Good Morning!

“At the end of every seven years you must declare a cancellation of debts. This is the nature of the cancellation: Every creditor must remit what he has loaned to another person; he must not force payment from his fellow Israelite, for it is to be recognized as “the Lord’s cancellation of debts.” Deuteronomy 15:1-2 (NET Bible)

In Deuteronomy, Moses lays out how the nation of Israel is to live. It is the greatest statement on Biblical Ethics. I think our modern problem with it is that we come to it to proof-text our positions and leave the rest with the excuse that it is really for Israel any way. It doesn’t apply to me. Our proof-texting is probably correct – that is we have an accurate assessment of what God has said. But our dismissing of other sections of this book undermines the authority we give to our proof-text. [Proof-texting is pulling verses out to prove your position, sometime out of context and, therefore, use the verse inappropriately.]

What I am getting at is that if Deuteronomy is God’s text on ethics than it all applies to us. Ethics is ethics; and, although we do not do the same things as Jews were required to do, we must believe as they were required to believe.

So we come to the Sabbatical year. The Jewish calendar was divided up into seven year periods (no I am not going into Revelation!). In the first six years of that time frame, you could borrow and loan, but in the seventh year, all was forgiven. This covered their “slavery” because all of these slaves were freed in the seventh year.

There are lots of details that go with this, but there is an ethical part, a heart issue that goes with this. Look at 15:12-14, “If your fellow Hebrew—whether male or female—is sold to you and serves you for six years, then in the seventh year you must let that servant go free. If you set them free, you must not send them away empty-handed. You must supply them generously from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress—as the Lord your God has blessed you, you must give to them.”

This requires a totally different attitude about your servant. You are to “serve” them by providing for their needs – as a brother or sister! God in not just giving legal statutes for the nation, He is calling them to have a different attitude than is normal. You are to love and care for them, just as He has cared for you. You are to mimic the LORD. Deut. 15:9 is clear, “Beware that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the Lord against you, and it will be a sin in you.” God is concerned with our thinking and not just our outward actions. Our hearts are to be more than kind - we are to be like Him.

So Deuteronomy always challenges me. It is not for what someone did 4,500 years ago, but because I have to think, “Do I think this way?”

In Christ Jesus, who is our Truth…

Pastor EA