

Notes for Malaysia's Jubilee Celebration

Introduction:

The 25th chapter of Leviticus especially reveals the grace of God and His compassion for the poor and the oppressed. The Sabbath year and the Super-Sabbath, the year of Jubilee, are one of God's gracious provisions for His people, especially the poor.

Finally, the year of Jubilee is one of the beautiful prototypes of the redemption which will be achieved in the person of Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. This great event is described and defined almost entirely in Leviticus chapter 25.

1. What was God's intention when he decreed JUBILEE?

- That God in the 6th year, will provide plenty before the land enters Jubilee. The provision will be enough to tie over for 3 years.
- That the 49th year will be observed as a Sabbath year (the land is to lie fallow and be given its rest). No work is to be done. Instead, there is enforced rest for everyone, including the servants, hired workers, animals and the land for a whole year. Jubilee begins in the following year, which is the 50th year, a year of consecration, and planting begins in the 51st year. No harvest or crops are to be cultivated (grapes, olive trees) during the Jubilee year. This did not prohibit the people from eating the crops, but there was to be no harvest for sale.
- That the land and its produce really belonged to Him, not the people. The people had no ownership rights over the food that grew during the seventh year. It was to be eaten by everyone, even the wild animals.
- That His people were not to exploit the land or the animals. The nation was to be responsible in its stewardship of God's creation.

In addition, let it be remembered that in Exodus Chapter 16, God instituted the Sabbath day observance with regard to the gathering of the manna. For some time, then, the people had been experiencing God's faithfulness in this matter. He revealed to them how they were to collect on the sixth day so that no work will be done on the Sabbath.

2. How were the Jews supposed to exercise JUBILEE?

- 7 Sabbath years (7x7=49)
- Trumpet sound on the 10th day of the 7th month (Super-Sabbath)
- Consecration of the 50th year with following actions:
 1. Year of consecration.
 2. Proclaim liberty.
 3. No work done for whole year.
 4. Keep it holy.
 5. Return all property – cancel all debts – free all slaves. This was a mechanism that evened out any gross inequalities between the haves and the have-nots, and prevented people descending into excessive poverty.

3. How do we relate JUBILEE to Jesus' reading in Luke 4: 18-19?

- As an ideal benchmark model of how Christians should live with Kingdom perspectives. Remember, we are salt and light.
- Evangelism – the restoration of liberty by preaching the good news and setting the captives free. Evangelism must be the thrust as we are entrusted to disciple the nation.
- As a reminder that the land (all wealth) belongs to God – Jubilee saw the cancellation of debts.
- As a reminder of social justice – under Jubilee, prosperity is to be shared.

- Remember who we are **1 Peter 2: 9-10** – a chosen/covenant people, a royal priesthood and a people belonging to God.

Ray Stedman – “True liberty arises from us acknowledging who we are before God, and becoming ... what God intends us to be.”

4. As Malaysia enters JUBILEE, what do we pray for and hope to see?

- That there will be restoration in our nation. The Lord’s proclamation for us to repent and consecrate ourselves is an expression of our Christian hope.
- That we will learn to trust God. Let Him have His way first with us and then with the nation. For our faith in Him to increase.
- That social justice and welfare will be restored. Systemic poverty will be gotten rid of and transformation brought to the nation.
- That we will submit to the Lordship of Christ and witness Christ in the community.
- That spiritual freedom and joy will be restored in a holistic way – a positive outlook upon the nation, peace and happiness, healthy relationships within families and communities.

Deuteronomy 15: 7-9 is a reminder to acknowledge that life is better than material prosperity. Guard the motives of our hearts.

5. What is significant about JUBILEE to the whole nation?

1. The Sabbath and super-Sabbath were reminders of the fact that God owns the land. Malaysia belongs to God. We need to communicate and champion the law of justice and redress exploitation.
2. Just as the people of Israel were recipients of divine blessing, we too, as God’s people, are beneficiaries of God’s blessings.
3. The commands related to the observance of the Sabbath and Jubilee were tests of the Israelite’s faith and obedience, and the basis for God’s blessings and discipline. The test to us will be our faithfulness towards Him.
4. The regulations regarding the use of the land were a provision for the poor, providing them with food in times of need and with the possibility of a new beginning. Likewise, in our section of community, we must help the rural and urban poor.
5. The “laws of the land” were designed to hinder materialism and to keep in check those who would try to accumulate vast land holdings, at the expense of others. We need to deal with the greed and corruption of our time.

6. What steps should the Malaysian church take?

- Acknowledge that Jesus is the source, centre and Lord of the church. The church is the body of Christ and He is the head.
- Be holy. The church is called to be *holy*. We are the bride of Christ and purity and holiness are at the core of the church.
- The church as the community, must strive for unity. Jesus’ prayer was for, **“all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” John 17:21**
- Be a countercultural community living a lifestyle that fundamentally challenges worldly values and practices. We must dethrone mammon and materialism in our hearts and adopt faithful use of our money.
- Practice mutual accountability and responsibility. These are essential in Jubilee’s astonishing new social order. We must implement practical ways to ensure accountability structures are in place.
- Be led by the power of the Spirit. Truly being the body of Christ is possible only in the power of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 16).