

Message One

The Age of the Jubilee

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:8-17; Isa. 61:1-2a; Luke 4:16-22

- I. The year of jubilee in the Old Testament was ordained by God to restore the children of Israel to their rightful inheritance of the good land—Lev. 25:8-17:**
- A. God's goal in His economy is not merely to redeem His people and save them from the world, typified by Egypt, but to bring them into Christ, typified by the good land, to possess Him and enjoy His unsearchable riches to build up God's habitation and kingdom on earth—Deut. 8:7-10; Exo. 25:8-9; 1 Kings 6:1; cf. Eph. 3:8; 2:20-22.
 - B. After the children of Israel conquered the land, God, through Joshua and the high priest, allotted the good land of Canaan into twelve different portions for each tribe—Josh. 14:1; cf. Col. 1:12; 2:6-7.
 - C. However, after the children of Israel received their portions of the land, some became poor and sold their allotment causing them to lose the land as their possession and inheritance—Lev. 25:25a.
 - D. After selling their land, others became so lazy and gluttonous that they sold themselves into slavery thus losing their freedom and becoming separated from their families—25:39a; cf. Rom. 6:17, 20.
 - E. To restore the children of Israel to the enjoyment of their lost portion of the good land, God ordained that every fiftieth year would be a year of jubilee—25:10:
 - 1. In the year of jubilee, everyone who had sold his possession, his allotted portion of the good land, was returned to it without paying anything to redeem it—25:10, 13, 28.
 - 2. In the year of jubilee, everyone who had sold himself into slavery regained his freedom and returned to his family—25:38-41.
 - 3. Hence, in the fiftieth year, no one was without a piece of land and no one was in slavery; everyone had his own possession and liberty.
 - F. The year of jubilee was a Sabbath year signifying that God has done everything, completed everything, and prepared everything, and that man must stop all his work; to keep the Sabbath is to stop our work and to take God and all that He has accomplished for us as our enjoyment, rest, and satisfaction—25:2, 8-12; Gen. 2:2; Exo. 20:8; cf. Matt. 11:28-30.
- II. The reality of the year of jubilee is the New Testament age of grace—the age of Christ as grace dispensed into us as our enjoyment, rest, and satisfaction—Luke 4:16-22:**
- A. The year of jubilee typified in Leviticus 25:8-17 is recorded as a prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-2a and is called “the acceptable year of Jehovah.”
 - B. The jubilee is fulfilled in reality in Luke 4:16-22, where the Lord Jesus read the prophecy in Isaiah and announced, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21).
 - C. In the New Testament age of grace, the God-redeemed believers are brought back to God to jubilantly enjoy the blessings of God's New Testament salvation:
 - 1. When God created man, He intended to give Himself in Christ to man as his possession and inheritance—Gen. 2:9; 13:12-15; Psa. 16:5; 90:1.
 - 2. However, man became fallen and lost God as his possession and sold himself into slavery under sin, Satan, and the world—Gen. 3:24; 4:16; Eph. 2:1-3, 5, 12; John 8:34; Rom. 7:14b; 1 John 5:19b.
 - 3. In God's New Testament salvation, which is accomplished by God's grace based on His redemption in Christ (Rom. 3:24; 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8), fallen man is:
 - a. Brought back to God as His divine possession—Eph. 1:14; Col. 1:12; Luke 15:12-24.
 - b. Released from slavery under sin, Satan, and the world—John 8:32; Rom. 6:6, 14; 8:2; 1 John 5:4.
 - c. Restored to his divine family, the household of God, that he may enjoy fellowship in God's grace—Luke 15:24; Eph. 2:19; 2 Cor. 13:14.

D. We must receive the Lord Jesus as the real jubilee in us; if we have Him, we have God as our possession and can be delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan to have real freedom and rest—1 Pet. 1:8; John 8:32, 36; Matt. 11:28-30.

Focus: The New Testament age of grace is the age of the jubilee in which the God-redeemed believers are brought back to God as their lost possession to enjoy Christ as grace, are released from all forms of bondage and slavery, and are restored to the church as their divine family.

Ministry Excerpts

The Loss and Return of the Land

Because God brought His people into the good land and allotted a portion of the land to every family, each family was rich in its possession of the land. But suppose the members of a particular family did not labor on the land. Because they did not work on the land, they became very poor. Little by little they sold the land until their entire allotment was sold. In this way they lost their portion of the good land.

When land was sold in a country other than Israel, the land was sold forever. But God's ordination did not allow the land in Israel to be sold permanently. At most, the land could be sold only for fifty years. Leviticus 25:23 and 24 say, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land." Here we see that the land was not sold forever; land that had been sold could be redeemed. The one who bought the land did not have the right to keep it indefinitely. After fifty years at the latest, the land could be redeemed.

