

His Own Vine And Fig Tree

Property Rights and the Kingdom of God

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As many of you did back in the Worldwide Church of God, I attended the Summer Educational Program (S.E.P.). I went to the second session in Orr, Minnesota in the summer of 1982. Of course, I did all the normal things campers did—the swimming, the water polo, basketball, volleyball, rock climbing, canoeing, and all that sort of thing. I got to go on the canoe trip, which was interesting and enjoyable too.

But, one of the things that we did at camp was to go to Bible classes. I cannot remember how many we had, probably just one a week. Maybe they had them more often and I was just not paying attention. I believe one was conducted by Dennis Van deVenter (whom I later came to know fairly well) which concerned the Millennium, and specifically our topic was our perspective of what the Millennium would be like compared to what the Bible says about it.

I distinctly remember as the class ended, our assignment was to draw either our millennial dream home—every kid which chose this had this palatial dwelling—or, we could choose an animal that we would like as a pet—dinosaur, leopard, or some other such creature with fangs. You see, I was 16 at the time, and I thought this was extremely childish. It was not the sort of thing for a 16 year old to be doing—drawing pictures.

Part of that class was Micah 4:1-4. This is also found in Isaiah 2:2-4.

Micah 4:1-3 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LOORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths for out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations from afar off. They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

To this point, Isaiah and Micah are parallel to each other. Then Micah and Isaiah take

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different tracks from what has been said here. Isaiah goes on to call Israel to repentance, to tell about the terrible things of the Day of the Lord, and puts the fear of God into them. But, Micah lingers on the Millennium for a few more verses.

Micah 4:4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make *them* afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

Here we have a verse that talks about people sitting under vines and fig trees, being secure and unafraid. When Dennis Van deVenter read this verse back when I was 16 years old, I was not too keen on vines or fig trees either. I much preferred to sit under an apple tree, or something that I really enjoyed. (I have learned to like what vines produce.) But, I understood the larger point of prosperity and peace, and security that was being talked about here.

Since then I have had 24 years to think this verse over from one angle or another. This year, one word of three letters hit me like a ton of bricks. And that was the word "his." "Everyone shall sit under *his* vine and under *his* fig tree."

Maybe that does not mean anything to you, since it is just a silly old pronoun, but it is a *possessive* pronoun. It says that these people own this particular vine and fig tree. It is not just *a* vine, or *a* fig, or *any old* vine, or *any old* fig tree, but it is *his* vine, and *his* fig tree. They own these things.

To me, this provides a pretty big hint that in the Millennium personal property will be the norm. God will allow the people to own their own land and property. The Kingdom of God will not be like some medieval serfdom (which one might think from the fact that we are going to have Christ as king)—a place where the king would grant them all land, and they would be tenants on His land, and He would own everything and they would just be caretakers.

But this verse says otherwise. It says "his vine and his fig tree." It is not going to be like a communist or socialist collective where they all own everything together, and they really do not own anything at all. It will go opposite to the trends in our own society which are moving away from private property (it seems), and the government is putting more and more regulations on what we can do with our own things.

God says here that they will be safe and secure, every man under his vine, and under his fig tree. The citizens of God's kingdom will enjoy the benefits of property ownership.

I do not know if you ever thought of this, but I thought it was significant. Have you ever heard a Feast sermon on property rights and property ownership? Well, you are going to hear one today.

Today, consider this concept of private property and private property rights as the Bible presents them. I want to apply them to the Millennium, and take from that a few hints of what Millennial society will be like because they will have the ability to own property.

Property rights began in the beginning, right at the foundation of the world.

Genesis 1:26-30 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; *have dominion* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, *I have given you every herb* [there are probably a few vines and fig trees among them] *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for food"; and it was so.

Here it is. Right at the beginning we have the concept of God giving man dominion over the earth and everything that is in it. He speaks specifically about the production of food and of using these things for food.

The word "dominion" suggests rulership, a kind of ownership. Usually when you dominate something you own it. They even say that in competitive sports, "I own you!" because they are dominated on the playing field. But, dominion suggests rulership, a kind of ownership, and authoritative control.

