

Doctrine of the Fifth Part

1. The fifth part is mentioned nine times in Scripture and is significant.
2. The fifth part refers to one part in five equal parts, twenty percent.
3. Joseph counseled the Pharaoh to reserve twenty percent of the grain of Egypt for seven years in order to prepare for a famine that was to last for seven years.
 - *Genesis 41:34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.*
4. Because of the wisdom of Joseph, the people in Egypt retained eighty percent of their crops for food for their families while reserving twenty percent for difficult days in the future.
 - *Genesis 47:24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.*
5. The priests of Israel were exempt from the royal decree suggested by Joseph to reserve twenty percent of the nation's harvest for years of famine.
 - *Genesis 47:26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.*
6. When making a trespass offering, an additional twenty percent of the value of the offering was to be given unto the priest in the act of atonement.
 - *Leviticus 5:16 And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.*
7. In the act of restitution for injuring someone by fraud, oppression, cheating, or deception, the value of the item in question was to be returned, and twenty percent of the value of the item was to be added. In this way, cursing was turned into blessing.
 - *Leviticus 6:5 Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering.*
8. In context, the reference is to a non-priestly person who unwittingly eats consecrated food. The value of the food had to be refunded with twenty percent added to it.
 - *Leviticus 22:14 And if a man eat of the holy thing unwittingly, then he shall put the fifth part thereof unto it, and shall give it unto the priest with the holy thing.*

9. If a person once had a piece of property and wished to redeem it, or buy it back, the property was to be valued, and then twenty percent more was to be added to the redemption price.

- *Leviticus 27:15 And if he that sanctified it will redeem his house, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be his.*

10. A piece of real estate, such as a field, could be redeemed by paying the value of the land plus twenty percent.

- *Leviticus 27:19 And if he that sanctified the field will in any wise redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be assured to him.*

Special Note.

“Our houses, lands, cattle, and all our substance, must be used to the glory of God. It is acceptable to him that a portion be given to support his worship, and to promote his cause. But God would not approve such a degree of zeal as ruined a man's family” (Matthew Henry).

11. The tithe of an animal, or food, belonged to the Lord. However, a person could redeem this tithe by paying the value of the animal, or food, with an additional twenty percent. John Calvin believes the fifth part provision prevented a poor animal, or bad food, from being given to the Lord, and thus to the priests, who received the tithes as a royal revenue, as the Lord ceded, or gave up, His own rights.

- *Leviticus 27:31 And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof.*

12. To “*recompense his trespass*” is literally, “*to restore his guilt.*” The meaning is that a person was to restore that which was being held in an illegitimate way, with an additional twenty percent penalty attached to the value of the item.

- *Numbers 5:7 Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed.*