

CHRIST'S DECLARATION OF KINGSHIP:  
A STUDY OF JUBILEE IN LUKE 4:16ff.

by  
Timmy R. Burnett

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AUTHOR: Timmy R. Burnett  
DEGREE: Master of Theology  
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ADVISERS: Donald L. Fowler and D. Wayne Knife

One of the most significant attempts to harmonize the gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry with the present emphasis of social responsibility of believers, began with the work by André Trocmé entitled Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution. His theme was basically that Christ's primary emphasis was the peaceful revolution of the masses in order to gain social equality. In support of that thesis he and his followers have pointed to the Jubilee material present in Luke 4 with its social connotations and from that text conclude that Jesus sought the overthrow of Roman oppression and the establishment of a more just form of economic provision for the masses.

However, when the institution of Jubilee is examined in its OT context, it is discovered that while the biblical provisions of Jubilee were primarily social and economic, because of similar institutions in the ANE, it was also seen as representative of a time when a king (Messianic) would come to bring about its provisions. Not only are the documents of the ANE replete with accounts of Jubilee type releases, as evidenced by such words as anduraru, misarum, and duraru, but the documents also show that such releases were the exclusive practice of kings. This kingly practice of release as well as factors within the biblical institution of Jubilee caused it to develop a clearly discernable eschatological/Messianic significance.

With this fact in mind, it is possible to see that the text which Christ quoted in Luke 4:16ff. (i.e., Isa 61:1-2), while referring back to Jubilee legislation of Leviticus 25, was used by the prophet to bring hope to the exiles in Babylon. This hope was based on their Messianic interpretation of Jubilee for it promised the exiles a triumphant delivering Messiah who after restoring Israel to a place of preeminence before the nations would restore economic and social equality for the people.

It is only as the Messianic significance of Jubilee and Isaiah 61:1-2 is seen lying behind the socio-economic legislation that the message of Luke 4:16ff. becomes apparent. This significance explains the problems of the different records by Luke and Mark as well as the supposed dual reaction of the crowd. Ultimately, it must be realized that while social and economic import cannot be divorced from the Jubilee, the choice of Isaiah 61:1-2 bears Messianic rather than primarily political significance.

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Adviser



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	<u>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</u> , J. B. Pritchard (ed.)
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, <u>Greek-English Lexicon of the NT</u>
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <u>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</u>
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
ET	Expository Times
Ev. Q	Evangelical Quarterly
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LXX	Septuagint
NICCOT	New International Critical Commentary on the Old Testament
NT	New Testament
NTS	New Testament Studies
OT	Old Testament

TDNT     Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,  
          G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.)

TY        Texte und Untersuchungen

TWOT     Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, R. Harris,  
          G. Archer, B. Waltke (eds.)

VT        Vetus Testamentum

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most volatile questions raised for theological consideration in recent years has been the debate over the messianic consciousness of Jesus. It has been proposed by the less conservative element of biblical scholarship that Jesus never conceived of himself as the Messiah and, in fact, that office was never attributed to him even by his closest disciples until after the events of the crucifixion and resurrection. Such conclusions are the result of the repeated application of the form-critical method of interpretation. This is certainly the conclusion reached by Gunther Bornkamm, a noted student of Bultmann, when he declared, ". . . behind the doctrinal teaching concerning the Messianic secret there still dimly emerges the fact that Jesus' history was originally a non-Messianic history, which was portrayed in the light of the Messianic faith of the Church only after Easter."<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Bultmann himself denies any intention of Jesus to present himself as the expected Messiah/king of Israel. He supposes, rather, that Jesus presented himself as either a prophet or a teacher, but

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<sup>1</sup>Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, trans. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 172.

never as king. Bultmann declares, "Moreover the synoptic tradition leaves no doubt about it that Jesus' life and work measured by traditional messianic ideas was not messianic."<sup>1</sup>

It must be recognized that the primary interests of form criticism are historical and literary reconstruction. Therefore, Scripture is reduced to the level of any other piece of ancient literature and all considerations of inspiration and inerrancy are summarily abandoned. It is then possible by the use of form criticism to reject as later insertions those parts of the biblical text that fail to conform to the form-critical presupposition. That basic presupposition is nothing less than the old Liberal School rejection of anything supernatural. The rejection of any messianic consciousness in Christ is a logical extension of the school of thought whereby each tenet of religion is considered to have been developed or evolved over a long period of time. To remain consistent with such a theory of the development of Christianity, messianic awareness is said to have been an insertion made by the early church in order to make sacred texts coincide with developed theology.

Another moving force in current theological debate has been from a recently evolved school of thought whose interests are primarily the social responsibility of Christianity. This group, which has tended to shift the emphasis of salvation from responsibility toward God (i.e., faith) to

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 27.

responsibility toward mankind (i.e., moral works), has found a new impetus for its theology in a supposed social gospel of Jesus. A primary text that has come to be associated with this school of thought is Luke 4:16ff. as it has been treated by André Trocmé<sup>1</sup> and John Yoder<sup>2</sup> after him. Both of these men have noted elements of the year of Jubilee in the text of Isaiah 61:1-2 as quoted by Christ in Luke 4. Their conclusion, based on their theology, rather than exegesis, is naturally that Jesus was proclaiming an economically oriented and politically motivated Jubilee. This type of Jubilee in the context of the Roman occupation of Jesus' day, would have been equivalent to a political revolution in the interest of social equality. As will be demonstrated, while the socio-economic impact of the establishment of the Messianic kingdom cannot be denied, the primary significance behind the use of the Jubilee text was royal and therefore Messianic. The social and economic aspects then are to be regarded as the result of the rule of a just king, not the motivation for the declaration of Jubilee.

It is sincerely felt that an exegetical investigation of Luke 4:16ff., when based upon a literal, historical, grammatical, hermeneutic, will demonstrate that there

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<sup>1</sup>André Trocmé, Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution, trans., Michael H. Shank and Marlin E. Miller (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973).

<sup>2</sup>John H. Yoder, The Politics of Jesus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

was a messianic consciousness present in the ministry of Jesus. Further, there was, among the people to whom Jesus ministered, a messianic expectation. In like manner, it will serve to demonstrate that Christ rather formally declared that the messianic expectation could cease, for it was now fulfilled in him. Finally, it will be seen that the social and economic aspects of Jubilee are only present as the physical benefits of the coming of the eschatological kingdom promised in Isaiah 61 and foreshadowed in the institution of Jubilee.

The question that must be considered then is, "Did Christ declare a year of Jubilee in the synagogue at Nazareth?" If not, what are the implications of his quotation in Luke 4 of Isaiah 61:1-2? This investigation must of necessity proceed along three lines. It is necessary first to acquire a basic understanding of the biblical institution of Jubilee, along with its parallel occurrence in the ANE, and its implications to Jewish eschatology. Next an in-depth study of the text and significance of Isaiah 61 must be accomplished in order to discover its value as sermon material for Jesus when he visited Nazareth. Finally, an exegesis and exposition of Luke 4 in the light of both Jubilee and Isaiah 61 will be attempted. This approach, while preserving the integrity of the OT texts, will reflect an equally high view of the gospel account.



Not only are the questions of the significance of Jubilee and the messianic consciousness of Christ addressed, but this study has yielded discussion on several interesting side-issues of the Nazareth event as well. One point of attack against the reliability of Luke's historical accuracy has been the divergent rendering of chronology and detail of his Nazareth episode when compared with the record given by Mark. This problem is addressed and answered as are the questions, "Why did Jesus stop reading after 'favorable year of the Lord'?" and "Why does Luke record two different reactions of the crowd to Jesus' sermon?"

As a matter of methodology, it should be noted that by virtue of the diversity of subjects under discussion, there are some topics that do not fall neatly within the confines of either one major topic or the other, but tend to overlap somewhat. It has been general practice in this study to treat those areas in the order of their first mention, though in some cases there is divergence.

## CHAPTER II

### JUBILEE

There is probably no one proper starting point for the discussion of this thesis. However the institution of Jubilee as it occurred in the biblical text as well as in the ANE is highly significant as background material necessary to understanding Luke 4:16ff. In light of this fact, it is with the biblical institution of Jubilee that examination of the subject must begin.

#### Jubilee as it Occurred in Ancient Israel

##### Definition

The year of Jubilee was an institution commanded by God and recorded by Moses in Leviticus 25:8ff. Under the provisions of that institution, social and economic regulations were to be enforced that served to balance the overall economy of the land and effectively limited the establishment of either a ruling class or an extremely impoverished class.

The year of the Jubilee was to begin on the tenth day of the seventh month, which is the Day of Atonement. The proclamation of its arrival was accomplished by the sounding of the ram's horn. This blast of the ram's horn

marked the beginning of a series of economic changes and social upheavals, which in some respects were unique to the nation of Israel. The provisions of Jubilee, as it is found in the biblical narrative, are delineated further in the next section of this chapter.

The name jubilee is derived from the Hebrew יָבֵל. The true etymology of this word, and thus the origin of its meaning, is somewhat obscure. It is quite likely that the noun form as it appears in Leviticus 25:10 is derived from the root יָבַל meaning, to bring, carry, lead, or conduct.<sup>1</sup> Others, however, prefer a supposed connection with the Phoenecian word *ybl*, meaning ram.<sup>2</sup> This idea seems to be supported by the use of the שׁוֹפָר (another Hebrew word meaning a ram's horn) in the same context. Alexander proposes that it is possible that both roots may be carried into the true sense of יָבֵל so that the ram's horn is used to bring in (or announce) that special year.<sup>3</sup> There are several other ideas as to the origin of יָבֵל, but it must suffice to say that none is conclusive and little is gained by their enumeration here. Nonetheless, it is the general concensus among current scholars that the root must in some way derive from the ram's horn, as just discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> BDB, pp. 384-85.

<sup>2</sup> TWOT, s.v. "yōbel," by Ralph H. Alexander, pp. 358-59.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

### Occurrence

One of the most debated questions concerning the biblical Jubilee is its frequency of occurrence, although the text of Scripture seems quite clear that the year should begin on the Day of Atonement after the counting of  $\text{אַרְבָּעִים וְתֵשַׁע}$  (i.e., forty-nine years, Leviticus 25:8). The text is even more explicit in Leviticus 25:11 when it declares, "You shall have  $\text{הַשָּׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁים}$  (this fiftieth year) for a Jubilee."

Despite the clear instructions concerning the counting of years and Sabbath years in order to determine the time of the Jubilee year, there is evidence that reflects significant variation in actual practice. There appears to have been two basic methods of determination of Jubilee, with the result that some determine Jubilee to have been concurrent with the seventh Sabbath year and thus occurring in the forty-ninth year, while others place Jubilee after the seventh Sabbath year in the fiftieth year. The evidence for both methods of determination is considerable. It seems apparent that the Jewish scholars originally thought Jubilee should take place during the fiftieth year so that it followed the seventh Sabbath year without interruption.<sup>1</sup> However, it is clear that with the cessation of the practice of Jubilee after the First Temple

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<sup>1</sup>Robert North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, *Analecta Biblica* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1954), pp. 87-95.

period (if it was ever practiced at all) and at least by the latter part of the intertestamental period, the designation of Jubilee had become concurrent with the dating of the seventh Sabbath year. Thus, a Jubilee was regarded as taking place once every forty-nine years. This seems to have been the thought of the Book of Jubilees which delineates the 127 years of Sarah's life as consisting of "two Jubilees, four heptads, and one year."<sup>1</sup> This system of measurement is observed continuously in the Book of Jubilees and is seen regularly in the later works of Josephus. However, regarding Josephus' reliability, North remarks, "He complicates the land-restoration by a puzzling system of calculations which seems in some cases to leave the secondary holder in possession."<sup>2</sup> The ultimate value of his counting system as evaluated by North is ". . . inconsistent and unreliable . . . ."<sup>3</sup> The conclusion to which one ultimately is forced is that there is simply too little evidence of an established and regularly practiced Jubilee to speak with confidence on the issue.

#### Provisions and Intentions

You are also to count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years. You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement

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<sup>1</sup>R. H. Charles, The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis (London: Black, 1902), 19:7.

<sup>2</sup>North, Sociology, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

you shall sound a horn through all your land. You shall consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee: you shall not sow nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. On this year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his own property (Lev 25:18-31).

And if a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner with you, until the year of jubilee. He shall then go out from you, he and his sons with him, and shall go back to his family, that he may return to the property of his forefathers. For they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold in a slave sale. You shall not rule over him with severity, but are to revere your God (Lev 25:39-43).

Even if he is not redeemed by this means, he shall still go out in the year of Jubilee, he and his sons with him (Lev 25:54).

It should be evident from the biblical narrative above that the provisions of the Jubilee institution are basically four-fold. (1) The primary provision established in the jubiliary code is the return of all property to its original owner or his family. That owner was naturally determined upon the original divisions made by Moses in Numbers 34:16-29 and confirmed by Joshua in Joshua 13:1ff.

