

SIGHTINGS

Jesus in the Old Testament

Haven't you read the sightings?" That's the question Jesus effectively asked two men on the road to Emmaus. Jesus explained to them how the Old Testament (Hebrew) Scriptures pointed to Him. We read, "Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him." (Luke 24).

Our current series looks at some of the celebrations in the calendar of ancient that point the way to Jesus. A series like this is particularly appropriate this time of the year in preparation to Easter as we remember the extreme act that Jesus went through in order for us to feast in relationship with God.

USING THE DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Some Christians prepare for Easter with a season called Lent. Effectively, it's a time of increased spiritual reflection and preparation. With that in mind, the daily questions and reflections are designed to help you re-appreciate God's involvement in your life and the radical call from Jesus to live as his followers.
2. In addition to these questions, you might want to take a page of the directory to pray through each day. Over the course of this series, you would have prayed for everybody in our church community.

USING LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

Spiritual Growth best happens in community. If you're not already in a LifeGroup, contact the office to find out more. You can also go to our website and find a group at <http://www.mabc.org.nz/content/life-groups>. How about making a commitment to check it out for the duration of this 5 week series?

Monday: Celebration!

1. Read Leviticus 25:8-10 and Luke 4:18-19.
2. Background: The year of Jubilees came around every 50 years, so just once or twice during a person's life-time. Four things happened on this year: 1) the land was left to rest; 2) all land was returned to its original Israelite owners 3) all Israelite slaves were released 4) all debt was cancelled.
3. What emotions might the people experience before and during this year? What would the atmosphere be like this year? Why?

4. Jesus said that he fulfills the year of Jubilees? How? Take some time to reflect on this.
5. Turn to page 6 of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven't met them before.

Tuesday: Rest for the Land

1. Read Leviticus 25:1-7, 11-12, 18-22.
2. Background: Every seven years the people were to refrain from planting crops/pruning the vines or trees. It was a Sabbath year for the land. The Year of Jubilees (every 50th year) has the same mandate about the land. These verses address some of the fears the people might have in doing so.
3. What are some of the lessons the people of God would learn and experience about God as they obeyed this law? Are there any lessons here that you need to reflect on in your own life about God and the way He provides?
4. The Old Testament blessings were spoken of as "rest," while its cursings were spoken of in terms of "no rest." Rest was to be given in the land, while no rest was to be experienced outside the land. In the light of the relationship of "rest" to the "land," think of the claim which our Lord was making when He said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The Jews were in the land of promise, but they did not have rest. Jesus offered them rest, in Himself, not in the land. Rest is now something which is found in Christ, not in a physical location.
5. Consider what it means to "find rest in Christ." How do we experience this in reality?
6. Turn to page 7 of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven't met them before.

Wednesday: Land Returned

1. Read Leviticus 25:13-17; 23-34
2. Background: One of the things that happened in the year of Jubilee was that all land was to be returned to its original Israelite owners. Effectively, those who bought the land from these original owners were leasing it for a period of time up to the next Year of Jubilee.
3. What was the motivation behind this law? What did it do for the people? What did it avoid?
4. The prophets spoke much of Israel's restoration. Through Jeremiah God promised restoration, based upon Israel's keeping of the Sabbath day (Jeremiah

17:24-27). But even when the captives were loosed and God's people returned to the land of promise, observance of God's "laws of the land" was imperfect (cf. Neh. 5). The later prophets spoke of a great and future day of restoration, which will be fulfilled only in the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom.

5. Reflect on Jesus' words in Luke 4:18-19 (quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2): "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor." (NLT).
6. Turn to page 8 of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven't met them before.

