

## Key – 2, Christ Our Sabbath – The Year of the Lord's Favor, 4 pgs

**Lk.4:16-21** [Jesus, in a synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath reading from **Isa.61:1-2a**] *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has appointed Me [the reality behind the figure of being anointed with oil for an office or task] to proclaim good news to the poor [category: needy, helpless, powerless, those humbled by the circumstances of their lives]. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives [redemption] and recovery of sight to the blind [restoration], to set at liberty those who are oppressed [victims, downtrodden], to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.<sup>a</sup> Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing [the savior has come; salvation and the kingdom are near].*

### GOD'S PROGRAM OF REDEMPTION

Jesus' words need to be filled with content to be meaningful or they become empty like a slogan or a cliché. Jesus was about to make a way for men to be forgiven and approach God, something the OT did not have (**Heb.9:8-12**). **Isa.61** refers to the liberation of Israel from what was a yet future Babylonian captivity. The year of **the Lord's favor** [unqualified blessing, **Isa.60:19-21**] corresponds to similar phrases, **time of favor** and **day of salvation** in **Isa.49:8** which is quoted in **2 Cor.6:2a**. At **the acceptable time** I listened to you and on the day of salvation I helped you. The part that follows (**2b**) leaves no doubt of the meaning, **Behold now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation**. These phrases are all referring to the same thing.

Further when Jesus quoted from **Isa.61** (in **Lk.4** above), He stopped short.<sup>b</sup> But Isaiah continued - **and [with it] the day of vengeance for our God [judgment at the return of Jesus] to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who mourn in Zion, to give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, a cloak of praise instead of a faint spirit ... 61:2b-3**. He did not come the first time to bring God's wrath upon the earth, but to proclaim deliverance from that awful judgment which will come upon the earth. In contrast, he came this time **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, Lk.4:18-19**. Such phrases are meant to be understood as a time of joy having their ultimate fulfillment in spiritual realities, things pertaining to ultimate redemption (**Col.2:16-17**). This is what is depicted by the year of Jubilee.

### THE CONNECTION WITH GOD'S REST

After Joseph's death, a new pharaoh rose to power in Egypt who **set taskmasters over the Israelites to afflict them with heavy burdens ... They ruthlessly made the people work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, Ex.1:8-14**. Years later, God sent Moses to lead them out, **I have seen the affliction of My people ... and have heard their cry because of their task-masters. I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them ... and to bring them ... to a [bountiful] land ... Ex.3:7-10**. 80 years later, Moses approached pharaoh with God's demand to release the people to sacrifice to Him, pharaoh accused Moses of giving the people **rest from their burdens** and he increased the workload even more, **let heavier work be laid on the men, Ex.5:1-14**.<sup>c</sup> As Moses was leading the Israelites out of oppression and slavery in Egypt, **Ex.12**, there is a progression of relief in the rest God makes for them beyond no longer serving the Egyptians. They had just been supernaturally freed from Egyptian tyranny; supernaturally rescued from annihilation by the Egyptian military forces (**Ex.14**). They were supernaturally being led across the desert, **Ex.13**; They drank water supernaturally purified, **15:22-25**; and were led to a very large oasis with abundant water and

shade (v.27) (that just happened to be unoccupied) where all the people and their livestock could rest.

**The people had complained and grumbled at seemingly every trial** and they did so again after they broke camp and began the next phase of the crossing. Each time, God treated them with patience and kindly (supernaturally) intervened to correct the problem. But the people continued to grumble.<sup>c</sup>

*In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death, Ex.16:2-3.*

God responded by graciously (supernaturally) raining quail down on them in the evening and he began a practice of depositing manna on the desert surface every morning for the people to gather, **Ex.16:4-15**. He set aside one day out of each 7 as a **weekly Sabbath rest** on which they were forbidden to gather manna. He made supernatural provision for that day, and continued that practice for 40 years while Israel wandered in the wilderness, **v.15-35**. God's rules governing the manna and the Sabbath were specific and detailed, **v.16-36**. **The Sabbath was later included in the covenant with Israel as its sign (Ex.31:12-18; Ez.20:11-20)**. On it, everyone [all the laborers, servants, and slaves, the kitchen staff, and the work animals] had a full day off, a rest, a break from the relentless monotony and grind of life.

