

Series -

Date/s -

11 Jan 2015

Topic - A Prophetic Message – Shabbat, Shemitah and Yobel

Speaker/s -

Pastor John Koe

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs that sing of God's goodness and His promises.

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will understand:

1. The three principles of Sabbath, Shemitah and Yobel.
2. We honour God as part of our covenantal lifestyle.

Word [45 min]

Pastor shared with us three principles that can help us enjoy the covenantal lifestyle with God's supernatural provision.

Shabbat – 7th Day of the week

The origin — shortly after the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and entering into the wilderness, God instructed them to begin the observance of Sabbath, which was to rest on the 7th day of every week. They were not to do any work on that day, for that day is set apart for God. They were instructed to gather the manna which God provided and only for that day. The manna was not to be kept for the night as it would go bad. There would be no manna on the ground every Sabbath. God would supernaturally supply the manna twice the amount on the sixth day. To enable them to observe Sabbath, God would double His supernatural supply for them every 6th day of the week so that they did not have to gather it on the Sabbath.

The Principle of Sabbath is to set aside a day of the week from our work, and to gather with other believers to worship and honor God. That is why we set aside every Sunday in the church to worship Him and to hear His voice. This is covenantal lifestyle (Leviticus 23:3).

Some examples -The early believers gathered in the synagogues every Sabbath to hear the Word of God taught to them: a) Luke 13:10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, b) Acts 13:42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath and c) Acts 13:44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

Shemitah - The Sabbath of Years or every 7th year

God also taught the Israelites that the principle of Sabbath not only applies to days, but also to the years.

- Just as every 7th day is to be set apart for God, so should they set apart every 7th year to Him.
- Just as every 7th day was the Sabbath day, so every 7th year was the Sabbath year. This 7th year is called the Shemitah.

During the Sabbath year, not only the people but also the land must rest. Leviticus 25:4 - But in the seventh

year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest, a Sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Whatever grew of its own accord on the 7th year belongs to God, which He wants to be given to the poor. The principle of Tithing corresponds to this Principle of Shemitah, where we give to God what belongs to Him and He uses it to help the needy (Exodus 23:10). And the 8th year's food supply was supernaturally supplied by God (Leviticus 25:19-21).

God also instructed that the year of the Shemitah is the year where all financial accounts will be wiped clean (Deuteronomy 15:1-2). The Shemitah ends imbalances, levels accounts, and nullifies that which has built up in the previous years—a massive cleansing of the financial and economic slate. It means “remission” or “release”. It ends entanglements and brings release for both the ones releasing and the ones being released. It requires people to release their attachments to the material realm: their possessions, their finances, their real estate, and their claims and pursuits concerning such things.

The Shemitah was a sign of Israel's covenant with God:

- Everything they had belongs to God, and they are but only stewards.
- To cease from their labor is an act of trusting in God's provision. So is the forgiveness of debts.
- The keeping of the Shemitah above all is an act of devotion and worship, to put God above everything else in one's life.

The Principle of Shemitah is to declare and honor God as the source of all blessings:

- That we are to trust Him and Him alone for our sustenance and well-being.
- That our wealth is to be used to express His love and faithfulness.

Yobel – 7th cycles of 7 years or 50th year (The Year of Jubilee)

The 50th year brought to a close a cycle of 7 Sabbatical years (49 years). During this year, economic debts were to be forgiven, land restored to families who sold in order to repay debt, and slaves sold to repay debt were to be liberated. The onset of the Year of Jubilee required that all land sold during the preceding forty-nine years be returned to the original owners or their descendants. When poverty forced an Israelite to sell himself into the service of a countryman, he was to be treated as a hired hand, not as a slave.

Then when the Year of Jubilee came, the indentured one and his sons were to be released so they could return to their own land. All people and their land belonged to God, and they were not to belong to any other people as slaves permanently. The Year of Jubilee was to serve as a reminder that the land is special to Yahweh and a divine gift to the Israelites. Since Yahweh redeemed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, ultimately making them His property (Lev 25:42, 55; 26:13, 45), the Israelites were now the property of Yahweh, they were not able to permanently sell one another into debt slavery. The year of Jubilee is like “the Shemitah of all Shemitahs”.

The Jubilee declares that God is the owner of us and everything we possess, including the land we dwell on (our nation, Singapore). We are to claim our land and our nation for God's purpose and glory for they belong to Him!

The Jubilee is the year of divine “reset” - a clean slate and fresh start in every area of our life. If you allow God, He wants to remove bondages, evict every “squatter” from your land and restore every inheritance lost. Yobel speaks of ultimate restoration. From Luke 4:18 – 19, “Let us proclaim this as the favourable year of the Lord!” In Christ, every year is the year of favour for us. The key is to honour God in keeping the Shabbat, Shemitah and Yobel principles.