In Leviticus 25 we are told not that the land was returned to its original owner, but that the person returned to the land. Concerning this, verse 28 says, "In the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession." Actually, one did not sell the land—he sold himself. Eventually, it was not the land that was returned to the seller; it was the seller that returned to the land, to his possession.

After the children of Israel received their portions of the land, some became poor and sold their allotment of the land, and others became landlords. Was there the need of some kind of "ism" in order for the land to be redistributed? No, God's ordination concerning the land allowed that in the fiftieth year, the year of jubilee, those who lost their possession of land could return to it. This means that in the fiftieth year every family could become rich again. Here we see that the principle of balancing the amount of land among the people was written in the Bible thirty-five centuries ago. What we find in Leviticus 25 is much better than the theories of statesmen, politicians, and philosophers.

The Release of Those Who Sold Themselves

We have seen that with every human being the most important matters are the person himself and his possession. From Leviticus 25 we see that it was possible for an Israelite to sell his possession and thereby lose his portion of the land. Now we need to see that some became so poor that they even sold themselves: "And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: but as a hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee: and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return" (vv. 39-41). These verses indicate that in the year of jubilee one who had sold himself to serve another would be released. Therefore, in the fiftieth year there was no one without land and no one in slavery. Everyone had his freedom and his own possession. This means that both the land and those

who had sold themselves were released. The proclamation of the jubilee was a proclamation of the release of people's possessions and of the people themselves. This is the jubilee.

If all the Israelites had been diligent to labor on the land, no one would have been in poverty, and no one would have had to sell his land or himself. However, many lost both their possessions and themselves. They had no way to return to their possessions or to their families. But when the year of jubilee came, there was release both of the possession and of the people. Those who had lost their land could return to it, and those who had sold themselves could go back to their families.

FALLEN MAN'S NEED OF THE JUBILEE

Before we consider further the definition of the jubilee, I would like to apply what we have already covered to today's situation. When man was created, he received a possession. Man's possession by creation was actually God Himself. God created man to be His vessel for His expression. Thus, God intended to give Himself to man as his possession. But man became fallen, and in the fall man lost God as his possession.

Through the fall man also sold himself. In Romans 7:14 Paul says, "I am fleshly, sold under sin." To be sold in this way is to be held in slavery. Anyone who sells himself to be a slave enters into a condition of slavery. Today all of mankind is in slavery, mainly the slavery of sin. Man has sold himself into the slavery of sin, Satan, and the world. Therefore, fallen man has lost both God and himself.

Before we were saved, we were those who had lost God as our possession and who had also lost ourselves. Ephesians 2:12 indicates that fallen man is without God. Instead of God as his possession, man has sin and has sold himself into the slavery of sin.

Apart from God's preserving grace, even Christians may lose God as their possession in a practical way and may also sell themselves into the slavery of sin. In their daily living some Christians have sin instead of God. Like unbelievers, they have lost God as their possession, and they have sold themselves to sin, pleasures, and worldly amusements. All such believers, as well as all unbelievers, need a jubilee.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, the entire human race had lost God as their possession and had sold themselves into the slavery of sin. This was true of Jews as well as Gentiles. The Lord Jesus did not live in the Gentile world; He lived in the Jewish land among God's chosen people. According to the four Gospels, not even those in the Jewish land, the so-called holy land, had God as their possession. Who among the people in the Jewish land had God as his possession? In the record of the Gospels we see that even Israel had lost God. Furthermore, all the Jews, including the Pharisees and rabbis, had sold themselves into sin. This was the reason the Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees so strongly in Matthew 23. Because they were in the slavery of sin, He pronounced woes upon them. He seemed to be saying, "You Pharisees, scribes, elders, and high priests have sold yourselves to sin. You have lost God as your possession, and you have lost yourselves."

A WONDERFUL RELEASE

In Luke 4 the Lord Jesus read a portion from Isaiah that was a prophecy not of the jubilee in type, but of the actual jubilee: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (vv. 18-19). Then He declared, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (v. 21). By reading that portion of the Scripture the Lord sounded the trumpet; He proclaimed the jubilee.

Do you know what the preaching of the gospel is? The preaching of the gospel is the sounding of the jubilee, the trumpeting of the jubilee. The preaching of the gospel is the proclamation of our release. Actually, this release is not the release of our possession to us; it is the release of us to our possession and to our family. Once we were in the wrong family, the family of slavery. The sounding of the jubilee tells us to return to our own family, to the family of God.

Now we can understand what the jubilee is. The jubilee is the proclaiming of a wonderful release—a release of our possession to us and the release of ourselves so that we may return to God, to our family, and to our possession. (*Life-study of Luke*, pp. 548-552)