

Seven Weekly Integrated Bible Studies

Oct-Nov 2020

During this our Jubilee year, please join us as we seek the Lord together.

The Lord wants to speak words into our lives and into the life of our church!

Words of **rest**, **return** and **release**!

Content of Seven Studies:

<i>Week 1</i> - Understanding the Sabbath Year	(sermon: Oct 04)
<i>Week 2</i> - Understanding the Mission of the Church	(sermon: Oct 11)
<i>Week 3</i> - Understanding Jubilation and Tribulation	(sermon: Oct 18)
<i>Week 4</i> - Understanding Forgiveness	(sermon: Oct 15)
<i>Week 5</i> - Entering His Sabbath Rest	(sermon: Nov 01)
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<i>Week 7</i> - Return and Restoration in Psalm 23	(sermon: Nov 15)

For each week of the Integrated Bible Study, find the accompanying Sunday. Service Sermon online.

Videos available at: <https://www.ebcg.ch/sermons.html>

Jubilee
rest, return, release



The Jubilee Year **BIBLE STUDY WEEK**

1

Understanding the Sabbath Year

KEY VERSE: *"The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines."* (Lev 25:11)

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: The Sabbath Year was intended by God for His people to understand His desire for them to experience rest and release.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Leviticus 25

As our community begins this Jubilee Year together, we want to seek the Lord for His will for us. In the Old Testament, the Lord designated holy days, holy weeks, and holy years for His people. The Jubilee Year was to be celebrated every 50 years, after seven Sabbath Years, or weeks of years had passed (Lev 25:8-11). To best understand the Jubilee Year, we must first seek to understand the significance of the Sabbath Year. It is called the "Sabbath" because the land was to have a complete rest from cultivation. It was also a year of release because debts and those in slavery were to be released. The Lord promised an extra bountiful harvest in advance of this year, similar to the double portion of manna on the 6th day. Observing the Sabbath Year is an act of trust in God's provision, practicing repentance and rest (Is 30:15).

? What significance does the Sabbath Year have for our community in 2020?

Group Discussion

POINT 1: The Lord intends for us to understand His sabbath rest

"The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, ² Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. ³For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. ⁴But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. ⁵Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest." (Lev 25:1-5)

During the Sabbath Year the land was to be at rest, ownership could not be claimed over the crops and the harvest could not be stored for future use. Additionally during the Jubilee Year, the shofar was to be blown on the Day of Atonement to announce that the Jubilee Year had begun. When the elders of EBCG chose the date of our Jubilee celebration this year, we only discovered later that we had chosen to begin on Yom Kippur 2020, the Day of Atonement. Please read Isaiah 30:15-18, and discuss as a group.

? Why do we have such a hard time practicing rest as the Lord commands?

POINT 2: The Jubilee Year was designed to avoid oppression among God's people

"Count seven sabbath years – seven times seven years – so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. ⁹ Then sound the trumpet everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. ¹⁰ Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. ¹¹ The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields." (Lev 25:8-12)

During the Jubilee Year all those who fell into slavery due to debts were set free and all land was returned to its original owner. The primary purpose of the Jubilee Year was to break the bonds of slavery and to prevent oppression in Israel (Lev 25:14,17). The Jubilee year restored the nation of Israel to the original order intended by God, bringing freedom and release. The Jubilee year also points us forward to the return of Jesus, the Messiah who will return to establish His kingdom (Micah 4:4-5). The whole earth will hear a trumpet when He returns, and all things will be made right, in His Millennial Kingdom (Matt 24:30-31).

? How do Jesus' words about the trumpet in Matt 24 make you feel?

POINT 3: The Year of Jubilee teaches us that we are dependent on God

"Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the Lord your God. "Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. ¹⁹ Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. ²⁰ You may ask, 'What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?' ²¹ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. ²² While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in. ²³ "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers." (Lev 25:17-23)

? How have you had to learn to depend on God in the past year?

Encourage One Another

During this year together, we have an opportunity to learn something about God's design in the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee. Reflect on the passage below and ask yourselves the following questions.

"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Heb 4:9-12)

- How can we as a community practice the "rest" that God has prepared for us?
- Can you give an example of His provision this year as you've depended on Him?
- Pray for one another, as you embark together on this study of the Jubilee Year!