This regulation served to provide a means whereby one always maintained possession of inherited land no matter to what depths his financial status fell. Therefore, should a Jew find it necessary to sell his lands because of mounting indebtedness, nevertheless, at the time of the Jubilee year he resumed ownership of that land with no further

financial obligation. In one respect, such sales were rather more like leases than outright sales, for the purchase price was to be determined upon the number of harvest times available to the new owner before the next upcoming Jubilee.

The code also allows for the possibility that the owner might recover sufficiently financially to be able to buy back his own land prior to the Jubilee year. Should that situation arise, once again the purchase price was based on the number of harvests available before the next Jubilee. Should the original owner not be able to repurchase his land at all, the code also allowed for his relative or kinsman (גִּזְרִי) to purchase the land in his stead. This act is referred to as redemption or גְּאֻלָּה. Should neither of these two eventualities come to pass, the land was still to revert to the original owner at the proclamation of Jubilee.

This regulation was of primary economic significance for the nation of Israel as it provided a balance against the accumulation of large amounts of land and the eventual impoverishment of the majority of the people. Properly implemented, this regulation would have promoted a classless society in Israel<sup>1</sup> and thereby served to keep the sense of unity for which the nation is known.

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<sup>1</sup>An excellent treatment of the possible economic effects of the implementation of the jubiliary regulations can be found in Stephen H. Bess, "Systems of Land Tenure in Ancient Israel" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1963), pp. 123-24.

Another significant reason that the people of Israel were not free to sell their land permanently is that, in a theological sense, they never really owned it. One must remember that the land of Canaan, in which the nation dwelt, was a gift given to them by Yahweh. This very fact is called to their remembrance in Leviticus 25:38, for God declares, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God." It is upon this very fact, then, that the inalienability of the land was predicated. This fact can be declared no more clearly than in 25:23 when the Lord says, "The Land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently for the land is mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with me."

(2) Another of the major provisions of the jubilee code is the release of all Jewish slaves at the occurrence of each Jubilee year. This regulation concerns the plight of those Jews who, out of financial necessity, were forced to sell themselves into servitude. Just as the land was not to be sold permanently, neither was the freedom of God's chosen people. The terms of indenture as well as pre-jubilee redemption were quite similar to that provided for property. Not at all unlike the land in which they lived, the people of Israel were possessions of Yahweh. As his servants they could not legitimately belong to any other.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>R. B. Sloan, Jr., The Favorable Year of the Lord (Austin, TX: Schola Press, 1977), p. 7.



(3) Although not explicitly stated, it is assumed that there is a provision for the cancellation of debts involved in the jubilar regulations. This is most clearly seen as a provision of the Sabbath regulations given in Exodus 21:2-6 and Deuteronomy 15:12-18. If the Jubilee year is conceived of as a Sabbath year of Sabbath years (i.e., seven groups of seven years as in 25:8) then certainly an extended regulation of Sabbath would be in force here. There is no small debate over whether the Jubilee year took place on the forty-ninth year (concurrent with the Sabbath year) or on the fiftieth year (following the Sabbath year). If, in fact, the Jubilee was concurrent with the Sabbath year, it is understandable that the regulation was not repeated. However, if the Jubilee year had followed the Sabbath year, the slaves would have been released the year previously and the regulation would have been uncalled for. One should recognize at this point, also, that to return the land to its original owners without some prior form of debt cancellation would have been superfluous.

(4) The fourth and most unique provision of the biblical Jubilee code is the command that the land not be tilled, planted, nor harvested for the duration of the Jubilee year. Yahweh promised an abundant crop during the sixth year to see the people through until the time of the harvest after Jubilee. This provision of sustenance from the hand of God would serve to remind the nation of the power of their God and the Sabbath year of Sabbath years

once again pointed to God's own Sabbath rest after his completion of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

### Jubilee as it Occurred in the

#### Ancient Near East

The fact that there existed parallels to the biblical Jubilee in other parts of the ANE can hardly be contested. Although the parallels are rough and the intentions and practices vary from time to time, yet the concept appears to have been the same. The validity of the existence of such parallels is demonstrated in a number of ways such as etymological proofs as well as actual historical occurrences. These are examined in some degree of detail in the following sections.

#### Etymological Considerations

Although little is gained by consideration of the name of Jubilee (יִבְלֵי), as was noted earlier, there is considerable contrast when the word דָּרֹר is examined. This word is found in the phrase of Leviticus 25:10 that declares, "You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the Land . . . ." The word דָּרֹר is the word translated release. It embodies totally the concept behind the Jubilee as it is found in both biblical and ancient Near Eastern documents.

BDB traces the word to the verbal form דָּרַר meaning to flow abundantly, and from that idea of a free-flowing

stream develops the idea of running free and thus liberty.<sup>1</sup> Such assumptions are not without precedent when one considers the etymological relationship of דָּרַר to the Neo-Assyrian word duraru and the Akkadian cognate anduraru. As Julius Lewy has effectively demonstrated, these words in their infinitive construction all describe some kind of movement.<sup>2</sup> This effectively demonstrates the possibility of such an origin in the case of biblical דָּרַר. In this connection it must be noted further that there is general agreement among current scholars that Hebrew דָּרַר and Akkadian anduraru certainly share a common etymological basis. Lewy demonstrates the probable connection in the following manner, based on generalizations concerning na and an prefixes found in the Ethiopic language.

Since the a of the an- prefix of these perfect forms can safely be regarded as prosthetic, it is reasonable to apply the evidence provided by the Ethiopic data just recalled to Akkadian, and accordingly, to define the prefix an-, by which anduraru is distinguished from its synonym duraru as a variant of the na- prefix

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<sup>1</sup>BDB, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup>Julius Lewy, "The Biblical Institution Ḏor in the Light of Akkadian Documents," Eretz Israel, V, 1958, p. 22. In this work Lewy goes to some lengths to demonstrate the concept of movement found in infinitives of this type. This certainly aids in the realization that the basic idea of דָּרַר must have been as delineated in Lewy and BDB rather than the older ideas of Delitzsch who attributed the source to an Akkadian verb doraru meaning to be strong, to be independent, or to be free. For further discussion see Frederick Delitzsch, Prolegomena in es neuen Hebraisch-Aramaischen Wörterbuchs zum Alten Testament, Leipzig, N.P., 1886, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>N. P. Lemche, "Andurārum and Mīšarum Comments on the Problem of Social Edicts and Their Application in the Ancient Near East," JNES 38, 1979, p. 22.

of the infinitive nadarruru. Hence the typical prefixes of these Akkadian terms supplement the evidence furnished by the Arabic lexicon from which we conclude that the root d--r--r expresses the notion "to move about," "to run away," "to be at large," "to be free."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is recognized that duraru, anduraru and biblical דָּרַר all stem from the same root, and the most central or common idea is that of moving about or freedom to move about. From this etymological vantage point, it is not difficult to see how דָּרַר came to refer to liberty, setting at liberty, or release.

There is one biblical occurrence of the word which does not refer to the jubiliary release. In Exodus 30:23 mention is made of מֶרְדָּר or myrrh of flowing. The verse speaks of myrrh, that fragrant spice which is found flowing from the injured bark of the commiphora myrrha.<sup>2</sup> Once again the idea of movement is inherent in the very nature of the word.

In all other biblical instances of דָּרַר, the more technical sense of release with reference to the Jubilee year seems to be in view. The first of these instances is Isaiah 61:1 which will be examined more closely in the following chapter. A second, but equally important, instance of the use of דָּרַר is found in Jeremiah 34:8, 15 and 17. This reference is set during the reign of Zedekiah when Jerusalem was under Babylonian siege (ca. 587 B.C.).

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<sup>1</sup>Lewy, "D<sup>e</sup>ror," p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, s.v., "Plants," by John L. Leedy.

During this time of siege, Zedekiah made a covenant with the people and proclaimed a release of the slaves. However, during a brief respite from the siege, the people reverted to their former hardness of heart and took back their slaves. Because of their hypocrisy, Jeremiah declared that the people would be released to the sword. The not so subtle use of irony by the prophet boldly pointed out that the nature of the coming release for the hypocrites was not unlike the release they had given their own slaves.

Jeremiah's promise of a release to the sword stood in stark contrast to the release that the people had come to expect. As will be demonstrated later, because of the kingly implications of the jubilee institution, the people of Israel clearly saw their present jubilee system as indicative of a future time of socio-economic abundance complete with the Messianic king. In that light then the release would have been equivalent to a Messianic deliverance both from impending captivity by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar as well as from the accompanying economic hardship.

A closer examination of the text of Jeremiah 34 will serve to reinforce this hypothesis. It should be noted that at the time of Jeremiah's first message to Zedekiah, the city of Jerusalem was under siege by the armies of Babylon (34:1). It is further noted that the message of the prophet demanded a demonstration of covenant loyalty in the form of a declaration of release (לָקְחָם דְּרֹר) (לְקִרְאָה). That the people had failed to keep their covenant

responsibilities is evident from the terminology used by Jeremiah when he gave the pronouncement of their impending doom. Verse 13 declares (אֲנִכִּי כָרַתִּי בְרִית) "I cut a covenant," and verse 18 likewise mentions (הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתוּ לִפְנֵי) "the covenant which they cut before me." Jeremiah's message then was one of covenant responsibility.

The people under the direction of Zedekiah responded to Jeremiah's message with the required demonstration of loyalty to the covenant of Yahweh in the hope of a Messianic deliverance from their impending conquest. When eventually it had become clear that God had provided deliverance for the people (vs. 21) without providing the expected Messiah, the people again responded in typical Israelite fashion by revoking their announced jubilee and taking back their slaves. It is, therefore, essential to the understanding of Zedekiah's release in Jeremiah 34 that one recognize the Messianic significance of the Jubilee institution. This subject will be discussed in considerable detail in the next major section of this study beginning on page 30.

The final instance of דָּרֹר in the biblical narrative is found in Ezekiel 46:17. In this text is discussed the right of a certain prince to make gifts of parts of his lands. Here it is declared that this prince may make such gifts to his sons and it shall remain theirs, as it was theirs by right of inheritance anyway. But this same prince may only make gifts of like disposition to his servants until the year of release, שְׁנַת הַדָּרֹר, when the gift shall

return to his possession, as it was previously. The intent of the release was obviously the same here as in Leviticus 25. There is a clear injunction against the permanent disposition of inherited lands.

### Cross-Cultural Considerations

Not only does there exist similar terminology for the ideas of liberty or freedom in various parts of the ANE but there are also similar occurrences of a general release of debts, lands, and slaves. The institution of release is in fact rather common and the practices and provisions are remarkably like those recorded in Leviticus 25. Some of these parallels will now be examined.

### Hana

The Akkadian documents of the Old Babylonian Period are most instructive concerning the fact of release during that era. As Julius Lewy has demonstrated, no less than four of the texts from the ancient kingdom of Hana deal directly with the disposition of inherited properties, and further, in so doing actually use the word anduraru which was earlier demonstrated to be synonymous with duraru and the biblical counterpart דָּרַר.<sup>1</sup>

Without doubt the most definitive work detailing the relationship of the Hana documents to biblical דָּרַר is that of Julius Lewy, which has been cited earlier.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Lewy, "D<sup>e</sup>ror," p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 23ff.

discussion that follows, therefore, is essentially his, after subjection to necessary editing and condensation.

The primary document for consideration concerns the gift of a house and the property on which it sat. The gift was given by king Isar-Lim to his servant Abihunni, the son of Kakki-Dagan. The tablet, after having named the parties involved in the transfer and providing a very detailed description of the property, records the following words.

" . . . bitum na-az/s/g-b/pu-um <sup>v</sup>ša la ba-aq-ri-im ù la an-du-ra-ri-im which we render as follows, 'The house is a possession not subject to claims not (subject) to release.'"<sup>1</sup>

The document concludes then with a mutual sanction against future claims on the property, a list of witnesses, and the date of the transaction.

It would appear that the very fact that the parties involved deemed the possibility of release so likely that a special clause was inserted to thwart its consequences, is most revealing. It seems clear that both the king and the servant recognized the gift of the house as permanent and possibly nothing would have been necessary to secure that fact, as long as the king lived. The clause was added as protection of the servant's interests should some future king declare an andurarum. In that eventuality the heirs of the king would have been the legal owners of the land once again. The insertion of this clause negated such a possibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 24.



