

WHY JUBILEE?

Contributed by Jim Jordal
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By Jim
Jordal

“I have written for him the great things of my law, but they were counted by him a strange thing” Hosea 8:12

The context

of this passage indicates that it was written to Ephraim, one of the 12 sons of Jacob and considered by most to represent the 10 tribes taken into Assyrian captivity (from which they never returned) in 721 BC. Whether you consider yourself an Israelite descended from the so-called Lost Ten Tribes, as many Mormons today do, or by adoption (Galatians 3), you are among the people to whom this lament was written.

God relates

that he gave his people the “great things of my law,” or the national blessings bestowed on peoples who would simply do what God said. That law included the Jubilee provisions of Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15, promising renewed peace and prosperity for those nations following Jubilee economic and social justice.

God then

laments that these “great things” were counted as a strange thing. These Jubilee provisions were never seriously implemented by Israel, and were soon replaced by a series of judges and kings, some of whom helped the people and others who built dynasties to themselves.

Jubilee is

the name given to that portion of God’s law dealing with human economic and commercial behavior and relationships. It was the planned economic system for the newly-freed people of Israel following their 400 years of slavery in Egypt. And it is a prominent part of the set of moral principles under which the returned Christ will rule his earthly kingdom.

Why mention

this now? Because as time passes it becomes increasingly obvious that political,

economic, social, and religious systems of the secular world order are in a state of decline, if not actual collapse. No matter what we do to modify these systems we still face the same results---chaos, revolution, defeat, and a general public sense of hopelessness and apathy. We seemingly cannot overcome the human tendency to abuse power, amass wealth, and then to use that newfound power to ensure enduring blessings of privilege, with little or no willingness to share our benefits with those less fortunate.

Today we endure ignorance and disregard by national leaders for the laws of God and an even worse marginalizing and discounting of these same laws by the very people charged with bringing them to the public attention---the clergy and their ecclesiastical institutions. The modern church has become sidetracked by excessive formalism and tradition on one hand, and total obsession with personal salvation, individual piety, and sexual purity on the other. This sad situation has now reached the place where it's unusual to hear anything about justice beyond the never ending pleas for charity. It's as if the generic church has lost the ability to speak out on the "great things" of God's law, with a consequent virtual disintegration of national justice and decency for people, their necessary institutions, and the earth itself.

William

Gladstone, a noted Prime Minister of Britain during the 19th Century, said: "Nothing that is morally wrong can be politically right; I would add that neither can it be religiously or spiritually right. Evil is evil, no matter how we attempt to hide it behind expediency.

Martin

Luther added, "If you preach the gospel in all its fullness, with the exception of those events pertinent to your times, you are not preaching the gospel at all." The true gospel ought to have something to say about the crucial issues of our time, like war, financial oppression, ecology, and the evident decline of world systems of social control.

By

continuing to ignore God's Jubilee system of justice both the nation and the church earn God's displeasure. In the past such malfeasance could escape Divine retribution because the time was not yet right. But, as God said to Abraham in Genesis 15, "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet complete," indicating that God was not yet ready to act against injustice.

But today we

live in a different age. We are the people "upon whom the ends of the ages have fallen." How much longer will we avoid the "great things" of God's law in favor of religious pablum that may make us feel good, but has little substance?