

THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

by

Timothy L. Herr

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Author: Timothy L. Herr
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Advisor: Dr. John J. Davis

When Isaiah spoke of the proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" (Isa. 61:2), he was using Jubilean terminology. Jesus stated that Isaiah's commission which included the proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" was fulfilled in Him (Lk. 4:21). In what way did the Jubilean imagery find fulfillment in Jesus?

Jesus did not fulfill the proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" by demanding His hearers to institute the Jubilean observance. Jesus was aware of credit slavery and the prozbul practice which circumvented the debt remittance required by the Jubilean observance. But the Gospels do not record that Jesus denounced these practices which were directly in conflict with a Jubilean observance.

The need to forgive one's fellowman, to redistribute capital to the needy, and to trust God for physical provisions were underlying truths of the Jubilean observance. Jesus did teach these Jubilean truths during His ministry. But He did not confine them to only one year of practice. These truths were to be evident throughout the lifetime of His followers.

Jesus' proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" must be given a salvational understanding. For the Apostle Paul, the time of God's favor equals the day of salvation which extends throughout this age (2 Cor. 6:2). Therefore, when Jesus proclaimed "the favorable year of the Lord," He was proclaiming that God's day of salvation had come. This salvation which had come was an upset of the spiritual order of man and not an upset of the societal order into which Jesus came. The Jubilean terminology used by Isaiah was to picture this coming salvation.

A study of Jesus' fulfillment of the proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" reveals once again that Jesus' ministry was a spiritual ministry. May the Christian community follow His pattern of ministry.

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Advisor

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INTRODUCTION

Luke's record of Jesus' public ministry opens with a Sabbath synagogue scene (Lk. 4:16-30). In this scene, Jesus read from a portion of Isaiah's prophetic writing. At the conclusion of His reading, Jesus announced that this prophecy which He read was fulfilled that day. Included in the fulfilled prophecy was the phrase *ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν* (Lk. 4:19). How did Jesus fulfill *ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν*?

Fulfilled by the Duration of Jesus' Ministry

Clement of Alexandria interpreted *ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν* to mean that Jesus' public ministry lasted for one year only. He wrote, "It was necessary for Him to preach only a year, this also is written. 'He hath sent Me to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' This both the prophet spake and the Gospel."¹ The Gnostic, Valentinus, also supported this interpretation according to his contemporary, Iranaeus. Concerning Valentinus and others who upheld this interpretation, Iranaeus wrote, ". . . they have not examined the Gospels to ascertain how often after his baptism the Lord went up, at the time of the passover to Jerusalem . . ."²

¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.21:146 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (10 vols., reprinted; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), vol. 2: *Fathers of the Second Century*, p. 333.

² Iranaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 11.22:5-6 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (10 vols., reprinted; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 390-91.

It is impossible to compress Jesus' ministry into one year. John records three Passovers during Jesus' ministry; the first Passover (Jn. 2:13), the Passover connected with the feeding of the five thousand (Jn. 6:4), and the Passion Passover (Jn. 11:55). The Synoptic Gospels also disallow a one year hypothesis. Jesus' disciples picked heads of grain in the Galilee region (Mt. 12:1; Mk. 2:23; Lk. 6:1). This incident points to a harvest season. The feeding of the five thousand, which is one common point of chronology for all the Gospels (Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:32-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-15), is dated near the Passover of John 6:4. Mark 6:39 mentions green grass in connection with this incident. This mention indicates that spring had come which was the Passover time. The Passover of John 2:13 preceded the disciples' picking of grain for two reasons. The Passover of John 2:13 occurred shortly after Jesus' ministry began. This is too early for the disciples' grain picking incident.¹ The beginning of Jesus' ministry was centered for about eight months in the Judean area (Jn. 1:35-4:3). The ministry then shifted to the Galilean area.² It is during the Galilean ministry that the grain picking incident occurred. Therefore, the record of the grain picking would fit well between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4 with yet another year between Mark 6:39 and the Passion Passover of Mark 14:1.³

¹Harold W. Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), pp. 55-58.

²Bruce Manning Metzger, The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 113-18.

³Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, pp. 46-48.

Fulfilled by a Period of Jesus' Ministry

Contemporary French theologian Andre Trocme has interpreted ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν to refer to one specific year in Jesus' ministry.¹ Because ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν is taken from the imagery of Jubilee,² Trocme hypothesized that Jesus demanded His audience to institute a Jubilee Year within the time of His public ministry. American Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, has adopted Trocme's hypothesis.³ Before this hypothesis can be accepted or rejected, the Gospel records must be examined.⁴

Fulfilled by an Age

Iraeneus interpreted ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν to be the designation of a new era in God's program which began with Jesus' advent and continues until the consummation.⁵ Many other commentators have held

¹Andre Trocme, Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution, trans. by Michael H. Shank and Marlin E. Miller (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), pp. 27-52.

²This statement is supported by R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Luke's Gospel (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 252; Robert North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1954), p. 3; and Alfred Plummer, The Gospel According to Saint Luke in the International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 252.

³John Howard Yoder, The Politics of Jesus (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 34-77.

⁴Cf. Chapter VIII, p. 46.

⁵Iraeneus, Adversus Haereses, 11.22:2 in The Apostolic Fathers, p. 390.

this interpretation,¹ but they have failed to establish clearly how the Jubilean imagery which is resident in *ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν* is applicable to this present age.

Before anyone can apply Jubilean teachings to this present age in God's program, he must establish two facts. It must be demonstrated that *ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν* contains Jubilee imagery and that this phrase is a reference to this present age.

It is this author's conclusion that Jesus fulfilled *ἐνιατὸν κυρίου δεκτὸν* by introducing a new age of God's program. In this present new age, the good news which Jesus brought has far-reaching implications of which the Jubilee institution was a prefiguring.

¹This interpretation is held by Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Luke's Gospel, p. 252; Patrick D. Miller, "Luke 4:16-21" Interpretation, 29:4 (October, 1975), 418-19; North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, pp. 3, 44; and W. E. Vine, Isaiah: Prophecies, Promises, Warnings (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), pp. 199-200. Cf. Chapters VII, VIII, IX.

CHAPTER I

A TRANSLATION OF 'ENIAYTÒN KYPIÓY ΔEKTÓN¹

'Ενλαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν is the Septuagint's translation of the Hebrew לַיהוָה שָׁנָה רְצוֹן found in Isaiah 61:2. Luke has used the Septuagint's translation in his record.

שָׁנָה רְצוֹן לַיהוָה

שָׁנָה רְצוֹן לַיהוָה expresses one unit of thought classified as a genitive by circumlocution.² The construct form of שָׁנָה is dependent on רְצוֹן to form one compound idea. שָׁנָה which means year and רְצוֹן which means favorable or acceptable combine to form the single thought of the favorable year. Just as שָׁנָה stands in close relation to רְצוֹן, so שָׁנָה רְצוֹן stands in the same relation to לַיהוָה. Because the ? preposition is attached to לַיהוָה, the favorable year is a possession of the Lord.

Other Hebrew examples of the genitive by circumlocution are Ruth 2:3 (חֵלקוֹת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבוֹאֵז׃--a portion of Boaz's field) and 2 Kings 5:9 (פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת לְאֵלִישָׁע׃--the doorway of Elisha's house). שָׁנָה רְצוֹן לַיהוָה can be translated "the favorable year of the Lord."

¹The purpose of this chapter is to give a translation which will be used consistently throughout the remainder of this paper. For a complete discussion of this phrase in its context, cf. Chapters III, V, and VII.

²E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed., revised in accordance with the 28th German ed. (1909) by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), pp. 419-420.

Ἐνιαυτὸν Κυρίου Δεκτὸν

The Septuagint has translated $\eta\lambda\psi$ with $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\iota\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$. $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\iota\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ which means year is modified by the adjective $\delta\epsilon\kappa\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$. In the Septuagint, $\delta\epsilon\kappa\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ has the meaning of acceptable or pleasing on the basis of the act of the divine will.¹ This year is favorable to God because it was chosen by Him (Isa. 49:8; 58:2).² The genitive form of $\kappa\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$ denotes an essential relationship of the Lord to the favorable year.³ In light of the Hebrew grammar, the favorable year is a possession of the Lord. Thus, $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\iota\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \kappa\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon \delta\epsilon\kappa\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ can be translated "the favorable year of the Lord."

Luke has employed the Septuagint's translation in Luke 4:19 with no indication that the Septuagint's meaning is to be understood differently. Therefore the English translation--"the favorable year of the Lord"--will be used in the remainder of this paper when speaking of either $\eta\lambda\psi$ or $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\iota\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \kappa\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon \delta\epsilon\kappa\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$. Neither the Hebrew text nor the Greek text has a variant reading.

¹Walter Grundmann, "δέχομαι," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (hereinafter referred to as TDNT), Vol. II, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 58.

²David Hill, "The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth," Novum Testamentum, 13:3 (July, 1971), p. 168.

