

Jubilee

God's economic blueprint

Imagine an economic system in which:

- Enterprise is rewarded but in which all the wealth cannot gravitate into the hands of a few individuals or groups.
- Individuals are encouraged to take personal responsibility and bear the consequences of failure or misconduct.
- Yet, if a person falls or fails, there is provision to restore again the opportunity to provide for themselves.
- A sense of community responsibility ensures those genuinely in need are compassionately provided for.
- The resources of the earth are managed in a sustainable way.
- A balance between work and rest is maintained for all.

Such a system is described in the Bible; it is the concept of Jubilee, an extension of the idea of the Sabbath Day and Sabbath Year. It appears that the Jubilee was not practiced consistently in Israel, possibly never fully followed; perhaps its ideals were too lofty for human nature to cope with. But the Jubilee system as described in Scripture is an economic system with built-in self-corrections like no other system has ever had.

As we study the Biblical concept of Jubilee we find that many of the economic principles that we have gleaned elsewhere in Scripture find a home and fit together in this economic system. The Jubilee can be described as God's economic blueprint.

 <p>Pray for clarity to see whatever God wants to reveal to you during this study.</p>	 <p>From the impression you have built up during the course of these studies, how much do you think God cares about economics?</p>
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 <p>What relative importance do you think God places on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evangelism (bringing people into Christian faith)• Discipleship (growing people in the Christian faith)• Reforming human society (including economic systems)• Serving other people (compassionate care for those in need)• Care of Creation (sustainable management of the created world)
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 <p>If Christians could help bring into effect an economic system that would have economic outcomes that pleased God, what would those outcomes be?</p>
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Principles and Practices of the Sabbath and Jubilee

Read:

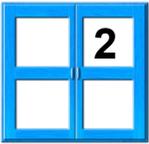
Leviticus 23: 3 about the Sabbath Day
(also Exodus 23: 12 and Nehemiah 10: 31)

Leviticus 25: 1 – 7 about the Sabbath Year
(also Exodus 23: 10 – 11 and Deuteronomy 15: 1 – 18 and Nehemiah 10: 31)

Leviticus 25: 8 – 55 about the Year of Jubilee

From these passages summarise the features of the Sabbath & Jubilee system, with respect to:

- Worship
- Work
- Land ownership in the rural areas (arable land and villages) noting especially concerning restoration of the means of producing a livelihood.
- Land ownership in the towns or cities
- Debt and interest
- Giving, generosity
- Opportunities for, and limits on, creating wealth
- Treatment of foreigners
- Care of those in need
- Slavery, servitude, liberty and redemption
- Sustainable use of the land
- Respect for wildlife
- Any other observations you have on these passages

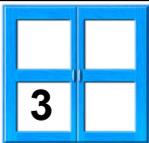


Applying to 21st Century Economic Reality

The Sabbath and Jubilee laws are set in a vastly different culture to ours and in a predominantly agrarian economy; but what principles or practices from the Sabbath & Jubilee system could apply in our own time?

What benefits might result?

What difficulties would this pose?



Jesus and Jubilee

Luke 4: 18 – 19 Jesus' description of his purpose.

'The year of the Lord's favour' is a reference to the Jubilee.

What is the significance of Jesus using this language to refer to his own coming and purpose?



Applying to Our Lives

If, as Christians, we are to take seriously all that we find in the Scriptures, how can the principles and practices of the Sabbath & Jubilee system influence the way we live personally?

How can these principles influence how we operate as the Church?



What has this study revealed about the nature of God?



What new thought or understanding has come to you during this study?



What issues, questions or practical implications for your local church, your church denomination, or the wider Christian church, are raised by this study?



(This section may be used for personal reflection alone or may be shared within the group)

If the economic system of our world operated in a way that would bring about the outcomes that God might want, what might then be different for you?

What changes to your lifestyle and aspirations might the Lord be calling you to make now?



Spend some time as a group praying over what you have discussed, asking God to bring into focus how you may respond to his Word in an ongoing way.



Notes on some of the passages referred to in this study:

Leviticus 23: 3 The Sabbath Day was both a day of rest and a day dedicated to worship.

Exodus 23: 10 – 12 This is a brief summary of the Sabbath laws. It is interesting that it is preceded by verses about justice and followed by verses about worship – another example of the linking of these important concepts.

Leviticus 25: 1 – 7 contains detailed rules concerning the Sabbath Year, as does Deuteronomy 15.

Nehemiah 10: 31 reveals a rediscovery of, or renewed commitment to, some of the Sabbath Year principles.

Leviticus 25: 8 – 55 is the only full description of all the laws pertaining to the Year of Jubilee. The Jubilee laws include mention of slavery. Slavery is abhorrent to us, but it is helpful to read these verses in light of the widespread practice of slavery at that time; we can also note in these verses, and in other Biblical references, that among God's people slavery is approached with a sense of limitation, humanity and compassion that was not universally typical. We have also not majored in this study on the concept of redemption that is described in these verses; this related to the buying back of property and also to buying back the freedom of people who were in servitude of some sort. Redemption is a concept that Jesus and New Testament writers picked up on to describe the spiritual role of Jesus himself in his saving work on the cross.

Luke 4: 18 – 19 Jesus quotes these words from Isaiah 61: 1 – 2 at the time of his first public declaration of his identity and purpose. The use of the phrase "the year of the Lord's favour" (a reference to Jubilee) reveals the important place that the concept of Jubilee had in the consciousness of God's people.