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Reaching Out from Rest **BIBLE STUDY WEEK**

2

Understanding the *Mission of the Church*

KEY VERSE: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: The Mission of the Church is “come” to Jesus and then to “go”.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Matthew 11:25-30

At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. ²⁷ ‘All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’

? What kinds of “rest” are YOU looking for when you come to church? What kinds of “rest” is EBCG offering?

Group Discussion

POINT 1: Jesus wants us to first enter into His rest, before we learn and do

“²⁸ ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’ (Matthew 11:29-30)

We are called to make disciples which is much more than just a “convert”. A disciple is a follower, someone who draws near to learn. How can we learn from Jesus? We don’t learn by listening, but by watching others and trying it out ourselves. The Church is the Body of Christ (read 1 Cor. 12: 27; Eph. 4: 12). A body is a collection of members, so learning from Him should also mean, learning from each other. How can we learn from each other? Are we doing that? What needs to change (in us and in others) for that to happen or to happen more?

? Will you share something new you have learned from Jesus in the past year?

POINT 2: Jesus wants to teach us to be like Him: Holy, Faithful, Truthful and Graceful, Caring

We are called to see Jesus and to become more like Him. How is this possible? So let's look together at what Jesus is like and ask ourselves how we are helping one another to become more like our Lord. Please read the following passages together, how do you understand these attributes of Christ and how would you implement them?

- **Being Holy** (1 Peter 1:15-16)
- **Being Faithful** (1 Corinthians 4:2)
- **Being Truthful AND Graceful** (Ephesians 4:15)
- **Caring for each other enough to build each other up** (Ephesians 4:11-13)

? How can we help one another to see Jesus and become more like Jesus?

POINT 3: The purpose of being “build up” is so that we can be His Body

” So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Ephesians 4:11-16)

? What does it mean to be the Body of Christ on the earth?

Encourage One Another

As we come alongside one another, we have an opportunity to encourage one another to live out the fullness of what the Church is meant to be. Jesus wants us to go and be His hands, His feet, His mouth... to the world. So let's take this opportunity as individuals and as a church to do a bit of a “self-check”. Remember that as we study the word together, the Holy Spirit is the true teacher. He “wields the word” and reveals Jesus to each of us, and we are helping one another to receive His revelation. Please record some of your thoughts and consider sharing these with the elders of EBCG over the coming weeks, we desire to come alongside you in your calling to be like Christ!

- **Who is in “my” world to whom I should be reaching out?**
- **How am I personally doing that? What are the challenges?**
- **How has EBCG been doing that? What more can we do?**

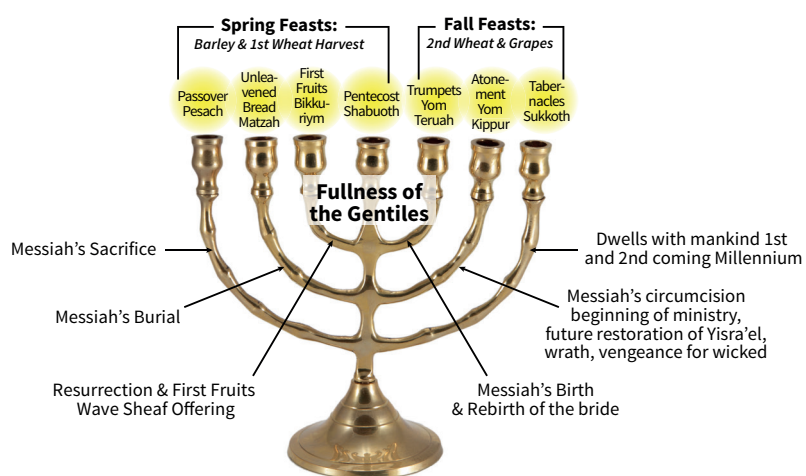
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Understanding Jubilation and Tribulation

KEY VERSE: "...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God." (Isaiah 61:2)

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: The Year of Jubilee points to eternal "jubilation", Leviticus also points to "tribulation" or a "shaking out" that is to come.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Leviticus 23:4-42



Passover: 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

Unleavened Bread: John 6:35

First Fruits: 1 Corinthians 15: 20

Pentecost: Acts 2:41

Trumpets: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Atonement: Hebrews 9: 7,11&24-28

Tabernacles: Micah 4:1-7

First coming: John 3:17

Second Coming: Acts 17:31

? How do the Feasts outlined in Leviticus 23 help us to understand Jesus' first and second comings?

