



Celebrating a Year of Jubilee

by Penny Musco

When the big 5-0 loomed for my friend Cindy, she refused to throw a pity party. Instead she sent invitations to 50 friends who'd had a part in her walk with Christ. She invited them to celebrate her "Jubilee Year," based on Leviticus 25:11, which reads, "The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you."

I was intrigued. What did the Year of Jubilee mentioned in a hard-to-read Old Testament book have to do with a birthday?

Plenty, I found out.

In Leviticus 25, God instructs that the blowing of a ram's horn on the Day of Atonement would usher in the Year of Jubilee. Just as on the Sabbath, God's people were commanded to rest from their normal activities such as sowing and planting crops. This rest reminded them that they, as well as everything they owned, belonged to God: "Because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants" (verse 23). As long as they obeyed His commands, He would provide all their needs. "I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years" (verse 21). Thus, God provided a harvest that would last through the Year of Jubilee and the subsequent planting years.

Shortly before Cindy's 49th birthday, a friend introduced her to the idea of celebrating a personal jubilee. She decided she would study the themes of Leviticus 25—release, redemption and restoration—leading up to her 50th birthday.

Release

During the Year of Jubilee, the Israelites were to proclaim liberty throughout the land. Israelites who had indentured themselves to others were to be set free. Those who perhaps had never known freedom threw off their shackles.

Cindy identified and shook off the things that had

kept her bound—spiritual lies and sinful habits. She also reclaimed her freedom in the Lord. A jubilee birthday reminded her that she is not captive to sin but freed by God's power (John 8:36; Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:1).

Redemption

As Cindy reflected on her deliverance from sin and spiritual bondage, she learned that some form of the word *redeem* is used 17 times in Leviticus 25. An Israelite who had sold himself to foreigners living in the land could always be bought back (or redeemed) by himself or a relative during a nonjubilee year. But during the Year of Jubilee, his freedom was automatic and cost him nothing.

Restoration

In the Year of Jubilee, all land sold during the previous 49 years reverted to the original owner. This foreshadowed the restoration God would

bring to all that has been perverted by mankind's sin.

Cindy rejoiced that she had been brought back to her rightful owner through salvation and that her life had been restored by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

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While Cindy carried out most of her jubilee observations in private, her birthday party was the culmination of all she had learned. The event honored not only Cindy, but also the Lord. We didn't blow a ram's horn, but we sure made a lot of noise. Many who were approaching their 50th birthdays changed their attitudes about this momentous year. I can't wait to see what God will do over the *next* 49 years in Cindy's life. ■

Penny Musco has, abem, already passed her first jubilee year, but looks forward to the possibility of celebrating her next one.

Numbering Our Days

- "Do not say, 'Why were the old days better than these?' For it is not wise to ask such questions." (Ecclesiastes 7:10)
- "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree. . . . They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green." (Psalm 92:12,14)
- "When God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart." (Ecclesiastes 5:19-20)
- "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12)