these were charitable loans, these were not business loans. The business loans were probably using a different scale in that they would use collateral of land, which gets into the Jubilee Year, that's why they could go forty-nine years on a business loan here, with collateral for the land. But here, these are charitable

loans; this is a poor person, in desperate need, and his fellow Israelites were obligated as fellow Israelites to take care of a person who came on hard times, to share with them. Jesus makes the point and I give you two references, one in Luke 6:34-35, one in Matthew 25:27. In Luke 6 He's talking about loaning things out, you know, if you're asked it; well, you'd go bankrupt if you followed Luke 6 in business, that was a personal charitable loan. Jesus honored commercial loans because in Matthew 25 that's what the parable of talents is all about, investing money. Charitable loans in Israel, and I went back to study Near Eastern ancient loans; if a person was really hard up and needed a loan over in Babylon, Syria, Egypt, look at the loan rates, 20-50% interest. Now how do you think the economic principles affected poor people in Gentile countries versus how the interest rates affected poor people inside Israel. There's a drastic difference here; look at the difference-zero percent in one country, 20-50% in another country. No wonder these other countries had people enslaved to debt.

Now the next thing, we won't have time tonight but I threw in a passage from Nehemiah 5:1-8, you can see, when they came back from the exile they got very sloppy about this business of loaning to fellow Jews that were in trouble, and they had a whole bunch of people, they almost had a riot going on in Nehemiah 5 because these people got ticked off that they can't get zero percent interest loans when their crop failed or something happened to them, so they come to Nehemiah, and Nehemiah has a big mess on his hand in chapter 5 trying to deal with this. And you can see, he goes after the people making these loans, he says you're supposed to follow the Mosaic Law that says if you loan to this poor person you don't live off the interest, this is charity here. And by the way, historically this kind of charity within Judaism spread into the rest of the world, that's where we got the idea of charity. And only where the Bible has had some sort of influence do you find charitable giving.

The next question, point 4, is: Who are the poor? Now we have to deal with this because today it's a big issue about how do you define poverty. You say well, what's so hard about defining poverty. Well, there is something hard about it and here's the problem. Modern definitions define poverty relative to the total national wealth, so they set a "poverty-level." So here's the bell-shaped curve again, here's the bell-shaped curve of the annual income of people in a nation, there's the very wealthy, there's the poor, then we make a chop somewhere along the bell-shaped curve and say anything on the other side of that is poor. What's the mathematical fallacy of that argument? Can you ever get rid of the poor? If you're going to chop the bell-shaped curve you're always going to have the poor. Right? A nation could progressively get wealthier and wealthier and wealthier and you still have a poverty class, it hasn't changed because you're still chopping the bell-shaped curve. So that's a relative way of defining poverty.

That's not the way, apparently, the Scriptures use it and if you look at the traditional definition of poverty it's this; you can look up in a classical dictionary, an insufficiency of the material necessities of life, having little or no means to support one's self. If that's the definition of poverty, then the number of poor people is vastly smaller than the number of poor people by the relative definition. Now the socialists like the first way of defining poverty because it expands the

poverty problem to make it so big that private charity never could deal with it. But if you define poverty in an absolute scale, where people just can't support their life, then it contracts the size of the problem. And in the 19th century that was what was going on, voluntary charity.

Now in the Greek there are three words for poor, and I'm going to show you the three words and where they occur in the New Testament. One is plusios, which means a person has sufficient wealth. Then there is penes, from which we get penury, someone who cannot sustain himself from his own property and so has to work with his hands, that was used of a laborer. And then the third one was ptochos, meaning he has nothing and he has to rely on begging. Now let's go to the two New Testament passages and you'll see the difference. Unfortunately they're translated in both cases as "poor," ignoring the fact that there's a difference in these words.

Turn first to Romans 15:26, this is Paul talking in Rome to Roman Christians about his collection and concern for the poor people in the church in Jerusalem. In Romans 15:26, talking about the collection system, and it says: "For it pleased those from Macedonia and Acacia to make a certain contribution for the poor," and there it is ptochos, among the saints who are in Jerusalem." Now the fact that he used that third Greek word means that these people were so in such desperate straits in Jerusalem they had absolutely nothing, these people were begging, they had no home, they were homeless, they had no clothes, I mean, they were really out and out people, they were poor, and because these are among those in Jerusalem, Paul started up a system of collection to help these people out, their fellow believers.

