

THE LAW OF SABBATH AND JUBILEE YEARS

By Marie Casale
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My research into the Sabbath and Jubilee years began because of this scripture:

Deut. 31:9-13 And Moses wrote this law and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, which bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates that they may hear and that they may learn and fear the Lord thy God and observe to do all the words of this law and that their children which have not known anything may hear and learn to fear the Lord thy God as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

Before I read this, I thought that the Sabbath and Jubilee years were only physical, agricultural laws which did not apply to Christians today. However, this commandment of God, that – THE LAW MUST BE READ IN THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES OF EVERY SABBATH YEAR BEFORE ALL THE PEOPLE - is beside the point of cultivation prohibition, freedom of slaves, release of debts, and land purchased reverting to original owner. It therefore behooves us as Christians to KNOW when the Sabbath years are so that we can keep this commandment. The Lord should make it known to us when the correct time is so that we can keep his commandment. Also I thought that the commandment to "HALLOW MY SABBATHS" is as applicable to the Sabbath and Jubilee years as it is to the weekly and annual Sabbaths.

Another important reason for us to understand this doctrine is that there is an obvious parallel between the Sabbath and Jubilee years and the Sabbath weeks and Pentecost in that they are counted alike. There are seven Sabbaths of weeks and then there is Pentecost on the 50th day. There are seven Sabbaths of years and then there is the Jubilee in the 50th year.

Besides reading the law in the Feast of Tabernacles, another aspect of the Sabbath year is that it is a time for releasing debts (Deut 15:1-11). This is something we ARE able to do as Christians even though we have no land to let rest or slaves to free. To release a person from his debt to you in the Sabbath year, whether it be a monetary debt or a sin committed against you, is a very meaningful spiritual act picturing the Lord's bringing us completely out of our debt of sin by the resurrection of the dead on his Sabbath millennium and is directly tied in to how God shall forgive us our debts according to the Lord's prayer in the New Testament.

Another important point is that the failure of the Children of Israel to keep the precepts of the Sabbath years was an important reason as to why they were sent into the captivity of the four beasts in the first place. (Lev 26:23-24,32-35,43, Jer. 34:8-17, 2Ch 36:14-21) Since the captivity of the four beasts lasts all the way to the first resurrection, it does apply to us as New Testament Christians. We surely ought to pray for the restoration of the knowledge and keeping of this commandment.

JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLE

When I saw that it was important to find out when the Sabbath and Jubilee years are, the first thing I did was to read the article in the Jewish Encyclopedia concerning this subject.

The Jewish Encyclopedia article tells of the controversy over how the Sabbath and Jubilee years should be counted and states that, "There is a difference of opinion in the Talmud as to whether the Jubilee year was included in - or excluded from the forty-nine years of the seven cycles. The majority of rabbis held that the Jubilee year was an intercalation, and followed the seventh Sabbatical year, making two fallow years in succession. After both had passed, the next fifty-year cycle began. They adduced this theory from the plain words of the law to hallow the fiftieth year, and also from the assurance of a yield in the sixth year sufficient for maintenance during the following three years, {until the ninth year, until her fruits come in - Lev. 25:22)

Judah ha-Nasi, however, contends that the Jubilee year was identical with the seventh sabbatical year. The opinion of the Geonim and of later authorities generally prevailed that the Jubilee, when in force during the period of the first temple, was intercalated, but that in the time of the second temple, when the Jubilee was observed only nominally, (from 352 BC on) it coincided with the seventh sabbatical year."

Simply stated, this means that according to the Talmud there were two ways of counting the Sabbath and Jubilee years, the 49-year cycle, and the 50-year cycle.

PROBLEMS WITH THE TALMUD CHART

The first problem I noticed about the Talmud chart was that the Rabbis, in the year 352 BC when they made the correction from the 50-year cycle to what they thought was the correct 49-year cycle, did not retrace their steps to recalculate the previous years all the way back to the conquest and allotment of Palestine. They just continued along with the new way of counting. Therefore, they must have assumed that there was not a "correct" Sabbath year, but that any year would do.

I do not believe this is true. Just as we know there is a correct Sabbath Day, and not any day will do; so there must be a correct Sabbath Year. This is so because the Sabbath and Jubilee Years are not just physical agricultural laws. They are actually God's broad timetable for his plan of Salvation - an exact timetable. Remember how the Sabbath Day has existed since creation and was 'restored' when Israel came out of Egypt by the miracle of the manna. So I think the knowledge of the Sabbath and Jubilee years was 'restored' when Israel entered the promised land. At that time the Lord gave them an exact date for beginning the count. The Talmud chart shows how over time they lost the correct count.

Like the Children of Israel we are 'wandering' as strangers and pilgrims on the earth until we enter into our spiritual inheritance, the Kingdom of God, when we shall be keeping this commandment in its fullness.

At first I believed that the second, or 49-year cycle is correct because if you consider how we count Pentecost, the 50th day is Sunday, but it is also the first day of the week. Thus the weekly

cycle is never interrupted. Likewise, in the yearly count, I thought that the Sabbath years must not be interrupted. So the 50th year would also be the first year of the next Sabbath cycle.

The next problem with the Talmud chart is that they somehow came up with the year 422 BC as the destruction of the Temple. This is not right. The destruction occurred in 587-88 BC

The third problem with the Talmud chart is that it says we will not reach 6000 years, which is the estimated time of the first resurrection, until 2239 AD. This date is too far away for the first resurrection and tells me that there is something wrong with their chronology.

If the Talmud chart is not accurate, we must find the answer in the Bible itself. I prayed that the Lord would show me FROM THE BIBLE what is the true Sabbath and Jubilee year. The following is what I have found...