Just a few verses later we get a few little hints of things as they begin to happen during this very early time. This is actually a restatement of the verses we just read.

Genesis 2:7 And the LOORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Here is the fact that God created man out of the dust of the ground. You could say that there is a kind of organic connection between mankind and the earth. In one way, we are one. We are made of the earth, and we go back to the earth, as it is said.

So man was created from the earth, and there remains an inherent link between human beings and land. I do not know a person alive who has not had a hankering at one time or another to own a piece of land, if he does not already.

I am not implying any kind of mystical union between mankind and the earth. I do not mean that at all. I simply mean that there is an implicit recognition in us that men are tied to the earth, and that we depend upon each other. We need the earth, and the earth needs us. All our sustenance and all our prosperity comes from the earth. There is a link there. Land and man need each other.

One small thing that we can toss in here from verse 7 is the fact that this man which was formed of the dust of the earth was named *Adam*. That word means "red earth." It was actually "Clay and Eve."

Genesis 2:15 Then the LOORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Now we have to expand on things just a bit. God gave Adam, the representative of all mankind, a dual responsibility in his dominion over the land. And here, the specific property being spoken about is the Garden of Eden. This is what the command was originally specifically about, but it also went further than that to all the earth which had been given by God.

Tend and keep, as we have learned in the past, covers two broad categories of work and of man's responsibilities. The first, to tend, means to cultivate. That is its primary meaning. But, it is not just to sow and to reap; it also has within it the principles of enhancing and beautifying. It is not just ripping up the ground, sowing some seed, covering it over, watering it a bit, and weeding once in a while. It is not as simple as that. It is the broad principle of care for the land; and not just caring, but also to make it better, to enhance it, to beautify it, and to make the most of what we have been given.

The second thing He said was "to keep it." This does not just mean to hold on to. It actually means to guard and protect. It suggests, what we call today, conservation. If you are a conservationist, you are different from an environmentalist. Not only do you

want to protect the land, but you also want to beautify it, enhance it, make it most useful, and keep renewing it. An environmentalist only wants to keep you off from it, and not let you do anything with it.

So we have these two things—*tending*, which means cultivate and enhance, and we have *keeping*, which means to protect, guard, and conserve (preserving in a state in which it can be passed on to others). It means guarding against abuse, and careful management of what we have been given.

A lot happened in these first few chapters. Some very fundamental things were being set down for our learning.

This next passage is after the sin of Adam and Eve, and God had asked them what happened, and they started pointing fingers. And so, God said that He would punish all three of them. He got to Satan first, and then He talked to Eve, and now He is going to give Adam what for:

Genesis 3:17-19 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return."

Now, that really shows me a great deal of linkage between mankind and the earth.

After Adam and Eve sinned, the God-given responsibility to care for the earth to tend and keep did not go away, but what happened was that it would become harder to do. The earth would fight against mankind, instead of cooperating, and his labors to produce food and wealth from the earth would grind him down. It would be sweat and toil. And once he got food from the ground and used it, he would have to go back and do it all over again. He would fight, and sweat, and toil again and again, until there was nothing left of him. And then he would fall down into the earth and wait because he was now dead.

It is not a very happy thing. I did an article in the Forerunner on this several years ago. There is a spot of hope here, but it is a dim spot. There are things to be learned from this toil that would bring man closer to God. But, we are not talking about that right now.

Man's life would be consumed by his struggles with the earth. That was the punishment that God gave to Adam. He would have a life of toil where he would do his best to get from the earth what God would have freely given if he had not sinned.

And so then, he would end up right where he started—in the earth.

This is an indication to me from God that humanity through sin was now going to be even more tied to the earth. There was an opportunity before their sin for them to look heavenward more often than they had to look earthward. But now that they had sinned, their gaze would be at the ground more often than to the heavens, because the toil of pulling things from the earth would keep their minds focused on the things of this earth.

There would be little time for higher thoughts than this lifetime of toil.

