

THE JUBILEE

An object lesson that brings great beauty To the work of our Redeemer

By Stephen N. Haskell

With the recent papal declaration of the Year 2000 Jubilee, mentioned in the pope's Incarnationis Mysterium, we feel it in the best interest of our readers to call your attention to the correct meaning of the Biblical Jubilee. We therefore present this excellent chapter from Stephen N. Haskell's book entitled The Cross and Its Shadow.

The Jubilee was the climax of a series of sabbatical institutions. The weekly Sabbath was the first religious institution given to man. See Genesis 2:2-3. The seventh day of the week was hallowed, and set apart to be kept as the rest-day of Jehovah. See Isaiah 58:13-14; Exodus 20:8-11.

After the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, God commanded that every seventh year should be "a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord." The people were not allowed to sow their fields nor prune their vineyards during the seventh year; neither could they gather into their storehouses that which grew of its own accord. The owner of the land could take all he wished for immediate use; but his servants and the strangers and even the beasts, had equal rights with the owner in enjoying the fruits of his fields during the sabbatic year. See Leviticus 25:1-7.

The seventh month of the sacred¹ year, the month Tisre, was called by some writers the sabbatical month, as more of the annual sabbaths and feasts came in that month than in any other one month in the year. The first day of this month was the Feast of Blowing of Trumpets; the Day of Atonement came on the tenth day, and the Feast of Tabernacles began on fifteenth day; and every fiftieth year, the tenth day of Tisri ushered in the Jubilee. See Leviticus 25:8-11.

The keeping of the weekly Sabbath was a token that the people belonged to God; and in allowing their land to rest during the seventh-year Sabbath, they acknowledged that not only they themselves, but their land, their time, and all they possessed, belonged to God. See Ezekiel 20:12, 20.

The Lord took special delight in the seventh-year Sabbath, and the disregard of His command to keep it was offensive in His sight. The children of Israel were carried into Babylonian captivity because they had not allowed "the land to enjoy her sabbaths." 2 Chronicles 36:18-21. In their love of greed and gain, they had worked the land *every* year, and God took them away and let the land lie desolate, that it might keep the Sabbath during the seventy years. (All emphasis in this article is by the author.)

If God's command had always been obeyed and the land had had its rest every seventh year, the earth would not have "waxed old like a garment" (Isaiah 51:6), but would have remained productive.

God's commands will all be honored, and as the land lay desolate seventy years, keeping the sabbath during the Babylonian captivity, to atone for the disobedience of ancient Israel; so, after the second coming of Christ, the land will lie desolate one thousand years, keeping sabbath to atone for the many Sabbaths that have been disregarded since that time. See Revelation 20:1-4; Zephaniah 1:1-3; Jeremiah 4:23, 27.

The weekly Sabbath was a steppingstone leading up to the other sabbatic institutions; and besides being a Memorial of Creation, it pointed forward to the final rest of the Jubilee. When the people of God for the sake of worldly interests, disregarded it, they placed themselves where they could not appreciate God's original design in giving them the Sabbath of rest. See Jeremiah 17:21-27.

The Jubilee was the fiftieth year following seven weeks of years, and would occur *once* at least in the lifetime of every individual who lived out his natural life. See Leviticus 25:10-11.

The Day of Atonement was the most solemn of all the feasts, and the Jubilee the most joyful. At the close of the Day of Atonement, when the sins of Israel had all been forgiven and borne by the scapegoat into the wilderness, then the people who realized what God had done for them, were prepared to forgive the debts of their fellow men, to release them from servitude, and to restore all to their own land as willingly as they expected God to give them their eternal inheritance in the antitypical jubilee.

At the close of the Day of Atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the sabbatical year, which closed the last of the seven weeks of years (49 years), the trumpets were blown throughout all the land, announcing the Jubilee.

Jewish tradition states that every Israelite was supplied with a trumpet of some kind at this time, and when the hour arrived which closed the Day of Atonement, *everyone* blew nine blasts with his trumpet. God has said, the trumpets were to sound throughout all the land. See Leviticus 25:9.

How like the final trumpet of the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 15:51-53) was the blast of the Jubilee trumpets in ancient Israel! The toiling slave arose and threw off his shackles. To the avaricious and covetous man, who had oppressed the hireling and the widow to gain his possessions, it came as a death knell to all his hopes. See Isaiah 2:20-21. Every person in bondage was freed, and all returned to their own land. See Leviticus 25:13-13.

There is no account of any religious services, or offerings, being required during the Jubilee, different from the ordinary services of other years. It was a time when all, rich and poor, high and low, shared alike of that which grew of itself in the fields and vineyards.

The Jubilee followed the seventh-year sabbath, thus bringing two Sabbath years in succession. However, God made ample provision for His people by commanding His blessing upon the forty-eighth year, when the earth yielded enough to keep the people for three years. See Isaiah 37:30; Leviticus 25:11-12.