The three remaining documents from Hana which concern the transfer of lands and use the word andurarum are almost identical to the one just discussed. The primary difference here is that the land under consideration was sold, rather than given away. It appears that, as Lewy has demonstrated, the reason these parcels of land were not subject to anduraru was that the purchasers paid the full price of the land.<sup>1</sup> Such a practice quickly brings to mind the restrictions placed on land sale in Leviticus 25:16, "In proportion to the extent of the years you shall increase its price, and in proportion to the fewness of the years, you shall diminish its price; for it is a number of crops he is selling to you." Certainly, the full value of a piece of inherited property was never to be paid in Israel. It appears that it was the general rule to purchase land in this same manner in Hana because the exception had to be clearly spelled out in the legal document. The possibility of a general release of debts and a return of inherited property to the original owners was a fact of life in the ancient kingdom of Hana.

### Nuzi

When the Nuzi documents are examined, it becomes acutely clear that the extremely large number of adoption cases are in reality a type of legal fiction designed to avert a law system prohibiting the sale of patrimonial

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

lands. The Hurrian customs attested in the Nuzi tablets appear to have been grounded in a feudal system in which the king owned all the land and each individual maintained possession by virtue of a royal decree. The possessor then could only transfer land to a male relative of his immediate family. However, by means of the adoption of the one who wished to purchase his land, a property holder could then pass the land to his legal son in exchange for some remunerative consideration.<sup>1</sup>

The idea that land was to be transferred only by means of inheritance through direct family lineage because the true owner of the land was the king is perfectly paralleled in the words of Leviticus 25:23 which states, "The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is mine." Obviously the right to possession of the land was based on the royal grant in Israel as well as in the other nations of the ANE. Although this fact does not speak directly to the issue of release it does lay the foundation upon which the idea of release developed. The idea of royal ownership of the land will become most significant when the reasons behind the inauguration of release are discussed later in this section.

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<sup>1</sup>C. J. M. Weir, "Nuzi," in Archaeology and Old Testament Studies, ed. D. Winton Thomas (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 73.

## Babylon

Possibly the most ancient evidence of a royal release and debt cancellation is provided by Alexander in his examination of documents dating to the reigns of Sumar-la-ilum, the second king of Babylon and Naram-Sin, a third millenium king of Eshnunna.<sup>1</sup> It is the thesis of this relatively brief work that certain date formulas found in documents produced during these kingly reigns contain indirect reference to a time of release from debts.

Alexander points out that "the phrases used in Old Babylonian to indicate that any document is no longer valid are: tappam hipu, 'to break the tablet' . . . In each case the figure is that of actually breaking the tablet which bears the contract."<sup>2</sup> In the instances of the kings mentioned above, the breaking of the tablet occurs in a date formulation to the effect that "such and such occurred in the year that king \_\_\_\_\_ broke the tablets." As Alexander concludes, ". . . it is probably another reference to a general cancellation of contracts . . . an event sufficiently remarkable to be used in dating . . . ." <sup>3</sup>

A second document from the reign of Naram-Sin is even more explicit, for the writer took care to note that this agreement was made after the breaking of the tablets. In this way he made it clear that this contractual agreement

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<sup>1</sup> John B. Alexander, "A Babylonian Year of Jubilee?" JBL 57 (1938):75-79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

would not be nullified by the general cancellation of debts pronounced in that year by the king Naram-Sin.

Two significant conclusions are reached concerning these records of tablet-breaking. First of all, the documents seem to point to a regal custom that corresponds, "very nearly in purpose and effect to the Hebrew 'year of jubilee.'"<sup>1</sup> And, secondly, it seems clear that there was "no definitely fixed period at the end of which there was a 'release' . . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Besides the releases that were noted by the breaking of tablets, there are a number of Babylonian kings who clearly are said to have declared andurarum sometime during their reign.<sup>3</sup> It must be remembered that andurarum is the exact cognate to biblical דָּרַר, meaning release. Further, it is noted by Bess that another term common to this same era that also refers to release is the word mīšarum. This word is actually a more general term than andurarum and could include other acts of justice than cancellation of debts and return of property. Yet, Bess

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> A. Leo Oppenheim, "Nabonidus and the Clergy of Babylon," in ANET, James B. Prichard, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 315ff. While this document does not mention the declaration of release it is significant that the terminology seems to indicate that a release will be declared by Cyrus who has displaced Nabonidus.

points out that "the two terms were often synonymous and practically interchangeable."<sup>1</sup>

With this further fact in mind, it is interesting to note that the second year (i.e., the first full year) of the reign of Hammurapi, the great Babylonian king known for his law code, is named the year "he established mīšarum in the land."<sup>2</sup> This establishment of a mīšarum clearly refers to a general establishment of justice in the land, an event of national significance by which dating of successive years could be accomplished. The kings immediately preceeding and immediately following Hammurapi are also known to have established some type of release, though Bess is careful to note that there were possibly as many as forty-eight distinct expressions that might be used to refer to the Babylonian type of release.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the concept of release from debts was common in the ANE as were the ideas of inalienability of land and royal ownership of property.

Another king who deserves individual attention is the king of Babylon's first dynasty known as Ammi-Saduqa. It is clear from studying his edicts that he declared two such releases during his lifetime. Like Hammurapi, Ammi-Saduqa declared a mīšarum during his second year, which was

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<sup>1</sup>S. H. Bess, "Systems of Land Tenure in Ancient Israel" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1963), p. 134.

<sup>2</sup>Oppenheim, ANET, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup>Bess, "Systems," p. 132.

his first full year of reign. This year was entitled the year "in which . . . the humble shepherd, who hearkened to Anu and Enlil, arose for his land like the sun and for all the people created a righteous order."<sup>1</sup> In the same manner, to his tenth year he ascribed the name, "Year in which . . . the true shepherd, the favorite of Samas and Marduk, released the debts of his land."<sup>2</sup>

A more complete understanding of the implications and implementations of Ammi-Saduqa's release is provided by examination of the document now known as the "Edict of Ammi-Saduqa." Rather than an announcement of the release, the document appears to be a commentary explaining the application of the mīšarum in various circumstances. Of particular interest in comparison to Leviticus 25 is a paragraph explaining the liberation of debt slaves and their reestablishment.<sup>3</sup> Most likely this reestablishment (anduraršū šakin) refers to the return of patrimonial lands.

The record of established releases comprises a virtual travelogue of the ANE. There are verified releases at Isin, Larsa, and Ashur, as well as those detailed above.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>F. R. Kraus, Ein Edikt des Königs Ammi-Saduqa von Babylon in *Studia et Documenta* 5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), p. 229.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Bess, "Systems," pp. 135-36.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 137-38. It should be noted that there are virtually no verifiable instances of release in the land of Palestine apart from the biblical record. Although there may be implications of release in the vocabulary at Ugarit

It seems that hardly a king allowed his reign to pass, no matter how brief, without declaring a mīšarum act. This very fact alone leads one to question the reason for such declarations of release.

There are at least two reasons that can be demonstrated as viable in the promulgation of mīšarum acts. The first appears to be a significant concern to relieve the economic pressure that gradually came to bear on the common citizens by the development of a wealthy class.<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that the frequent cancellation of debts and the return of patrimonial lands to the family of inheritance, worked a considerable effect on the economy of the nations in which such kingly acts took place. They would have of necessity limited the growth of an extremely powerful, landed aristocracy. Although the accumulation of wealth was not impossible, the accumulation of large land dynasties with the resulting large impoverished class would have been almost totally abrogated. In effect, then, for Israel, the year of Jubilee was a divinely appointed socio-economic welfare system that promoted social justice and financial viability for all. Naturally by virtue of man's corruptible nature, even the provision of Yahweh was thwarted, but the provision was made nonetheless.

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the materials for such a study are not generally available at this time.

<sup>1</sup>Richard E. Averbeck, "Laws and Collections of Laws in Ancient Mesopotamia" (paper presented in the course "Ancient Near Eastern History" at Dropsie University, 1979), p. 20.

A second reason that ancient Near Eastern kings often provided releases during their reigns was their own rather egotistical concern to demonstrate their personal worthiness before the gods. The pronouncement of mīšarum acts served as a basis upon which the king found it possible to declare his own virtue and piety.<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the law codes which grew out of the mīšarum acts, Finkelstein remarks, "Their primary purpose was to lay before the public posterity, future kings, and, above all, the gods, evidence of the king's execution of his divinely ordained mandate: to have been 'the Faithful Shepherd' and the šar mīšarum . . . ."<sup>2</sup> Thus it is seen that acts of social justice such as mīšarum, andurarum, and duraru served as a demonstration that the king was indeed a righteous ruler.

#### Conclusions Regarding Jubilee in the Ancient Near East

Having examined the phenomenon of release or jubilee as it occurred in biblical Palestine and her contemporaries about the rest of the ANE, it seems that there are a number of legitimate conclusions that may be reached.

1. Most obviously it is noted that releases of varying degrees of similarity to the biblical Jubilee occurred with considerable frequency in the ANE. When one

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Finkelstein, "Ammisaduqa's Edict and the Babylonian 'Law Codes,'" JCS 15 (1961):103.



considers that modern scholarship is four millenia removed from the actual events, it is highly likely that only a fraction of the releases that really occurred are known today.

2. One immediately becomes aware from a study of the various releases that they were always enacted by kings. No doubt there were divergent motivations that drove the royal persons to their decisions to effect mīšarum acts, but, despite these differences, the king alone was always responsible for the pronouncement.

3. All serious reflection on the subject must lead one to conclude that the basis of the king's ability to declare releases resided solely in the fact that he was sovereign owner of the land. Although the people maintained possession and inheritance rights, the king, because of his ability to yield protection and because of his close association with the gods, ultimately controlled ownership of the land.<sup>1</sup>

4. Individual acts of mīšarum served to highlight the piety and justice of the king.

5. Acts of release were not exclusively enacted at the first of the king's reign, although by virtue of the king's desire to demonstrate his justice immediately, such was often the case.

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<sup>1</sup>An excellent work demonstrating the intricate relationship between the state (i.e., king) and land ownership is afforded in Maria de J. Ellis, Agriculture and the State in Ancient Mesopotamia (Philadelphia: The Babylonian Fund, 1956).

6. While a release is not equivalent to a proclamation of kingship, it would have been necessarily construed as a thing that only a king could do. It seems quite clear that it was for this very reason that God chose to deviate from the cultural norm at this point by providing a recurring Jubilee to take place once each fifty years. As Bess has clearly stated,

. . . the fifty year cycle takes it virtually out of the hands of a king. In this respect the Jubilee was unlike the Mesopotamian releases; the fifty year interval would imply that no other king was acknowledged in Israel except Yahweh.<sup>1</sup>

While there may be other equally valid conclusions to be reaped from the study of the ancient Near Eastern materials, the ones just listed are most significant for the ensuing study of Jubilee in Luke 4. These conclusions are singularly important and will be referred to later.

#### The Eschatological Significance of Jubilee

While it can certainly not be doubted that the institution of Jubilee filled very real and immediate needs within the economy of Israel, it is equally clear that very early in the history of the nation the release came to have a secondary significance that may well have superceded the first. That secondary sense in its purest definition is eschatological. By use of the term eschatological we mean that the concept of release as it was originally established was an institution that provided for real

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<sup>1</sup>Bess, "Systems," p. 145.

physical needs, but because of certain basic thrusts of Judaism subtly took on characteristics of, or associations with, a future expectation of better conditions. For the OT Jew the expectation of better times was inextricably bound to the coming of a Messianic king. It is for that reason then that when the word eschatological occurs in this study, one must bear in mind that the term is used as it might be viewed within an OT context and does not necessarily refer to events that are yet future when viewed from the present.

That Jubilee, then, had taken on an eschatological significance by the time of the prophet Isaiah should be clearly evident by a simple reading of Isaiah 61. This passage will be discussed in more detail later, but it must suffice to say here that although the terminology of the verses themselves of necessity harken back to the jubiliary phraseology of Leviticus 25, the context itself is eschatological (i.e., Messianic).

There are a number of features about the Jubilee that belie its eschatological import. If it is assumed as demonstrated earlier that יוֹבֵל is etymologically derived from יוֹבֵל meaning a ram's horn, then this very fact becomes eschatologically significant. It is demonstrable from the story in Joshua 6 that the ram's horn was distinct from the regular trumpets, in that only the priests were allowed to blow it. The special place of honor and reserve held by the יוֹבֵל is explained by Morgenstern.

