

JUBILEE

“Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. ”In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property. ” If you sell land to one of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other.” (Lev 25:10-14 NIV)

The Hebrew people had been enslaved and mistreated in Egypt for four hundred years (Acts 7:6). When God delivered them from this captivity He gave them bread from heaven and also a day of rest. Six days they were to gather manna, but on the seventh day they were to rest (See Ex. 16:21-30).

Not long after this, the Law of the Sabbath was written in stone and given to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 20:8). The Sabbath Law not only required the Hebrews to rest one day in seven, but was expanded to include a Sabbatical Year. Every seventh year they were not to till, or plant, and thus were to let the land also rest (Ex. 23:10, 11).

The book of Leviticus further expands this concept to also include another Sabbatical year, the Year of Jubilee. They were to count off seven Sabbatical Years ($7 \times 7 = 49$) and then to consecrate the next year (the fiftieth) as the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8, 9). The word “Jubilee” comes from the Hebrew word for “ram’s horn”, and that special year was announced by the sounding of the trumpet throughout the land (Lev. 25:9). The association with the Feast of Pentecost is obvious. Pentecost began on the fiftieth day after seven Sabbaths of weeks. Jubilee began on fiftieth year after seven Sabbaths of years.

It is also significant that the Year of Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9). It was on this day that the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices for himself and for the errors of the people. The roots of Jubilee were therefore entwined with forgiveness and the profound spiritual significance of what Jesus would do for us when He entered into the presence of God in that Holy Place not made by human hands.

At least three special benefits are listed in association with the Jubilee. First, “liberty to the captives” (Lev. 25:10). The sound of the trumpet proclaimed liberty to every Hebrew slave. The eager anticipation for this day is impossible to conceive for those who have never been slaves.

The second benefit was the return of family property. When the Hebrews inhabited the Promised Land, each tribe and each family was assigned property by the casting of lots (Nu. 33:54). Any family forced to sell their land received it back at Jubilee. An additional benefit involved the cancelling of all debts (Deut. 15:1ff.)

The third benefit of Jubilee was continued rest. The Sabbath rest of the 49th year was to continue through the 50th year. They could eat the volunteer things that grew directly from the fields, but could not harvest them. This not only gave the poor access to food, but also the wild animals as well (Ex. 23:11). Jesus reminds us that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

Like a beautiful diamond there are many facets of truth radiating from the Jubilee. One dominant truth is obviously the need to depend upon God. After six years of labor the people ceased their work and depended upon God for their daily needs. Since Jubilee meant that two Sabbath years would be observed together the need to depend upon God was even greater.

God, however, was faithful! This lesson in trust vindicated God. Notice, the slaves were not set free by their own cleverness and hard work, but by a divine decree from a Sovereign Lord. Notice also that property was not returned because of hard work and wise planning, but because a loving and generous God ordained it. A loving, wise, and generous God was teaching lessons with eternal significance. Jesus came to announce the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:18, 19). His ministry has ushered in an eternal Jubilee. Now it is up to you and me to accept it!