

SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS

Leviticus 25:10; Isaiah 61:1; Romans 8:21; Galatians 5:1

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

The Year of Jubilee! What a wonderful subject and thought! Liberty to all captives! All debts canceled! Total joy and rest for one year! No oppression whatsoever! All original property restored! What more could anyone desire? What greater celebration could there be? All of this, and more, is found in our gracious God giving this "law" to ancient Israel.

Even though America seems bent on being anti-Bible and anti-God, it is amazing that on many of our treasured national landmarks we still have plain evidence of our nation's Christian past. For example, on the Liberty Bell are inscribed the words of Leviticus 25:10, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land." "Proclaim liberty" is the great theme of the gospel, both in prophecy (Isaiah 61:1), and in its fulfillment in Christ (Luke 4:18). However, the "liberty" that we "proclaim" on July 4 is definitely not the "liberty" referred to in these passages. We now only proclaim "freedom" from the England of the 1700s (England is now strangely America's ally). For sure, there was much oppression then, but even Americans today are guilty of some high-handed oppression, are we not? Not being *slaves to sin* (John 8:34), is what should concern us.

True "liberty" is not just being able to live and work in a capitalistic society, sing the songs we like, wave flags, watch parades, enjoy fireworks, or honor war veterans. True "liberty" is being *released from sin*, and this is what we "proclaim" as Christians who believe the gospel. We have been freed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13), and despite our fallen, sinful condition by nature (Ephesians 2:3), we have been made righteous before God through the work of our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24).

What a message worth proclaiming! In this sense, we are all preachers! The context of Leviticus 25 is not at all about one country being "free" from another. The passage is about the Year of Jubilee (or Release) in Israel, "the fiftieth year," a year of grace, which began at the end of the great Day of Atonement, proclaimed throughout all the land with a solemn blast of a ram's horn. This was a year of rest for both land and laborers, when people were to return to their ancestral property, all debts were canceled, and all slaves were to be released and sent home. It was a time appointed by God to cause the people of Israel to realize equality in providing for themselves, and kept certain Israelites from amassing wealth at their brethren's expense. What a law this was! But it was all typical of the work of the

Messiah who was to come.

Calvary's cross and the empty tomb are our great Year of Jubilee! This is what we celebrate! A literal rendering of Galatians 5:1 is, "For freedom Christ freed us." But the only ones "proclaiming" this are the children of God. This is no Fourth of July celebration. It is far greater! It is a year by year, day by day "celebration" of victory in Christ! It is totally foreign to all sinners, till regenerated by the Spirit of God. And Paul admonishes us, "Stand fast therefore in this liberty, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of slavery." "Stand fast" indeed! "It is finished." "Blow the loud trumpet." "Christ is not here, but is risen." And some sweet day, "at the last day," even the graves of God's people will burst open, at Christ's return, and *glorification* of all the saints will occur, and we shall then sing in eternal triumph, "*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*" (I Corinthians 15:54-55).

Hallelujah, the great Atonement has been made! "Blow ye the trumpet, blow. The Year of Jubilee is come. Return, ye ransomed sinners, home." Let us all rejoice! Let us sing and shout! What a celebration! "Free at last, free at last," yes, "Because the creation itself also *shall be delivered* from the bondage of corruption into *the glorious liberty* of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). This is our proclamation to the nations!