In all likelihood the "great trumpet" (Isa 27:13), a blast from which would inaugurate a new and happier era for conquered and dispersed Israel, was a יובל. All this suggests cogently that the ram's-horn trumpet was of unusual character, used only upon extraordinary occasions and for some particular purpose (cf. Ex 19:13b) . . . . This year acquired its name just because this unique, fiftieth year was ushered in by this blast upon the יובל whereas the commencement of ordinary years was signaled by a blast upon only a שופר (II Sam 15:10; cf. Lev 23:24).<sup>1</sup>

Sloan argues quite cogently that there possibly exists some indication of the theological implication of Jubilee within its close association to the Day of Atonement (Lev 25:9).<sup>2</sup> As he points out,

This day, the New Year's Day of the solar calendar, was the one day of the year upon which all Israel--through the transference of sins by Yahweh to the "scape-goat," the Mesalleh--gathered to receive expiation for all sins deliberate and indeliberate. Not only therefore does Israel on the day of jubilee announce with the ram's horn both a new calendaric and economic era, but also a time of new beginnings morally for the nation.<sup>3</sup>

It is highly significant here to note that the LXX uses the word ἄφεσις in translating the phrase לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לְעִזְאֵזֶל הַמִּדְבָּרָה rendering it ἀφήσει αὐτόν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον (Lev 16:10). The word ἄφεσις is also used by the LXX to translate דָּרַר in Leviticus 25:10 and is a significant word as used by Luke to denote forgiveness (see p. 74). While these facts in and of themselves do not necessarily cast Jubilee into the realm of the eschatological, yet they do seem to highlight the

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<sup>1</sup> IDB, s.v. "Jubilee, Year of," by Julian Morgenstern, 2:1001.

<sup>2</sup> Sloan, Favorable Year, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

aura of expectation and excitement with which the Jubilee was welcomed.

Nonetheless, the formal year of Jubilee was cast in an eschatological framework. Certainly the institution was to have been practiced and the socio-economic benefits derived therefrom, but because of its very nature as it existed in the ANE it pointed to a time of a Messianic release (see pp. 28-30).

Although it will be discussed more fully later, it is evident that the prophet Isaiah recognized an eschatological thrust to the Jubilee. His use of the Jubilee description to designate a day of release for the people of Israel most certainly must have born a message of hope to those who were even then in captivity in Babylon. His message would not necessarily have been construed as the announcement of a forthcoming Jubilee year, but most likely it would have been seen as Messianic by the captives. The prophecy would have carried an eschatological application that promised release to the captives, for by virtue of their own concept of Messianism any hope of either political independence or economic viability was directly related to the coming of their expected Messianic king.

That the concept of Jubilee was regarded as Messianic can hardly be denied. A section of the Babylonian Talmud expresses just such a Messianic thrust. These words of Elias were directed to Rabbi Yehuda, "The world has no less

than 85 jubilee-cycles, and in the last jubilee-cycle the Son of David will come."<sup>1</sup>

Of even more significance to the understanding of Christ's audience at Nazareth is a study of their cultural contemporaries at Qumran.<sup>2</sup> A fragmentary text preserved from the community of Qumran has been dated to approximately the time of Christ's public ministry in the first half of the first century A.D.<sup>3</sup> The text is known as 11Q Melchizedek. In order to facilitate the reader's own studies the text and translation of the significant lines of 11Q Melchizedek are provided below.<sup>4</sup>

Text:

- 1 ] .....יך.....[
- 2 ] ..[וא]שר אמר בשנת היר[בל הזואת תשובר איש אל אחוזתו
- 3 ]ואשר אמר שמו[ט כול בעל משה יד אשר ישה [ברעהו לוא יגוש
- את רעהו ואת אחיו כיא קרא] שמטה
- 4 ]לאל פשרו לאח[רית הימים על השבוים אשר]
- אמר[
- 5 ....מה ....י ה.... ומנחלת מלכי צדק כ[ .....המה
- ב...[מלכי צדק אשר

<sup>1</sup>North, Sociology, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>James A. Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults, ed. Jacob Neusner, Part 1, Vol. 1 of 12 (Leiden: E. S. Brill, 1975), pp. 89-92.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," JBL 86:1 (March, 1967):25.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 26-29.

- 6 ישיבמה אליהמה וקרא להמה דרר לעזוב ל[ה]מה [ולכפר] על  
 עורגותיהמה ו.....[ ]...[ ] דבר הזה
- 7 בשנת היובל האח[ר] ון אמ[ר] ש[ ] . בלי[ ] וי[ ] ום  
 (?) הכפו[ר]ים ה[וא] ה[ ].....[ ] יו[ ] בל[ה] [ע]שירי
- 8 לכפר בו על כול בני [אור ו] אנש[ ] י ג[ ] ורל מל[ ] כן[ ] צדק  
 [ ] ם עלי[המ] ה[הת] [ ] לג[ ] ותמה כיא
- 9 הואה חקק שנת הרצון למלכי צ[דק] ל[ ].. [ ] וקדושי אל  
 לממ[ש] לת משפט כאשר כתוב

## Translation:

1. [ ].....your.....[ ]
2. [ ]..[and wh]at he said, "In [this] year  
 of ju[bilee each of you will return to his posses-  
 sion"]
3. [and what he said,] "Let every creditor [re]mit the due  
 that he claims [from his neighbor; let him not dun  
 his neighbor or his brother for there is proclaimed]  
 a remission
4. [of God." Its meaning for the en]d of days concerns  
 those taken captive whom [  
 he] imprisoned
5. ...MH....Y H....and from the heritage of Melchizedek  
 K[ ] .....their BW.. [ Mel-  
 chized]ek who
6. will restore them to them, and he will *proclaim release*  
 to them, to set them (?) free [and to atone] for  
 their iniquities and .....[ ]..[ ] this  
 word.

7. In the year of the la[st] jubilee he sai[d] S[ ].  
 BLY. [ ] and [tha]t is the d[ay of Aton]ement  
 [ ].....the [t]enth [ju]bilee
8. to atone in it for all sons of [light and] men [of the  
 l]ot of Mel[chi]zedek [ ] M upon [th]em  
 HT[ ] LG[ ] JWTMH for
9. he has decreed a year of good favor for Melchize[dek]  
 L..[ ] and the holy ones of God for a re[ig]n of  
 judgment. As it is written . . .

The unifying text of 11Q Melchizedek is nothing less than Leviticus 25. Quotations from the Jubilee chapter are found in lines two (Lev 25:13), six (Lev 25:10) and nine (Lev 25:9). Further, a year of release is proclaimed in lines 3-4 and the דְּרִלָּר is announced in line 6.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that in this text the year of release has taken on a salvation context and involves atonement from iniquity. It is further interesting to note, in light of the above discussion, that the Day of Atonement is somehow related to the text. Unfortunately, line 1 of the text where this mention occurs is quite fragmented and the meaning is not clear.<sup>2</sup>

The year of release as seen by the sectaries of Qumran was comprised mainly of peace, well-being and salvation (as found in lines 16 and 19). These attributes

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill P. Miller, "Isaiah 61:1-2 in Melchizedek," JBL 88:4 (December, 1969):467.

<sup>2</sup>Fitzmyer, "Further Light," p. 29.



are assured to come to pass by virtue of a judgment to be executed by Melchizedek or someone with like heritage to his (see lines 5-6 and 13).

Of particular interest to this study is the fact that Isaiah 61:1-2 is alluded to most specifically in lines 4-6 and again in line 9. For the sectaries at Qumran then, the historical context of Isaiah's message of a Messianic release to the exiles, which was the logical extension of the Jubilee message, had become secondary to their own message of a salvific release. Such a secondary or even tertiary application to the words of Scripture are not to be unexpected in the midrashic system of interpretation practiced at Qumran. Wright explains the midrashic method of interpretation as follows.

A Midrash is a work that attempts to make a text of Scripture understandable, useful and relevant for a later generation . . . the midrash may go as far afield as it wishes provided that at some stage at least there is to be found some connection, implicit or explicit, between the biblical text and the new midrashic composition.<sup>1</sup>

The midrashic application of the Isaiah 61 passage serves, then, to reflect what might be termed their eschatological imperative. In fact, among the interpretive rules used at Qumran, Brownlee lists first the following mandate. Everything the ancient prophet wrote has a veiled,

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<sup>1</sup>Addison G. Wright, "The Literary Genre Midrash," CBQ 28 (April, 1966):137.

eschatological meaning.<sup>1</sup> To declare this the usual practice of all first century interpreters would no doubt be hazardous. Yet there does seem to be a certain mindset reflected that was common to many of that era.

The significance of 11Q Melchizedek is that it provides the first piece of conclusive evidence before A.D. 70 that the proclamation of glad tidings could be considered a significant aspect of the messianic task. Although this announcement of the reign of God cannot be said to have been a *necessary* ingredient of the messianic office, it nevertheless belonged to the spectrum of functions which the designation *mashiach* connoted in the first century A.D. The evidence provided by 11Q Melchizedek demands that the central characteristic of Jesus' earthly ministry--the proclamation of the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God--be considered a messianic function.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note, as Marshall has pointed out, that not only was Isaiah 61 used with reference to the Messiah but with reference to the Teacher of Righteousness as well.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon occurs in one of the Qumran hymns of thanksgiving commonly designated 1QH 18. The final line of this document is translated ". . . like Thy truth bringing (tidings) . . . Thy goodness, to bring good tidings to the meek, according to the abundance Thy mercies."<sup>4</sup> Although it would appear that the Teacher of

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<sup>1</sup>William H. Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation Among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls," BA 14 (September, 1951):60.

<sup>2</sup>David E. Aune, "A Note on Jesus' Messianic Consciousness and 11HQ Melchizedek," EvQ 45 (1973):165.

<sup>3</sup>I. H. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke in The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 182.

<sup>4</sup>Menahem Mansoor, ed., The Thanksgiving Hymns (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), p. 9.

Righteousness was a purely historical figure,<sup>1</sup> it would also seem that his eventual return during the time of Messiah was expected as well.<sup>2</sup> It can therefore be seen that Isaiah 61 was repeatedly used within an eschatological framework by the Essenes of Qumran.

Another of the Qumran documents that demonstrates the eschatological significance applied to the concept of Jubilee is the well known Book of Jubilees. This document is significant for two reasons. It can, first of all, be demonstrated by the fact that mention is made of the temple sacrifices, that the work must have been produced prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The best estimates are something less than 100 years before the time of Christ. Therefore, the Book of Jubilees represents an hermeneutic

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<sup>1</sup> It is most difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty the historical identity of the Teacher of Righteousness. It is possible that the title was originally that of the founder of the Essene community but that the office continued throughout the history of the sect. Further discussion of his historical identity may be found in H. H. Rowley, "4QpNahum and The Teacher of Righteousness" JBL (1956) as well as in F. M. Cross, Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, Revised, 1961).

<sup>2</sup> This proposal is supported somewhat in detail by J. M. Allegro in his article, "Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature" and is further critiqued in The Ancient Library of Qumran & Modern Biblical Studies by F. M. Cross, Jr. (pp. 225-30). Both of these materials are cited fully on the preceding pages of this manuscript.

In a rather lengthy and debated interpretation of a Qumran document known as "The Damascus Document" Allegro concludes that the Essenes anticipated the return of the Teacher of Righteousness as a priestly Messiah. The interested reader is directed to the above mentioned sources for a fuller treatment of the materials as well as the delineation of the textual evidence.

tradition that would have been active during Christ's own lifetime. Secondly, it is noted that, as the name implies, a system of counting of Jubilee periods was being maintained. Although it is not certain that the Jubilee years were being observed, they were definitely being counted. It has been well demonstrated that the calendar in use at Qumran was not the same as that which was in use by the rest of the nation,<sup>1</sup> yet the very presence of a contingency such as the Essenes of Qumran, shows that Jubilee was not forgotten in the Jewish culture.

Lest one suppose that the Jubilee was a dead issue outside the community at Qumran during the time of Christ, there are records that indicate otherwise.<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Hillel is said to have issued a prosboul authorizing a creditor to transfer to a court the right to recover a debt that might have been lost to him in the Jubilee Year. Such may well indicate that the observance of the Jubilee provisions was either already in force during this time or that there were those who desired its reinstitution.<sup>3</sup> Sloan has suggested that the crushing taxes of Herod must surely have intensified the eschatological appeal found in the release of

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Morganstern, "The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees: Its Origin and Its Character," VT 5 (1955):36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, "Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," pp. 87-88 gives a fuller treatment of the Rabbinic evidence than is afforded here.

<sup>3</sup> North, Sociology, p. 186.

jubiliary provisions.<sup>1</sup> The desire for a better existence after the manner of the words of the prophet Isaiah (61:1-2) to his readers would have been heavy on the hearts of the Jews at the time of Christ.

The question might well be raised, "How could the Jews have hoped for a reinstitution of Jubilee at this time, for they had no king?" In reply it should be remembered that a message or hope of Jubilee would have carried virtually the same message for the Jews of the Roman oppression that it did for the Jews of the Babylonian exile. It would surely have meant that the Messianic king would arise to judge the enemies of Israel and to restore social equity in the land.

It might further have been expected that had the proposed connection between Jubilee and an eschatological Messiah been relatively insignificant, then all thought of such would have disappeared with the passage of time. However, examination of the Kabbalist, Rabbi Moses ben Nahman Gerundi, or better known as Nahmanides (c. 1195-1270), reveals the following.

