

Chapter 10



The Restoration of the Davidic Government - The Economics of Justice Part III

At the Council of Jerusalem in 50 A.D., a number of critical issues facing the early church were addressed. The Council of Jerusalem dealt with the growth dynamics and needs of early Christianity as it developed in the then-current world environment. The decisions made on these issues were to prove to be watershed positions which were to affect the direction of Christianity for centuries.

The 'restoration of David' was referenced by James, the brother of Jesus, at this council meeting (Acts 15:16-18). James' reference was a textual extrapolation of Amos 9:11-12 citing the restoration of David, and some issue decisions at the Jerusalem council were delayed until they could be fully implemented in the future restoration, as James implied. Thus the restoration of David was an expected and anticipated reality of the early Christian church.

Part I reviewed the textual references that forecast the restoration of the Davidic government. In Part I a new land use plan of the restored Davidic government is cited, the forecasted Temple construction is shown, and the forecast of a Davidic civil government implementation is referenced. Part II addresses the prophetic timing of the restoration. Part III details the economics of justice which is associated with the restoration. Part IV cites additional conditions and references of the Davidic government restoration while Part V traces the historical political formations which lead to the restoration.

Economic justice, the right for all men to have equitable access to earth's resources, is developed as the full implementation of 'The Kingdom of God' on earth. It was shown in Chapter One, *Jesus And The Problem of World Poverty*, that Jesus supported basic human rights involving access to earth's bountifulness--denial of these rights in social practice was the focus of Jesus' intense condemnation.¹ The predicted 'Kingdom of God,' the coming kingdom of justice with and among men includes the implementation of basic land resource access rights.

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Biblical Documents Predict the Restoration of the Davidic Government

Ancient Israel had been subjugated by Babylon and taken into exile because Israel had failed to institute social justice, opting instead to allow Báal land policies to create a wealthy class and a poverty class in Israel. A time prophecy given by Daniel (See Chapter 10, Part II: *The Predicted Time of the Restoration*) indicated that the exile, the distress of Jacob, was to span 2,300 years, after which the exile judgment was to be reversed and there was to be a restoration of Israel. A specific message regarding this restoration was given by Jeremiah and is recorded in the 30th chapter of the book by his name. It reads:

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. For behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and will bring them back to the land which I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.

These are the words which the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah: 'Thus says the Lord: We have heard a cry of panic, of terror, and no peace. Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale? Alas! that day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it. And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will break the yoke from off their neck, and I will burst their bonds, and strangers shall no more make servants of them. But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.' "

Jeremiahs's prediction regarding the restoration of Israel was made in relation to the subjugation judgment brought by Israel's failure to follow God's instruction regarding the institution of social justice--specifically it was brought for failing to observe the Hebrew Jubilee. A brief background of this failure follows.

Land ownership practices in Israel at the time of Jesus had a history dating back to the 9th century. In the 9th century B.C., the striking difference in land policies between Israel and Phoenicia is illustrated in the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-19). King Ahab wished to add Naboth's vineyard to his adjacent estate. Naboth refused to sell or exchange his vineyard, claiming that to do so would violate the heritage of his clan. The Báal (Phoenician) system of land usage and ownership practices treated land not as an inheritance to be retained, but rather as a commodity to be bought and sold. Therefore, under the Báal system of commodity land laws, Naboth's insistence that his land heritage be maintained was a preposterous position. King Ahab's wife Jezebel subsequently had Naboth condemned in a public trial for blasphemy against the god Báal and the king. Naboth was executed and the vineyard was taken. This difference in land policy between Phoenicia and Israel caused Elijah the Tishbite to thunder in moral outrage, "If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Báal, then follow him." (I Kings 18:21)

In the book of Leviticus (Leviticus 25:23), it was indicated that the land occupied by the Hebrews was not to be sold:

"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the country you possess, you shall grant a redemption of the land."

The hallmark spirit and character of Elijah the Tishbite (Elijah the Prophet) was in his opposition to Báal-inspired land practices in Israel. This opposition established his unique position in history as well as establishing the precedence for those who would follow him. Elijah's opposition to the Báal-inspired land policies in Israel along with activities against those who promoted these policies would become known to

posterity as 'the spirit and power of Elijah.' But in spite of efforts by Elijah (1 Kings 18:40), Gideon (Judges 6:25), Jehu (2 Kings 10:18), Jehoiada (2 Kings 11:18), and Josiah (2 Kings 23:4; 2 Chronicles 34:4) to destroy Báal worship, Báal observances continued. A reference in Jeremiah 23:27 indicates Israel had forgotten God for Báal. Jeremiah 32:29 records that incense was offered to Báal, and Jeremiah 32:35 indicates high places were built to Báal. Báal meant lord, master, possessor or owner, and Báal worship was enticing, in that Báal land ownership policies created an elitist wealthy class, an aristocracy, while at the same time creating a slave labor class. Jeremiah 23:13-40 makes plain that God would bring a longlasting reproach on Israel for instituting and continuing this error.