³H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: MacMillan Company, 1957), pp. 72-76.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING FOR LUKE 4:18-19

It would be expected that Jesus began His ministry in His own home town of Nazareth, trying to secure the adherence of His own people to His ministry. Luke 4:18-27 is Jesus' first public address recorded by Luke. If Luke 4:18-27 was Jesus' first public address, then it was His inaugural address which would reveal the program of His administration.¹

Although Luke 4:18-27 is Jesus' first public address to be recorded in Luke's Gospel, it was not His inaugural address. Jesus' ministry did not begin in the Galilean region but in the Judean region of Palestine. Jesus gradually emerged into public notice (Jn. 1:35-4:3). Not until after John 4:3 did Jesus have a Galilean centered ministry with established headquarters in Capernaum.² Jesus had His headquarters established in Capernaum before the Nazareth incident, otherwise the Nazarenes could not have said "What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your own country also (Lk. 4:23)?" If the Nazarenes wondered at the deeds of Jesus performed in Capernaum or were jealous of the honor Jesus gave to that city, Jesus must have resided

¹Trocme, Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution, p. 28.

²Metzger, The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content, pp. 113-18.

there. Jesus could not have proceeded to that city for the first time as a consequence of the Nazareth incident (Lk. 4:31).¹

The parallel passages to Luke 4:16-30 are Mark 6:1-6 and Matthew 13:53-58. In these passages, three outstanding similarities are noticeable. In all three passages, Jesus' teaching created offense (Mt. 13:57; Mk. 6:3; Lk. 4:28); Jesus spoke a maxim concerning a prophet (Mt. 13:57; Mk. 6:4; Lk. 4:24); and there was a lack of miracles with Luke presenting the effect of the lack of miracles.² But, all three records have a different chronology. Matthew's record has placed the incident near the close of the Galilean ministry, while Luke's record has placed the incident as a preface to Jesus' public ministry. Yet in Luke's record, an allusion is made to Jesus' former works (Lk. 4:23).³

The reason for the Nazareth incident to be placed as a preface to Jesus' public ministry in Luke's record is that Luke 4:16-30 is programmatic for Luke-Acts. While the incident is not chronologically first in Jesus' ministry, it does introduce three major themes found in Luke-Acts.⁴ The three major themes introduced by Luke 4:16-30 are the Holy Spirit, the fulfillment of Scripture, and the rejection of the

¹David F. Strauss, The Life of Jesus Critically Examined, ed. by Peter C. Hodgson, trans. from the 4th German ed. by George Eliot (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 272.

²Ibid.

³Hugh Anderson, "Broadening Horizons," Interpretation, 28:3 (July, 1964), p. 260.

⁴G. B. Caird, Saint Luke (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 86.

appointed messenger.¹ Yet, in this rejection of the appointed messenger by His own people, the universality of the Gospel to include the Gentiles is shown.²

The chronological variations between the Synoptic records present a difficult problem. If "the favorable year of the Lord" is a reference to the observance of the Jubilee Year during Jesus' ministry, its beginning cannot be ascertained from the Gospel records. It has been demonstrated that "the favorable year of the Lord" cannot be given inaugural significance according to the Gospel records.

The programmatic understanding of Luke 4:16-30 gives insight into interpreting "the favorable year of the Lord." Just as Luke 4:16-30 is programmatic for Luke-Acts, the Isaian prophecy found in this passage appears to be programmatic for Luke-Acts also.³ If the Isaian prophecy is programmatic for Luke-Acts, then "the favorable year of the Lord" must be a reference to the Luke-Acts period and not just one period of time within Luke's record.

¹Glenn W. Barker, William L. Lane, and J. Ramsey Michaels, The New Testament Speaks (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969), p. 290.

²T. Henshaw, New Testament Literature (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1952), pp. 134-35.

³For further discussion cf. Chapter VII, p. 33.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPHETIC SETTING FOR LUKE 4:18-19

The Scripture which Jesus read was from the prophet Isaiah (Lk. 4:17). The Scripture, taken primarily from Isaiah 61:1-2, was prophetic according to Jesus for He claimed to be the fulfillment of this Scripture (Lk. 4:21).

The message of Isaiah 61 was directed to those who were in the Babylonian captivity. It promised their release and return to the restored Jerusalem.¹ The wholesale rebuilding of the context suggests the return of the exiled people.²

The Commissioned One

The prophecy of Isaiah 61 cannot be limited to Isaiah's time. The Commissioned One of Isaiah 61 must refer to someone other than Isaiah. All that the person of Isaiah 61 claims of himself is in character with the Servant of Yahweh. The claims of the person of Isaiah 61 which have been a characterization of the Servant of Yahweh include endowment with the Spirit (Isa. 42:1), sent by Yahweh (Isa. 48:16), a rescuer of the despairing (Isa. 42:7), and a sight restorer to the blind (Isa. 42:7; 49:9). Up to this point, the Servant of Yahweh has always been exalted above the prophet. The prophet's previous demeanor should

¹Plummer, The Gospel According to Saint Luke, p. 121.

²North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 42.

be expected to continue here.¹ Therefore, Isaiah 61 must have looked to a fulfillment beyond the Babylonian captivity.

The Commissioned One of Isaiah 61 is enabled to perform his assignment for he is divinely empowered. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of Yahweh or Elohim being upon someone meant that the person was divinely empowered to perform mighty deeds (Num. 24:2; Jud. 3:10; 14:6; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:6; 10:10; 11:6; 19:23; 2 Chr. 15:1; Isa. 11:2). The divine empowerment was given through an anointing which set that person apart to a task. A commission was given to the anointed person at the time of his anointing. The commission which was given to the Isaiah 61 personage is found in Isaiah 61:1-3.

The Commission

Luke's record of Jesus' Scripture reading does not include all of the tasks which are given to the Commissioned One of Isaiah 61. Luke's record ends with the fifth task of the Commissioned One--the proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord."

The First Task

The first task listed for the Commissioned One is לְבַשׂר עֲנִיִּים וְשַׁלַּח צְדָקָה לְעַלְוֵי. This is a common formula for the commissioning of a prophet. שַׁלַּח is a verb used especially in the sending of a prophet by Yahweh with the infinitive denoting the purpose of the commission (1 Sam. 15:1;

¹F. Delitzsch, Isaiah, trans. by James Martin, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 424-25.

Jer. 19:14).¹ The root meaning of בִּשְׂרָ contains the giving of a message with a sense of joy.²

The Commissioned One is sent to the עֲנָוִים. In Isaiah 61:1-3 the term is explained by a series of parallel expressions. They include the בְּשִׁפְרֵי לֵב, שְׁבוּגִים, אֲסוּרִים, כָּל-אֲבָלִים, and רִגְחַ בְּדוֹה. עֲנָוִים, which is translated as afflicted or poor, is not a term used for an economic position. עֲנָוִים must be combined with נָל (Ps. 82:3; Isa. 10:2; Amos 2:7) or אֲבִיוֹן (Dt. 24:14; Ex. 16:49; 18:12; 22:29) before it can be assigned an economic position meaning.³ The עֲנָוִים are those who are oppressed in quite a general sense.⁴ Thus, in the Old Testament, the עֲנָוִים are not those who have deserved poverty but those who are wrongfully impoverished or dispossessed.

As ruler of Israel, it was Yahweh's will that no permanent or hopeless poverty should exist in Israel. Yahweh's poor laws were established to help the victims of human injustice (Dt. 15:5-11), to alleviate poverty and provide for the impoverished (Dt. 15:1, 12; 23:20, 25; 24:6, 14; Lev. 19:9 f.; 23:22; 25:25; Ex. 22:2-4; 23:11). The greatest

¹Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 1018.

²O. Schilling, "בִּשְׂרָ," Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. 11, ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. by John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 313-16.

³Ernest Bammel, "πτωχος," TDNT, Vol. VI, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 888.

⁴Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology, trans. by John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 112.

collection of material concerning the poor is to be found in the Sabbath and Jubilee laws (Dt. 15:1-18; Lev. 25:1-55).

Since it is Yahweh's will as Ruler that no permanent poverty should exist, it is understandable why Yahweh is pictured as the poor's protector. אֲנִי is given religious significance when the wrongfully impoverished present themselves to Yahweh's protection. They are designated as humble or pious.¹ In the prophets, אֲנִי embraces the oppressed and poor who are thrown completely on Yahweh's help.² The אֲנִי are not specially elected (Isa. 3:15; 14:32) but God will defend them because of His commitment to the law which is violated by their oppressors (Ezek. 22:29).³ Therefore, אֲנִי is particularly applicable to those held in captivity.⁴

The Second Task

The second task listed for the Commissioned One is $\text{לְחַבֵּשׁ לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי לֵב}$. The binding or bandaging of לְחַבֵּשׁ is figurative for comforting the distressed (Isa. 1:6; 3:7; 30:26; Ezek. 34:4, 16; Hos. 6:1).⁵ The distressed are characterized as לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי לֵב . This brokenhearted characterization⁶ is applicable to those afflicted by the captivity.

¹Bammel, "πτωχός," p. 888.

²Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 112.

³Bammel, "πτωχός," p. 890.

⁴Albert Barnes, Isaiah, Vol. II, Notes on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 372.

⁵Brown, Driver, Briggs, Lexicon, p. 894.

⁶Ibid., p. 990.