He compares the six days of creation with the six millenniums of the world's existence. On the sixth day, animals were created first, and then came man, the animals representing the nations of the earth to whom the Jews are subjected, and man the Messiah, man in the image of God, who will appear during the sixth millennium. The Sabbath represents the seventh millennium, when the life of the future will be inaugurated, and he considers the institutions of the Sabbatical year, the jubilee year, and the counting of Omer as other

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<sup>1</sup> Sloan, Favorable Year, p. 27, n. 60.

indications that the world will change its present form at the end of six thousand years of its existence.<sup>1</sup>

The more orthodox Kabbalists were strict followers of both the Targum and rabbinic tradition. As Nahmanides is considered representative of the conservative rabbinic tradition, it is noteworthy that he is said to count Jubilee as a significant indicator of that final stage of world history which is nothing less than the time of Messiah's reign on earth.

In summary, it must be reiterated that the institution of Jubilee had acquired an eschatological thrust at least by the time of the writers of Qumran, if not prior to the time of the writings of Isaiah. There is, within the very nature of the institution itself, the capacity for just such an eschatological interpretation. This fact is demonstrated in the name יוֹבֵל as well as in the close association with the Day of Atonement which contains elements of expectation as well as its own release from sin. That the eschatological application of Jubilee would have been known to the Pharisees addressed in Luke 4, there can be little doubt as they, like the Qumran sectaries, practiced the methods of Midrashic interpretation and would likely have known of the works of their radical brothers at Qumran. It would also seem likely that the rabbim themselves were

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<sup>1</sup> Julius H. Greenstone, The Messiah Idea in Jewish History (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1906), pp. 167-68.

familiar with an eschatological thrust within the Jubilee legislation.

## CHAPTER III

### AN EXAMINATION OF ISAIAH 61:1-2

As has been suggested on a number of occasions in the course of this study, the text from which Jesus read when he spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth was from the words of the prophet Isaiah (Lk 4:17). The text was read primarily, though not exclusively, from Isaiah 61:1-2. A small insertion into the Isaiah text appears to have been taken from Isaiah 58:6. In order to appreciate more fully Christ's use of this text, it is necessary, first to become aware of its own contextual significance.

#### Historical Context

The author of the work here under discussion began his prophetic activity during the fifty-second year of the reign of Uzziah (Isa 6:1, this was the same year Uzziah died) and continued to prophecy through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His years of ministry extended from approximately 758 to 690 B.C.

This was an era of rapid and radical political upheaval in the nation of Israel. In only ninety years Isaiah had witnessed the rise and fall of at least four kings, as well as the exile of half the empire. It was amid this turbulent time in Israel's history that the words of



Isaiah 61:1-2 were penned. They constituted words of hope to the beleaguered exiles in Babylon with the promise of a coming release. The words of the prophecy are as follows:

- (1) The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
Because the Lord has anointed me--  
To bring good news to the afflicted;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
- (2) To proclaim liberty to captives,  
And freedom to prisoners;  
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord,  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,
- (3) To grant those who mourn in Zion,  
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,  
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.  
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,  
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.
- (4) Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,  
They will raise up the former devastations,  
And they will repair the ruined cities,  
The desolations of many generations (Isa 61:1-4).

The first audience to whom these words were directed were the Jews of the Babylonian captivity.<sup>1</sup> The rebuilding indicated in the context clearly seems to indicate the return of the nation from exile.<sup>2</sup> It would further appear that this first audience would have supposed that the prophecy was exclusively directed at their plight in exile and that it promised to them a new era of justice and hope. Isaiah's reference here to the Jubilee institution is certainly to be expected if one realizes that the very basis of the Jubilee release was God's own redemption of the people of Israel

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Plummer, The Gospel According to Saint Luke, ICC (Tenth Edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> North, Sociology, p. 42.

from a prior captivity in Egypt. The Jubilee law was given to Moses at Mt. Sinai while the exodus from Egypt was still fresh on their minds. In addition, God reminded the people with three interjections in the Jubilee instructions that the law was expected to be followed because of his having redeemed them from Egypt. Those interjections were:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God (Lev 25:38).

For they are my servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt (Lev 25:42a).

For the sons of Israel are My servants; they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God (Lev 25:55).

Clearly the implication of a Jubiliary release was the device by which Isaiah intended to point out the ability of the God of Israel to bring about the physical release of the captive nation. This is the sense in which the text would have been received by the people. Such notwithstanding, however, there was another more eschatological thrust to the passage. To discern more clearly this fact a closer examination of the words of the text itself are in order.

#### Immediate Context

It is most interesting to follow the logical development of thought being expressed by Isaiah in the chapters immediately preceding sixty-one. In chapter 58, Isaiah points out that the problems that have overtaken the nation are a direct result of their own faithlessness. In the first verse of that chapter Isaiah records, ". . . Raise

up your voice like a trumpet, and declare to My people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins."

Then a glimmer of hope is extended to the people in spite of their sins, for in chapter 59, verses 1 and 2, Isaiah remarks, "Behold the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, . . ." This hope is expanded to its ultimate eschatological fulfillment in the latter part of chapter 59 (vss. 16-21) and in chapter 60 for therein is described the future glory of Zion. The eschatological nature of the chapter is no more clearly stated than in verse 14. ". . . And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; and they will call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

Yet, with all its emphasis on the glories of the coming age, one thing is obviously missing. Nowhere in the chapter is the Messianic king himself mentioned. This omission is rectified in chapter 61.<sup>1</sup> In the opening verses of this chapter the coming Messiah is introduced. It is precisely at this point that the captives of the nation who awaited a return from Babylon would have found hope for their immediate situation, for this text with its kingly connotations reminded them that one day they would have a

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<sup>1</sup>H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Isaiah, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 318.

Messianic king to free them from bondage and to restore their rightful ownership of the land of Canaan.

### The Text Itself

#### The Speaker

The immediate concern of one who reads this passage must naturally be the identity of the speaker. The two most obvious possibilities are either Isaiah himself or the Messiah. There are several reasons that it is preferable to see these words as Messianic utterances. Any reading of the passage brings sharply to focus the accomplishments that are claimed by the speaker. The nature of these accomplishments alone makes it improbable that Isaiah has spoken as himself. The list of tasks to be performed by the one who is anointed seem to be much more significant than might be expected from any human agent.<sup>1</sup>

It is to be noted that in this latter half of the book of Isaiah, the prophet is conspicuously in the background. Such a declaration of his own significance in God's program as is recorded in these verses is somewhat out of place. Although it is not impossible that these words belong to Isaiah himself, the interjection of his own commission at this point does not fit the context of the preceeding chapters as they were described above.<sup>2</sup>

In this regard also, it is highly significant that one of the purposes or tasks of this anointed one is the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

proclaiming of "the favorable year of the Lord." This is an obvious echo of Isaiah 49:8-9, which is spoken by the Lord. Another task of this anointed one that is seen to be totally within the domain of the Messiah is that of comforting those who mourn (61:2). Isaiah 49:13 records the words, "For the Lord has comforted His people." Further, the first of the suffering servant texts in Isaiah 40:1 declares, "'Comfort, O Comfort My People' says your God." The comfort spoken of here could only be accomplished by the Messiah, who was himself God.

In conclusion, it should be noted that chapters 60-62 of Isaiah contain not less than five verbatim quotations from the Suffering Servant passages found in chapters 40-55. It becomes, then, a logical contextual, and theological necessity to see Isaiah 61:1-3 as the words of the Messiah rather than the words of the prophet.<sup>1</sup> This, then becomes especially significant in light of Christ's application of the material to himself in the book of Luke.

### The Structure

In Hebrew poetry, a literary device was often employed that emphasized important thoughts by repeating them in subsequent lines using slightly different wording.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that while these words are rightfully attributed to the Lord (i.e., Messiah here) the prophet himself would in no way have disclaimed them as his own. There is somewhat of a tension present in that while the words are clearly those of a kingly redeemer yet they were the words Isaiah used to bring hope to the exiles in Babylon.

This device is known as poetic parallelism. In Isaiah 61: 1-3, there is clear and significant use of parallelism that cannot be overlooked if serious exegetical errors are to be avoided.

When the text of Isaiah 61 is examined, it is readily observable even from the English versions that poetic parallelism has been employed. The second bicolon of verse 1 opens with the following thought.

He has sent me to bear good tidings to the afflicted;  
To bind up the brokenhearted.<sup>1</sup>

The parallelisms are more evident in the Hebrew than in the English. For example:

לְבַשׁ עֲנָוִים שְׁלֵחָנִי  
לְחַבֵּשׁ לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב

It is now possible to see that the root verb שְׁלֵחָנִי is meant to govern all of the infinitives that follow.<sup>2</sup> The two infinitives, לְבַשׁ and לְחַבֵּשׁ, are then found first in the line and express similar reasons for the sending. The objects of those infinitives occur next in the colon and are likewise parallel. While עֲנָוִים and לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב are both objects of oppression, it is likely that binding up is to be regarded as an extension of the action of bearing. Therefore, this

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<sup>1</sup>This is the author's translation based upon the parallelism found in the passage. It is well within accepted Hebrew word order to attach שְׁלֵחָנִי to the first colon rather than the second as some translators, such as NASB, have done.

<sup>2</sup>Claus Westermann, Isaiah 40-66, A Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 366.

cola represents an example of synthetic parallelism, the second thought being used to extend the scope of the first.<sup>1</sup> No doubt there are more clear instances of poetic parallelism to be found, but this must serve to illustrate here. The parallels are most easily discerned by referring to the bicolon divisions already present in most poetic editions of a text, such as *Biblical Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.

In light of the above discussion, it is recognized that verses one, two and three of the text under consideration are comprised of five poetically parallel bicola. While it is evident that the poem begins with a synthetically parallel cola, it then continues with four synonymously parallel cola. There is virtually no debate over the proposed synonymous parallelism of "To proclaim liberty to captives" with "To grant those who mourn in Zion," nor of "Giving them a garland instead of ashes" with "(Giving them) the oil of gladness instead of mourning." Such is not the case with the intervening lines.

לְקַרְא שְׁנַת־רִצּוֹן לִיהוָה

יְיָ יוֹם נָקָם לְאַלְמֵינוּ

A most significant point is realized in the study of the structure of the two phrases "To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord," and "And the day of vengeance of our God." As it appears that the colon immediately preceeding, as well as the two cola following these lines are

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Nordheimer, Critical Grammar of the Hebrew Language, Vol. II (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1841), p. 322.

synonymously parallel, there is reason to believe, therefore, that the intervening lines are likewise parallel. While this supposition is certainly not binding, it does seem to be a valid possibility. Some expositors, such as Delitzsch<sup>1</sup> and Nägelsbach,<sup>2</sup> have supposed a distinction in the two simply because of the different lengths of time involved (i.e., year as opposed to day). This distinction is not tenable, however, as Isaiah on other occasions, clearly uses the words year and day in a parallel sense. The reader is referred to Isaiah 34:8 as well as Isaiah 63:4.

If this is the case, it is erroneous to assume that Christ ceased the reading of the text after the words "favorable year of the Lord" because this had been fulfilled while the words "day of vengeance of our God," were yet to come to pass. If it is correct to assume synonymous parallelism in these two lines, as this writer believes, then "the favorable year" and "the day of vengeance" must refer to one event.

The question immediately comes to mind, "Why then does Luke say that Christ stopped reading after the phrase, 'favorable year of the Lord'?" There are two possible

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<sup>1</sup>Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, vol. 2, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869) in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, Vol. XV, 1929, p. 427.

<sup>2</sup>Carl Wilhelm Edward Nägelsbach, The Prophet Isaiah, trans. Samuel T. Lowrie and Dunlop Moore, Vol. XI of the Old Testament: Containing the Prophet Isaiah in Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. Ed. John Peter Lange (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 659.



answers to this question. Either Jesus read only that portion of Isaiah's text that would have served as an introduction to the remainder of his sermon,<sup>1</sup> or Luke only recorded that portion of the text that would have brought the passage to the mind of his readers.<sup>2</sup> The practice of quoting only the opening lines of a text was not at all uncommon, as the Jews of Jesus' day did not have the advantage of chapter and verse enumeration by which they might refer to specific citations. The accepted talmudic practice was to make reference to the passage by quoting as much of the text as might be necessary to call it to the mind of one's audience.<sup>3</sup>

Although it cannot be answered with certainty whether he stopped after "favorable year of the Lord" as a use of the talmudic type reference system, or that he read more and Luke only recorded the reference, one thing can be stated with certainty. The reading was not stopped because Jesus recognized that he was the fulfillment of the first age, but not the second. In like manner, neither can the harsh reaction to his sermon be blamed on the fact that the Jews were infuriated over Christ's failure to proclaim a day of vengeance on their enemies (the Jewish concept of

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1915), p. 453.

<sup>2</sup>Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), p. 511.

<sup>3</sup>Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, p. 36.

the day of vengeance). It is clear from the parallelisms involved that all involved would have recognized the fact that the two events were one.

