

UNDERSTANDING THE JUBILEE OF GOD

- I. The Jubilee is a release that happens every 50 years. There is a sabbatical every seven years, so it rolled over into the Jubilee on the seventh sabbatical. The sabbatical years were to give the land and the people rest. The Jubilee was also used to gauge how you could rent your land and buy the crops for a season. This was to keep people from robbing poor people of their inheritance.

Luke 4:17-21

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

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

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

KJV

Luke 4:14-30

Jesus was asked to read the Scripture text and to give the sermon. The passage He read included Isa 61:1-2, and He selected it for His "text." The Jewish rabbis interpreted this passage to refer to the Messiah, and the people in the synagogue knew it. You can imagine how shocked they were when Jesus boldly said that it was written about Him and that He had come to usher in the "acceptable year of the Lord."

The reference here is the "Year of Jubilee" described in Lev 25. Every seventh year was a "Sabbatical year" for the nation, when the land was allowed to rest; and every fiftieth year (after seven Sabbaticals) was set apart as the "Year of Jubilee." *The main purpose of this special year was the balancing of the economic system: slaves were set free and returned to their families, property that was sold reverted to the original owners, and a debts were canceled. The land lay fallow as man and beast rested and rejoiced in the Lord.*

Jesus applied all of this to His own ministry, not in a political or economic sense, but in a physical and spiritual sense. He had certainly brought Good News of salvation to bankrupt sinners and healing to brokenhearted and rejected people. He had delivered many from blindness and from bondage to demons and disease. Indeed, it was a spiritual "Year of Jubilee" for the nation of Israel!

Luke 4:16-30

4:16-30. Jesus initially was a popular Teacher, so when He went back to His hometown, it was natural for Him to teach in synagogues. It was the custom in the synagogue for a man to stand while he was reading the Scriptures but then to sit while explaining the portion he had read. The portion of Scripture Jesus read was Isa 61:1-2, a messianic passage. He concluded His reading with the words, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor - stopping in the middle of the verse without reading the next line in Isa 61:2 about God's vengeance. When Jesus added, Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing, the implication was clear. Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah who could bring the kingdom of God which had been promised for so long -

Luke 4:18-22; Luke 4:18-22

Vers. 18-22. The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. --

The acceptable year of the Lord: -- These were things sure to interest the Pauline evangelist. It is a worthy frontispiece, in respect both of the grace and of the universality of the gospel.

1. In the first place the text of Christ's discourse was a most gracious one; none more so could have been found within the range of Old Testament prophecy. Made more gracious than in the original by the omission of the reference to the day of vengeance, and by the addition of a clause to make the Messiah's blessed work as many-sided and complete as possible.

2. If Christ's text was full of grace, His sermon appears to have been not less so. That this was so the evangelist indicates when he makes use of the phrase "words of grace" to denote its general character. That phrase, indeed, he reckoned the fittest to characterize Christ's whole teaching as recorded in his Gospel, and on that very account it is that he introduces it here.

3. In respect of the universal destination of the gospel, the scene is also sufficiently significant. The attempt on the life of Jesus foreshadows the tragic event through which the Prophet of Nazareth hoped to draw to Himself the expectant eyes of all men. The departure of Jesus from His own town is a portent of Christianity leaving the sacred soil of Judea, and setting forth into the wide world in quest of a new home.

4. The two features most prominent in this frontispiece are just the salient characteristics of the Christian era. It is the era of grace, and of grace free to all mankind. And on these accounts it is the acceptable year of the Lord. It is acceptable to God. It should be acceptable to us.

(A. B. Bruce, D. D.)

Luke 4:18-22

The matter of Christ's preaching: --

I. I preach that the great atonement for sin has been offered.

II. I preach that the guilty may be forgiven.

III. I preach that the slave may be emancipated.

IV. I preach that the lost inheritance may be regained.

Luke 4:18-22

Ministry for the poor: -- To awaken a spiritual interest in the poor is my object.

7. We are solemnly bound, therefore, to cherish and manifest a strong moral and religious interest in the poor. Every man whom God has prospered is bound to contribute to this work. The Christian ministry is a blessing to all, but above all to the poor. If there be an office worthy of angels, it is that of teaching Christian truth. The Son of God hallowed it by sustaining it in His own person.

(W. E. Channing, D. D.)

Luke 4:19

To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

a year of universal release for person and property. See also <Isa. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2>. As the maladies under which humanity groans are here set forth under the names poverty, broken-heartedness, bondage, blindness, bruisedness, (or crushedness), so Christ announces Himself, in the act of reading it, as the glorious HEALER of all them maladies; stopping the quotation just before it comes to "the day of vengeance," which was only to come on the rejecters of His message <John 3:17>. The first words, "THE SPIRIT of THE LORD is upon ME," have been noticed since the days of the Church Fathers, as an illustrious example of Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit being exhibited as in distinct yet harmonious action in the scheme of salvation. The year of Jubilee is also called the year of liberty and year of freedom. Here it is used in the physical to show what would happen in the spiritual just as Ruth was redeemed by the next of kin so are we by Jesus and all the rights are restored to us as heirs of God.