Group Discussion

POINT 1: The progression in Leviticus relates the Feasts (Ch 23) directly to the Sabbath and the Jubilee (Ch 25)

"The Lord said to Moses, ² 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies."³ "There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the Lord.'" (Leviticus 23:1-3)

Eternal Jubilation is what the Year of Jubilee points to. Tribulation (shaking) is what God will increasingly permit, as a forewarning of what is to come. Because, as the flow of Leviticus 16, 23 & 25 shows, eternal jubilation cannot be entered without the fullness of the atonement. And without this, it's the fullness of judgment that will be entered. A jubilee rest for the land meant the restoration of justice, proclaiming liberty in the Lord and a return to God's right order.

? How was the observing of the Feasts meant to link the Sabbath (Lev 23:1-3, 25:1-7) to the vision of Jubilee, what does this mean for us?

POINT 2: We should anticipate an increasing “tribulation” (shaking) of the world and of the church, as God’s forewarning of what is to come

Please read the following passages together and discuss:

- Forewarning (Amos 4:12)
- Shaking (Isaiah 13:9-13)
- Falling away (Matthew 24:10)
- Day of God’s vengeance (2 Thess 1:7-10)

? What do you see as the problem and the opportunity we will have in the coming years?

POINT 3: The best picture of spiritual foundation that will be “shake-proof” in these times is that of the first believers

“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ “For in him we live and move and have our being.”] As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring.” ²⁹ ‘Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.’ (Acts 17:26-31)

? The great promise is this - that not all will fall away - what will make the difference?

Encourage One Another

As we come alongside one another, we have an opportunity to encourage one another to anticipate the “shaking” that is to come. The Gentile believers saw themselves as grafted in (Romans 11:17) forming “one new man” (Ephesians 2:15-16). Jesus return will be a moment of jubilation, but it will be preceded by a time of tribulation shaking. For those who are covered by His atoning sacrifice, it will be a time of great joy. For those who are not, it will be a time of vengeance against sin. So as we prepare for His return, our message must be to “return and repent” (Acts 17:26-31). The great promise is that not all will fall away. God is redeeming all things, bringing them back to His right order. We must encourage one another!

As 1 Thess 4:13-18 says, *“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.”*

- How do you picture yourself in the “jubilation” that will follow the “tribulation”?
- How can we learn from the “shake-proof” example of the “grafted” first believers?
- How can our community prepare to be strong in the face of the shaking to come?

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Jubilee Release **BIBLE STUDY WEEK**

4

Understanding *Forgiveness*

KEY VERSE: “Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:13b)

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: True forgiveness begins in community and ends in true release.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Colossians 3:11-15

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. ¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

? In what sense is forgiveness a form of release? Why is it so important to practice forgiveness?

Group Discussion

POINT 1: True forgiveness takes time and deliberate action

Lewis Smedes, professor of theology at Fuller Seminary wrote “Unforgiveness is like having a videotape planted in your soul that cannot be turned off. It plays the painful scene over and over again inside your mind. It hooks you into its instant replays. And each time it replays, you feel the clap of pain again... Forgiving turns off the videotape of pained memory. Forgiving sets you free.” In Leviticus 25, the Lord gave a command that in the Jubilee year all “debts” would be settled. All those whose debts had resulted in bond slavery were to be set free (Lev 25:39-41).

Forgiveness is the only way to stop the cycle of pain and brokenness. Forgiveness takes time. There are instant forgivers, but not many. We should not count on the ability to forgive bad hurts very quickly. C. S. Lewis once wrote to a friend, “Dear Mary... Do you know, only a few weeks ago, I realized suddenly that I had at last forgiven the cruel schoolmaster who so darkened my childhood. I had been trying to do it for years.” God takes his time with a lot of things. Why should we not give time for a hard miracle like forgiving? How can we help one another forgive?

? Will you share a personal example, either of receiving forgiveness or of learning to forgive?

POINT 2: Awareness of being forgiven, helps us to be able to forgive others

In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus tells a parable about forgiveness. The point of the parable is that those who have been forgiven have a special obligation to forgive those who sin against them. To say it simply, Jesus forgave us, so we are able to forgive others. When one thinks of how Christ forgave you it should make us much more generous with forgiveness. Please read this passage together and ask yourselves the following questions.

- What did the servant ask for in verse 26, what did he receive?
- What did the servant ask for in verse 29, what did he receive?
- What are the implications of the question in verse 33 for us?