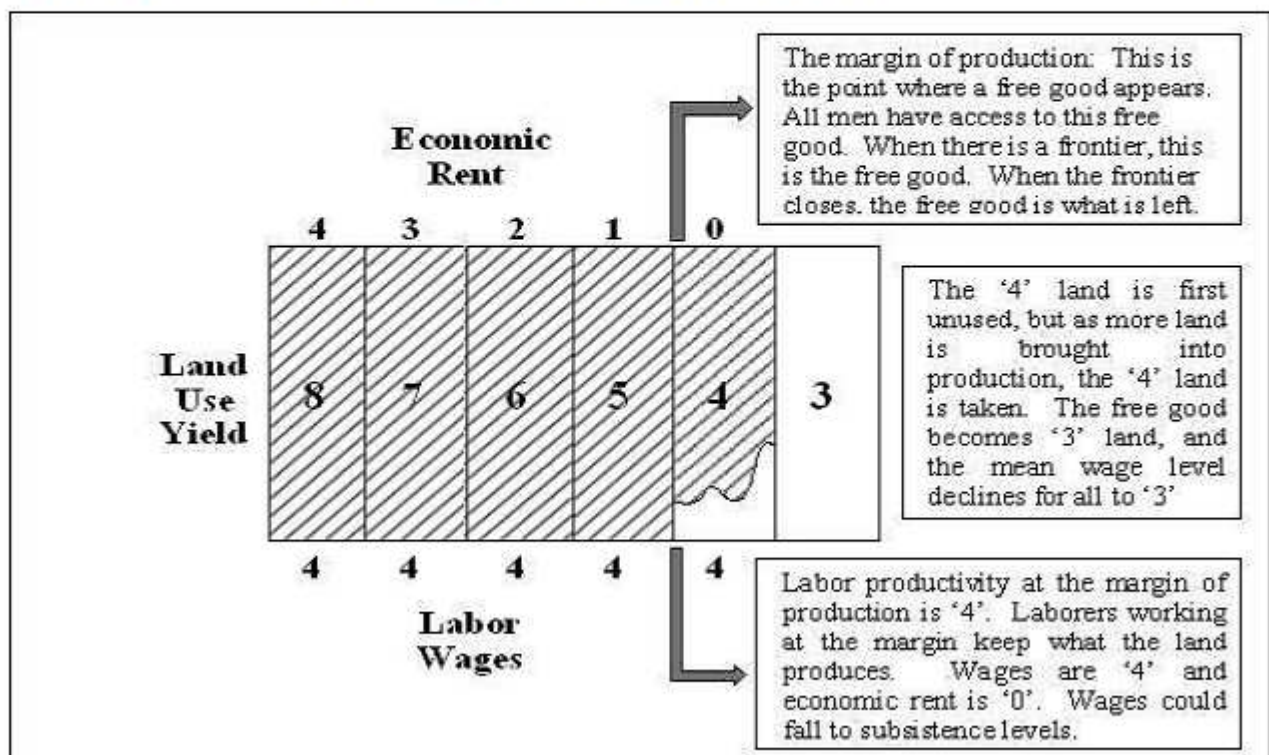
Although the Hebrew Jubilee was a critical social adjustment festival which was designed to correct the distribution imbalance caused by different land productivity rates, the Jubilee was actually implemented only twice in Israel after the reign of Ahab and Jezebel. The second attempted implementation of the Jubilee was short-lived, in that the resultant freeing of the slaves was soon reversed. This failure of instituting social justice in Israel brought the judgment of subjugation by Babylon. (See Chapter 3 for a more complete treatment of the land issue.)

The reference to the second attempted institution of the Jubilee occurred during the reign of Zedekiah when Jerusalem was under Babylonian siege (about 587 B.C.). Zedekiah made a covenant with the people and "proclaimed freedom" to the slaves (Jeremiah 34:8). When the siege was temporarily lifted, however, the aristocracy changed their minds and took back their slaves (Jeremiah 34:11). Because of their hypocrisy, inspired by Báal cultural influences, the prophet Jeremiah announced that the people would be "set free"--to the sword, pestilence, and famine (vv. 15-17).

When the Babylonians returned, resuming and completing the siege of Jerusalem and subjugating Israel, we are told that they left the poor as vinedressers in the land (II Kings 25:12). Thus God forcibly implemented social justice in Israel, permitting the laboring class to continue in the land but removing the aristocracy who had practiced Báal policies. However, even with this, the implementation of Báal-inspired social policies did not end. By the time of the Maccabees, Báal land policies had been fully established again in Israel. And it was the wealthy landowners, particularly the ruling party, the Sadducees, who

continued to practice the Báal land policies in Israel. And modern research has substantiated that the aristocracy of Israel were the large land holders.²

The reason that land ownership is so critical to the community and to the creation of social classes is that the margin of production, the least productive land brought into production, determines the mean wage level for all labor. The British economist David Ricardo (1772-1823) first articulated this operational principle, calling it 'The Iron Law of Wages.' The principle is illustrated in the graph below:



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