Type:	Antitype:
Leviticus 25:10. the Jubilee gave liberty to everyone.	1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. The living and the dead will all be given freedom.
Leviticus 25:9. The blast of the trumpet announced the Jubilee.	1 Corinthians 15:51-53. The blast of the trumpet of the Lord, gives freedom to all.
Leviticus 25:9. The Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement, the type of the judgment.	Revelation 22:11-12. Immediately after the decree is issued which closes the judgment, Christ comes.
Leviticus 25:13. In the year of the Jubilee every man returned to his own possessions.	Isaiah 35:1-10. The ransomed of the Lord will enjoy the redeemed earth forever.
Leviticus 25:23. The Lord always owned the land. Man was only a steward.	Psalms 24:1; 1 Corinthians 10:26, 28. The Lord owns all the earth. He has never relinquished His title to the land.
Leviticus 25:48-49; Ruth 2:20, margin. Only one nigh of kin had the right to redeem.	Hebrews 2:14-16. Jesus was born of the seed of Abraham, that He might be nigh of kin.
Leviticus 25:47-51. The persons of those sold in	Romans 8:23; Hosea 13:14. He that is nigh of kin, says, "I will ransom them

bondage were redeemed and set free.	from the power of the grave.”
Leviticus 25: 25-28. The land could be redeemed by one nigh of kin.	Ephesians 1:14. Christ has purchased the possession of His people.
Leviticus 25: 29-30. Dwelling houses in walled cities did not revert to the original owners in the Jubilee.	Revelation 16:19; Jeremiah 4:26. All earthly cities will be destroyed at Christ’s second coming.
Leviticus 25: 32-33. Dwelling houses in the cities of the Levites could be redeemed. They all reverted to the original owners in the Jubilee. The priests were a type of Christ.	Hebrews 11:10, 16; Revelation 21:1-27. Christ, the antitypical priest, has a city which will be given to His people in the antitypical Jubilee.
Genesis 2: 1-3. The weekly Sabbath was a stepping-stone toward the Jubilee.	Isaiah 66:22-23. The Sabbath will be observed on the New Earth forever.

Was the Jubilee Ever Observed?

There is no mention in the Bible of the Jubilee’s ever being observed, and for this reason some writers think it may not have been kept; but all the other Mosaic festivals were observed, and it would be strange if one that is so organically connected with the other feasts, and is really the climax of all other festivals, should have been omitted.

The Jubilee must have been observed, for the law of the inalienability of landed property, which was based upon the Jubilee, existed among the Jews. See Numbers 36:4, 6-7; Ruth 4:1-4. Josephus speaks of it as being permanently observed.

Instances are recorded where the work of the Jubilee year was performed by the Israelites. Nehemiah, in his great reformatory work, required the Jews to give freedom to their servants, and to restore the lands and vineyards to the original owners. See Nehemiah 5:11-19.

On the Eve of the Babylonian captivity, Zedekiah proclaimed liberty to everyone. He evidently designed to celebrate the Jubilee. If he had done so, it would have given him liberty, but he was too vacillating to carry out the requirements. The Lord sent a message, saying that he had done right in proclaiming liberty, “every man to his neighbor,” but that in failing to grant it, he had polluted the name of the Lord. See Jeremiah 34:8-17.

Revealing Our Redeemer’s Work

All the commercial interests of the ancient Israelite taught the gospel. While he was allowed to dwell in the Promised Land and enjoy its privileges, yet he was only the steward, to the owner. The divine decree was: “The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine: for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.” Leviticus 25:23. Notwithstanding the fact that the Lord owns the world, yet He counts Himself a stranger and sojourner with His people upon the earth, until the antitypical Jubilee, when Satan, the present prince of this world, will meet his doom.

If a man became involved and was obliged to sell his home, it was sold with the understanding that it should return to its original owner when the Jubilee trumpets were blown in the land. If the unfortunate man had one near of kin able to redeem his land, the purchaser could not hold it, even until the Jubilee. See Leviticus 25:25-28.

A poor widow has misfortune after misfortune, until her wealthy neighbor, who has long coveted her land, has gained possession, and she in sorrow is obliged to leave the home of her childhood and labor for a mere pittance, that fails to supply the needs of her household. The wealthy neighbor continues to advance money, until finally she herself is sold to him as a servant. Her case seems hopeless.