RELEASE, YEAR OF

A term applied to the Year of JUBILEE, the end of a cycle of seven sabbatical years. The Year of Jubilee was established to safeguard against a small group gaining control of much land and people falling into poverty because of high interest (Lev 25:8-17,23-55). It fell every 50 years.

JUBILEE

(See YEAR, SABBATICAL). The 50th jubilee, after seven weeks of years, when alienated lands returned to the original owners and Hebrew bondservants were freed (Lev 25:8-16,23-55; 27:16-25; Num 36:4). At the close of the great day of atonement the blast of the jubilee curved trumpets proclaimed throughout the land liberty, after guilt had been removed through the typically atoning blood of victims. It is referred to as antitypically fulfilled in "the acceptable year of the Lord," this limited period of gospel grace in which deliverance from sin and death, and the restoration of man's lost inheritance, are proclaimed through Christ (Isa 61:1-2; Luke 4:19). Literally, hereafter (Ezek 7:12-13; 46:17) to be kept. Liberty to bondservants was given every seventh or sabbatical year. The princes and people at Jerusalem first observed it, in accordance with Zedekiah's covenant made under fear of the Babylonian besiegers; afterward on Pharaoh Hophra interrupting the siege they broke their engagement and enslaved their brethren again; God in retribution gave them a fatal liberty, namely, emancipation from His blessed service, to be given up to the sword, pestilence, and famine (Jer 34:8-22; 37:5-10; compare Neh 5:1-13).

The jubilee prevented the accumulation of land in the hands of a few, and raised legally at regular intervals families and individuals out of destitution to competency; thereby guarding against the lawless and dangerous outbreaks of the penniless against large possessors, to which other states are liable. It tended to foster family feeling, and to promote the preservation of genealogies, and to remind all that Jehovah was the supreme Landlord under whom their tenure was held and the Lord of the Israelites, who therefore could not become lasting servants of anyone else.

"The times of the restitution of all things" are the coming grand jubilee (Acts 3:21), "the regeneration" (Matt 19:28) ushered in by "the trump of God" (1 Thess 4:16-17). The Spirit is meantime "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph 1:13-14; Rom 8:19-23).

As in sabbatical years, there was to be no tillage, but the natural produce was to be left open to all. If a Hebrew in poverty disposed of his land the price was regulated by the number of years to run until jubilee, the sabbatical seventh years not being counted. The original proprietor or the nearest of kin (go'eel (OT:1350)) could redeem the land at any time. Houses in walled cities were excepted; the owner might buy them back within a year, otherwise they became absolutely the purchaser's own. But houses in villages went with the lands. Levites too could buy back their houses at any time, which always reverted to them at jubilee; their lands were not affected by the law of jubilee. If a man sanctified his land to Jehovah it could be redeemed before the jubilee on paying the worth of the crops and a fifth. If not redeemed before jubilee it remained sanctified for ever. Even a bondman who bound himself to willing service by boring his ears was freed at jubilee (Ex 21:6). No legislator would have enacted such an institution, and no people would have long

submitted to it, unless both had believed that a divine authority had dictated it and a special providence would facilitate its execution. Nothing could have produced this conviction but the experience of miraculous interposition such as the Pentateuch describes. The very existence of this law is a standing monument that when it was given the Mosaic miracles were fully believed; moreover this law, in the Pentateuch which the Jews always have received as written by Moses, is coeval with the witnesses of the miracles: therefore the reality of the Mosaic miracles is undeniable (Graves, Pentateuch, 6).

The root of "jubilee" is yaabal (OT:2986), "to flow," a rich stream of sound (Ex 19:13, where jubilee is translated "trumpet," margin "cornet"; compare Josh 6:5, compare Ps 89:15). It was in the 50th year, so that, the 49th also being a sabbath year, two sabbatical years came together, just as Pentecost came the 50th jubilee at the end of the seven weeks (49 days) closing with the sabbath. It stood between the two series of sabbatical years in the century. See Isa 37:30, where the reference to jubilee is not at all certain; also Isa 5:7-10, those who by covetousness prevented the operation of the law of jubilee. Remission of debts was on each sabbatical seventh year; the bondage for debt was all that jubilee delivered from.

The jubilee is the crowning of the sabbatical system. The weekly and the monthly sabbaths secured rest for each spiritually; the sabbatical year secured rest for the land. The jubilee secured rest and restoration for the body politic, to recover that general equality which Joshua's original settlement contemplated; hence no religious observances were prescribed, simply the trumpets sounded the glad note of restoration. The leisure of the jubilee year was perhaps devoted to school and instruction of the people, the reading of the law and such services (Ewald).