The next passages I want parallel Genesis 12.

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

Hebrews 11:13-16 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

So, by Genesis 12, the story in the Bible had been narrowed down to the record of one man, Abraham, and his descendants who became the children of Israel.

And then,

Genesis 13:14-15 And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you

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are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.

One of the primary things as part of the promise of God was a gift of land, a huge land as we will see in a moment. It was, at that time, the land of Canaan, and later became Israel.

Genesis 15:7 Then He said to him, "I *am* the LOORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

I want the phrase "to inherit it." When you start talking about property and property rights, inheritance becomes quite important, because we are mortal men and women—we die. Who gets the land after us?

So, quite early in the book as we see above, we have already begun to hear the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Millennium. We are introduced to the concepts of the Promised Land, which is a type of the Kingdom of God: inheritance, sojourning, and dwelling in tents as pilgrims.

Leviticus 23:34-35 Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the Feast of Tabernacles [tents, shelters, temporary dwellings] *for* seven days to the LOORD. On the first day [today] *there shall be* a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work *on it*.'

Leviticus 23:39-43 Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LOORD *for* seven days; on the first day *there shall be* a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LOORD your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LOORD for seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LOORD your God.

Obviously, all these ideas have ties with the Feast of Tabernacles. We have tents, promised land, inheritance, sojourning, and being pilgrims—these things all indicate either present or future property ownership. We are already starting because of the types to begin to receive hints of this property ownership thing happening in the Millennium.

What I am going to do now is take you through the historical concepts of property ownership as they appear in the Bible. We cannot hit them all, because there are a lot of them. You would be surprised after you start a study in them.

Below, this is God telling the children of Israel what He was going to do in bringing them into the land.

Exodus 23:20 Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

Exodus 23:31 And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.

By this time, the descendants of Abraham had become the tribes of Israel, and they had become a nation coming out of Egypt under Moses. God promises here that He would lead them to the Promised Land, a land that He had specifically prepared for them. It was a land that He had set aside for them.

One of the ways that He had prepared it was by setting its boundaries. That is all part of property ownership. You have to know where the landmarks are—where the borders are.

He had told them that the boundaries of this land goes from the Red Sea on the South, the Mediterranean Sea on the West, the Euphrates River on the North, and the desert in the East—a very large land; a land that Israel never really controlled.

The closest they came to fulfilling this was under David and Solomon. And, perhaps they did control this much, maybe not as in directly holding it themselves, but as being over-lords with the other peoples under tribute.

Later, under Joshua, He set internal boundaries within this land. He divided it into tribal inheritances. All thirteen tribes, counting Ephraim and Manasseh as two, received

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inheritances. And those two, which should have received half of Joseph's inheritance, actually received full inheritances, more than the others ones, except for Judah. It is interesting how that worked out.

This allotment of land within Canaan was so important to God and the way that He thinks, that He allocated nine chapters to this in the book of Joshua. I bet you have never thought about that! There were nine chapters that Joshua wrote down the exact tribal boundaries for the whole nation. It runs from Joshua 12 to Joshua 21. And, it is pretty specific—it goes from this town, to this town, to this brook, to this landmark, and back to this town, etc. He gives you the whole thing.

As a matter of fact, when I was a student at Ambassador College taking historical geography, we had to buy a map book that was made by the Israelis, and go through Joshua 12 through 21, and actually map out these tribal boundaries for all thirteen tribes.

It was an amazing exercise! You could do this yourself. As long ago as that was, those places are still there. Most of them have been identified. It is like connecting the dots. Just draw it all out. It is an interesting thing if you like geography.

From the allotting of the land in the book of Joshua, the tribal elders, then, apportioned the property among the heads of the families; and then the heads of the families apportioned their property among their clan until each household in the entire nation had land. And they had it pretty much in perpetuity. (We will get to that in a moment also.) Nobody was without a place to call their own. They had a plot on which to build a house, raise a family, raise crops or livestock, and/or ply their trade from their own property.