The Third Task

The third task listed in the Isaiah 61 commission is לְקַרְא לְשִׁבְיָיִם דְּרִוּר. The proclaiming expressed by לְקַרְא concerns a release.¹ דְּרִוּר is a technical word used for the release of the debt slaves during the Sabbath and Jubilee Years.² This release is declared to the לְשִׁבְיָיִם. At this point of the commission, the identity of the שִׁבְיָיִם is not agreed upon. While all agree that the שִׁבְיָיִם are captives, the diversity of opinion appears concerning what these people are captive to. The idea of the Babylonian captivity may be carried on here with the promise of release which is comparable to the Jubilee release.³ These need not be Babylonian captives but those who are oppressed by pauperizing economic and social conditions.⁴

The latter interpretation is a departure from the Babylonian captivity application of the prophecy. Such a departure should be allowable however, for as demonstrated previously, the fulfillment of this prophecy is not solely for the Babylonian captivity period. An understanding of the following commission task will determine the legitimacy of the latter interpretation.

¹ Ibid., p. 894.

² Ibid., p. 204.

³ Barnes, Isaiah, p. 373; Plummer, The Gospel According to Saint Luke, p. 121.

⁴ Miller, "Luke 4:16-21," p. 418; North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 42.

The Fourth Task

The אֲסֻרִים are the benefactors of this task of the commission. These people are imprisoned.¹ פְּקוּדַת־קוֹרָן is the task of this commission. This action of opening wide or completely opening eyes is figurative for the freeing from a dark prison.²

These prisoners are understood to be either prisoners to the Babylonians or prisoners to blindness. If these are Babylonian prisoners who need their sight restored, then their blindness must be due to a deliberate act of blinding performed by their captors or a lengthy sentence served in a dark prison. While Samson was deliberately blinded by his captors (Jud. 16:21) and Zedekiah was blinded by the Babylonians (2 Ki. 25:7), it seems highly unlikely that the Babylonians blinded very many of the captives. Josephus mentions only the incident of Zedekiah's blinding during the Babylonian captivity.³ If this practice was widespread during the Babylonian captivity, it should be recorded. Just as unlikely is the hypothesis that these Babylonian prisoners have become blind due to a lack of light in their prison confines. There is no record of Babylonian captives being imprisoned and there is no logical explanation for such imprisonment either.

It is preferable to consider these prisoners to be prisoners to blindness rather than prisoners to the Babylonian government. In

¹Brown, Driver, Briggs, Lexicon, p. 63.

²Ibid., p. 824.

³Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, X.8:2 in The Works of Flavius Josephus, trans. by William Whiston (4 vols., reprinted; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), III, 73.

Isaiah 42:7, the opening of eyes is equal to the opening of prisons. Isaiah promises the cure of blindness as a theme of eschatological hope (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:6-7, 16, 19).¹ This preferred interpretation is in harmony with Isaiah's paradoxical contrast between his people's spiritual blindness while they were not physically blind (Isa. 43:8; 42:18; 56:10; 59:10). This departure in interpretation from a Babylonian captivity focus to a spiritual focus would indicate that a salvation theme is present in Isaiah 61. But there is nothing in the context which would oppose a salvational understanding of Isaiah 61:1-3.

The Fifth Task

The fifth task includes a declaring of the "favorable year of the Lord." The cognate verb of רָצוֹן which means favorable is used in reference to the land getting its due rest in the Sabbath year (2 Chr. 36:21; Lv. 26:34, 43).² Isaiah uses the adjective favorable with a time reference three times.

In Isaiah 49:8 בְּעֵת רָצוֹן, which means a favorable time, is paralleled to יְשׁוּעָה וְכִיּוֹם which means a day of salvation. This verse is in a context of the covenant's reaffirmation. The land is restored so that the people can inherit the desolate heritages. This is definitely a Jubilean principle (Lev. 25:13). The people who are the inheritors are called the bound (אֲסֻרִים) and the blind (אֵתְלֵלִים).

¹Wolfgang Schrage, "τυφλός," *TDNT*, Vol. VIII, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 280.

²Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Lexicon*, p. 953.

The adjective favorable is used with יוֹם, the word for day, in Isaiah 58:5. In this verse, the favorable day is paralleled to a fast. The context is during the time of the rebuilding of the ruins (Isa. 58:12) when the Israelites are oppressing their own people. The justice which Isaiah has called for on this occasion is a justice found in the Jubilean law. This justice includes loosening the bands of wickedness, letting the oppressed go free (Isa. 58:6), dividing bread with the hungry, and bringing the homeless into the house (Isa. 58:7).

The only other Old Testament verse in which the adjective favorable is used with a time reference is Psalm 69:14. This verse uses the same phrase as Isaiah 49:8--a favorable time. For David, the favorable time is a time when God answers with saving truth.

It can be concluded from the preceding study that the adjective favorable used with reference to a time interval has salvational connotations. The Isaian usage of this construction is set in contexts with Jubilean overtones so that salvation is pictured by Jubilean principles.

"The favorable year of the Lord" is connected to יוֹם נְקָם לְאֵלֵינוּ in Isaiah 61:2. This day of God's vengeance¹ is inseparably connected to "the favorable year of the Lord" by the circumstantial waw.² For Isaiah, "the favorable year of the Lord" would occur simultaneously with the day of God's vengeance.

The juxtaposition between the terms year and day does not stress the time significance as to endurance. Because the favorable year

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 668.

² Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, p. 489.

occurs simultaneously with the day of vengeance, the consoling aspects of the period are made more prominent than the retributive aspects (Isa. 34:8; 63:4).¹ The Old Testament pictures God as taking vengeance against sinful Israel or Israel's enemies. God's vengeance against Israel's enemies was naturally synonymous with salvation for Israel. But in Isaiah 61:2 as in Isaiah 35:4, the thought of Israel's enemies seems to have faded altogether, leaving only the positive thought of Israel's salvation.

The consolation and sudden vengeance of Isaiah 61:2 is not foreign to the Jubilee law. Following the Jubilee law (Lev. 25), God declared vengeance for those who broke His commandments (Lev. 26:14-39) especially those commands associated with the Sabbath commands (Lev. 26:34-35, 43). But God's vengeance will never surpass His faithfulness and grace (Lev. 26:44-45).

An Additional Task

Luke has included in his record an additional task found in Isaiah 58:6. This task is **שְׁלַח רְצוּצִים חַפְּשִׁים**. The person is sent to the **רְצוּצִים**--a term denoting oppressed ones.² The oppressed ones were to be given **חַפְּשִׁים**. This freedom was granted to Hebrew bond slaves in the Sabbath year (Ex. 21:2, 5; Dt. 15:12-13, 18; Jer. 34:9-11, 14, 16)

¹North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 42.

²Brown, Driver, Briggs, Lexicon, p. 953.

or when they had been injured (Ex. 21:26-27).¹ Isaiah 58:6 is set in a context of debt imprisonment to which Isaiah applied Jubilean principles.²

Conclusion

The prophecy of Isaiah 61 grew out of the Babylonian captivity. But it was not fulfilled by the release of the Babylonian captives. The restoration of the prisoners' sight and the declaration of the favorable year are salvational aspects which only the Servant of Yahweh could fulfill.

The poor, the oppressed, release, freedom, and the "favorable year of the Lord" are allusions to Jubilee. It is appropriate that this prophecy employs Jubilean terminology because Jubilee taught the idea of grace for all the oppressed.³ For the Israelites, Jubilee was a complete renewal. The Jubilee allusion of Isaiah 61 is used as a vision for a coming renewal.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 344.

² H. J. B. Combrink, "The Structure and Significance of Luke 4:16-30," Neotestamentica 7 (South Africa: University of Pretoria, 1973), p. 36. Cf. previous discussion of this context on page 17.

³ "Jubilee," Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. 4, ed. by John McClintock and James Strong (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), p. 1042.

⁴ Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, pp. 37-38.

CHAPTER IV

AN OLD TESTAMENT STUDY OF JUBILEE

Before an accurate attempt is made to determine Jesus' usage of Isaiah 61, the source of Isaiah's Jubilean allusions should be examined. A study of Jubilee in the Old Testament must be pursued for an adequate understanding of this practice.

The laws which regulated the Jubilean Year are found in Leviticus 25:8-55, and 27:16-24.¹ The Jubilean Year possessed all the features of an ordinary Sabbatical Year so that all the sanctions which were enforced during the Jubilean Year included Exodus 21:2-6, Deuteronomy 15:1-8 and Leviticus 25:1-55, 27:16-24.² While the scriptural basis for Jubilee is found exclusively in Leviticus 25 and 27, it embodies the same sociological elements which dominate Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 15.³

The Time of Jubilee

The Jubilean Year was proclaimed after the passage of seven Sabbatical Years (Lev. 25:8-11). This meant that there were two successive fallow years. The produce of the sixth year in the Sabbatical cycle

¹F. H. Woods, "Festivals and Fasts (Hebrew)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 5, ed. by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 866.

²J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 401.

³North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 3.

(which was the forty-eighth year of the Jubilean cycle) needed to last for three years (Lev. 25:21). The Jubilean Year was proclaimed on the tenth day of the seventh month which was also the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9).

The Regulations of Jubilee

Four regulations were to be followed during the observance of Jubilee by the people. These four regulations included land rest, debt remittance, slave emancipation, and a redistribution of capital.

Land Rest

While the people were allowed to gather spontaneous produce for their immediate wants, they were prohibited from working the soil or harvesting produce for storage during the Jubilean Year (Lev. 25:11, 12, 22).