Now, different from that, also Paul talking about collections, but look what he says in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; now he uses a different word. In 2 Corinthians 9:6 he says, "This I say, he who sows sparingly will reap sparingly; he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully, [7] So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver." See, that's the problem, you can't be cheerful if you're coerced. [8] "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things have an abundance of every good work. [9] As it is written, He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor," now he uses the word penes, this is the person who is not wealthy, he has to go out and work, but look how he helps the poor here; "his righteousness endures forever. [10] Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown," in other words, the idea there is God is giving this laborer a seed, He's giving them because the guy has the capability of taking the seed and making money with it. So it's not the kind of poor, poor type person, I mean, they don't even have the next meal; these people can do it, they just need empowerment, they just need some tools to get started. So there's a difference there in the kind of poor.

And one other since we're here in the New Testament, turn to 2 Thessalonians 3 because as every deacon and elder knows in a church, if you've ever been in that kind of a position, you always have abuse, no matter how careful you set up aid to the poor you always have welchers that come along and they just go from church to church sucking them dry of everything they can get, and the deacons and pastors have to be very, very

careful because then they get chewed, guilt manipulation, oh boy, you're a Christian and you're not going to help me—that kind of stuff. So here is the precedence; 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "For even when we were with you we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." Now there's a good statement. And by the way, that's the verse that was used in the 19th century rescue missions in Boston, New York, Washington and Baltimore; that's the filter they used, that if a person... they would help them out, they would provide food, they would provide clothing but they did ask, the people had to work to help the mission. [11] "For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies." So they had the problem in Thessalonica and that's the answer, the apostolic answer to that problem.

Now let's turn and finish the last part up in Deuteronomy 15. You can imagine, therefore, these kind of standards, can you envision the 2 Thessalonians standard being used in a government program? Can you imagine MSNBC's comments if they found out that you were running a federally funded system and you were requiring a 2 Thessalonians test for the people; I mean, just imagine what Christ Matthews would do, imagine what the editors in the Baltimore Sun would do, I mean, they'd castigate you for putting this kind of a filter on the welfare program.

So going back to Deuteronomy 15:4-6, now the blessing of God. Verse 4 he actually says that if Jews in their kingdom had obeyed the Lord, they could have eliminated poverty. This is a stunning statement and I think it foreshadows the Millennial Kingdom that where you have a godly remnant in Israel that becomes the total nation because of the Tribulation, at least at the start of the Millennium that poverty probably is erased, it's dealt with because God is in charge of the climate and everything else. This is why he says, [4] "except when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess [as an inheritance--] [5] if," and verse 5 is one of those infinitive absolutes in the Hebrew, meaning "if," very emphasis on it, IF, big IF, font 25 here, "you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today." So there's the contingency. And it shows you, by the way, historically in history to get rid of poverty you have to deal with the Lord.

And then it says, and here's... we want to conclude in verse 6, we want to go into some things about interest rates here. "For the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you." Now on your outline I point out, and these are insights, actually I've gotten from Gary North's Economic Analysis of the Law, that means if Israel is to lend, that they are a net exporter of goods and services. And that means that in order to be a net exporter they had to save profits to accumulate capital. And there's an equation I have down there, but you see on the left side of the equation: "Goods plus Services exported (\$)" that's the output of Israel in monetary units, "equals what they import [Services imported (\$)] + accumulated savings (\$)." [Equation: Goods + Services exported (\$) = Goods + Services imported (\$) + accumulated savings (\$)] In other words, they can't be importing the same amount economically that they are exporting or they

wouldn't have any savings. They are obviously exporting more goods and service than they're buying by import. There's a balance of trade here.

Now you go to the chart, and I want to work this through to show you probably why, if God prospered the nation, what the economy was looking like. And there's some lessons for us here today. There's an interest rate component to lending. How much is an interest rate. So if you loan money to somebody you charge them interest. Now why do you charge them interest? There are three risks that are involved in interest on a loan. The first one is the risk of default, the person who will just take your money and blow it, take it off; so you have to insure against that happening. So if you make ten loans and you figure one of those loans is going to blow out, then you're going to charge an interest rate that will accommodate that default. Now if you look at the domestic column versus the foreign column, which society would have the highest integrity, and therefore the lowest default rate? It would be domestic Israel, right? Here's domestic Israel and Psalm 37:21 says, "The wicked borrow and they pay not again," clearly arguing there that it's a matter of personal character.

So the difference culturally between Israel in column 2 and the foreign pagan nation in column 3 has to do with character. Now what does that do to the interest rate? Within Israel the interest rate is going to be lower than it is to the pagan nation because the risk level is higher in a pagan nation. So this has all kinds of impact now. Look at the second row: forfeiture of the use of money. One of the reasons why there's interest is because if I loan money to somebody, say I loan \$1,000 to person X, I have to give up the use of \$1,000, they may have it for 3 or 4 years, of course if it's one of your kids they'll have it for infinity, but the point is that you loan it out and then the issue is that you're not able to use the money. So you add an interest to it to compensate for the fact that you have to forfeit use in the present.