If they had a stand of timber, they could do something with that. If they had a rock quarry, they could do something with that. Maybe they had a seam of coal, or who knows what, but that is what they owned, and they could use it—tending and keeping—for the benefit of themselves, and for their tribe, and the whole nation.

And now another thing that comes from my Ambassador College training: In first year Bible called "Old Testament Survey," John Halford made it very interesting. He was always funny. He had a quirky sense of humor, and was a very creative man. He came up with a lot of very interesting ways to teach things. I think he was a pretty good teacher.

We never had a test. We always had an assignment for the information that we needed to cover without having to have a test. It counted as a test, but it really was not a test.

One of these assignments was to choose from a list of six to eight scenarios that involves something like: a person trips and falls on your property, and bangs his head. How would you judge this situation from what the Bible gives us for such things?

And so, you actually had to read the Bible, believe it or not, and figure out which laws applied. Then you wrote a paragraph explaining how you as a judge in Israel would judge this situation—Who was right? Who was wrong? And does it require compensation? And if so, how much?

So, he had quite a few of these scenarios, and we had to choose five or so, and that was our first semester test. It was a test, but it was very creative. It gave me an appreciation for the laws of Moses, and the laws that are here in the Pentateuch.

The Pentateuch contains dozens, maybe scores of laws dealing with property—everything from buying and selling land and homes, to inheritance rights, to the use of landmarks, to the management of crops, the care of trees, the responsibilities governing animals. (What do you do with a bull that is known to gore?)

And, even building codes! We think we are so smart that we came up with building codes. Everybody's houses are built to specs, and all that. But God was doing this 3500 years ago! In fact, in the basic law, there are two commandments that deal with property rights—the Eighth Commandment, which concerns stealing; and the Tenth Commandment, which concerns coveting another man's property. Usually, coveting leads to abuses of one sort or another—stealing, or moving landmarks, or pulling a fast one, etc.

So, there is a great deal in the Old Testament about property.

I chose a scripture in Deuteronomy because I think that it is very significant in this particular passage. What we will hear at the end of Deuteronomy 27 is the instructions to Israel about the blessings and cursings that they were to say on Mount Gerazim and Mount Ebal when they got into the land.

Now, verse 17 is in the midst of the curses. I want you to notice that the first curse in verse 15 is against those who make or worship any idol. The second one has to do with how you treat your parents. Those are two pretty big ones! Especially the first one, but the second one is similar on a physical plane.

What is the third one?

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Deuteronomy 27:17 Cursed *is* the one who moves his neighbor's landmark.
And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

If this is any indication of where they fall in this list of curses, property ownership and abusing another's property is pretty important to God. It ranks third in this list, right after the first two Commandments and the fifth Commandment. I am sure that there were probably other reasons for doing this, but I do not know what they were. However, I thought it significant that after He knocked out those two big ones, He talked about removing, or moving landmarks.

This, to me, shows just how important property is to God in His scheme of things.

What makes this more compelling, to me, is that this command is repeated four other times just in the Old Testament. If you want to write them down, they are: Deuteronomy 19:14, Proverbs 22:28, Proverbs 23:10, and Hosea 5:10.

God does not like it when people, "Heh, heh! There! I got a couple more feet! I just knocked his landmark over. Tomorrow night, I will go get the other one," because at that time they used stacks of stone. It would not take much to move it over a bit, and grab a quarter acre down that line. (I think God says something in the book of Amos, too, about this.)

Also, remember that I said that God talked about building codes in the Pentateuch? Here is one of them:

Deuteronomy 22:8 When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

In Mr. Halford's test, this was the answer to that question about somebody's tripping, because this is a principle that applies more broadly than just having a parapet around your roof. This is the biblical foundation for the homeowner's insurance industry, tort law, etc. This is a building code that says that if you build a house, and there is an unsafe place in your house, and you have a guest not knowing how your house is, who falls over the side and hurts himself badly, it is the owner's responsibility for that injury or death. Then, the applicable laws found elsewhere in the Bible would apply.