Debt Remittance

The alienated property described in Leviticus 25:25 is a fore-closed mortgage.¹ All debts connected with real property were cancelled so that every man could freely reclaim his original allotment of land which might have been lost by debt or sale (Lev. 25:28).² The debt release of Deuteronomy 15 occurred every seven years. But this debt

¹ Ibid., p. 31.

² Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1978), p. 78.

release was not a complete cancellation of debt. Rather it was a year of grace.¹

Slave Emancipation

Slave emancipation is first obscurely mentioned in Leviticus 25:10 with a complete development in Leviticus 25:39-54. All slaves, whether they were Israelites or foreigners, received their liberty.

Redistribution of Capital

Lands and flocks were the primary capital of the agricultural Israelite society. The reversion of the landed property to its original owners (Lev. 25:10, 13-34; 27:16-24) made the possession of real property a kind of lease. This regulation prevented a monopoly of agricultural land, insuring that the people would stay on the land. Deuteronomy 15 also sets forth regulations for the redistribution of capital. The poor were to be given economical relief (Dt. 15:7-11), especially at the time of their release (Dt. 15:12-15).

The Basis for Jubilee

God was the basis for Jubilee. He instituted the Jubilee through Moses because He was the owner of the land and the liberator of His people.

God as Owner of the Land

Because God owned the land (Lev. 25:23), the land could not be sold in perpetuity. Though God was the only owner of the land, He did

¹ Ibid.

not operate as an oriental potentate by oppressing His people in slavery. God acted as a father, entrusting the administration of His goods to His servants. It was Jubilee which distributed the capital God alone possessed.¹

God as Liberator of His People

God as liberator of His people justified the institution of Jubilee (Lev. 25:38) as well as the Sabbatical Year (Dt. 5:14-15). The mercy which was manifested during the Jubilean Year occurred at regular intervals to regularize the relations between God and His people.²

The Jubilean Year began on the Day of Atonement. Just as the people's debt to God did not stack up indefinitely, the debts between the Israelites were to be cancelled periodically also.³ The Israelites who had forfeited their personal liberty or property to their fellow-citizens due to poverty or other adverse circumstances had their debts forgiven by their co-religionists every fifty years on the Day of Atonement. They were restored to their families and inheritance as freely and fully as God on that very day forgave the debts of His people. The whole community, having forgiven each other and being forgiven of God, returned to the original order which had been disturbed in the lapse of

¹Trocme, Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution, p. 35.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

time. Being freed from bondage to one another, the Israelites could unreservedly be the servants of their Redeemer.¹

The Teachings of Jubilee

God's ownership of the land taught that particular property acquisitions were to be subordinated to the general welfare. The expanding family was God's vehicle for subordinating particular property acquisitions.² The stress on family life is shown by the importance of the גאול in Leviticus 25:25-48. The kinsman's right and duty of property-redemption was an integral part of the Jubilean institution. The function of the levirate (Dt. 25:5; Ruth 3:13) was primarily like the גאול for he also secured the permanence of property within the family.³

God would not allow anyone to usurp His title of Lord over those whom He owned. The merciful disposition which God showed to the Israelites by liberating them from the Egyptian oppression was to be the Israelites' disposition to their oppressed and poor fellow countrymen. Help to the poor (Lev. 25:25, 35) and mercy to the dependents (Lev. 25:39, 43, 46, 53) were to be practiced because God had liberated the Israelite nation from an oppressive situation (Lev. 25:38, 55). The example of God's mercy was to be so vivid on the Israelites' memory that they could not reverence God while they practiced oppression or usury

¹"Jubilee," Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, p. 1042.

²North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 36.

(Lev. 25:17, 26). The practice of oppression or usury was antithetical to a reverence for God.

The Jubilean Year was an act of faith for all Israelites. The harvest of the forty-eighth year needed to last until the harvest of the fifty-first year. The Israelites needed to trust God's providence for their provisions--a promise which He had given to them (Lev. 25:18-22).

The Practice of Jubilee

Redistribution of Capital

The Jubilean regulation of redistributing capital explains the conduct of Naboth and Ahab (1 Ki. 21:3-4) and the prophetic rebukes of Isaiah 5:8; Amos 5:11; 8:5; and Micah 2:2. Justice demanded the land to remain inalienably distributed among numerous small landholders for when property is concentrated in the hands of a few, monopolistic oppression is inevitable. Amos 5:11 pictures the concentrated estate owner oppressing his poor sharecroppers.¹

Ezekiel 46:16-18 in conjunction with Ezekiel 45:17 gives instruction on this Jubilean regulation. Ezekiel saw that the breakdown of a rural society began with a central government. If the ruler would become obligated to private individuals to the extent that he would need to alienate his property to satisfy his indebtedness, his next move would be to indemnify himself from the property of his subjects. Ezekiel saw the injustice and prevalence of the latter practice so he

¹ Ibid., p. 39.

made the royal patrimony inalienable after the fashion of the Jubilean legislation.¹

Slave Emancipation

Slave emancipation is evident once in the Old Testament (Jer. 34:8-12). The details of this slave emancipation are sketchy. There is no indication that this was a recurring practice or intended to be such. Several possibilities have been suggested for the slaves' emancipation. The emancipation could have been due to a spirit of fraternal charity.² The suggestion that the slaves were released to replenish the military ranks or to free their masters from the obligation of feeding the slaves³ seems more appropriate in the war context of Jeremiah 34.

The return of the slaves to bondage is also puzzling. Because of the public proclamation of the release, it is hardly thinkable that the former slaveowners would have simply seized their former slaves. While this cannot be entirely ruled out, it has been suggested that the slaves were given no economic support to function independently. With no means to start anew, the slaves must have rapidly fallen into debt again so that they needed to return to their former masters.⁴

¹ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

² Ibid., p. 37.

³ N. P. Lemche, "The Manumission of Slaves--The Fallow Year--The Sabbatical Year--The Jubilee Year," Vetus Testamentum, 26:1 (January, 1976), p. 51.

⁴ North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 37; Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, p. 38.

Debt Remittance

Nehemiah 5:1-13 very nearly parallels the Jubilean situation. This is the only Old Testament record of the practice of debt remittance. Although nothing is said concerning the release of any slaves, when all was restored in Nehemiah 5:11, slavery was also probably eo ipso terminated.¹

Conclusion

The appearance or absence of Jubilean regulations and teachings in the Gospels should determine the meaning of Jesus' declaration concerning "the favorable year of the Lord." If Jesus were demanding the observance of Jubilee during some phase of His ministry, His teachings should have required the observance of land rest, debt remittance, slave emancipation, and a redistribution of capital for that phase of His ministry. The underlying Jubilean teachings should also be found in the Gospels, otherwise the observance of Jubilee would be a legalistic observance. If in Jesus' declaration concerning "the favorable year of the Lord," He was using Jubilean terminology to be a picture of the salvation which He brought, then all the details of the Jubilean law need not appear in the Gospel record. The Gospel record needs to be further studied to determine the nature and extent of Jubilean references which Jesus made during His ministry.²

¹North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, pp. 37-38.

²For further discussion cf. Chapter VIII, p. 46.

CHAPTER V

THE SEPTUAGINT TRANSLATION OF ISAIAH 61

Twenty-four of the twenty-six words which Luke recorded from the Isaian prophecy were taken directly from the Septuagint. A study of the Septuagint's translation of Isaiah 61 will reveal the translators' degree of faithfulness to the Hebrew text. In addition, such a study could possibly reveal their degree of understanding the Jubilean allusions.

The Faithfulness of the Translation

The Septuagint translators retained the nuances of meaning found in the Hebrew text. The same context of joy in proclamation found in the word שָׂבַח is retained in the translators' word εὐαγγελίσασθαι .¹ ἀπέσταλεν , the term used to translate the word פָּרַשׁ , retained the same idea of sending with a commission.² דִּלְגָּד is rendered as πτωχοῦς . This word choice agreed with the desperateness of the Isaian context for it denoted a complete destitution which forced those poor to beg from others. Πένη was a possible alternative for the translators but it

¹Gerhard Friedrich, "εὐαγγελίζομαι," *TDNT*, Vol. 2, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 70.

²J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (reprinted; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 67.

did not carry the force of πτωχοῖς. Πένη denoted one who needed to earn a living because he had no property.¹

The Septuagint translators did not deviate from the Hebrew text's nuance of meaning when they translated Isaiah 61. The translators have given a Greek translation which is faithful to the Hebrew text.

The Suggestions of the Translation

רַעוּן is translated by the Greek word δεκτόν. The use of δεκτόν in the Septuagint requires this term to be understood as a year well-pleasing or favorable to God because it is chosen by Him.²

The word ἀφεσις is used to translate רָרַן in Isaiah 61:1. In the Septuagint, ἀφεσις is used to translate יִוָּבֵל (Lev. 25, 27), רָרַן (Lev. 25:10; Isa. 58:6; 61:1) and אָמַן (Dt. 15). The use of ἀφεσις in the Septuagint forms the connecting link between these three Hebrew words which deal with the Sabbatical and Jubilean Years.³ Even when ἀφεσις is used in the sense of liberation, the noun at least includes the thought of forgiveness.⁴

Leviticus 25:10 is the nearest parallel phrase to the proclaiming of "the favorable year of the Lord" in Isaiah 61. The word for

¹Bammel, "πτωχός," p. 886.

²Hill, The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth, p. 168.

³Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," New Testament Studies, 7:4 (July, 1961), p. 33.

