

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

Series: "The Kingdom of God"



Message: "The Kingdom and the Jubilee"

[Click/tap to hear the live recording](#)

Dr. Mary Craig

June 6, 2021

After being tempted by the devil, Jesus returned in the power of the Holy Spirit to Galilee. News of Him spread. Jesus taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. Then He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. It was His custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Jesus came into the synagogue in Nazareth. He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. Finding the place where He wanted, He declared:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. Luke 4:18, 19 NKJV

Then Jesus closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. Eyes were fixed on Him. He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:21)

The themes were familiar to Jesus' audience. In quoting the Isaiah 61.1, 2 passage, Jesus is revealing that He is the Messiah; that His role is to bring liberating news to the poor, the blind, the captive, and the oppressed. Jesus proclaims God's favorable year. Those in the synagogue were astounded when Jesus said that today this Scripture had been fulfilled in their hearing. The people were so astonished that the people tried to kill Jesus by chasing Him out of town and shoving Him off a cliff. Why such a murderous reaction to Nazareth's "famous son?"

Note that Jesus declares that the Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Him, and the LORD has anointed Him (Isaiah 61:1). Yet Jesus omits a phrase concerning the Day of Vengeance. This is because first the kingdom comes in grace; then it will come in power. What was infuriating was that for now, God would extend mercy and freedom even to the gentiles, to any and all those given to Jesus by His Father. Of these, He would lose none.

The year of the Lord's favor refers to the Hebrew Jubilee, according to Kraybill in his book, *The Upside-down Kingdom*. Others agree. Essentially Jesus proclaims Jubilee. Jesus expects His followers to embrace Jubilee practices among themselves.

Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy describe the Jubilee vision. There was a weekly Sabbath, a sabbatical year, and the Jubilee which ended a week of sabbatical cycles of years, so in the 49th or 50th year. (Scholars do not have agreement.)

Three shake-ups were expected in the seventh, or sabbatical, year, with a big shake-up the Jubilee year.

1. **Land.** One concerned the land. Crops were not to be planted or harvested. Unplanted plants were to be left for the poor. The land was to have its rest and the people were to trust God to supply excess in the sixth year.

2. **Slaves.** Slaves were released on the 7th year. The expectation of freeing slaves after six years of labor appears in passages like Exodus 21:1-6, Deuteronomy 15:12-18.
3. **Debts.** Debts were erased. These were mostly charitable loans to needy persons, not commercial ones. Charging interest on loans to other Hebrews was prohibited. The principal of any debt was canceled in the sabbatical year (Deuteronomy 15:1-6).
4. **The big shake-up.** The fiftieth, or Jubilee year, brought a big shake-up. The ownership of land returned to the owners who held it at the beginning of the fifty-year period. Leviticus 25:10. This 50-year turnover helped to preserve the original pattern of land ownership. It prevented greedy barons from buying up all the land at the expense of the poor. Land ownership was restored at least once in each generation. Hebrews really didn't buy the land, they bought its use. As the Jubilee approached, the cost of using the land dipped because fees were calculated according to the number of harvests remaining before the Jubilee. (Leviticus 25:13-16).

We know that in Zedekiah's day, before Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 586 BC, the rich released their slaves but soon recaptured them. (Jeremiah 34:16, 17) Sabbatical violation was one of the reasons for the impending destruction of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 34:18-22).

Nehemiah (5:1-13) rebuked the people for not observing the Jubilee after returning from captivity. In Ezekiel 45:7-9; 46:16-18, Ezekiel calls for reestablishing the Jubilee.

Many think the Jubilee land reform was never practiced; others think it was maybe observed a few times. There is better evidence that debts were released, but creditors were slow to lend money knowing the sabbatical year would wipe out the debt and people borrowing wouldn't pay as it got closer, knowing their debt would be canceled. Hillel, who lived about the time of Jesus' birth, started a legal practice that allowed lenders to deposit a certificate with the courts to prevent debts from being erased on the sabbatical year.

The Jubilee vision called for social upheaval. It touched three factors which can generate inequality: 1. Control of the land and access to natural resources. 2. Ownership of slaves and the need for human labor in regards to production. 3. The management of capital and credit, e.g., borrowing and lending money. Thus, we are talking about the use and distribution of natural, human, and financial resources, which tilt the balance of justice in any society.

Six Jubilee principles highlight God's vision for handling social injustice:

1. **Divine ownership.** The land is Mine. (Leviticus 25:23) The slaves are God's servants. (Leviticus 25:42, 55). In the Jubilee those who manage land and people are not owners, but stewards accountable to God. Land is not to be abused. It is to be kept in a restored condition. Resources are only on loan.
2. **God's Liberation.** The people were to participate in something that symbolized God's liberating acts. (Deuteronomy 15:15; Leviticus 25:28)
3. **Jubilee response.** The Jubilee was God's expected response from His people for His gracious liberation and deliverance. God's people were to pass freedom on to others by forgiving debts, releasing slaves, and redeeming the land. (Deuteronomy 15:13-14). Show generous mercy; exhibit goodness.
4. **Jubilee compassion.** The poor are the reason the land is to lie fallow. (Exodus 23:11). Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:4-11) Give liberally. God will bless you. Demonstrate a gracious response to God's liberation and show compassion to human hurt.
5. **Upside-down revolution.** Today we are seeing certain nations threatened with loss of freedoms enjoyed at a heavy cost. We see growing oppression, exploitation, deceit,

lawlessness, godlessness, a wave of desire to get rid of God, Christ, the Word of God, the Creator...and to take His place. People in oppressed countries, exploited and angry, lash out at their oppressors and oppressive regimes, seeking freedom. Only Jesus sets people free. Nations whose God is the Lord are blessed by Him.