What this shows us is, not only do we have property rights, we also have property

responsibilities. These are the things that we should be teaching our children. They should be taught to keep things clean and neat, to keep them in good repair, to make sure that other people do not get hurt. "Do not keep the skateboard just inside the front door, so that when mom comes in with the groceries..."

They should be taught these types of things. These responsibilities begin early. And in this country, we give our kids a lot of things, and they should be taught to take care of them.

We have noticed this in our family—the more that they have, the less they appreciate what they have, and the worse care that they take of what they have. They are willing to get this, that, and the other. Then you find that they are catching them on fire, hanging them from ropes, and using them for batting practice. Here they cost you \$10 each, and they do not see the worth in it.

Of course, as they are not taking care of these things, ten years down the road, they will take their car and do something stupid because they does not understand, because they were never taught the worth of property, and the responsibilities that go with it. These things need to be taught. That is what God was teaching His children with these laws.

And, not only their own property, but children should be taught to respect the property of other people. For instance, they should not enter another person's property except by permission. This is terrible in our society where we are all crammed cheek by jowl into subdivisions, and it is an easy thing for a kid to hop over the fence, and go through your yard as the shortcut. But, really in the real world, that is trespassing. It is not a good thing. They should only go on another person's property by permission, or by public access—your sidewalk and driveway leading to a front door. That is where one is expected to come to go onto another's property, knock on the door, and state one's business for being there. They are not to go across the carefully tended lawn.

Another thing is when a friend allows them to use one of his possessions, we should teach our children that they should return it in as good a condition as they received it, and if they do not, it should be replaced. That is respect and responsibility for property.

These are things that are backed up by God's word. I could go to these verses, but there are very clear verses that say that if you borrow somebody's animals and they die in your care, then you have to replace them so many-fold. It is the same principle with things that are inanimate. If you borrow their tractor, and you damage his equipment, you are responsible to replace that because you are not giving it back to them in a

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condition in which they gave it to you to use.

This is the sort of thing that we need to be teaching our children. Property rights are one of those things that are falling out of our consciousness. I believe that the reason is 1) the domination of government in our lives, and 2) the super-abundance of things we have. Things do not have the value to us anymore. We do not think of these things as much as we used to.

Let us turn to another of these laws in Exodus 22 to back up some of the things I have been saying.

Exodus 22:5-6 If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

Did you know that these verses were here? They are all through this section, particularly from the end of chapter 20 through the beginning of chapter 24. There are all kinds of little laws like this that give principles of property ownership, relationships, and that sort of thing.

This also tells us that if we do something to harm another's possessions, it is our job and duty to repay him in kind, or sometimes pay money. But, we have to understand these principles as well as pass them along to our children.

God, obviously, thinks that private property is essential, and He legislates against those who trespass on, steal, or destroy another's property. Perhaps His concern goes back to the fact that God owns everything. And though we consider ourselves owner of our land, and our goods, we are at best caretakers or stewards of them. And so this principle of taking care of them and making the most of them comes out.

Turn to Leviticus 25 and see this. This is a very interesting scripture. This is in the chapter about the jubilee year, and the sabbatical year; and then it goes into the redemption of property.

Leviticus 25:23 The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land *is* Mine; for you *are* strangers and sojourners with Me.

God owns the land. He owns the whole earth. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He owns all the gold and all the silver. So, we really do not own anything permanently. But here, God says that you are not supposed to sell the land permanently. And He has a good reason for it. He is the ultimate title-holder to all of it. He had given it to our forefathers, and it has come down to us, and that was His will. And so He says do not sell it to anybody else, because I put the property into the hands I wanted it in.

He prohibited the Israelites from selling their property permanently. That is important. He did allow them to sell it if they were in debt. What would happen is that when they got back on their feet, and able to buy the land back, they could go to the person who bought it from them, and say, "Look, I have got the money for my ancestral land here in my hand, thanks for taking care of it, please give me my land back." This was allowable.

Or, the other thing that he could do, if he could not get back on his feet financially, then he and his family would have to wait until the Jubilee year. And if he did that, then he would not owe a dime. He would get his land back automatically, because in every Jubilee year the inheritances in Israel reverted back to their owners. No matter what had happened in the past 50 years, it came back to them.