⁴Rudolf Bultmann, "ἀφίημι," TDNT, Vol. 1, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 509-11.

proclaim in Leviticus 25:10 was rendered as διαβοήσετε by the translators, but the Isaian passage has καλέσαι. While the Leviticus and Isaian translations contain the terms ἄφεις and ἐνιαυτός, the translators did not force the Leviticus translation into the Isaian translation. Rather, they left the differences between the two passages remain.

The reminiscence of Leviticus 25:10 may be found ad sensum in Isaiah 61.¹ But the Septuagint translation does not give strong evidence as to whether or not the translators saw a reference to Jubilee in this passage. The usage of the word ἄφεις is the strongest support the Septuagint gives for linking Isaiah 61 to Leviticus 25.

¹North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 43.

CHAPTER VI

QUMRAN'S INTERPRETATION OF ISAIAH 61

11Q Melchizedek is a fragmentary text from the Qumran community. It is dated to the first half of the first Christian century.¹ This text related Leviticus 25:9-10, 13; Deuteronomy 15:2; Isaiah 52:7; Psalm 82:1-2 and Psalm 7:8-9 to the Jubilee and end of days.²

The thread that ties 11Q Melchizedek together is Leviticus 25. Line 2 is a quote from Leviticus 25:13, line 6 is a quote from Leviticus 25:10, and line 26 is a quote from Leviticus 25:9. A year of release (מִשְׁוֹט) for the Lord is proclaimed in lines 3-4 and liberation (דְּרוֹר) is proclaimed in line 6.³ The proclaimed year of release involves atonement from iniquity. The Day of Atonement is somehow related to the text, but line 1 where this seems to be mentioned is very fragmentary.⁴

The characteristics of the year of release are peace, good (wellfare), and salvation (lines 16, 19). These characteristics are insured by a judgment executed by Melchizedek or someone with the heritage of Melchizedek (lines 5-6, 13). After a year of good favor is decreed

¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave II," Journal of Biblical Literature, 85:1 (March, 1967), 25.

² Merrill P. Miller, "Isaiah 61:1-2 in Melchizedek," Journal of Biblical Literature, 88:4 (December, 1969), 467.

³ Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave II," p. 29.

⁴ Ibid.

(line 9), Psalm 82:1 and Psalm 7:8-9 are quoted in reference to him (lines 10-11). These quotations imply that this person is God's agent for executing divine judgment on man in this year of release.¹

Isaiah 61:1-2 are alluded to in lines 4 and 6 of 11Q Melchizedek.² The occurrence of *יְדוּרָה* in Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61:1 is undoubtedly the reason for relating the two texts in this midrash. Line 9 with its phrase the year of good favor is also an echo of Isaiah 61:2.³

11Q Melchizedek's eschatological theme of the Jubilean Year is set in the framework of Isaiah 61:2. The salvation proclaimed in the deliverance of the captives in this midrash is guaranteed and counterpoised by judgment.⁴ Exactly as in Isaiah 61:2, "the favorable year of the Lord" with its salvation is inseparably connected to the day of vengeance with its judgment.

11Q Melchizedek gives strong evidence that the Qumran community of Jesus' day found a reference to Jubilee in Isaiah 61. For them, the Jubilean institution was a picture of salvation.⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 30.

² M. DeJonge and A. S. VonDerWoude, "11Q Melchizedek and The New Testament," New Testament Studies, 12:4 (July, 1966), 306.

³ Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," p. 34.

⁴ Miller, "Isaiah 61:1-2 in Melchizedek," pp. 467-69.

⁵ These two conclusions were also arrived at in Chapter III.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGICAL SETTING FOR ISAIAH 61:1-2

The New Testament theological setting provides the understanding for Jesus' fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2.

The Commissioned One

The prophecy of Isaiah 61 revealed that the Commissioned One was enabled to perform his assignment because he was to be divinely empowered. Luke has clearly demonstrated that Jesus' divine empowerment for ministry occurred at His baptism experience.

The baptism accounts of Jesus are recorded in Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, John 1:32-34, and Luke 3:21-22. But it is Luke who most clearly shows the significance of the event for Jesus' ministry. Each of Luke's major sections of material between the baptism and the Nazareth incident, with the exception of Jesus' genealogy, is introduced with Jesus' relationship to the Spirit.¹

Because Jesus was anointed by God, the Spirit came upon Him empowering Him for ministry. Apart from the Old Testament quotation in Hebrews 1:9, Luke is the only New Testament writer who referred to Jesus' anointing (Lk. 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38).

¹R. C. Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus," in Jesus in Nazareth (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), p. 68.

The baptism account of Luke 3:21-22 stresses a conformity with Isaiah 61. Luke does not state that John baptized Jesus so that there is no confusion as to God's complete role in the anointing of Jesus for ministry.¹

Jesus' ministry was possible because God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). This is a clear echo of Luke 4:18.

Acts 4:25-26 is a quotation from Psalm 2:1-2. This Psalm with its usage of the title of Messiah is applied to Jesus. The verse immediately following this quotation mentions the fact that God had anointed Jesus. The close connection in the context between the title of Messiah and the anointing by God would indicate that Jesus was the Christ.² Thus, Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61 at Nazareth was His official statement of Messiahship. It is appropriate that Isaiah 61 was used by Jesus to comment on, for it is the only Old Testament text where the Messiah speaks in the first person.³

The Commission⁴

The First Task

The first task of the commission is to preach good news to the

¹ Ibid., p. 69.

² Ibid.

³ Trocme, Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution, p. 69.

⁴ Since the Commission has been studied in Chapter III with its Greek translation in Chapter V, only the aspects of the Commission which give special significance to understanding "the favorable year of the Lord" will be considered here.

πτωχοί. Luke has demonstrated in his Gospel the way in which Jesus fulfilled this task.

The term πτωχοί is used in the Gospel records in the same sense as the prophets used עָנִי.¹ More than the other synoptists, Luke portrays Jesus' deep concern for the socially ostracized. Luke alone mentions the immoral woman (Lk. 7:36-50), the transformation of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:8-10), and the repentant robber (Lk. 23:42-43). Jesus' gracious attitude toward the socially ostracized is illustrated in three parables peculiar to Luke: the parable of the two debtors (Lk. 7:41-43), the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32), and the parable of the publican (Lk. 18:9-14). It is Luke again who placed the ostracized Samaritans on the same level with the Israelites (Lk. 9:54-55; 10:33; 17:11-19).² Because the good news included the publicans, prostitutes, and Gentiles; the Pharisees displayed their utter disgust (Lk. 7:28-35; 36-50; 15:1-2).

The term πτωχοί is understood by Luke and Matthew in different senses. Luke used the term οἱ πτωχοί in his first beatitude (Lk. 6:20) while Matthew qualified the term in his first beatitude with τῶ πνευμάτα (Mt. 5:3). The first woe in Luke 6:24 which is parallel to the first beatitude of Luke 6:20 speaks only of τοῖς πλουσίοις without any addition. To the different wording corresponds a different meaning. Luke had in mind those who were really poor just as in the beatitudes he referred to those who were really hungry, really weeping,

¹Jeremias, New Testament Theology, pp. 112-113.

²Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), pp. 91-92.

and really persecuted (Lk. 6:21-23). This is not to say that οἱ πτωχοί refers to those who have no material possessions. Rather, Luke 6:22-36 shows that Luke was thinking of those who must suffer poverty, hunger, and persecution because of their discipleship. By contrast, Matthew's first beatitude is to be understood in a purely religious sense as the addition of τῷ πνευμάτι indicates. Matthew's addition takes up the Old Testament formulations of the humble spirit (Isa. 57:15), contrite spirit (Isa. 66:2), and the broken-hearted (Ps. 34:8). Οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνευμάτι are those who are poor before God as beggars with empty hands due to their consciousness of spiritual poverty. Thus, Luke and Matthew have emphasized a different feature of οἱ πτωχοί. Luke speaks of an outward oppression while Matthew speaks of an inner need.¹

The preaching of the good news to the poor sums up in advance the other individual tasks of Jesus' ministry. Jesus Himself placed the preaching of the good news to the poor as the climax of His work which included raising the dead (Lk. 7:22).

The Second Task

Luke has deleted Isaiah's second task of comforting the distressed from his record. Luke's deletion of this phrase indicates that Luke has given an interpretive rendering of Jesus' reading from Isaiah. This deletion by Luke reveals that Luke is emphasizing a certain point in his record.² While the deleted phrase carried the sense of οἱ πενθοῦντες of Matthew's second beatitude, its deletion reinforces the

¹Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 112-13.

²Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus," p. 66.

supposition that πτωχοί is used in a different sense in Luke's beatitude (Lk. 6:20) than in Matthew's beatitude. In Matthew's beatitudes, this deleted concept is parallel to his first beatitude.

The second task which Luke has mentioned is the preaching of release to the captives. Like in the Old Testament, αἰχμαλωτοί meaning captives, are miserable people who stand in need of God's help because they are swallowed up by a terrible enemy. It was not until Paul's writing that the thought of captivity came to signify a moral and religious struggle of man (2 Tim. 3:6; Rom. 7:2-3, 6; 2 Cor. 10:5; Eph. 4:8).¹ To these captives, the ἄφεσις or release was to be preached. This task was not fulfilled by Jesus proclaiming release to jailed prisoners. Herod had only heard of Jesus' activities up to the time of His trial, but Herod had no political charge against Him (Lk. 9:7-9; 23:8-11). This would not have been true if Jesus had been involved in freeing jailed prisoners. Even though Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist, was jailed, Jesus did not attempt to have John released.