6. **Institutionalized grace.** The Jubilee was set to harness personal desire and selfish ambition. Jubilee makes justice a new rule of economic practice. The Jubilee vision does not squelch individual initiative or call for communism or prescribe legalistic equality. It does mandate structural change at regular intervals to equalize excess economic disparities. Divine grace stirs economic change. The Bible holds spiritual and economic life together.

The theme of restoration is linked to the Jubilee. Things will be restored, returned to their original state and purpose. (Luke 7:22, 23; Isaiah 29:18; Isaiah 35:5; Is 61.1ff). Jesus adds lepers and the dead. Jesus is saying that the Messiah is here. The KOG is near, not far away somewhere. God's presence has broken in NOW. The Messiah announces God's release, a letting go, a forgiving of debts, and redemption from sin. Sin is a debt note and Jesus cuts the chains of bondage to sin. Our eyes open. The bindings of evil and death drop off. Salvation is true liberation as we repent and turn back to the Father. The day of grace extends even to Gentiles. This KOG will not know ethnic barriers; will not have ethnic favorites. So they wanted to kill Jesus.

A redemptive rhythm emerges from Jubilee.

Garden—Egypt—Exodus __Jubilee.....

Perfection—sin/slavery—salvation—mercy/grace

Freedom—oppression—forgiveness/releasing—redemption/restoration

Jesus tells us to forgive as God has forgiven us, to be merciful as God has been merciful to us, to love as we have been loved, to give freely as God has given to us freely. Pass the Jubilee forward, to others. Proclaim the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are consequences in living out the Jubilee vision. We find:

A Jubilee model, laws, habit, a principle in the Lord's Prayer, a posture in Mt. 18:23-35, a morality. The Jubilee vision is to be perpetual. It is the response to belief in God, in His Word, in His Promise. It will reveal belief. It has a connection as to how we treat the creation, including nature, animals, people, the earth and even space. It can be either refused or embraced. We will have a definite attitude either for it or against it. We have to respond in concrete, economic ways. Our faith will impact our pocketbook.

The poor approach Scripture looking for heavenly escape from monetary poverty. The rich see affluence as the sign of God's blessing. The poor believe that God will bless them in heaven. Both rich and poor use financial status to filter a view of the Bible and thus interpret the Bible in ways that endorse an economic lifestyle—rich or poor. Is this right?

The biblical message urges us to place our economic decisions UNDER the reign of Jesus in the KOG. **Both rich and poor** may be proud or poor in spirit (humble), greedy, oppressive, oppressed, lawbreakers, covetous, etc. Both rich and poor are to open wide the hand of mercy, to forgive debts as they have been forgiven, free the enslaved, and return land, seeing God as the

owner of everything. Faith should wag wallets. The way of life is free from covetousness. Our beliefs should shape our societal structures inasmuch as we live in the world but not of the world.

Mercy, liberty, freedom, compassion, and release are the code words of Jubilee. God is King. The KOG is here now. Those living in social and spiritual bondage are to be freed upon God granting forgiveness and repentance from the world's ways. Today is the day of salvation.

Bibliography: Kraybill, Donald B. *The Upside-Down Kingdom* Herald Press, 2011.

Ladd, George Eldon. *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959.

Mary Craig, D. Min.

Nevertheless when it [the heart] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 KJV

© 2021 Mary Craig Ministries, Inc. All rights reserved. www.marycraig.org www.mcmtffr.org



Thank you for giving to MCM! Donate: Mary Craig Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 4610, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33338-4610 or through PayPal® online at www.marycraig.org. Go to marycraig.org for the latest articles and words received. Take a look and see all that God is doing through this ministry, in world missions, in evangelism, the Barnabas Project, Craighthouse® Christian Fellowship, home visitation, Kinetic Koinonia, media, and more. Worship with us 4:30 p.m. Sundays via teleconference. Reach MCM at 954-491-7270. Send in your prayer requests. Follow MCM Bible teachings and Rev. Jim Craig's sermons; go to www.marycraig.org and click on "Audio Bible Studies" or "Divine Appointment" radio ministry; or go to www.mcmtffr.org for audio sermons, teachings, and handout sheets. Free. Go to www.marycraigverses.org for "Enjoying God for Life," daily encouragement and growing in your faith. Go to www.marycraig.smugmug.com for some pictures of MCM world missions.

See our new Mary Craig Ministries YouTube Channel here:
www.youtube.com/channel/UCs4c-InXmh2HKF36huJQTOA. Subscribe for free.

Free books by Dr. Craig to download, print, or just open and use, here:
www.marycraig.org/Catalog.htm .

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc. is a USA 501 (C) (3) nonprofit corporation founded in 1993. Federal ID 65-0429517.