Now, this last clause in this verse above, where it says, "for you are strangers and sojourners with Me...", should be better translated as, "for to Me you are foreigners and pilgrims..." Not much difference there, just a slightly different wording. What He is talking about is the concept that we talk about a great deal in the Feast of Tabernacles. They were pilgrims and sojourners on a journey. They were not completely settled. They are temporary, transitory tenants upon the land.

It is not a great leap to see the connections among Israel's inheritance of the land, yet remaining pilgrims. The symbolic use of booths or temporary dwellings during the Feast of Tabernacles, and the millennial fulfillments, or you might say the resolution of these types. God is teaching a lesson through property.

What He says here is that the land was His, just as the whole earth is His, just as the whole universe is His, and that is not going to change in the Millennium. Christ will come. He will be King. He will own everything. But, because of who we are, we will own it with Him. This is what I mean about the fulfillment or the resolution of these issues.

Let us go to Jeremiah 32. We are now getting more into the millennial context of these things.

Jeremiah 32:37 Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have

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driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely.

This is speaking of what we have called in the past, the Second Exodus. This is Israel after the Day of the Lord, coming back to the land, weeping and repentant.

Jeremiah 32:38 They shall be My people, and I will be their God;

They repent and God accepts them.

Jeremiah 32:39-40 then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.

So, they come under the New Covenant. They are given the Holy Spirit. And this time, they will not forsake Him.

Jeremiah 32:41 Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly (Look!) ***plant them in this land***,

Just a bit different from *give them*, or *bring them in*.

When you plant something, you normally expect it to stay there, and to grow and to flourish, and to bear fruit. The idea here is that in the Millennium they are not just strangers and pilgrims. God has decided that He is going to put them there to stay.

Jeremiah 32:41 and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.

"My Children, I am giving it to you lock, stock, and barrel. You are here to stay!"

Jeremiah 32:42 For thus says the LOORD: 'Just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them.'

How does God show through Jeremiah how good it is going to be?

Jeremiah 32:43-44 And fields will be bought in this land of which you say, "*It is desolate, without man or beast; it has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men will buy fields for money, sign deeds and seal *them*, and take witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the South; for I will cause their captives to return,*" says the LORD.

In this section, what is the thing that makes this time period so good? Property—in this particular example He gives us here.

It is not just that there is a Promised Land, but there is a Promised Plot, you might say, a Promised Lot, or a few acres for each person, and they will have the ability to buy more, to sign deeds, and do whatever they need to do. They will have property and they can start living well.

The economy at this time, if we are just looking at this verse, seems to be based upon land; the buying, selling, and production from the land. It appears that it will be a kind of capitalism. I do not know how far we can go with that, but it will be a more pure form, or more righteous form than we have today, I guarantee you. Perhaps it will be a bartering economy. Perhaps not. It would be easier to use a form of currency, I would think. But, that is what we are used to in this day. Who knows?

It will be primarily agricultural, as far as we know. What do you normally do with land? You sow seed on it. You graze animals on the grass that might grow on it. You do something agriculturally. Maybe you plant trees on it and grow fruit, nuts or timber. It later produces, and you sell it for the things that you do not produce like clothes, shoes, equipment, etc.

And, if you are able to procure these items, that means that someone else is doing other things with their land to produce these items. Maybe they grow the flax, or cotton, or raise wool to make the garments.

There will be other people who will have different types of land, and will use their land in the way that they see fit in order to bring wealth and prosperity into their homes.

It does not all have to be agricultural. There will be industry and commerce also. There will be the use of raw materials from the land, and bringing them into finished products for use of the people.

However it works out, though, property is at the base. You need land, and you need the rights to that land, to use the land in a right and proper way, under the heading of tending and keeping.

One of the hallmarks of the age to come is that they will all own their own bit of land to make the most of. And they will really own it.