Because the second task does not apply to physical imprisonment, this phrase leaves considerable room for interpretation. The captives may be understood to be in bondage to the religion of the Pharisees and Sadducees² or in bondage to the devil (Acts 10:38; Lk. 13:16). It is to these captives that ἄφεσις is preached. This word is prominent in Luke-Acts, being particularly associated with the forgiveness and release

¹ Gerhard Kittel, "αἰχμαλωτοί," *TDNT*, Vol. 1, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 195-96.

² Vine, Isaiah: Prophecies, Promises, Warnings, p. 199.

from sin (Lk. 1:77; 7:36-50; 24:47).¹ The significance of this term is shown in the Acts' sermons in the phrase ἄφεσις ἁμασιῶν (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18).² Luke-Acts emphasizes the absolute forgiving grace which Jesus brought.³

The Third Task

The commission's third task set forth by Luke was a restoration of the blind's sight. As in Luke 14:13, 21, πτωχοί and τυφλοί are used in the same context in Luke 4:18. While the πτωχοί and τυφλοί are two distinct groups, they are in a common situation.

Jesus' healings of the blind were a signal of a new eschatological age (Lk. 7:21-22; Mt. 11:5). The healing of the blind was in accordance with contemporary Jewish expectations (Lk. 7:19; Mt. 11:3) as well as deliverance from other physical incapacities (Lk. 7:1-23).

Physical healing does not need to be the primary understanding of this task. Jesus' ministry was not primarily for bodily benefit but rather to reach people's minds. The people whom Jesus regarded as most blind were the people whose physical eyes were still functional. Jesus defined blindness as a state of moral and spiritual obtuseness (Jn. 9:39-41). This was the condition of the Pharisees (Jn. 9:40-41; Mt. 15:14; 23:16-19, 24, 26) and their followers (Mt. 15:14 cf. 24:15). Luke understood blindness to be a picture of a certain spiritual state

¹Miller, "Luke 4:16-21," p. 420.

²Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus," p. 70.

³For a full treatment of this subject, cf. Martin H. Franzmann, The Word of the Lord Grows (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), pp. 200-201.

for he used the term in a context of the forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:18).

The Fourth Task

Luke's fourth task was inserted into the Isaiah 61 commission from Isaiah 58:6. It cannot be assumed that Jesus inserted this phrase into Isaiah 61 for He was reading. Luke must have inserted it because he regarded it as part of Jesus' program of ministry.¹ The only reason for the insertion of this phrase must be a dependency on the catchword ἀφῆσις.² The best explanation concerning Jesus' fulfillment of this task is in reference to the religion imposed by the Pharisees on the people (Mt. 11:28-30; 23:4).

The Fifth Task

The proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" is the last task which Luke included in his Isaian quotation. The adjective δέκτος denotes that the ἐνιαυτός is favorably regarded (Lk. 4:19, 24; Acts 10:35; 2 Cor. 6:2; Phil. 4:18). Though ἐνιαυτός is translated as year, it is a more general term which can be applied to a longer period of time.³ This term could be applied to a period of two or three years or even be used in a generalized sense for an era.⁴ The announcement of

¹Plummer, The Gospel According to Saint Luke, pp. 121-22.

²Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus," p. 66.

³William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 4th ed., revised and augmented (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 265.

⁴North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 44.

the previous four tasks means the arrival of "the favorable year of the Lord."¹

Jesus could hardly have finished reading here where Luke has ended the Isaian quotation because the commission of Isaiah 61 is ended by Luke in midsentence. Grammatically, Isaiah 61:1-3 forms one sentence.² As previously demonstrated by Luke's deletion and addition to Isaiah 61, Luke has not recorded Jesus' exact reading. Luke could have recorded Jesus' introductory text for His discourse which was to follow³ or Luke was using a practice found in the New Testament scriptures and the Talmud where the author would introduce the first phrases of a scripture, leaving the reader to fill in the rest of the content.⁴ These factors forbid reading too much meaning into the absence of the remainder of Isaiah 61:2b-3.

Any suggestion which states that Jesus stopped reading at the point of the day of vengeance because He read only what was fulfilled in His day with the day of vengeance yet to be fulfilled in the future at His return, must be rejected.⁵ Luke made salvation to be the climax of the Isaian quotation by ending the quote with "the favorable year of the

¹Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus," p. 71.

²James Oliver Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 511. Cf. also the previous discussion on page 17.

³Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. I (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1915), p. 453.

⁴Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, II, 511; Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, p. 36.

⁵This view is set forth by Alfred Martin, Isaiah, The Salvation of Jehovah (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956), p. 111.

Lord."¹ Jesus' coming meant salvation and judgment (Lk. 4:34; Jn. 9:39). Though Jesus' primary purpose was not to judge during His ministry (Jn. 3:17), He did not fail to proclaim coming vengeance on those who rejected God's righteous demands (Mt. 23:14; Mk. 3:29; 12:40; Lk. 20:47; Jn. 5:29). Even during Jesus' ministry, God's wrath was already abiding on all those who did not obey His Son (Jn. 3:18, 36). Thus, "the favorable year of the Lord" must include judgment as well as pardon. This is the good news! To suggest that Jesus did not read Isaiah 61:1-3 in its entirety to His audience is to narrow the biblical content of vengeance.²

The Commission Interpreted

The first four tasks of the commission as found in Luke's record are best understood as being pictorial in the context of Luke's writings and the whole New Testament. Good news to the poor, release for the captives, restoration of the blind's sight, and release for the oppressed all have spiritual significance for Luke. Because the first four tasks are pictorial, it should be expected that the last task of proclaiming "the favorable year of the Lord" should be understood as being pictorial also.

If the proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" is understood to be a demand to observe the Jubilean Year, then the last task of Luke's commission is understood in its original sense while the other

¹Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus," p. 71.

²A. S. Herbert, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 163.

four tasks are understood in a broader salvational sense. This inconsistency in interpreting such a unit as Luke 4:18-19 is a very questionable practice.

The Commission Fulfilled

When Jesus completed His reading of Isaiah, He announced that what He had read was fulfilled that day (Lk. 4:21). While Jesus did not say that He was the one whom the Lord anointed, it is clear from the context that He meant these lines of Isaiah were fulfilled specially and personally in Him.¹ Because the Isaian prophecy was fulfilled on that day, it must not be understood that the prophecy was exhausted on that day. Rather, it should be understood that the time had now come of which Isaiah spoke.²

The Isaian prophecy is a text which referred to a specific event in its original context. But the prophecy is also vague enough to be used in a contemporary event by Luke so that while the general sense of Isaiah is preserved, the prophecy is applied to a new subject.³ The fulfillment of this prophecy by Jesus must have been in a spiritual sense. Luke does not allow his readers to assume that the things which oppress people are tied completely to their physical situation.⁴ All

¹North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, p. 43.

²Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, Vol. III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 460.

³Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," New Testament Studies, 7:4 (July, 1961), pp. 297-333.

⁴Miller, "Luke 4:16-21," p. 420.

during His ministry, Jesus' purpose was religious. Jesus showed no interest in the issues of Jewish politics. In fact, His chief difficulty was to avoid the complications of the political, economical, and rival sects' quarrels. Without deviation, His mind was set on spiritual ends.¹ It is legitimate to move from the political context of Isaiah 61 to the spiritual context of Luke for the spiritual sense was involved when Jesus declared the prophecy was fulfilled in Him.² To understand Jesus' proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" as being a demand to observe the Jubilean Year would be to violate the spiritual sense in which Luke has used Isaiah 61. This interpretation would also require that Jesus be involved in political and economic activity.³

The event which Jesus announced is not dependent on the faith of His listeners. Isaiah's prophecy would be fulfilled whether His audience believed it or not. Luke consistently taught that the kingdom of God was a future event (Lk. 19:11; 21:31; Acts 1:16) but its saving effects were already operative during Jesus' ministry (Lk. 11:20).⁴ When John the Baptist questioned Jesus' works, Jesus replied with Isaiah 61 (Mt. 11:5; Lk. 7:22) showing that Isaiah 61 was being fulfilled in His ministry. Jesus' fulfillment of Isaiah 61 happened regardless of

¹Ernest Findlay Scott, The Gospel and Its Tributaries (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 56.

²Alexander Balmain Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," in Vol. 1 of Expositor's Greek New Testament, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 490.

³Cf. the following chapter for a further discussion of this subject considered in light of the Gospel records.

⁴Barker, Lane, and Michaels, The New Testament Speaks, p. 291.

His listeners' response. Therefore, "the favorable year of the Lord" must not be a demand to institute the Jubilean Year for such an understanding would make the proclamation dependent on the audience's reaction.

The Commission Described

The audience's reaction to Jesus' reading of Isaiah was that Jesus spoke οἱ λόγοι τῆς χάριτος (Lk. 4:22). While this phrase is often interpreted to mean winsome words, it does not refer to the form of the words or the impression made but their content. It would be best to translate this phrase as "words of grace."¹ Luke uses this phrase in a technical sense with the unequivocal meaning of "message of grace" (Acts 14:3; 20:23 cf. 20:24).² Such an understanding of the phrase is in keeping with Luke's emphasis on God's grace.³

Jesus' reading was characterized as being a message of grace. To confine "the favorable year of the Lord" to a Jubilean interpretation would be to delete the salvational sense of Isaiah 61 which Jesus' audience recognized.