Discussion Questions

- 1 **What did the Lord instruct the Israelites to do for Sabbath, Shemitah and Yobel? Why?** [10 min]
- Sabbath**
 - Shemitah**
 - Yobel**

Leader's Notes: Refer to Leviticus 25:1-28 & Exodus 23:10. The list here is not exhaustive, serve as pointers:

a. *Sabbath - given for our health and well-being too.*

- *Our bodies have been designed by God to function in cycles of 7 days.*
- *We need a rest day out of every 7, or we will suffer in our health in the long run.*
- *Our blood is fully filtered every 7 days.*

The Lord instructed the Israelites to gather in the synagogues to worship Him and to have fellowship with one another. It is not only the day to honor Him but it is a day we rest to rejuvenate our health. Our health will improve in the long run.

b. *Shemitah –Both the people and the land must rest because:*

- *The land will be rejuvenated and will be more fertile*
- *Whatever unattended produce will be given to poor or needy to meet their needs*
- *All financial debts cancelled to ease the burdens of many Israelites.*

The Lord wants them to trust Him with their provision and livelihood. The giving up of what others owed them is also a way of showing they trust God to provide even though the debts are not recovered. For the needy, orphans and widows, it is God's way of provisioning for them.

c. *Yobel – Both God's people and land will be ultimately restored*

- *Debts cancelled*
- *Land restored to debtors*
- *Slaves freed to be with their families*

The Lord, through Yobel, reminded the Israelites that everyone and everything belongs to Him and to no man. God "reset" the entire system what man has messed up. It is a time of ultimate renewal after years of man-abuse.

- 2 **How do the above benefit the people of Israel and their land? What might be the physical and spiritual implications if not observed.** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: Physical Benefits: people were free from debt; family members were united and no longer burdened by separation through debts. The land would be rejuvenated and debtors would get back their land. Everyone would now be able to look after their livelihood trusting and relying on Yahweh who "resets" everything to normal instead of indebtedness, slavery or in want.

Spiritual benefits: the entire system comes under the ownership of God. He restores the people to their "liberated" state owing nothing to anyone. People learnt to trust in God for all their provisions and are able to worship Him in liberation and freedom without any worries or burdens. All their assets and livelihood were protected and guarded by God because they have placed all they had under the ownership of God.

When not observed: the owners of land properties and slaves would have violated what God wanted them to do and will not come under the provision and protection of God Yahweh. The land would 'dry up' and not be able to regenerate itself. The person might become self-reliant and soon displaced God in his life. If we were to stray from the precepts or commandments of God, we no longer come under His sovereignty

and have in one sense, rebel against Him. God would leave us to our own faculties and we slowly turn to ourselves and away from God. At its extreme, we could become carnal and fall away from God.

3 How does tithing relate to the principle of Shemitah? How does tithing benefit us? [10 min]

Leader's Notes: Tithing reminds us to honor God and to trust in Him for every provision. When we tithe, we are declaring that ALL our possession belongs to God. The principle of Tithing corresponds to the principle of Shemitah where we give to God what belongs to Him and He uses it to help the needy. We adopt a Kingdom Mentality. The purpose of tithing is to teach us always to put God first in our lives (Deuteronomy 14:23). It is a tenth of our income which belongs to God and is intended by God to provide for the Levites (full-time ministry workers), the widows and the orphans (needy in our midst) 2 Chron 31:4.

A promise from Malachi 3:8-10 when we honour God through tithing : "...if you do, I will open up the windows of heaven for you and pour out a blessing so great you won't have room enough to take it in! "Try it! Let me prove it to you! (NLT)

4 God desires for us to have a clean slate at the start of this Jubilee year. What would you ask of Him and receive His favour? [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A response question. God can restore everything that has been lost or stolen – youth and years, time and opportunities, love and relationships (marriages & families). If only you would allow God to remove bondage; repair, restore and reconcile all that are needed. Name those areas one by one and place them at the altar. It is good to examine if there are areas that do not honour Him and repent (1 John 1:9). This will mark the start of us returning to a covenantal lifestyle by putting first things first and get them right before God.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Members to spend 2 minutes quietly to commit their possessions, self and family to God and understand that tithing is not giving what we have earned but giving Him what He owns in the first place. Ask the cell to consider tithing if some of the members are not doing it.

Announcement

1. Water Baptism Course
Sat, 7 Feb | 9.30am-3.30pm | Room 207 & 208
Registration closes on Sun, 25 Jan. Baptism service will be held on Sun, 15 Mar 2.30pm.
You can register at the Information Counter or email claratan@riverlife.org.sg or call 6511 4111.
- 2 RTG Briefing (FAPG/OL Leaders)
Sun, 1 Feb | 2.30pm-5.30pm | Victory Chapel