Remember what Jesus said, *The Sabbath was made for [the benefit of] man, and not man for the Sabbath [to his detriment]. Come to Me all who labor and are heavy laden [weighed down by a heavy load] and I will give you rest. Take My yoke [harness that serves as an emblem or symbol of subjugation] upon you and learn from Me for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light, Mt.11:28-30.*

God also established a Sabbath year. Every 7<sup>th</sup> year the land was to be left alone [no planting, no cultivating, no pruning, no commercial harvesting, or marketing]. The Israelites were to store up food from the 6<sup>th</sup> year and leave the fields for the poor, the hired hands, foreigners, servants, and cattle. There was to be no pressure for people in debt to repay personal loans. It was the year of release (Dt.15:1-2a) [remission, cancellation of debts], a time to recover and recuperate from the ceaseless burden of making interest payments.<sup>d</sup>

**After a series of 7 such years, 49 total, God mandated a year of Jubilee, Lev.25:8-13. Ez.46:16-17** calls it *the year of liberty*. For those who had fallen on hard times because of the circumstances of life, or by being swindled by unscrupulous men, or because they made bad or foolish decisions and were in debt or had sold their land or themselves into servitude, **God says FREEDOM for those who could not redeem themselves or find a relative who would; CANCELLATION of the debts they could not pay; RESTORATION of their inheritance in the land**; God provided food for everyone and all the animals on the fallow ground. This language of deliverance meshes with that of **Lk.4**. The weary laborer looked forward to the Sabbath day when he could rest. So the man struggling to keep up payments on his debts and provide for his family anticipated the Sabbath year to relieve the pressure and give him a chance to catch up. Thus those who were hopelessly in debt, who had lost everything

waited and longed for the year of Jubilee [rejoicing, celebration].

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. [FINALLY] **The time has come**, he said. **The kingdom of God has come near**. Repent and believe the good news! Mk.1:14-15. So **we in the Gospel age find our rest in Christ our Sabbath,<sup>e</sup> our Jubilee**. For he says, *In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. I tell you, [right] now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor.6:2; Isa.49:8. [see Adam's Song]*

The very next time the people were tested, God stood on a rock and had Moses strike it with his rod, and abundant water [representing life in the desert] supernaturally flowed out of it enough for the whole congregation and their livestock, Ex.17:1-7.<sup>f</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Not a calendar year, but the period **when salvation would at last be announced** by the Gospel and accompanied by signs such as physical healing demonstrated that after some 400 years of silence (since Malachi), God has “remembered” His people and “turned His face toward them.”

<sup>b</sup> Isa.61 opens with someone proclaiming that **the Spirit of the Lord is upon him, v.1**, to accomplish the Lord's redemptive purposes, **v.1-6**. Then the Lord himself speaks, **v.7-9**, proclaiming the everlasting covenant characterized by both joy and justice. The vengeance theme is developed in **chapter 63**.

<sup>c</sup> **see GOD'S TRAINING – 1 & 2**. Abram and Sarai came from a pagan culture with a lot of baggage. They knew nothing about the Living God who called them out of it. They had to learn about him and his ways from scratch. They had to be **trained out of** [deconstructed from] their native mentality and understanding of the world [default setting] and **retrained** [reconstructed and recalibrated] **to the supernatural nature of God and his ways**. This essay is about their journey out of the darkness of ignorance into the undiscovered country of the light. **THIS TRAINING IS A NECESSARY JOURNEY ALL OF US WHO COME TO CHRIST ARE OBLIGED TO TAKE**. It took them a long time and much adversity, but they did finally come to trust in God's providence. Throughout their **training** God was patient with them and never once criticized them. They are both highly commended in the NT for their **faith as seen by their obedience**. Their responses to God's promises have become an example to us as we are being trained.

**More significant than what we go through is our response to it because that is effectively our response to God**. In all that he designs or allows us to experience, his chief concern is that our attitudes become consistent with those of his son, Jesus Christ. He was subject to the authority of his parents as he was growing up, even though at that time it seemed to run counter to his Heavenly Father's business (Lk.2:49). Because of this response, he grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man (Lk.2:52).

<sup>d</sup> The length of Israel's Babylonian captivity was determined by the number of years they failed to observe the Sabbath year law, **2 Chr.36:15-21; Jer.29:10**.

<sup>e</sup> Heb.3:7-4:11, [v.9 lit, *sabbath keeping*]

**f** This was a picture of **eternal life that comes to us** through the judgment of Christ, **1 Cor.10:1-5**.