Thursday: Slaves freed

1. Read Leviticus 25:39-43
2. Background: The picture we have of African slaves in chains is probably different to the picture of slavery here in Leviticus. When people faced financial challenges, they may have needed to sell their land. The problem was that once their land was sold, they had no income and, therefore, no food on the table. This led them to sell themselves/their families to a land-owner where they would work and be provided for in return. One of the things that happened in the year of Jubilee was that all Israelite slaves were to be released. God had brought the people out of slavery and did not want them to be in slavery again. Having the land released (refer to yesterdays notes), enabled the people to earn once again.
3. As you reflect on the above verses, note the way the people were to treat each people facing financial challenges?
4. Reflect on Jesus' words in Luke 4:18-19 (quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2): "He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released..." (NLT).
5. Turn to page 9 of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven't met them before.

Friday: Debt cancelled!

1. Read Deuteronomy 15:1-2
2. Background: One of the four things that happened on the year of Jubilees was that all debt was cancelled.
3. What would cancelling debt do for the people and society?
4. Reflect on Jesus' words in Luke 4:18-19 (quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2): "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor . . . He sent me to proclaim . . .that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD'S favor has come." (NLT).

5. Reflect: Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV). Jubilees are about 'release.' What comes to mind when you think of that word? What heavy weights are you carrying that you don't need to carry?
6. Turn to page 10 of your new church directory and take time to pray for others in our faith family, even if you haven't met them before.

LIFE GROUPS

JUBILEES

OVERVIEW

This past Sunday, we looked at the Year of Jubilees. Every fifty years, this year-long celebration came around – so probably just once or twice during a person's life-time. Four things happened on this year: 1) the land was left to rest; 2) all land was returned to its original Israelite owners 3) all Israelite slaves were released 4) all debt was cancelled. This was a radical event that was not practiced elsewhere. The heavy weight that the people carried could be replaced by freedom and release!

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Have you ever been released from a debt (financial or some other sort)?
2. What's the worst financial mistake you ever made?
3. Looking back at this week's teaching, what particular point, statement or scripture caught your attention, challenged or confused you the most?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. There is no record of the Israelites ever having a Year of Jubilee. If it did happen, it happened just a handful of times. Why do you think this might have happened?

2. What emotion might the people feel prior to the Year of Jubilees? What emotion during it, having experienced release?
3. Read Jesus mission statement – Luke 4:18-19 and Isaiah 61:1-2
There is something missing from Jesus citation from Isaiah 61:1-2. He stops in the middle of a sentence and leaves off the mention of God's judgement. Compare Luke 4:19 and Isaiah 61. What does this say about Jesus present work?
4. The year of Jubilees was a time when no crops were planted, a time to rest the land. It was also a time when the land was returned to its original owner. What impact would these practices have had on God's people?
5. Isaiah predicted the liberation of Israel from the future Babylonian captivity, but Jesus proclaimed liberation from sin and all its consequences. How is this liberation from sin expressed in our daily lives?

TAKING IT HOME

Looking back at this week's teaching, what is the one take-away for you:

1. What weights are you carrying that you can leave with Jesus?
2. What release can you experience as you come to Jesus?
3. The Jubilee that Jesus brings is not solely for us to experience. It's for others! Discuss the following quote by Dallas Willard: "Faith today is treated as something that only should make us different, not that actually does or can make us different. In reality we vainly struggle against the evils of this world, waiting to die and go to heaven. Somehow, we've gotten the idea that the essence of faith is entirely a mental and inward thing."

4. Reflect: "Sometimes I would like to ask God why He allows poverty, suffering, and injustice when He could do something about it." "Well, why don't you ask Him?" "Because I'm afraid He would ask me the same question." – Anonymous. As we consider Global poverty – reflect on our responsibility, as followers of Jesus, to release the oppressed.
5. As some Christians have reflected on the Year of Jubilees, they have been motivated to help bring 'release' to the majority world through such things as debt release. What are potential ways that Christians can help bring 'release' to others?

GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS

Break into groups of 2-3. Pray that God will give us His heart for those suffering oppression or poverty. Pray also for the desire and ability to apply the things learnt from today's study. Pray for one of our global missionaries serving overseas.