

## The Early Church Institutes the Jubilee

### Part I

#### Chapter 2



The message of God's Kingdom government was the central focus of Jesus' message. Jesus had been tried and crucified for sedition because He advocated (preached and taught) a new theocratic universal government administered from outside the societally developed political system. And generally unknown textual evidence indicates that Jesus early identified with proponents of land reform. The ethical content of Jesus' transcendental government, the Kingdom of God with its unique treatment of the critical land issue, did not harmonize with accepted mores of the local political order.

At issue was whether Jesus' claim to authority in this transcendental government with its ethical content was a kingship of substance threatening the existing political structure. And it is likely that it was elements of His economic reform that precipitated some of the most intense opposition of Israel's leaders. There is evidence in the Gospels that Jesus' moral outrage over economic abuse reached intense levels. For example, the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 23) cites venomous diatribes against the Jewish leaders--whom Jesus calls "hypocrites," "blind fools," and even "murderers,"--terms, which particularly attach to those who implement and support socially debilitating and murderous land policies, the policies that were creating a disenfranchised and impoverished social class (See Chapter One). Jesus' pronouncements to Israel's leaders were made to those who had a heritage in the law and the prophets--to those who should have had an awareness of the ethical issues involved. Jesus was justified in making His accusations.<sup>1</sup>

The instrument of correcting social injustice in Israel was the Hebrew Jubilee. And as followers of Jesus there is indication that the early church proceeded to institute the Jubilee soon after the crucifixion/resurrection and while the church was in the formative stages of developing its public program. Without waiting for government action or legal approval, they put into practice what Jesus had preached and thus addressed the economic needs of the dynamically growing church.

Copyright © 2016 Glenn E. Weeks. All Right Reserved

US Copyright Office Registration # TX 8-257-053 - 1 -

It is the position of ChristianText that the early Christian church leaders, having had direct contact with Jesus, understood the land/economic issue in the manner that Jesus had cited and developed.

The early disciples had no question as to how the Jubilee was to be implemented. Acts 2:41ff and Acts 4:32ff record that they instituted the Jubilee among themselves in the power of the promised Holy Spirit within three years of the resurrection event.

**"So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls...And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet;" Acts 2:41; 4:31-35 RSV**

Some historians have cited these texts as a proof that the early Christians held Communistic or Socialist beliefs in that they held all things in common, distributing to members according to need. They have missed the point. They ignore the real meaning of the action the early church took to correct the abuses of the brutal and selfish ruling class in Israel and to moderate the economic divide evident among their members. It also validates Jesus' teaching on the ethics of the land issue as it was the landed aristocracy, particularly the Sadducees, who had long practiced the debilitating land laws of the ownership god, Bál, by aggregating economic land rent to themselves and violating the basic moral laws of justice.

The common assumption, however, is that the early Christians sold assets to meet the immediate need

of members. The need of church members was valid, but it is very doubtful that the program was simply a stopgap effort to meet the disadvantaged church members' immediate need only. For why would the ruling class have been concerned about the disciples selling assets just to distribute to the needs of their economically poorer church adherents? There obviously was a more pointed message in the program of the early disciples to have elicited such visceral ire as manifest by the Jewish leaders--it was a program rooted in the Jubilee tradition of Israel which had been long ignored by the Báal-inspired land practices of the ruling class. The program touched the root of aristocratic privilege.

The success and influence of the new church was evident to all. It was palpable, dynamic and growing. But the issue which had been present during the ministry of Jesus was still an irritant, the rich/poor divide and the privilege which caused it--it was too much for the ruling class. The action of the early church in instituting this manifestation and form of the Jubilee sent a poignant and pointed message to the leaders of Israel that their government was morally bankrupt and that a new day in social policy had arrived. And the action was not lost on the leaders of Israel.

**"But the high priest rose up and all that were with him, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the common prison."**  
**Acts 5:17 RSV**

Even though this early attempt to institute the Jubilee as a correction for social abuse was to prove premature to the final correction of poverty, the action was notable, as this program of the early church was a foretaste of the final resolution of distressing social issues. (Actual implementation of this Jubilee-inspired program requires governmental support and involvement, both national and perhaps on an international level to succeed--as such, several beneficial programs must wait for the 'restitution of David' [See Chapter 10]. This was envisioned by James, the brother of Jesus, at the council of Jerusalem in 50 A.D.[Acts 15:16-18]) However, the first Christian martyr, Stephen, one of those involved in the economic distribution this program entailed (Acts 6:5) had risen to defend the Christian way after being accused of 'speaking blasphemous words.' (Acts 6:11) His speech was to be recognized as one of the great speeches of history.

**Three pages of  
Chapter 2, Part I,  
are shown  
as a sample of this  
chapter. This chapter  
is included in the  
book, GENESIS II,  
and  
may be purchased  
via the purchase  
menu.**

***Buy Now***