It is to be recognized that such is in perfect accord with Jewish Messianic tradition for only one Messianic coming was expected and that coming was one of release and restoration for Israel and retribution on her enemies.<sup>1</sup> This then becomes the key by which a proper understanding of the reaction of the crowd at Nazareth is gained.

#### The Larger Context

The larger context of Isaiah 61:1-2 involves its relationship to at least two other passages that are primary objects of study in this work. Those passages are Leviticus 25 and Luke 4:16ff. Some aspects of the relationship between Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:16ff are obvious enough, others have already been discussed, and some will be discussed in Chapter IV. Of particular interest at this point is the relationship that is said to exist between Isaiah 61:1-2 and Leviticus 25. The connection between these two texts has been alluded to already and from necessity was simply presupposed for the sake of discussion. The reason for such a supposition will be expanded here.

It has been the consensus of scholars for many years to see a connection between the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 and

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<sup>1</sup>David L. Cooper, Messiah: His Nature and Person in Messianic Series, Vol. 2 (Published by the Author, Los Angeles, CA, 1933), pp. 14-15.

Leviticus 25. Most every commentary on these verses makes reference to the Jubiliary terminology found in them.<sup>1</sup> "On what basis," it might be asked, "is this opinion formed?" The answer to this question lies within the tasks that the anointed one is called to accomplish. The strongest link between the two passages is found in the anointed one's task of "proclaiming release to the captives." The word release is the Hebrew word דָּרֹר. This word occurs in only two other passages in the OT. They are Leviticus 25:10 and Jeremiah 34:8,15,17.<sup>2</sup> In both cases the release of the Jubilee is in view. In essence, therefore, דָּרֹר has become a technical word referring to the Jubilee itself. Of lesser significance is the occurrence of the word שָׁנָה, or year. This use of the word year seems to be connected, at least in the mind of the author, with the word דָּרֹר, that clearly points back to Leviticus 25.<sup>3</sup>

It seems certain from the occurrence of jubilee in the ANE that a primary significance of the release other than its direct link to kingship, was its significance as a socio-economic event for the people of the land. That this

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<sup>1</sup>The number of commentators holding this view is far too large to enumerate here. The consensus of opinion is overwhelmingly in favor of it. A few of its proponents are Delitzsch, Lange and Young.

<sup>2</sup>Although the release of slaves as detailed in Jeremiah 34 did not satisfy all the requirements of the biblical Jubilee, yet this was the basis upon which the release was enacted.

<sup>3</sup>Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, Vol. III in NICCOT, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 459-60.

same significance (i.e., the social and economic impact) is explicit in Leviticus 25 cannot be denied. Besides the obvious economic impact of debt cancellation and return of patrimonial land, there is the repeated warning concerning personal relationships. "And you shall not wrong one another; but you shall fear your God: For I am the Lord your God" (vss. 14 and 17). Further, there is the warning, "You shall not rule over him (one another) with rigor, but shall fear your God" (vss. 43,46,53). It is interesting to note that the word translated rigor above denotes harshness, severity, or hatred<sup>1</sup> and is the same word used in Exodus 1:13 and 14 when describing the slave labor that Egypt imposed on the nation of Israel prior to the Exodus. That Israel would have understood from Leviticus 25 her own social responsibility to covenant loyalty cannot be denied. This very fact is mirrored in the previous discussion of Jeremiah 34 for here the people were condemned on the basis of covenant and they responded with a jubilar release. While it is clear that the social action had a selfish motivation, it is equally evident that the action developed from their theological concept of the necessity for social action in order to fulfill their covenant responsibility.

In return for loyalty to the covenant Leviticus 25 promised economic viability for the nation (vss. 18,19) as

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<sup>1</sup>BDB, p. 827.

well as a king who could secure it for them.<sup>1</sup> It is in this context then that Isaiah 61 may be seen as directly connected to Leviticus 25. The list of tasks that this anointed one is sent to accomplish reflect not only the kingly (Messianic) implication but the promised restoration of social and economic order as well. This emphasis on the restored social order as well as the use of the terms *דָּרֹר* and *שְׁפָתָהּ* make it abundantly clear that the exiles to whom Isaiah addressed his message would have seen it as a promise of deliverance from bondage, restoration of both social and economic equity, and the coming of the Messianic king.

#### The Socio-Political Context

It must be remembered that the words of Isaiah were not delivered into a vacuum. Much of the phraseology evident in the text under consideration was, in fact, part of a well-established kingship motif. An examination of certain texts relating to the ascension of kings demonstrates the use of terms and phrases markedly similar to those found here. For example, one may note the following citation from ANET, regarding the enthronement of Rameses IV.

O happy day: Heaven and earth rejoice,  
           for thou art the great lord of Egypt.  
 Those who had fled returned to their towns,  
           those who had hidden showed themselves again;  
 Those who had been hungry were fed,  
           those who had been thirsty were given drink;

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<sup>1</sup> This latter of course was the kingly, therefore Messianic significance attached to the Jubilee institution which was previously discussed on pages 28-30 of this text.

Those who had been naked were clad,  
     those who had been ragged were clothed in fine  
     garments;  
 Those who were in prison were set free,  
     those who were in bonds were filled with joy . . . .<sup>1</sup>

The parallels in terminology between this text and those found in Isaiah 61:1-2 should be apparent to even the most casual reader. A number of other documents from the ANE could also be used to demonstrate this fact; however, for economy's sake, such will not be done here.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, when the documents are examined, a number of characteristic statements are found to be present describing the kings of the ANE, as well as the nature of their reigns. These statements are generalized into the following four observations about the king.<sup>3</sup> (1) The reign of the king is always initiated with the blessing of the gods. (2) The subjects of the king as well as all people of the earth, rejoice because he has become king. (3) Even nature rejoices at

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<sup>1</sup> John William, "Joy at the Accession of Ramses IV" in ANET, James B. Pritchard, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 378f.

<sup>2</sup> An excellent expansion of this topic is afforded the interested reader in Sloan, Favorable Year, pp. 54-56.

<sup>3</sup> These generalizations can be seen demonstrated in the following study. Oppenheim, A. Leo, "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts: Nabonidus and the Clergy of Babylon," ANET, p. 315. This document traces the reaction of the clergy to the new King Cyrus who has displaced Nabonidus. The text after exhibiting the general characteristics listed above concludes with the following statement.

To the inhabitants of Babylon a joyful heart is given  
     now  
 They are like prisoners when the prisons are opened  
 Liberty is restored to those who were surrounded by  
     oppression  
 All rejoice to look upon him as king!

his accession and yields abundantly. (4) The poor and needy are especially blessed by his kingship because (a) often the prisons are opened and amnesty declared (this was a special blessing to those in debt slavery for the release cancelled their obligation to pay), (b) justice is established and the courts are opened to the lowly to hear their cases, and (c) the promise (is made that there will be) abundant crops sufficient for the needs of the poor.<sup>1</sup>

Isaiah 61:1-2 clearly reflects each of these four general statements about kings in the ANE, but it distinctly lists these as attributes of the eschatological (Messianic) king. The characteristic of the blessing of God is the opening statement that records, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me." Likewise the rejoicing of the poor is noted in the words, "to bring good tidings to the afflicted . . . to bind up the broken hearted . . . to comfort all who mourn." The release of prisoners is obviously a central idea in these verses as well, for they state, "to proclaim liberty to the captives . . . etc." The promises of abundance and justice are literally the warp and woof of the jubilee reference. Justice is further guaranteed in 61:11 which states, "So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up . . . ." Abundance is promised throughout the chapter, but most significantly in 61:6-7, "You will eat the wealth of nations

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<sup>1</sup>Sloan, Favorable Year, p. 57.

. . . and instead of shame you will have a double portion." That this type of king would have been considered the ideal king is not simply a matter of conjecture. The description of a righteous king is given by Solomon in Psalm 72 and it conforms in every detail to the type of king described in the idealogical terminology of the ancient Near Eastern texts. One might also refer to Zechariah 9:9-10 in this regard.

### The Significance of the Text

It has been demonstrated that Isaiah 61:1-2 has overt grammatical connections as well as theological connections to the Jubilee passage of Leviticus 25. That institution itself has been shown to have been closely tied to the idea of kingship in the ANE. Further, the very formulation of the phraseology used in the passage would have called to mind the types of statements made about almost every ancient Near Eastern king. Because of the obvious parallels of the text of Isaiah 61 to enthronement texts found elsewhere in the ANE, it is easy to see why it very early came to be regarded as prophetic of the coming Messianic King. No doubt it was composed in that way for that very reason. It has been demonstrated that the very earliest audience of these words would have recognized the Messianic thrust contained in them, and that the eschatological interpretation of the passage continued even until the time of Christ's ministry. The significance of this fact in relation to



its reading by Jesus at Nazareth will be considered in some detail in the chapter that follows.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN EXAMINATION OF LUKE 4:16ff

#### The Text

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,  
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE  
POOR.

HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,  
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,  
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN,  
TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:16-22).

And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; (Luke 4:28).

The previous chapters of this study, which have dealt primarily with the study of the Jubilee institution and with the various contextual analyses of Isaiah 61:1-2, have served only to provide background to the scene that unfolded as Jesus spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth, as recorded in Luke 4:16ff. It would not be an exaggeration to state with Leaney that "Luke has given us an impossible

story."<sup>1</sup> It is certainly true that the Nazareth incident, as recorded by Luke, presents some very difficult exegetical problems. The three most significant questions that arise from the study of this text can be answered if a proper relationship is drawn between the events that Luke described and the proper understanding of both Jubilee and Isaiah 61. The three questions that seem to arise most frequently and that will be discussed in the presentation of this chapter are: (1) Why does Luke clearly place the Nazareth event out of its place chronologically in relationship to the rest of Christ's ministry; (2) Why is the response of the people such as it is; and (3) What is the significance of Jubilee to this passage? In order to begin to answer these questions, it is necessary first to look more closely at the text under consideration.

#### The Relationship of Luke 4:16ff to the LXX

A comparison of the Isaiah 61 quotation found in Luke 4:18-19 with the LXX translation of the same passage reveals a marked similarity. Of the twenty-six words comprising the passage, twenty-four are the same in Luke as in the LXX. This does not necessarily suggest copying by Luke, although it is certainly possible that he had the LXX before him and made use of it.

It is likely that Luke used the LXX translation, first of all because of his familiarity with it, and,

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<sup>1</sup>A. R. C. Leaney, The Gospel According to St. Luke (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 52.

secondly, because it represented the most faithful reproduction of the Hebrew currently available. The accuracy of the LXX translation of Isaiah 61:1-2 can be demonstrated in the careful way certain nuances of the Hebrew were captured in the Greek. A primary example is found in the LXX rendering of the word בשר which is translated with the word εὐαγγελίσασθαι. As Friedrich has pointed out, בשר means not only to deliver a message, but also carried the idea of good news within its stem. Often the good news is in reference to a victory in battle. In like manner, the Greek translation carries the same shade of meaning.<sup>1</sup>

Another example of the care taken to preserve the Hebrew nuance is seen in translation of הלך with ἀπέσταλεν. Both words convey the idea of sent with a commission.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, Luke was aware that the LXX at this point was a faithful and accurate reproduction of the original and, therefore, felt no hesitancy to include it in his own narrative.

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<sup>1</sup>TDNT, s.v. "εὐαγγελίσασθαι," by Gerhard Friedrich, 2:707.

<sup>2</sup>BAGD, p. 98.