THE BIBLE ANSWER

In Eze 1:1-2 we read the following: "Now it came to pass in THE THIRTIETH YEAR, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity."

I noticed in particular the phrase 'the thirtieth year'. What is this the thirtieth year of? In the Liberty Bible Commentary the proposed interpretations of the thirtieth year are listed.

1. The thirtieth year of Jehoiachin's age (585 BC)
2. The thirtieth year after Josiah's reform (593, 592 BC)
3. The thirtieth year of the Neo Babylonian Empire (606,605 BC)
4. The thirtieth year of Manasseh (667 BC)
5. The thirtieth year of Artaxerxes 111 (328 BC)
6. The thirtieth year of Ezekiel's age and
7. The thirtieth year of a Jubilee cycle.

Ezek 40:1 strongly indicates that this is the thirtieth year of a Jubilee cycle... WHY?

Ezek 40:1 In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the Lord was upon me and brought me thither. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel and set me upon a very high mountain...

The THIRTIETH year, as we saw above, was the FIFTH YEAR of King Jehoiachin's captivity. In Ezek 40:1 the TWENTY-FIFTH year of the captivity was when Ezekiel saw the vision of the FUTURE TEMPLE. The fifth year to the twenty-fifth year is 20 years. The thirtieth year (which was the fifth year) plus 20 years is the fiftieth year or Jubilee. So Ezekiel saw the vision of the future temple which shall be built in the Kingdom of God in a Jubilee year! We KNOW that the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity (the thirtieth year) was 594/593 BC (Hebrew year 3168). So the twenty-fifth year (Jubilee) was 572/573 BC (Hebrew year 3188). This gives us an accurate

date, a bench mark FROM THE BIBLE ITSELF for counting the Sabbath and Jubilee years backwards and forwards.

In addition to the thirtieth year connecting to the vision of the new temple in 572/573 BC, it also happens to connect backwards in time to Josiah's reform that took place in in 622/623 BC, which would be the previous Jubilee year. .

THE CORRECT DATES AND THE CORRECT METHOD

I did calculate the Sabbath and Jubilee years backwards to the creation and forwards to the end of the millennium from this Ezekiel bench mark, using what I thought was the correct 49-year cycle method.. Then I noticed that Jesus preached a Sabbath Year message in Luke 4 at the beginning of his ministry in 26 AD.

* Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
Luk 4:19 To preach the ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.

The problem with the 49-year cycle chart is that it does not connect with the Luke 4 Sabbath Year message of 26 AD.

But we CAN connect the Ezekiel bench mark (572/573 BC) and the Luke 4 bench mark (26 AD) perfectly IF WE USE THE 50-YEAR CYCLE COUNTING METHOD! Using this method, 26/27 AD is a Sabbath year and 27/28AD is a Jubilee.

This told me that the Ezekiel 1 bench mark establishes the correct DATES for the Sabbath Jubilee cycle. When we add to it the Luke 4 bench mark, we further establish the correct METHOD of counting, the 50-year cycle, which is God's will for us to use. Both of these dates are established from the BIBLE ITSELF, not from the Talmud. I feel that these two bench marks restore to us the knowledge of the Sabbath-Jubilee years.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE JUBILEE

The meaning associated with the Jubilee is that in the fiftieth year “every man shall return to his possession.”

Lev 25:10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout [all] the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a Jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

Here is the promise of this restoration and renewal for Israel:

Ezek 11:16-19 "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye

have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

I was asked why I would associate Ezek 40:1 (the vision of the future temple) with a Jubilee year since there is no mention of a temple in any scriptures about the Jubilee. This is true. However, the scriptures describing the future temple beginning in Ezek 40:1 extend to the end of the book of Ezekiel. Ezek 47 and 48 go on to describe the future appointment of the land which shall be divided among the children of Israel. This is when they shall return to their possession and re-inherit their land. So the vision of the future temple has everything to do with the promise of the Jubilee.

According to the Jubilee chart, you see that the next Jubilee is 2027 AD. This shows that the fulfillment gathering and restoration of Israel will take place several years AFTER the Kingdom of God is set up. In the first few years after Christ's return, the great destruction of the last days will be cleaned up. The Dome of the Rock will be destroyed and the beautiful temple of Ezekiel's vision will be built. A highway shall be prepared for all the dispersed of Israel and Judah who are left after the destruction of the last days. In the great Sabbath year of 2026 AD they will be forgiven their debts and declared FREE. They will hear the reading of the law in the Feast of Tabernacles of that year and be converted. And in the great Jubilee year of 2027 AD, they shall be gathered from all the lands where they have been scattered and return every man to the land of Israel unto his possession. This is the great fulfillment of the Jubilee.

CONCLUSION

As far as I know this is the only Sabbath Jubilee cycle calculated from bench marks in the Bible, so this, I feel, is the very best we can do to comply with the Lord's commandment to keep these years. Many other charts have been calculated from the Talmudic chart or from years that the Jews have historically kept the Sabbath years.

If we wish to please the Lord and keep all his commandments, I believe that we ought to restore the keeping of the Sabbath Jubilee years in the Churches of God according to the 50-year chart, and in each of the coming Sabbath years, READ the law during the Feast of Tabernacles as the Lord has commanded, not only the letter of the law, but comparing also the spirit of the law in which we serve under the New Covenant. Also we should forgive the debts of our brethren at the beginning of each Sabbath year following the example of our Lord who has forgiven our debts. These are things we can all do as Christians to keep the Lord's commandment even if we do not have land to let rest or slaves to free.

The Lord will surely add to our knowledge of the purpose of the Sabbath-Jubilee years just as he has added to us such wonderful knowledge of his Sabbaths and holy days. As you see, there are not many more Sabbath years to go until we reach the Jubilee which we will all celebrate with great joy in the Kingdom of God.