

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Four Special Old Testament Days - Jubilee

Where will you be in 50 years time? When looking forward for 50 years, that final point seems to be so far ahead but, when we look back, much has been forgotten and the period appears not to have been so long. We have pleasure this year in celebrating the jubilee of our Queen. Celebrating a jubilee is a time for looking back. We celebrate the fact that our Queen has had a reign of peace in our country and that she has acted in an honourable way throughout. We give thanks for the stability we have enjoyed. How many things there are for which we *can* give thanks! When Samuel, in the Old Testament, presented Saul to Israel as their first king, 'the people shouted, God save the king', 1 Samuel 10:24. So, today, we offer our warm congratulations to Her Majesty and say, 'God save the Queen'.

Did you know that a jubilee is included in the Bible? It has specific reference to Israel and we find the main details in Leviticus 25. In celebrating the jubilee today, we look back, but the Bible significance is in looking forward. It was of particular significance to the Israelite who had been overcome with difficulty and had to sell some possessions or property. He might even have had to sell himself as a servant! Because of this he looked forward to the jubilee. It might have been 49 years away, or it may only have been a short period. To such a person the jubilee was a time of gladness and of restoration.

In order to follow the details through, we need to commence at the beginning of the chapter. We can note two things. The first is that God cares for His land. The second is that He cares for His people. For you and me, and every believer who is saved from the punishment due for sin, because we are covered by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, we are just as much in God's care. The Apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:7, 'He careth for you'. So we need not have any anxious care in all our circumstances. He cares!

### THE LAND.

We will first consider the land. The first thing we will notice from Leviticus 25 is that the land belongs to God. Verse 2 says, 'When ye come into the land which I give you...' In verse 23 we read, 'The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me'. Jehovah is Lord of the land; He is the owner and the people are but tenants. What counts is what counts to Him. What He decides, He arranges in His wisdom for the blessing of His people. In a similar way, once we thought that this world, our land, was our own, but when we believed, we realised that every believer has a new home, a heavenly home and now we find ourselves listening to the apostle Peter as he tells his readers to 'pass the time of your sojourning here in (godly) fear'. 1 Peter 1:17. Then he calls his readers 'strangers and pilgrims', 1 Peter 2:11. What a reality our eternal home should become! Yet, the land belongs still to God.

Next we see how the land is to be worked. Each Israelite was to be allocated his piece. For six years they would sow the land, they would cultivate it and prune their vines. For six years they would gather in the harvest and they would have that store to last them through to the next harvest. But in the seventh year there would be a difference. The land would remain fallow in the seventh year. There would be no sowing, no cultivation nor harvesting of the crop. The land would be left for a year of regeneration. Yes, there would be some fruit from seed that was still in the land and this fruit was available to any who would come along and take it for food. 'It is a year of rest unto the land', verse 5. Jehovah could see that everything needed rest and renewal and so He gave this command. But, we might ask, how were these people to live in the period of one year? In the goodness of God, the sixth year would yield enough for the following period also. When we think of all this, surely we are impressed by the reality of the presence and the providential power of Jehovah. How well the Psalmist could say, 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation'. Psalm 68:19. May we say the same too!

We also note the regular occurrence of the number seven. This pattern of seven years, six where the land is worked and one where the land is left fallow, is to be repeated seven times. In the Scripture we will find that the number seven speaks of a perfect period. In the beginning of Genesis we read of seven days. God created on the first six days and on the seventh day He rested. There was a complete period including, again, a day of rest. This seven day week continues to this present time. So through the Scriptures we have the number seven arising, generally for good, and it concerns perfect divine accomplishment. God always knows what He is doing and it is always complete and for the best.

## THE PEOPLE

Next we come to the way this chapter deals with people. The lesson of the jubilee is that God sees and understands the conditions of men and women living in this world. Whether for Israel in the Old Testament times or believers in the New Testament era no one is promised an easy path. Life is never straightforward and has its 'ups and downs'. This is why the New Testament encourages believers to look to the Lord in all their difficulties and to know His keeping power. The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, 4:6-7, 'Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus'. The apostle Peter also writes to believers and reminds them of the great hope they have, 'an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you', he says, 1 Peter 1:4. The reason for this reminder was that they were 'in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ'. Yes, Christian friend, we all have problems and difficulties from time to time; perhaps our faith also will be tested. Our Lord will keep us and will bring us through to great joy when He comes, if not before.

Let us understand the circumstances of Leviticus 25. Seven series of seven years have passed by, forty nine years in all. So came the fiftieth year and this was to be a jubilee. In verse 9 we read, 'Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month'. The word 'jubilee' means 'a loud sound'. We also have another word translated jubilee and from these words we sense the meaning of 'a cry of joy' or 'a joyful noise' and the trumpet is sounded to welcome in the great jubilee, for it is a time of joy. This was the time for proclaiming liberty throughout the land.

In the last forty nine years there would have been people who had got into difficulty, particularly debt. How could payment be made? The Israelite might have had a possession which was worth something. He would sell it to pay his debt. The debt may be of such size that he had to sell his house. He may have had to sell the rights to the fruits of the land he cultivates and give the purchaser the right to cultivate his ground. Or, perhaps, the debt was so large that he had to sell himself. In selling himself, he became a servant of another master. What a tragedy! What could be done?