Turn forward a bit to Ezekiel 46. There is a person at the ending chapters of Ezekiel named the "prince." It is hard to know exactly who this prince is. Most think that this is a human ruler rather than Messiah. It does not seem to be Messiah from the things that are said about him. But, I want to pick up three verses:

Ezekiel 46:16-18 Thus says the Lord GOD: "If the prince gives a gift of *some* of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. But if he gives a gift of some of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, after which it shall return to the prince. But his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs. Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people's inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property."

What God does here is that in the Millennium everybody's property will be secure. What it tells me is that the property rights in the Millennium will be pretty much sacrosanct. And the bases for these property rights are exactly what we just read there in the Pentateuch. Those same laws will be put back into effect, and followed, even to the point of this thing about the redemption of property in the year of jubilee. Things will revert to the original owners in the year of liberty.

What was not done properly in ancient Israel will be made to work as intended by God during Christ's thousand-year reign. As a matter of fact, that is a theme of these last several chapters of Ezekiel. Time and time again God, through Ezekiel, tells us that Israel is going to be made to do things the right way this time as God intended from the beginning. And one of those things is the property rights and responsibilities. They are going to be made to put them into practice.

Ezekiel 36 is similar to what Jeremiah gave us in Jeremiah 32. Please notice that we come back full circle.

Ezekiel 36:22-36 Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOOD: "I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the LOORD," says the Lord GOOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land (Second Exodus). Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that *were* not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. Not for your sake do I do *this*," says the Lord GOOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!" Thus says the Lord GOOD: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable *you* to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities *are now* fortified *and* inhabited.' Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LOORD, have rebuilt the ruined places *and* planted what was desolate. I, the LOORD, have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*."

Did you notice the full circle? We started way back in Genesis 1, God giving dominion to mankind, and placing him in the Garden of Eden. In the Millennium, He brings His people back to the land, and He says, "This is yours. Tend and keep it, and bring it back to the Garden of Eden."

What He is aiming for is to, in a way, turn back and start over. He wants His people to do it right, to learn the lessons, to be ashamed and confounded because of the stupid things that they did to defile their own inheritance, and to mess up their relationship with God. And God said that He will respond to that, and shower them with blessings that come from the land. And they will, then, be able to produce something like the Garden of Eden. Something that is impossible with the frame of mind we have as men without God's spirit. That is what makes the difference.

God gives His Spirit. Something clicks. And it not only clicks with our relationship with each other, and with God, but it will also click with the land, and our responsibilities for it as sons of God.

Did you know that land was so important? That property would be front and center in God's mind. There is something about owning land and being responsible for owning land, and having to produce something from that land for your own sustenance, and then for your prosperity.

God uses the conditions of the land to teach valuable lessons of things like ownership, responsibility, out-going concern, and stewardship. In doing it right, the people of that day (and we in a way, now, because we have the Holy Spirit) will be able to see a huge difference between God's way, and their own ways that did not produce a thing that was good. And, the right use of land, and the right understanding of property will, like it says above in verse 31, teach them great lessons about their relationship between themselves and God. They begin to look at property, at land, and at the things that can be produced like being fruitful and abundant from God's perspective, not ours.

All we want, it seems, is to get from the land. But, there is more to it all bound up in that initial command to tend and to keep.

I certainly did not think that when I began this study of property that I would find so much. I thought this would be a long shot for a sermon, and that I might not be able to fill out the time.

There was a lot more that I could have gone to. There were several more in the law. But, I am going to leave that up to you, if you are interested. It has a great deal to do with what we are here for, because like Abraham, we look to that better country, that land.

Let us end in Amos 9.

His Own Vine and Fig Tree by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Amos 9:13-15 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LOORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow *with it*. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit *them*; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them," says the LOORD your God.

We often speak of the Millennium's peace and prosperity. But, I want to add another word to your Feast of Tabernacles millennial vocabulary—permanence. In the Kingdom of God, in the Millennium, there will be peace, plenty of prosperity, because they will be permanently planted in the land. God's people will no longer be strangers and pilgrims. That will be resolved. They will have found their homeland.

That homeland is the wonderful Kingdom of God.