A Comparative Chart of Luke 4:16-30

and Mark 6:1-6

Luke 4:16-30

<sup>16</sup>καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Ναζαρά, οὗ ἦν τεθραμμένος, καὶ εἰσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰώθος αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν, καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι. <sup>17</sup>καὶ ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ἡσαίου, καὶ ἀναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον εὗρεν τὸν τόπον οὗ ἦν γεγραμμένον, <sup>18</sup>Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλχέν με κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεςιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, <sup>19</sup>κηρύξαι ἐν ἑαυτῷ κυρίου δεχτόν. <sup>20</sup>καὶ πτύξας τὸ βιβλίον ἀποδούς τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ ἐκάθισεν καὶ πάντων οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἦσαν ἀτεωίζοντες αὐτῷ. <sup>21</sup>ἤρξατο δὲ λέγειν πρὸς αὐτοῦς ὅτι Σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφὴ αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὠσιν ὑμῶν. <sup>22</sup>καὶ πάντες ἐμαρτύρουν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐθαύμαζον ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις τῆς χάριτος τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔλεγον, Οὐχὶ νιὸς ἐστὶν Ἰωσήφ οὗτος;

<sup>23</sup>καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Πάντως ἐρεῖτέ μοι τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην Ἰατρέ, θεράπευσον σεαυτὸν ὅσα ἠκούσαμεν γενόμενα εἰς τὴν Καφαρναοὺμ ποίησον καὶ ὧδε ἐν τῇ πατρίδι σου. <sup>24</sup>εἶπεν δέ, Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς προφήτης δεκτός ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ. <sup>25</sup>ἐπ' ἀληθείας δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, πολλὰ κῆραι ἦσαν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις

Mark 6:1-6

<sup>1</sup>καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐκεῖθεν, καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀκολουθοῦσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. <sup>2</sup>καὶ γενομένου σαββάτου ἤρξατο διδάσκειν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ

<sup>2b</sup>καὶ πολλοὶ ἀκούοντες ἐξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες, Πόθεν τούτῳ ταῦτα, καὶ τίς ἡ σοφία ἡ δουεῖσα τούτῳ καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τοιαῦται διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ γινόμεναι. <sup>3</sup>οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τέκτων, ὁ νιὸς τῆς Μαρίας καὶ ἀδελφὸς Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωσήφ καὶ Ἰούδα καὶ Σίμωνος καὶ οὐκ εἰσιν αἱ ἀδελφαὶ αὐτοῦ ὧδε πρὸς ἡμᾶς. <sup>4</sup>καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς

ἡλίου ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ, ὅτε ἐκλείσθη ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐπὶ ἔτη τρία καὶ μῆνας ἕξ, ὥς ἐγένετο λιμὸς μέγας ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, <sup>26</sup>καὶ πρὸς οὐδεμίαν αὐτῶν ἐπέμψθη ἡλίος εἰ μὴ εἰς Σάρεπτα τῆς Σιδωνίας πρὸς γυναῖκα χήραν. <sup>27</sup>καὶ πολλοὶ λεπροὶ ἦσαν ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ ἐπὶ Ἑλισαίου τοῦ προφήτου, καὶ οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν ἐκαθαρίσθη εἰ μὴ Ναιμᾶν ὁ Σύρος.

ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν προφήτης ἄτιμος εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῦσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ. <sup>5</sup>καὶ οὐκ ἐδύνατο ἐκεῖ ποιῆσαι οὐδεμίαν δύναμιν, εἰ μὴ ῥλίγοις ἀρρώστοις ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας ἐθεράπευσεν <sup>6</sup>καὶ ἐθαύμαζεν διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν.

<sup>28</sup>καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες θυμοῦ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἀκούοντες ταῦτα, <sup>29</sup>καὶ ἀναστάντες ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ἤγαγον αὐτὸν ἕως ὄφρυος τοῦ ὄρους ἐφ' οὗ ἡ πόλις ὠκοδόμητο αὐτῶν, ὥστε κατακρημνίσαι αὐτόν. <sup>30</sup>αὐτὸς δὲ διελθὼν διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν ἐπορεύετο.

<sup>3b</sup>καὶ ἐσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ.

#### The Relationship of Luke 4:16ff to

#### Mark 6:1-6

Considerable aspersion is often cast upon the reliability of Luke's historical accounting because of the extreme differences between his account of the incident at Nazareth and Mark's record of the same event. Although the two passages are very similar, a closer examination reveals a number of contrasting features. In order to appreciate more fully the similarity of the texts, it is necessary to review the differences in some detail.

1. Luke expressly states that the event took place at Nazareth, while Mark does not.
2. Luke fails to mention the presence of Jesus' family, though Mark says they were present.

3. The miracle requested in Luke is absent in Mark.
4. Luke makes explicit reference to Capernaum while in Mark the reference is only implied by previous mighty works.
5. Luke places the Nazareth event prior to the rest of Christ's ministry while Mark makes it much later.
6. Luke and Mark use different forms of the proverbial saying.
7. Luke introduces the proverb with ἀμὴν, while Mark does not.
8. There is no record of healing in Luke, but there is in Mark.
9. In Luke, Jesus is called "son of Joseph," in Mark, "son of Mary."
10. The response of the crowd is different in the two records.
11. Luke gives the content of the sermon, while Mark does not.
12. Luke mentions the use of the OT text, while Mark does not.
13. The escape of Jesus from the crowd is markedly different in the two accounts.<sup>1</sup>

It should be clear from the above list that the main distinctions between Luke and Mark center in only two

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<sup>1</sup> L. Crockett, "The Old Testament in the Gospel of Luke With Emphasis on the Interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-2" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1967), pp. 115-19.

areas. These areas concern the matter of chronology and the matter of detail. The event, as expressed by Luke, is placed significantly earlier in Christ's ministry than it is in the chronology of Mark, and Luke provides a much more detailed description of the event. If the historical accuracy of both Luke and Mark is assumed, and if both Gospels are thought to describe a single event, then the matter must rest on more substantial grounds than either the oral traditions of the early church or the intervention of a "Q" document.

Possibly the best method of handling these apparent problems is after the manner of G. B. Caird. For him, the matter of the chronology in Luke contains no hint of misrepresentation of the historical occurrence, as Luke made it evident by implication that he had drawn an incident from a later time to use at the outset of his narrative, because it was indicative of the whole tenor of Christ's ministry.<sup>1</sup> Luke's mention of the works done at Capernaum is a clear statement that he was not distorting the order of Christ's ministry but that he was mentioning, what was for him, a more significant event first.

That Luke regarded Isaiah 61 as programmatic to Christ's ministry, there can be no doubt. Both by direct quotation and grammatic inference Luke uses the text of Isaiah 61 repeatedly in his gospel. Although this fact

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<sup>1</sup>G. B. Caird, St. Luke (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 86.



will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter, the repeated reference to Isaiah 61 highlights Luke's motive for having moved the Nazareth sermon to a place of prominence in his gospel. This move allowed Luke to describe in detail Christ's exposition and application of the prophetic text in such a way as to indicate the general procedure that was followed throughout the entire three-year ministry of Christ, as well as to intimate the type of reaction that the ministry would eventually elicit from the crowds.

The question of the apparent inconsistency of the reaction of the people, as described by Luke, is best understood in light of the fact that, despite the rather full treatment of the event, it is clear that some details are missing. It is obvious from the text that what started out, initially, as a favorable reception to Jesus' sermon, rapidly degenerated into disbelief and, eventually, into a heated rage. Beare has suggested that, since Luke has expanded at this point upon the Marcan story, the extra detail is "to be viewed as a bit of legendary enhancement."<sup>1</sup> This view is inconsistent, to say the least, with the high view of Scripture maintained by this author. Neither is it necessary to conclude with Jeremias, by virtue of his linguistic reconstruction based on a presupposed Aramaic

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<sup>1</sup>F. W. Beare, The Earliest Records of Jesus (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 46.

original, that the crowd was really hostile from the very beginning.

It is his theory that as Jesus was speaking Aramaic, the common language of the day in Palestine, it is likely that the Gospels were originally composed in that tongue.<sup>1</sup> With this presupposition in mind he states:

. . . the beginning and the end of the verse v. 22 are at variance with one another; the first two clauses would seem to express entranced wonder, the third, on the other hand, expresses sudden disbelief and criticism. But the first clause is ambiguous: καὶ πάντες ἑμάρτυρον αὐτῷ (יְהוֹדוּ עֲלֵהוּ). [Notice that this last is his Aramaic reconstruction of the proposed original.] The dative after μαρτυρεῖν can be either the dative of advantage (to bear witness on behalf of some one), or the dative of disadvantage (to bear witness against some one).<sup>2</sup> Brackets mine.

In developing his argument further, Jeremias treats the second clause in a similar manner applying an implication of opposition rather than admiration to the word θαυμάζειν.<sup>3</sup> His conclusion then is that "from the outset unanimous rage was their response to the message of Jesus." That rage, he declares, was because Jesus left out the day of vengeance from his reading of Isaiah 61.<sup>4</sup>

There are two significant reasons to reject the theory of Jeremias. As was discussed earlier, it seems most likely both by analysis of the synonymous parallelism found

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Anderson, "Broadening Horizons: The Rejection at Nazareth: Pericope of Luke 4:16-30 in Light of Recent Critical Trends," Interpretation 18 (1964): 266-67.

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Jeremias, Jesus' Promise to the Nations (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1958), trans. S. H. Hooke, pp. 44-45.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

in Isaiah 61:1-3 as well as because of the theological mind-set of the Jews to whom Jesus spoke, that "the day of vengeance" and "the favorable year" were one event. Further, as Sparks has pointed out, the supposed Semitisms that are said to underlie Luke's wording can in fact be better called Septuagintalisms.<sup>1</sup> There are two obvious recollections of the LXX in Luke 4. The first is the phrase εἰς Σάββατα τῆς Σιδωνίας πρὸς γυναῖκα χήραν (vs. 26) which is an exact duplication of the LXX reading of 1 Kings 17:9. The second is of course the near perfect quotation of the LXX rendering of Isaiah 61:1-2. It seems most likely then that the existence of Aramaisms in this account could be the result of LXX influence and Luke's own culture as well as the influence of an original Aramaic gospel, the only substance of which is conjecture.

While Jeremias assumes the existence of the dative of disadvantage occurring after μαρτυρέω in Luke 4:22, it is the position of most commentators that while it is an alternative possibility to the dative of advantage (see Matt 23:31, John 7:7; 18:23), such is not the case here.<sup>2</sup> It is to be noted that in all the Lukan usages except this one (Acts 13:22; 14:3; 15:8; 22:5) μαρτυρέω is characteristically followed by the dative of advantage.

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<sup>1</sup>H. F. D. Sparks, "The Semitisms of Luke's Gospel," JTS, Vol. 64 (1943):129ff.

<sup>2</sup>H. Strathmann, "μάρτυς," TDNT, IV, p. 496.

The use of the verb ἀτενίζω in verse 20 also seems to mitigate against the position held by Jeremias. Although its meaning is simply to look intently at someone or something,<sup>1</sup> it is clear that Luke always speaks of such a gaze as favorable toward the one being viewed. Two significant occurrences of the verb in Acts demonstrate this fact. In Acts 1:10, the disciples were gazing (ἀτενίζω) into heaven as Jesus ascended and the council who condemned Stephen in looking steadfastly (ἀτενίζω) at him saw that his face was like an angel (Acts 6:15).

Therefore, however attractive Jeremias' arguments may be, they seem to make the understanding of the text unnecessarily difficult and require the acceptance of a syntactical reconstruction that occurs nowhere else in the writings of Luke. The understanding of the apparent discrepancies within the Lukan account as well as those with Mark's record must be explained by another means. That means becomes available only upon examination of the relationship of the two key texts, Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:16ff.

#### The Relationship of Luke 4:16ff to Isaiah 61:1-2

In order to understand more fully Luke's use of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the significant position that he has

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<sup>1</sup> BAGD, p. 119.

reserved for it, one must be aware of the fact that Luke, if not Christ himself, considered the passage to define fully Christ's ministry. Here in Luke 4, Christ chose to sermonize on a particular prophetic passage,<sup>1</sup> and fully cognizant of the implications inherent in that text, declared unreservedly, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your hearing." Again, in Luke 7:22, Christ called upon Isaiah 61 as a verification of his Messiahship to John the Baptist. Sloan has given an excellent treatment of the significance of the present participle, εὐαγγελίζονται, in Christ's message to the imprisoned John.

. . . "preaching the gospel to the poor," are to be reported to John the Baptist as *presently*, i.e., customarily and repeatedly, characteristic of Jesus' activity; "the poor are having good news preached to them." Jesus is therefore shown here to be depicting both his ministry and himself in a way that reflects the continued impact and influence of the vision of Isaiah 61:1f upon his own self-understanding.<sup>2</sup>

Other allusions to Isaiah 61 are abundant in the Gospel of Luke. It is widely held that the Beatitudes recorded in Luke 6:20ff. and Matthew 5:3ff., "reflect the verbal influence of both Isaiah 61:1ff. upon the preaching

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<sup>1</sup>There is considerable debate over whether Christ chose the Scripture reading of the day or whether it only came up as the regularly scheduled reading of the lectionary cycle. Either way, it is safe to assume that God in his sovereignty arranged the reading to be from that particular text. Therefore, it is concluded that Christ "chose" to read from Isaiah 61.

<sup>2</sup>Sloan, Favorable Year, p. 117.

of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Besides these three rather direct references to Isaiah 61, Luke also uses in his gospel a number of less overt allusions. Sloan has concluded, with some degree of probability, that because Luke has taken the pains to put the ministry of the anointed one, along with his six tasks, in such a prominent position, then the fulfillment of those tasks elsewhere in the Gospel reflects Isaiah 61 also.<sup>2</sup> An example of this phenomenon is found in Luke 9:2 and 6. In this text Jesus sends out the Twelve to minister in a manner parallel to his own ministry. There the disciples are told to κηρύσσειν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἰᾶσθαι, to preach the kingdom of God and to heal (9:2). Further the commission is elucidated εὐαγγελιζόμενοι καὶ θεραπεύοντες πανταχοῦ, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. It is interesting to note that the word εὐαγγελιζόμενοι is the same word used both by Luke 4:18 and the LXX to translate the כְּבִשָּׁר (to proclaim the good news) as found in Isaiah 61:1.