? How can we help one another be more forgiving?

POINT 3: How can we help one another be more forgiving?

Can any-one forgive alone? It is possible, but it is hard. We need people who hurt as we hurt, who have known the same struggle to forgive. As professor Smedes writes, "I need persons who are struggling as hard as I need to struggle, before I come through forgiv-ingly. I know only socialized forgiving. It is fine if you can do it all by yourself; but if you are hooked into your video-tape of past pain, seek a fellowship of slow forgivers. They may help."

In Matthew 6:12 Jesus taught us to pray, "...forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." It is only when we are aware that we have sinned, that we can truly forgive those who have sinned against us. This is a type of true forgiveness that we can only practice if the power of Jesus flows in us and through us. Is there someone you haven't forgiven, especially a brother or sister in Jesus? Receive the forgiveness of Jesus, receive His strength and love, and forgive them in the mighty name of Jesus, as He forgave you. Not only will this bring release for them, it will bring release for you. Jubilee forgiveness brings Jubilee release.

? Will you share a situation where you would like to show true forgiveness?

Encourage One Another

As we come alongside one another, we have an opportunity to encourage one another to live out the reality of true forgiveness. How has God forgiven you? God makes the first move towards us in forgiveness; we often wait for the offending party to make the first move. God forgives often knowing that we will sin again; sometimes we revoke our forgiveness if the offending party does it again. God's forgiveness is so complete and glorious that He grants adoption and restoration to the offender; in the habit of man, even when forgiveness is offered, we often will not lift the offender to a place of true restoration and partnership. Forgiveness is not easy, it takes time, changed perspective and community.

- How can we better practice forgiveness in community with one another?
- Are you struggling with unforgiveness? Will you welcome breakthrough?
- Pray for one another, and ask Jesus to bring 'Jubilee release' in this area.

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Jubilee Rest **BIBLE STUDY WEEK**

5

Entering His *Sabbath Rest*

KEY VERSE: “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Hebrews 4:7b)

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Entering His rest means hearing His voice and moving forward in obedience.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Hebrews 4:1-7

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. ³ Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, ‘So I declared on oath in my anger, “They shall never enter my rest.” And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: ‘On the seventh day God rested from all his works.’ ⁵ And again in the passage above he says, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ ⁶ Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, ⁷ God again set a certain day, calling it ‘Today’. This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.’

? How does trusting in what God has said enable us to enter His rest?

Group Discussion

POINT 1: Entering His rest requires hearing His word and obeying

The two keys to entering into His Sabbath rest are hearing and obeying God’s word. Please read 1 Kings 17:1-9. In this passage Elijah hears a clear word from the Lord and he obeys. But suddenly things change to the unexpected. Elijah didn’t form a committee to discuss or question himself. He did not ask, “Did I get it wrong? Did I mishear the Lord?”. Instead he “rests” in what God has said and seeks revelation for the next move. As is said of the “men of Issachar”, in 1 Chronicles 12:32, “who understood the times and know what Israel should do”, Elijah was always ready for the next move of the Lord. He had learned to hear God’s voice and always be ready to obey.

? What have you heard from God about what you should do or do you still need to wait on Him?

POINT 2: Understanding what to do is not enough, we need to “step out” in faith and obey

Elijah was able to “rest” on the word that he already received, he was not thrown off by a change in plan or by a moment of uncertainty. In Hebrews 4:1-7, the writer of Hebrews explains the concept of the Sabbath, a day of rest once a week as practiced by God at creation. A weekly Sabbath is good for man, but it says that some who practiced this Sabbath did not “share in the faith of those who obeyed” (v2). Entering His Sabbath rest requires belief and obedience, as the hymn says “Trust and Obey, for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust, and obey.” Elijah heard the word of the Lord, but he did not just hearing God, he believed what God said, and he stepped out in faith, and obeyed the word He had received. He remained in the place of rest.

? Are there any fears that are keeping you from doing things you know you should be doing?

POINT 3: When we don’t hear a specific word, we need to rest on what God has already said

What about when God seems to be silent, when we don’t have a specific word to act on? Well the book of Acts gives us an example. Please read Acts 8:1-4. Sometimes we imagine that the book of Acts all took place in a month. But the believers in Acts went through many years of very tough times. During these challenging times for the Church, it appears that they didn’t hear a specific word from the Lord. In fact they had received many words. In Acts 1 they were told, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait...” and to “be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth”. The stoning of Stephen in Chapter 7 brought a new form of “release”, so that they were scattered and “preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4). Sometimes when great change is forced upon us, it is hard for us to adjust, we are driving out of our “comfort zone”. This is when God can release us to something new. Like Philip in Chapter 8, who obeyed and “started out” and “on his way” he came upon a God-appointed encounter with the Ethiopian official and baptized him (Acts 8:26-27).