The Audience's Response

The audience revealed their disbelief of Jesus' message when they asked, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Lk. 4:22). The audience is pictured looking not so much at the fulfillment of the words of Isaiah

¹Hill, "The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth," p. 168.

²Ibid.

³Tannehill, "The Mission of Jesus," p. 72.

but more that Joseph's son spoke these words.¹ The audience was not antagonistic until Jesus commented that His liberation would extend beyond Israel. It is difficult to understand why Jesus wanted to offend His fellow citizens if they had not already disbelieved at the beginning of His speech. Jesus probably voiced the audience's reaction in the proverb, "Physician, heal yourself" (Lk. 4:23). But Jesus' announcement of His scope of ministry angered the parochially-minded Nazarenes.²

The Isaian quotation did not produce anything but disbelief. This is a very unexpected reaction if Jesus was demanding the observation of the Jubilean Year by His use of Isaiah. If Jesus' audience understood Him to be instituting the Jubilean Year, the poor who would have benefited from the Jubilean Year should have immediately rallied to His support while the rich should have become very antagonistic to Jesus' proclamation. But no such audience reaction occurred. Therefore, Jesus must have used "the favorable year of the Lord" in a salvational sense which did not arouse His audience to do anything but disbelieve.

¹Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I. 453.

²Hill, "The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth," pp. 168-69.

CHAPTER VIII

JUBILEAN TEACHING IN JESUS' MINISTRY

If Jesus' proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" was a demand to institute the Jubilean Year, then His instructions to the people should have included the observance of land rest, debt remittance, slave emancipation, and a redistribution of capital. The underlying Jubilean teachings upon which the institution was built should also be observable in the Gospels. Otherwise, the Jubilean observance would be a legalist observance for it would be torn from the truth which it was meant to teach. On the other hand, if Jesus' proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" spoke of the age of salvation which He brought, then the Gospels need to only exhibit the Jubilean truth which is applicable to the age of salvation. A study of the Gospel evidence will be necessary before a conclusion can be reached.

Land Rest

There is no indication that Jesus demanded an observance of land rest during His ministry. However, the silence does not mean that there was not a land rest during Jesus' ministry.¹ Land rest was one Jubilean regulation which the nation observed. Josephus recorded the observance of land rest in Alexander the Great's time;² 1 Maccabees 6:49, 53 speaks

¹Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, p. 65.

²Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, XI.VIII:5-6.

of land rest in the conflict between Judas and Lysias (162 B.C.); its observance is mentioned again in the siege of the Dagon Fortress by John Hyrcanus (135-134 B.C.),¹ and in the siege of Jerusalem by Herod the Great (38-37 B.C.).²

The land rest was possible because God had promised the Israelites that He would provide their sustenance. Moses recorded that when the Israelites would ask what they were to eat on the seventh year if they did not plant or harvest, the answer to be given was that God would provide (Lev. 25:20-21). The faith to enact the Jubilean land rest and trust God to provide was the same faith which Jesus called for His listeners to exhibit. In a statement which sounded like Leviticus 25:20-21, Jesus told His listeners not to be anxious concerning food and clothing. Rather, they were to give first priority to the kingdom and then the necessities would be given to them (Mt. 6:31-33; Lk. 12:29-31). The Gospel writers saw fit to record that Jesus' disciples gave up all their visible means of livelihood in response to Jesus' call (Lk. 5:11; Mk. 10:29-30; Mt. 19:21).

There is no mention in the Gospels concerning the nation's observance of the land rest or Jesus' demand for its observance. This silence cannot be used to argue extensively, for either interpretation of "the favorable year of the Lord" since the nation did observe the land rest with regularity. But the Gospels make it clear that Jesus

¹ Ibid., XII.VIII:1-2.

² Ibid., XIV.XVI:1.

taught the principle of trusting God for provisions. It was this principle on which the land rest regulation was based.

Debt Remittance

The existence of prozbul during Jesus' time is an indication that debt remittance was practiced during His time. Prozbul was a legal formula instituted by Hillel (75 B.C.-10 A.D.) whereby a creditor could still claim his debts after the Sabbatical Year despite the prohibition against this action (Dt. 15:2).

By Hillel's time, the economic life of the Israelites was becoming more complex. An agricultural-business economy had replaced the strictly agricultural economy of Moses' time. Business transaction debts could not be cancelled fairly because they belonged to a different category than agricultural debts.¹

Hillel observed that the Israelites refused to give loans near the end of each Sabbatical cycle for the closer the Sabbatical Year came, the more the one who loaned had to fear of losing his loan. Since this harmed the poor who needed money for seed, implements, and basics, Hillel created the legal fiction of prozbul. He wrote that a loan secured by prozbul was not to be cancelled by the seventh year. He argued that since the people refrained from giving loans to one another, they had transgressed the command of the Torah "Beware, lest there be a base thought in your heart (Dt. 15:9)."² Hillel's legal fiction was

¹Philip Birnbaum, A Book of Jewish Concepts (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1964), p. 619.

²"Shev'it 10:3," The Mishnah, selected and translated by Eugene J. Lipman (New York: Viking Press, 1973), p. 57.

accepted even though it circumvented a Torah law because it was couched in consistent language, it was justified by a Torah law, and it was required by religious ethics.¹

Debts, which were delivered to the court before the intervention of the Sabbatical Year, were not affected by the Sabbatical observance. Prozbul entrusted the court with the debt collection. Without handing over the bond to the court as previously required, the creditor could secure his debt against forfeiture by making the prescribed declaration.² The declaration "I affirm to you ___ and ___, the judges in ___, that regarding any debt due me, I shall collect it whenever I wish" was signed by witnesses or the judges of the court before whom the declaration was made.³ The court could collect the debt because the words "your brother" (Dt. 15:2) suggested an individual relationship which did not apply to the court for it was a corporate body.⁴

Luke 6:34-35 and Matthew 5:25-26 can be understood as a reference to the Prozbul practice. Jesus' teaching in Luke 6:34-35 specified that His disciples should not take their debtor to court for an exact repayment. Matthew 5:25-26 is set in the context of peacemaking (Mt. 5:21-26). Expounding on the fifth commandment, Jesus exhorted His disciples to peacemaking by controlling their anger (Mt. 5:21-22), by reconciling their offenses (Mt. 5:23-24), and by promptly paying their

¹ Ibid.

² Aaron Rothkoff, "Prozbul," Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 13 (Jerusalem: MacMillan Company, 1971), p. 1182.

³ "Shev'it 10:4," The Mishnah, p. 57.

⁴ Rothkoff, "Prozbul," p. 1182.

debts (Mt. 5:25-26).¹ Because Jesus was commenting on the fifth commandment concerning murder and not the seventh commandment which deals with stealing, Matthew 5:25-26 is unduly narrowed when it is only applied to money disputes.² In fact, Jesus used this same illustration in Luke 12:57-59, not to illustrate reconciliation between men but to illustrate Israel's necessary reconciliation with God. Israel was the insolvent debtor with one final chance of escaping the legal penalties who must be reconciled with God.³

Luke 6:34-35 and Matthew 5:25-26 reveal that Jesus must have known the prozbul practice. Although He did specify that His disciples should not go to court to obtain an exact repayment, nowhere in the Gospels did He explicitly denounce this practice which circumvented a Jubilean requirement. Jesus' silence on this issue is strange if He were demanding the Jubilean observance in His ministry.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He included in His prayer a teaching concerning the forgiveness of debts. The disciples were to forgive the debts which were owed to them (Mt. 6:12; Lk. 11:4). In expressing this teaching, Jesus used a rigorous equation which is found in the Jubilean law. As on the beginning day of the Jubilean Year when everyone was forgiven by God so that they were to forgive their

¹M. D. Goulder, Midrash and Lection in Matthew (London: SPCK, 1974), p. 258.

²R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Matthew's Gospel (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing Company, 1964), p. 223.

³W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, Matthew in vol. 26 of The Anchor Bible (42 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1974), p. 62.

fellowmen, so Jesus taught that His disciples could not expect God's forgiveness if they did not show forgiveness to their fellowmen.¹

The Septuagint translation used **ὀφείλημα** to speak of a debt to an exchequer (Dt. 24:10; 1 Macc. 15:8). **ἄφειναι** is a corresponding term for the creditor remitting the debt.² Matthew recorded Jesus' prayer as "Forgive (**ἄφες**) us our debts (**ὀφείλημα**) as we also have forgiven (**ἀφήκαμεν**) our debtors (**ὀφειλέταις**)." Luke recorded Jesus' prayer with a variation. Luke replaced the first **ὀφείλημα** with **ἁμαρτία** so that the prayer reads "Forgive (**ἄφες**) us our sins (**ἁμαρτία**) for we also forgive (**ἀφίομεν**) everyone who sins (**ὀφείλοντι**) against us." Both writers maintained that the **ὀφείλημα** of others needed to be forgiven. But Luke has replaced the Hebrew understanding of the relationship between God and man expressed by **ὀφείλημα** with **ἁμαρτία**. The ethical and religious sense of **ἁμαρτία** is equivalent to **ὀφείλημα** but the Greeks did not understand the Hebrew's ethical and religious usage of **ὀφείλημα**.³

Certainly material debts would be included in Jesus' teaching expressed in his prayer. But material debts alone are too narrow for a New Testament understanding of this term. Jesus' commentary on his prayer (Mt. 6:14-15) reflects this fact. Matthew has recorded a word change from **ὀφείλημα** to **παραπτώμα**. This word is used of the

¹Trocme, Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution, pp. 42-43.