Another word that suggests quite heavily the import of Isaiah 61 for Luke is ἄφρσις. This word is used again by both Luke and the LXX to translate the word רִנָּה. BAGD lists two possible meanings for ἄφρσις, and each seems to derive

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 116. Other authors who connect the Beatitudes to the Isaiah 61 text include: C. H. Cave, "The Sermon at Nazareth and the Beatitudes in the Light of the Synagogue Lectionary," TU 88 (1964):231-35, and Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

from the ancient Near Eastern concept of Jubilee. The first meaning is release, as from captivity, while the second meaning is cancellation of an obligation, punishment, or debt.<sup>1</sup> Although the verbal form of the word ἀφίημι does not always carry the same force as the noun listed above, it does in some instances seem to deliver just such a sense. A prime example is reflected in the words of the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:12). In that verse the disciples are instructed by Christ to make request of God that he forgive their debts as they forgive the debts of others.

"Ἀφεσις occurs only seventeen times in the NT, yet ten of those times are in the writings of Luke.<sup>2</sup> Of those instances of ἀφίημι where it carries the meaning connoted by the noun, ten occurrences are in Luke alone.<sup>3</sup> Of further interest is the fact that "of the 50 or so instances of aphesis in the LXX, 22 are found in Lev. 25 and 27 (for Heb. yobēl, year of jubilee) and 5 in Deut. 15:1-9 (for Heb. samat, release from debts in the year of Jubilee)."<sup>4</sup> When Luke's use of the LXX is considered, it is clear that he was aware of the jubilary sense and connections inherent in the word ἀφεσις.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>BAGD, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Sloan, Favorable Year, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>BAGD, pp. 125-26.

<sup>4</sup>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, s.v. "Forgiveness," by H. Vorlander, 1:698.

<sup>5</sup>Bultmann, "ἀφίημι," TDNT, p. 510.

In this same manner, allusions to Isaiah 61 are seen in reference to key figures of the recipients of Christ's ministry, such as the poor (πτωγοί), the maimed (ἀνάπειροι), the lame (γολοί), and the blind (τυφλοί) in verses like Luke 14:13 and 14:21. It would seem that these words reflect a conscious effort on the part of Christ to be fulfilling, in the present tense sense, the prophecy of Isaiah 61.

It should be clear from Luke's (and Christ's) use of words and phrases that hearken back to the prophecy of Isaiah 61 that it was considered to be possibly the one key passage describing the task of Messiah at his coming. The question that arises, then, is "Why was Isaiah 61 such a crucial passage for Christ and why is it so significant in the context of Luke 4:16ff?" The answer to this question lies in the fact that Isaiah 61 in several ways would have spoken of the coming of a Messianic king for the nation of Israel.

As has already been demonstrated, the people at the synagogue at Nazareth would most readily have understood the implications of kingship that had come to permeate the text of Isaiah 61. They realized fully that Isaiah 61, because of its terminology, its royal connections to Jubilee, its eschatological interpretation, and its socio-economic provision, promised that there someday would come a messianic king for Israel. This fact alone, when compared to the account given by Luke, adequately explains the dual reaction of the crowd at Nazareth. At first, all present



were delighted that someone had finally come to announce the coming of this long-awaited Messiah. But it suddenly became painfully evident that this Jesus was in effect offering the Messianic kingdom and declaring the social and economic tasks he was to perform but that he was not the triumphant delivering warrior king that their theology had taught them he must be. His quotation of Isaiah 61 conjured up images of a delivering king who would arise to remove the Roman oppression just as a similar image would have come to the captive nation to whom the text was originally addressed. Likewise, the Jews of Jeremiah 34 expected a triumphant king and when they received deliverance without the king they reverted to their former sin.

In the same manner, in Luke 4 the Messianic image was so permanently cast that it enraged the people to think that a Messiah might come and require once again the covenant loyalty in faith without at the same time demonstrating his power and majesty by executing their deliverance from oppression. Further, this realization did not come because he broke off the reading of Isaiah at mid-sentence, thereby omitting his task of executing vengeance on the nations but it came on the heels of his message of healing for Naaman the Syrian. The message was obvious to them all that it was the faith of the Gentile that delivered him from his infirmity<sup>1</sup> not his birthright. This alone brought on the rage of verse 28, for now they were

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<sup>1</sup>See 2 Kings 5:14.

cognizant of the fact that Jesus had laid claim to the kingship but its benefits for them required an acceptance by faith and those benefits could extend to the nations as well. The Jews of Nazareth clearly preferred their own theology of Messianic deliverance to Christ's message of salvation through faith.

Sanders has expressed well the atmosphere of expectation turned to rage in his evaluation.

One could hardly blame the congregation at Nazareth for expecting Jesus to interpret the *logoi tēs charitos* or *divrē ḥesed*, which he had read from Isa 61, as favorable to themselves, particularly when he had stressed *'aphesis-dēṣṣōr* by the interpolation of Isa 58:6 (which also ends in *'aphesis-hophshīm*) and insisted immediately upon sitting down, that they should be understood in the eschatological or, at least, penultimate situation they, like the faithful at Qumran, believed themselves to live in.<sup>1</sup>

And further,

Luke's point is that the Nazareth congregation rejected Jesus precisely because he preached Isa 61 in the way he did--by applying the hermeneutic axiom of prophetic critique even to the End Time. Little wonder that the faithful at Nazareth rejected not only this interpretation but the preacher-interpreter as well. The offense was intolerable. It went against all they believed in.<sup>2</sup>

Another question that should be addressed here is "What are the exegetical parameters of πεπλήρωται?" or to state the question another way, "What did the people of Nazareth understand when Jesus, having read Isaiah 61:1-2, stated 'This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your hearing'?"

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, "Greco-Roman Cults," p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

The root verb from which πεπλήρωται originates is the word πληρώ. Lexical evidence indicates that the primary meaning of the word is simply to fill up in a spacial sense.<sup>1</sup> Yet in the NT usage of the word the idea of spacial filling is almost totally lost in favor of the meaning "to fulfill a norm, a measure, a promise, to complete or achieve something."<sup>2</sup> It is further to be noted that when this particular translation value is attached to πληρώ in the NT, it always refers to the fulfillment of the demands or claims of God but never to the claims of man.<sup>3</sup> Another nuance of the word is evidenced by its use in the Gospels as part of an introductory formula denoting the completion or fulfillment of prophetic sayings. The occurrence of the πληρώ formula appears to be restricted to the Gospels and Acts with one exception in James 2:23 and is always reserved for descriptions of the manner in which Jesus was the fulfillment of OT prophecy.<sup>4</sup>

While it is significant that the gospel writers found the πληρώ formula of value in denoting fulfilled Messianic prophecy, the fact is even more significant when it is realized that the idea of fulfillment had a generally

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<sup>1</sup> BAGD, p. 670.

<sup>2</sup> TDNT, Vol. VI, p. 290. Note that the idea of filling up a space exists simultaneously with the latter meaning and is evidenced in such texts as Acts 2:2 and Matthew 13:48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

accepted connection to the Messianic age during the inter-testamental period. This fact is demonstrated by a quotation from the apochryphal book II Baruch 30:1-3, better known as the Apocalypse of Baruch. It states the following.

1. And it shall come to pass after these things, when the time of the advent of the Messiah is fulfilled, that He shall return in glory (emphasis mine).
2. Then . . .
3. For they know that the time has come of which it is said, that it is the consummation of the times.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning this text Block has commented:

The idea of a 'fulfillment' or a 'consummation' by the coming of the Messianic Kingdom is a familiar one in contemporary Judaism. In the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch it is made clear that the coming of the Messianic Age was expressly known and referred to as 'the fulfillment' or 'the consummation' . . . .<sup>2</sup>

Should Block's hypothesis indeed be true, then the use of πληρώω by the Gospel writers played upon already existent concepts of exactly what the fulfillment was to be. In like manner, Jesus' use of the word after the reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue at Nazareth was a further claim to Messiahship.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Book of the Apocalypse of Baruch the Son of Neriah," trans. R. H. Charles in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, ed. R. H. Charles, Vol. 2 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 498.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew Block, "The Fulfillment in the Kingdom of God," ET 57 (1945):25.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Before enumerating the conclusions reached in the study of Luke 4:16ff., it will prove most helpful to review the most significant discoveries made concerning the background areas of Jubilee and Isaiah 61 as well as Luke 4:16ff. itself. This review will serve to synthesize the large amount of material covered in the last three chapters and make much easier the task of relating the topics to one another. Out of the minor conclusions of each chapter, then will come the major conclusions of this study.

#### Minor Conclusions

##### About Jubilee

1. Jubilee or release was an event initiated only by kings.
2. It was on the basis of the king's ownership of the land that he was able to initiate the release.
3. The biblical institution of Jubilee seems to have been an exact parallel to that of the ANE except that no earthly king ever owned the land in Israel. The land was always seen as belonging to Yahweh.
4. Jubilee was most often accomplished in the first year of a king's reign in the ANE. Since there was

no true king in Israel, the release was to have been practiced every fifty years.

5. Jubilee soon came to have an eschatological meaning for the Jews because they perceived the Messianic king as the only king of Israel who could ever declare the release.

6. Jubilee was enacted by a king to demonstrate his mīšarum or justice before the deity as well as for its economic or social benefit to the country.

#### About Isaiah 61

1. Isaiah 61 clearly refers back to the institution of Jubilee in Leviticus 25.

2. Underlying the physical deliverance explicit in Isaiah 61 is an implicit spiritual deliverance.

3. The terminology of Isaiah 61 is strikingly similar to ancient Near Eastern accession texts which are equivalent to inaugural addresses (i.e., a royal declaration of kingship).

4. The prophecy of Isaiah 61 was not considered to have been fulfilled with the return from exile, but soon took on an eschatological interpretation. This is easily noted in its use by the Qumran sectaries and the Talmud.

5. The words of Isaiah 61 are exactly what Israel would have expected her Messiah to say and do when he came.

#### About Luke 4

1. Christ's use of Isaiah 61 is placed out of chronological order because Luke saw the event as programmatic for all of Christ's ministry.

2. The use of the quotation, as well as certain other words and phrases, shows that Luke, as well as Christ, considered the tasks of Isaiah 61 as the core of Christ's ministry on earth.

3. The artificial stop after "favorable year of the Lord . . ." could not have been the reason for the reaction of the crowd because they were well aware that the favorable year and the day of vengeance were equivalent events because of the synonymous parallelism found in the Hebrew text.

4. The reaction of the crowd is exactly what one would expect when the people realized the implications of his claim, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your hearing," as well as the nature of his offer which was altogether different from that which their theology had taught them to expect.

#### Major Conclusions About the Incident at Nazareth (Luke 4:16ff)

1. Christ was declaring the arrival of a year of Jubilee, but in a Messianic sense, much as did Isaiah. His primary motivation was to evoke the connotation of kingship surrounding Jubilee rather than to promote either an economic upheaval or a political revolution, although the

social and economic implications of the established messianic kingdom would have been apparent to the Jews of Nazareth.

2. The people would have been well aware of the fact that only a king could declare a year of Jubilee and only the Messianic king could do so in Israel.

3. By using Isaiah 61, Christ made it doubly clear that the proclamation was not only toward a socio-economic reform but toward the implications of kingship so vivid in the prophecy.

4. The people recognized all the ramifications of Jesus' statement, "This day is this fulfilled in your hearing." The major ramifications are:

- a. "I am here to fulfill all the royal implications of Jubilee."
- b. "I am here to fulfill the Messianic implications of Isaiah 61."
- c. "I have already begun performing the tasks listed in Isaiah 61."
- d. "I, therefore, am the anticipated Messiah."
- e. "I, therefore, am the anticipated king of Israel."

5. The intense reaction of the crowd is best seen as a gradual realization that although they really desired the coming of Messiah, this one who was now proclaiming himself to be the Messianic King was totally out of the character of their expectations. He offered them the



kingdom based on their faith rather than on his delivering power and this they could not accept.

6. In light of the royal implications and eschatological overtones contained in both the text of Isaiah 61 and the institution of Jubilee, Christ could not have chosen a better prophecy, to announce as fulfilled in himself; no other would have guaranteed the understanding that he was declaring himself to be the promised Messianic King of Israel. It is only in light of this fact that the account of the Nazareth incident, with its displaced chronology and contradictory reactions by the crowd, can be properly understood. When all is considered, then, it must be concluded that Luke 4:16ff. gives a detailed account of Christ's declaration of himself as the long-awaited Messianic King of Israel.

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