? Are you presently facing a situation that can act as a catalyst for change?

Encourage One Another

Psalm 46:10-11 says “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” We can encourage one another to “enter the rest” of God’s power, and to believe the word He has spoken. We will enter into His Sabbath rest, when we learn to “be still”, on the solid foundation of what He has said. When we do this we are positioned for the “next thing” that He is doing. Like the men of Issachar, we will “understand our times... and know what to do”. Like Philip we need to be “still” in our belief, and in “movement” in our obedience. Always willing to make a change when the Lord shows us the new thing He is doing. We must be obedient, even when it may seem like a change of plans, then we will welcome the miracle of the power of the Holy Spirit and experience true joy. God has plans for us, we need be adaptable, to hear and walk in obedience!

- **How can we better help one another to “enter into His Sabbath” Jubilee rest?**
- **Are you struggling with any areas of fear that are hindering you in your belief?**
- **Pray for one another, ask Jesus to make us ready to stay or move out with him.**

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Jubilee Release **BIBLE STUDY WEEK**

6

Understanding Jubilee Release

KEY VERSE: “He has sent me... to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” (Luke 4:19)

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Jesus came to offer for everyone to experience an eternal year of Jubilee.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Luke 4:14-21

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. ¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written ¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’ ²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’

? What does it mean to be “poor”? What type of poverty is Jesus talking about?

Group Discussion

POINT 1: Jesus came to preach good news to the poor

The gospel of Jesus is “good news” for the poor, freedom for the prisoners and release for the oppressed. When we don’t have Jesus in our lives, we are in spiritual poverty. In Christ we receive spiritual riches. As we begin this study of Jubilee, we begin by focusing on celebrating all that God has done for us. One major sub-concept in the celebration of jubilee is thankfulness for what God has done. Read Leviticus 25: 9-11a. As you consider the 50 years of EBCG, think of the ways this fellowship has impacted you personally. Read Colossians 3:15. Remember that thankfulness and personal peace often go together. Take time in your group to share examples of God’s blessings, and to pray a prayer of thankfulness for the way God has used the EBCG in your life and around the world.

? Can you share some of the ways you have been “enriched” by the EBCG fellowship?

POINT 2: Jesus came to bring freedom for the oppressed

Read Luke 4:18-21 (above). In this passage, Jesus essentially proclaimed a Jubilee. His arrival was that “year of the Lord’s favor”. How does this compare to the first concept of jubilee in Leviticus that you read earlier? What are the differences? What are the similarities? Jesus says he has five jobs. Talk about each of them as it relates to what you think each means:

- Proclaim good news to the poor. **Who are the poor? What is the good news?**
- Proclaim liberty to the captives. **Who were the captives then? Who are they now?**
- Recovery of sight to the blind. **What are the two kinds of blindness we see today?**
- Freedom for the oppressed. **Who are the oppressed today? Do you have anyone in your life who is oppressed?**

? Can you share an example of oppression with your group, and take time to pray now?

POINT 3: Jesus came to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour

In his sermon Al shared his experience of meeting with refugees who had lost everything. One commented, “Yet with all that I’ve endured, I thank God, because now I have Jesus.” He went from poverty of spirit to receiving the riches of Christ. Jesus was also a refugee (having to flee to Egypt). He came to bring liberty for the oppressed, to confront all different forms of oppression and to proclaim the “year of the Lord’s favor”. Every time we accept Jesus and enter into a relationship with Him, we enter into the “Year of Jubilee”. Al reminds us of the need for a personal decision to accept Jesus, and receive the new life that is available to us in Christ. He encourages us to pray for those who have not experienced the “year of the Lord’s favor”, who are still enslaved to sin and brokenness. Read Romans 10:9-10. Freedom means that we are made righteous before God. Jesus went to the cross for our sins, and defeated the power of death by His resurrection. He offers us an eternal “year of the Lord’s favor”. This is how we enter into the Lord’s Jubilee year.