It was possible for a relative, perhaps an uncle or cousin, to come along and redeem this man, pay off the debt and set his brother free. If that was not possible, this poor man had one certainty of liberty. It came with the jubilee. With what sadness he might have had to leave his wife and children. Perhaps his wife would say, Take courage, look to the jubilee! Yes, he would look forward to the jubilee. With what anticipation he would look forward as the day approached, the day when he would be at liberty once more. What a merciful provision God had made! It did not matter if the jubilee was thirty years or three years away, looking to the jubilee would assure hope. If a possession was sold, it would be returned; if a house was sold, (with some exceptions) it must again be made available. If a man sold himself, then when that trumpet sounded on the day of jubilee, he would be at liberty once more. Everything had to be returned to the original possessor. No wonder that such a person would be looking forward. A life of liberty was before him, to enjoy all the possessions which God had given him freely to enjoy. For us too, Paul reminded Timothy that we do not need to 'trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy', 1 Timothy 6:17. It was surely a time to make a joyful noise!

Let us look at some of the details.

### *Fallow and hallowed.*

The land was to be left fallow for a further year after the jubilee. For this second year there was no pressure for the land to produce. God said, 'I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years', verse 21. The providential care of God was over all. He would provide in advance for their needs in this joyful time. But the year was also to be hallowed, verse 10, that is, it was to be honoured as holy. This fiftieth year would be one in which everyone would look to God. Nothing would be needed to be done to take attention away from Him. It will be a glorious time for us when the work of life can be laid aside and He will be the centre and only object of our delight.

### *The trumpet call to liberty.*

The trumpet of the jubilee was sounded 'on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement', verse 9. There could be no liberty without sacrifice. The sacrifice of the atonement brought into focus the deep need of man which would be met by the sacrifice. According to ceremonies which were to be carried out by Israel, the atonement signified that the nation was cleansed and the debt before God had been settled. Now that the people were at one with God, there was to be the sounding of the trumpet of the jubilee. It was on this day when liberty became a fact for all who looked forward to it. The wonderful sacrifice of the Saviour at Calvary has already taken place. It was on that

day that freedom from sin became available to all who trust in the Lord Jesus. The trumpet is going to sound. 'The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God'. 1 Thessalonians 4:16. This 'shout of joy' will draw each believer away to start afresh, no longer on this earth but in eternity. What a jubilee that will be!

*Redemption of possessions.*

Everyone would be free to return to his possession. What would you regard today as your most treasured possession? Is it something that you could do without? Something else is said in connection with all these things. It concerns the value placed on them particularly if there was a possibility of early redemption. The price is fixed 'according to the number of years' left, verse 15. The closer the next jubilee became, the less valuable the property became. As the years pass, and our jubilee nears, how do we consider this world's goods? Possessions they may be, but does their value diminish with the thought of the Lord calling us into His presence? The apostle Peter, writing to believers in difficulty, reminds them of something better. 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...hath begotten us again unto a (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation', 1 Peter 1:3-5. How much better a possession this is!

*Return to the family.*

'And ye shall return every man unto his family', we read in verse 10. Can you imagine what a reunion that would be for every family involved? A reunion of a family separated long ago would take place now in complete freedom. The cause of the separation has been settled. The price has been paid. The time for final liberty has come and the grand reunion will take place. There is a hymn which has the following verse:

*How joyful is the hope that lingers,  
When loved ones cross death's sea  
That we, when all earth's toils are ended,  
with them shall ever be.*

We also can look forward with glad anticipation to the day of the jubilee, the shout of joy.

*Rest from all labour.*

We have already referred to the fallow and hallowed land. There was to be no labour with the earth. We read in verse 11, 'Ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather grapes in it of thy vine undressed'. This meant that every one was in a position to spend the year in rejoicing. With the jubilee, the servant also was at liberty from his former master. What rejoicing there will be in the day that is to come! When the glorious shout has gone forth and we all share the presence of the Lord Himself, the song will be forever one of praise and honour to 'the Lamb that was slain', Revelation 5:12.

So we see what a tremendous change would take place in the lives of those who had experienced difficulty in the land. It was all positive; God was at the centre of everything. He had arranged what would happen and when it would happen. Liberty from all the problems of life was a certain conclusion. This would remind us again of all that the Lord has done for us today. We are begotten to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:3. Final liberty from the things that often bind us to this world is assured: 'we...shall be caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be for ever with the Lord', 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The more we look forward to that, the less value will we put on all that attracts us here. Looking forward, what rest from our labour, what glad reunions with our loved ones, what a happy release will come from a world of cares, and in a much fuller way than now, our eyes will be solely taken up with 'Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame', Hebrews 12:2.

We return to the question we started with. Where will you be in 50 years? We look forward to **our** jubilee with great anticipation. We wait to hear that joyous shout, the trumpet sound. Although we may gladly say, 'God save the Queen' today, in that day we shall eternally sound praise 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen'.

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