But now, if you look at column 2 and column 3, that has to do with your view of the future. Which society, Israel or the pagan nations, had a concept of being optimistic about the future? In other words, I can forego use of money today because there's going to be a better tomorrow, and that's Israel because in the Bible you have linear progress in history. In a pagan nation it's just cyclic, history is going nowhere. Does that impact interest rates? Of course it does, because the pagan is going to be present centered; since history is not optimistic, it's not going forward, it's not doing anything, it's not going anywhere, shoot, I want to enjoy my money today, I don't know what tomorrow is going to bring. Whereas over in Israel they had the confidence that Yahweh was blessing their nation and there was going to be a better tomorrow. So therefore, they would be willing to forfeit the present use of the money and put it aside because they could use it tomorrow. Does that raise or lower interest rates? It lowers the interest rates within Israel. The third row, an inflation premium. This is where we are going to face it, it's going to rip interest rates, this business of printing money by the Feds because if you borrow money, or I borrow money, I borrow a \$1,000 say, say I borrow \$1,000 from Jeek, now look what happens. Three years later, it's a three year note or something, they inflate the currency; when Jeek gets his \$1,000 back can he buy as much with that \$1,000 three years from now as he can now? No. So he has to guess what's happening

inflation wise to his money supply so when he gets paid back he doesn't lose purchasing power. So does inflation raise or lower interest rates? It raises them.

Well, now those two verses, and I gave you Leviticus and I said we were going to come back to this, one of those little verses about justice, do you remember one of the verses about justice, it says what about weights and measures? Don't tamper with weights and measures. Now what was weighed and measured? Money. What form of money did they have, it wasn't printed notes. It was the shekel, it was the silver, it was the gold. So you don't mess with the weights because if you mess with the weights you change the value of that little coin, because it was weighed. And Leviticus defends against that. And Isaiah 1 is castigating the nation for inflating their currency. He says you've mixed your silver with dross, in other words, you've taken the coin that yesterday was all silver and worth, say a buck, you've clipped it, you took the silver out, you added some tin or some other metal to that coin, so today it only buys fifty cents but it says a dollar on there.

So now you're in violation of two commandments, number nine because you've committed perjury, you're now saying something is worth a dollar and it isn't because it's inflated money, and you've violated commandment number eight because now you've stolen from everybody that uses the currency. Right. If you're going to inflate the currency, and everyone of us has a thousand dollars in currency today, and it's going to be inflated so two months from now or next year none of us can buy what we could have bought today, but yet it's still a dollar, it's still labeled as one dollar, but now all the prices are higher. So we've been ripped off. Inflation is a form of theft.

So all these factors between Israel and the pagan nations show why they were able to loan money-because their economy had integrity, no inflation, and it looked to the future. So therefore, Israel, the next chart, future-oriented; pagan nation, present-oriented. In Israel capital loaned at a high interest rate to the foreigner, because the foreigner wants to get the goods and services now, I want to enjoy it now, like a lot of these young people, you know, the parents didn't have two cars until they were 50 and now kids 18 think they need two cars because they see the parents had it. Well, wait a minute, the parents took 50 years to get there, what gives you the idea you're supposed to get it at 20? No. So here's the pagan nation, I want it now, and because I want it now so bad I will borrow money so I can get it and use it now. So Israel says okay, we'll sell you the goods and we'll also put it on credit, and you pay us a nice healthy interest rate. So Israel lends to the other nations, and they sell the goods at a profit. So now they're making profit on their goods and services and they're also making profit on the credit system.

Now this was the picture that Israel was to have. Now coming down to the end here, if this had happened, if Israel had been faithful, and if they had the balance of trade that was this good, what do you suppose the foreign businessman would do in their interaction with the Jewish businessman? The foreigner comes out of his country, he sees the high interest rates, he sees the less efficient production, I mean, he's a good business man, he says you know, wait a minute, your business is succeeding, and mine isn't like that, what is a good businessman going to

do when he sees that. He's going to ask and find out why because he's competing. How can his business work better. Well now, what is he going to find when he goes to the Jew and asks him how come his business and the economy is so efficient. What do you suppose he's going to find out? All about Yahweh. So this is part of the witness of Israel to the world, and this is what we could call cultural conquest. That's why Deuteronomy 4:5-8 said the nations will hear this law and they'll say wow, there's not a law on earth like this law. So it was a method of fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant of blessing all the nations; it was a built-in evangelistic system that had it worked it could have evangelized the entire planet.

So we conclude with Proverbs 22:7, all this shows you is "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender," ...servant, slave; in the sabbatical regulation God doesn't want His people to live like slaves.