But in a far country she has an elder brother. He hears of her misfortune and comes to the rescue. Her brother reckons with the man who has purchased the woman, and pays the redemption money, and she is free. Then the brother begins to reckon what is due on the land; but the man objects, for the same spirit rules him that disputed with Michael, the Archangel, when he came from a far country to redeem the body of Moses from the prison-house of the grave, (see Jude 9) and he says, "No! I will not part with it. What right have you to interfere?" Then the brother produces evidence of his kinship, that he is "one that hath right to redeem." Ruth 2:10, margin. He offers the redemption money, and the home was redeemed to the rightful owner. A stranger might have wished to help the poor widow, but his money could never have released her; the price must be paid by "one that hath right to redeem"-near of kin.

How forcefully was the power of Christ thus taught in the everyday commercial life of the Israelite!

An angel could not redeem mankind, not the world. His life would have been powerless, for he was not "nigh of kin" unto humanity. See Leviticus 25:47-49. Christ left the heavenly courts, partook of flesh and blood, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death *were all their lifetime subject to bondage*. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Hebrews 2:14-16. He became the "firstborn among many brethren," (Romans 8:29) the one *nigh of kin*, that He might have right to redeem every son and daughter of Adam; and down through the ages, comes the cheering assurance that "he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Hebrews 2:11.

"Thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money" (Isaiah 52:3), even "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Have you yielded to temptation until you are bound in abject slavery to Satan? Remember, you have an Elder Brother who is able and willing to redeem you from the slavery of sin, and make you a free man in Christ Jesus. In order to be free, you must acknowledge Him as "one nigh of kin" to you. If the poor widow had disowned her brother when he came to redeem her from servitude, he would have been powerless to help her.

Satan may bind the soul until he thinks it is his forever; but when the soul cries out for help, and claims Christ as the "one near of kin," "one who has power to redeem," and Christ presents the redemption price-"His precious blood"-Satan is powerless to hold the soul.

The study of the Levitical laws in regard to land and servants gives new beauty to the name *Redeemer*. Job knew the power of the "one who had right to redeem." Hear him in confidence saying, "*I know that my redeemer liveth.*" His faith grasped a power that not only redeemed from sin, but will bring forth the patriarch's body even after the worms have consumed it. See Job 19:23-27.

While at any time one could be given freedom and reinstated in his former home by "one nigh of kin" who had right to redeem, yet the Jubilee was looked forward to as the great day of release for all Israel. It was then that every wrong was righted and every Israelite reinstated in his own possession. See Leviticus 25:28, 33, 40-41.

Restoring the Earth to its Rightful Owner

If one sold a dwelling house in a walled city, during the first year after the sale, it might be redeemed; but if not redeemed the first year, it remained in the hand of the purchaser. It did not revert to its original

owner in the Jubilee, for houses were the work of man of man, and had no part in the Jubilee, which released only the *land* and *persons*. See Leviticus 25:29-30.

The cities of the Levites were under different regulations; they were the only walled cities that had a part in the Jubilee. If a man purchased a house of a Levite, the house that was sold “and the city of his possession” went out free in the year of Jubilee. See Leviticus 25:32-33.

The priests were a type of Christ. Our great antitypical Priest has prepared a walled city for His people (see Hebrews 11:10, 16), and in the antitypical Jubilee, they will receive the city. The regulations in regard to the cities of the Levites were a constant reminder of the New Jerusalem to be given to God’s people in the great final Jubilee.


God designed that His people should remember Him in all their business transactions, in every detail of life. The value of property depended upon the length of time intervening between the date of purchase and the Jubilee. See Leviticus 25:15-16.

In the type, the Jubilee was ushered in at the close of the Day of Atonement. In like manner we understand that the antitypical Jubilee will follow the antitypical Day of Atonement.

“The Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard.” Isaiah 30:30. Then the pious slave will rise and shake off the chains that bind him. The trumpet of the Lord’s jubilee will resound through the length and breadth of the land. Saints sleeping in Satan’s prisonhouse--the grave--will hear the glad sound, and he “that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners,” “did not let his prisoners loose homeward” (Isaiah 14:17, margin), will be powerless to hold his prey; for our Redeemer has said, “The prey of the terrible *shall be delivered*,”-yea, delivered forever from the power of sin and Satan (see Isaiah 49:25).

God’s original plan was that man should possess the earth. “The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s: *but the earth hath he given to the children of men.*” Psalm 115:16.

Adam was given dominion over the earth and everything upon it. See Genesis 1:26. But God’s plans were thwarted, and Satan became prince of this world. In the antitypical Jubilee the redeemed of the Lord will be reinstated in the original home of man. The earth restored to its primeval beauty will be given to the children of men for their eternal home. See Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11, 34. The seventh-day weekly sabbaths, which the Lord sanctified and gave to mankind before the curse of sin rested upon the earth, will then be kept according to God’s original design; and throughout eternity, “from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship” before the Lord. Isaiah 66:22-23.

“The Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.” Isaiah 51:13. 

1 The Jewish sacred year began in the spring, and the civil year in the autumn.