? If you have accepted Jesus as your savior and Lord, can you talk about this day with your group?

Encourage One Another

Take time to share the testimonies of how you first came to Christ with one another. Do not feel pressured to share if you are not comfortable. Would you like to share a burden for someone you know who has not yet accepted Christ? Take time to pray for them by name. And if you have not taken this step and confessed Jesus as Lord, quietly consider why not. What is stopping you from this? Take a moment and pray that God will reveal Himself to you. If you would like more information on how to begin a new life in Christ, contact Sam Fiore or discuss this with your small group leader. They would be glad to point you to someone who could help you. Al has also offered his contact information for anyone who would like to discuss this step with him. His email is al.goff@unto.com or WhatsApp at (972)322-2034.

NOTES

Jubilee
rest, return, release



Jubilee Return **BIBLE STUDY WEEK**

7

Return and Restoration in *Psalm 23*

KEY VERSE: “He leads me beside quiet waters... he restores my soul.” (Psalm 23:2-3)

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: When we are aware of our needs, our souls are guided back to the Lord.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³ he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

? What does it mean to not “be in want”? Does this mean that we will never be needy?

Group Discussion

POINT 1: Jubilee is an opportunity to return to God

Read Leviticus 25:4-10 In Leviticus 25 God commands Israel to practice a year of rest and of return. This is a picture of reliance on him for our needs, and of bringing all things back to his right order. Hundreds of years later, when King David is writing his song, he reminds himself that we all must return to the perspective of God as our shepherd. We all have needs, and in Matthew 6 Jesus himself reminds us that the Lord knows the things that we need. In Psalm 23:1-3, David is very aware that he personally has needs. Sheep are needy animals, not like a lion or a bear who can fend for themselves for survival. Maybe it is hard to accept that we are more like sheep than like other wild animals. Sheep need a shepherd, without a shepherd sheep will not have their needs met.

? Can you share some personal areas of need in your life right now? What are you asking for from God?

POINT 2: No matter what stage we are in life, God meets us at our point of need

Read Psalm 71:17-21 and Psalm 72:12-14. These passages remind us that when we return to God, he will restore us. Restoration is about all things being made right. While it is true that we will experience trouble in this life, the trouble that we experience can help us to return to God. And when we return to him we experience deliverance, salvation, and rescue and restoration. What are some of the areas where God promises he will bring rescue and restoration in these two passages? Read Psalm 23:4-6. Which of these promises is most meaningful to you.

? Can you share personal example of one of the promises from Ps 71, 72 or 23 with the group?

POINT 3: We have the promise of that God's goodness and love will follow us for eternity

During our study today we allowed for ourselves to look at suffering as a reality in our lives. Psalm 71 says “Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter” and Psalm 23 says “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death”. It is no use to pretend that we will never face suffering. But in the middle of suffering we can remind ourselves of God’s promises. That we will “fear no evil” because he is with us, that he will comfort us, that he will restore us and rescue us. During this season of Jubilee the Lord may allow for us to experience suffering. Our suffering can cause us to return to him in our moment of need. Our prayer lives can experience growth as, in our need, we cry out to him. Often when we experience trouble we feel that we are alone. We are not! He is with us, and he has given us one another. He is the God of comfort, and he gives us an opportunity to comfort one another (read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5). Often when we experience trouble, we feel like we are being crushed, as if we are running away from trouble that is sure to catch up with us. Psalm 23 reminds us that instead God’s “goodness and love” will follow us, indeed that we carry God’s goodness and love with us into every situation. And this promise is for “all the days of (our) life” which David reminds us in Psalm 23:6 will be for ever! Psalm 23 is a picture of eternal Jubilee, resting in God’s provision for every need, returning to him to receive full restoration.

? Can you give an example of how you have experienced comfort and provision from one another?

Encourage One Another

Take time to share the testimonies of how you have felt the Lord's presence during this recent season together. Have you experienced trouble? Have you felt your need? Have you felt yourself returning to Him, and if so, have you experienced restoration of anything that you might have felt was "lost". During our call next week via zoom, several groups will be asked to share an example of the reality of the Jubilee year in our experience of these weeks with one another. Is there an area of your life, or the life of our city which you feel needs to experience rest, return or release? What steps would you like to take to see things restored to God's right order? Let's remember that this is only the beginning of our Jubilee journey together. End your time together in prayer, and be sure to proclaim liberty "throughout the land" in every domain.

NOTES



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