

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Seven

The Seventh Year – Year of Release

Deu. 15:1 "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. 2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release."

In today's society, whenever a person pays off a loan such as a real estate loan or car loan, the creditor grants to the debtor a "release of lien." This release indicates that the debtor no longer has a lien against the property he has purchased. A "release" takes away any future liability or responsibility to the one to whom it is granted.

The release at the end of every seven years was designed for the benefit of the debtor. The way this works is if a man had borrowed a thousand dollars and had paid back five hundred dollars when the year of release came, he would be released from the responsibility of paying back the last five hundred dollars. The creditor bore the burden of the last five hundred dollars.

We have no record that the children of Israel ever observed the year of release. They started to do it once in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, but they reneged on it after they started and the Lord was sore displeased: Jer. 34:13 "Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, 14 At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear.

15 And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: 16 But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. 17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to

the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."

No doubt, the creditors in Israel refused to observe the year of release because of the covetousness of their own hearts whereby they did not want to suffer the loss of revenue from their loans.

However, the year of release points us to a greater release. All of mankind owed a great debt of sin unto God. God is just; therefore, the debt must be paid. Before God could grant a release, the debt had to be paid. God arranged that Christ would pay the debt for those elected before the foundation of the world.

When the time came for the crucifixion of Christ, Pilate was confronted with the custom of releasing a prisoner to the people at the Passover. The two prisoners under consideration for release was Barabbas and Christ. Barabbas had been guilty of murder and insurrection. Whereas, Christ bore no guilt of his own, but was carrying the burden of all the sins of the elect. Pilate knew that Christ was not guilty of any crime and sought to have him released. However, the chief priests and rulers moved the people to ask that Barabbas be released. The voice of the people prevailed and Christ was delivered to be crucified and Barabbas released. Barabbas, who was guilty of murder and insurrection, was released of the debt and responsibility of those crimes before men. Christ, who was not guilty of any sin, bore the burden of punishment. Yet his punishment was not for his sins, but for the sins of the elect.

Just as the guiltless died and the guilty went free in the release of Barabbas, so the guiltless of sin, Jesus Christ, suffered the payment of the debt of sin we owed that we be released from the payment of that debt. Just as Barabbas was released of the debt and responsibility of his crimes, so are we released from the debt and responsibility of paying the debt of sin we owed. Once a debt is released we are no longer responsible for paying the debt. Praise be to our wonderful Saviour, who has paid our debt and released us from the responsibility of ever having to pay our sin debt.