²Charles F. Fensham, "The Legal Background of Matthew 6:12," Novem Testament 4 (1960), 1-2. Also, Friedrich Hauck, "ὀφείλημα," TDNT, Vol. V, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 559-66.

³Hauck, "ὀφείλημα," pp. 559-66.

God-to-man as well as the man-to-man relationship (Mt. 6:14-15; Mk. 11:25). Its difference from ἀμάρτημα is in the figure it presents rather than force.¹

Forgiveness for fellowman is to grow out of God's forgiveness of the individual (Mt. 18:23-35). Prompted by gratitude, the forgiven individual must always forgive the one who has sinned against him. While this Jubilean principle is obvious in Jesus' parable on forgiveness, there is no evidence in the parable which would place it into a Jubilean observance.

Slave Emancipation

The Jubilean slave emancipation was connected to the debt remittance for the Jubilean emancipated slaves were in slavery due to their debt. When their debt was remitted by the Jubilean Year, the reason for their slavery was gone.

Credit slavery was in operation during Jesus' time.² Jesus was familiar enough with the practice of credit slavery to use it in parabolic teaching (Lk. 7:40-43; Mt. 18:25-34). But nowhere in the Gospels did Jesus command His hearers to release their credit slaves.

Redistribution of Capital

Jesus clearly demanded the redistribution of capital in His teaching. He demanded the redistribution of capital from the rich who would be His disciples (Lk. 18:22-23; Mt. 19:21) and from His own

¹Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 485.

²Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus, trans. by F. H. and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 313.

disciples (Lk. 12:32-34). This demand of Jesus is the most forceful argument for the Jubilean observance in Jesus' ministry.

Observations on the Regulations

Jesus taught the Jubilean principles of trusting God for life's necessities and of forgiving one's fellowman because God had forgiven men. But there is no hint given by the Gospel records that these teachings of Jesus were to be confined only to one year of His ministry. Rather, the impression given by the Gospel writers is that the entire life of a disciple is to be characterized by trusting God and forgiving one's fellowman.

If Jesus were demanding the Jubilean observance when He proclaimed "the favorable year of the Lord," He would have been demanding the economical and social upset of His society. The wealthy segment of Israel would have resisted such a rearrangement. But the small proportion of the Gospels which deal with Jesus' Jubilean teachings shows no such resistance.

The recorded words of Jesus did not refer to the observance of the two Jubilean regulations of land rest and slave emancipation. Even more astounding is the fact that Jesus' teachings revealed an awareness of credit slavery and the prozbul practice, yet Jesus did not demand the abolition of either during His ministry.

Because the proportion of the Gospel records which are devoted to the obvious Jubilean principles and regulations is so small, Jesus' proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" must be understood in another way than a demand for the Jubilean observance.

CHAPTER IX

JUBILEAN TEACHING IN THIS AGE

Having concluded that the proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord" did not refer to one year in Jesus' ministry, to what time did the proclamation refer?

The Time of the Favorable Year

In 2 Corinthians 6:2, the Apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 49:8. Isaiah 49:8 makes the favorable year synonymous with salvation's day.¹ Paul, commenting on Isaiah 49:8, said that now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). The equation which Paul has set forth is that the time of God's favor equals the day of salvation.²

The beginning of "the favorable year of the Lord" started with Jesus' public ministry. It was at this time that He proclaimed "the favorable year of the Lord" while bringing salvation to the people through His preaching of good news to the poor and proclaiming freedom for the prisoners, sight for the blind, and release for the oppressed (Lk. 4:18).³ According to Paul, "the favorable year of the Lord" will continue during this age of salvation.

¹Cf. Chapter IV, p. 16 for a previous discussion of this verse.

²R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of 1 and 2 Corinthians (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), p. 1060.

³Cf. Chapter VII, pp. 34-42 for previous discussion of the verse.

The Characteristics of the Favorable Year

"The favorable year of the Lord" is an allusion to the Jubilean Year. Jubilee was observed in a historical context. But since Jubilee is a picture of the present age of salvation, there is a move from the physical aspect of the institution's observance to the spiritual aspect which it pictures. This fact allows a leeway in interpreting the Jubilean application to this present age. One need not expect all the physical details of the Jubilean observation to be applied to the spiritual situation of the present age. Only the details which were not considered in the preceding chapter will be examined here.

Regulations of Jubilee

Land rest

The belief which brings salvation causes the believer to enter into God's rest (Heb. 4:1-3). The one who enters God's rest rests from his own work (Heb. 4:10). The Sabbath Day institution was a picture of God's rest. The author of Hebrews wrote with the Sabbath Day institution in view rather than the Sabbatical Year institution, but both institutions were concerned with rest. Josephus clarified this thought when he mentioned that the Jews observed rest on the Sabbath Year as they did every seventh day.¹ Therefore, the land rest of the Jubilee Year could be a picture of the rest from works which salvation brings.

Debt Remittance

Jesus taught His disciples that they were to forgive the debts

¹ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, XIII.VIII:1.

which were owed to them (Mt. 6:12; Lk. 11:4).¹ As in Jubilee, forgiveness for fellowmen is to grow out of God's forgiveness of the individual. The individual who is forgiven by God must forgive his fellowman who has sinned against him (Mt. 18:23-35). The Apostle Paul has clearly stated the same equation in his writings. Paul wrote, "Forgive each other just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:32) and "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:13).

Slavery emancipation

Just as debt remittance and slavery emancipation were inseparably connected in the Jubilean law, so Jesus connected them in His parable on forgiveness (Mt. 18:23-35). In the parable, debt remittance is forgiveness. Therefore, the one who is forgiven must be the emancipated slave.

Redistribution of capital

Jesus' demand for His followers to redistribute their capital to the needy (Lk. 12:32-34) is found in the New Testament examples and epistles. The early church shared their possessions (Acts 4:32) and gave to the needy according to their ability (Acts 11:29-30). The epistle writers commanded their readers to give to the needy (Acts 20:45; Rom. 12:20; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7; Eph. 4:28; Jas. 2:16; 1 Jn. 3:17).

¹Cf. Chapter VIII, pp. 48-52 for a previous discussion on the nature of these debts.

Principles of Jubilee

Two principles of Jubilee are to be evident during this age of salvation. The principles are a trust in God's providence and forgiveness to one's fellowmen because of God's forgiveness.

Trust in God's Providence

Jubilee could be practiced because God promised the Israelites that He would provide. Jesus told His hearers to trust God's providence in the priorities of their lives. Jesus' hearers were to seek the kingdom and His righteousness first, then God would provide for their necessities (Mt. 6:31-33; Lk. 12:29-31). Paul stressed the same principle in the context of giving. "Give cheerfully and God is able to make all grace abound to you so that . . . having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8) was Paul's admonition to the Corinthians. When the Philippians had given to Paul's needs, he included the same principle in his letter of thanks when he wrote "My God will meet all your needs" (Phil. 4:19).

A Merciful Disposition

The merciful disposition which God showed to the Israelites by liberating them from the Egyptian oppression was to be the Israelites disposition toward their oppressed and poor fellow-countrymen. This principle has already been dealt with in the interpretation of the Jubilean debt remittance for this age. The same Jubilean principle applies to this age though expressed slightly differently. The command for this age is forgive as the Lord forgave you (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32; Mt. 6:12; Lk. 11:4; Mt. 18:23-35). The change from mercy to forgiveness is

appropriate as one moves from the mercy of the Old Testament age to the forgiveness of this age of salvation.

CONCLUSION

The Gospels have left a record of Jesus' ministry, but the nature of Jesus' ministry is significantly altered by the interpretation of His proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord." If Jesus were demanding the observation of Jubilee when He proclaimed "the favorable year of the Lord," then His ministry had a special emphasis on social justice. If Jesus was proclaiming the age of salvation which He brought, then His ministry was primarily spiritual with social justice being a secondary aspect of His ministry.

Nowhere in the Gospels did Jesus demand the Jubilean regulations of land rest or slave emancipation to be observed. Neither did He speak against the practice of prozbul or credit slavery. Even more astounding is the small proportion of Jubilean teachings in the Gospels. The additional observation that the poor did not rally to Jesus' cause when He proclaimed "the favorable year of the Lord" weighs against the Jubilean observation interpretation of this phrase.

Luke has imported Isaiah's commission to his record. In its New Testament context, the commission has salvational significance, including the proclamation of "the favorable year of the Lord." When Jesus proclaimed "the favorable year of the Lord," He was proclaiming an age of salvation which was prefigured by the Jubilean institution. In this new age, men were to enter God's rest and trust God's providence, while forgiving their fellowmen as God had forgiven them and sharing with the less fortunate.

Jesus' ministry is an example for Christian ministry. Jesus' priority of ministry was a salvational priority and not a social priority. This priority of ministry must be observed in Christian ministry.

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