

7. 2 Chronicles 7:14 *“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”*

Sabbath, Rest, and forgiveness Pt. 3

There is another side to this sabbath and rest story in Leviticus 25. When I saw this parallel line, I wondered if I was just chasing a story. Chasing an idea that was not really there. Yet, I think I see a parallel line between the sabbath year of the Lord, forgiveness, and seven times seventy found in Matthew 18. Peter is the disciple with the big heart and big mouth. Of course, he is the one who comes up to Jesus and asks how many times we should forgive. Then Jesus says something that must have hit them right between the eyes. Matthew 18:22 *“Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”*

Peter and his friends were not Bible scholars. Yet, they grew up in Jewish homes. They knew what the Year of the Lord was. Sacrifices for sin was common knowledge. The Year of the Lord is also called the atonement. This word means to correct previous wrong doings? To make restitution. For Jesus to attach seventy times seven to forgiveness must have been shocking. Jesus was point blank giving them a connection to the sabbath and rest. The Year of Jubilee consists of the land resting every 7 years for 49 years. Then the cycle repeats itself. The people are also to forgive debt every 49 years too.

Jesus does nothing by mistake. The Bible is not a collection of stories and utter ramblings. There is intentional wording by the Bible writers and Jesus. This is the words from God. John 10 has a series of sayings by Jesus to the people. He mentions the words “I am” several times. In verse 31 of that chapter, they picked up rocks to stone Jesus for blasphemy.

Why? "I am" is a title that is only given to God. In fact, it was even blasphemy to even utter those words. Jesus was totally being intentional with His words. He was claiming to be God! Read John 10:1-18 about the good shepherd. Then take a look at Isaiah 61:1-2 "*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" In Luke 4 Jesus reads from Isaiah 61 and the religious rulers are stunned. What I'm driving at is that if Jesus mentions seventy times seven, it meant something!

When we forgive someone, our stress level comes down. When we rest our stress level comes down. If we took at-least one day off a week to observe the sabbath our health might improve. What if we rested more? What if we rested the land? What would be the cut in pollution on this earth if every Sunday nobody turned on a machine and worked? Yet, that is not the world we live in now. Everything is open seven days a week. There is shift work, and deferment of vacation days.

Let's take a final look through forgiveness. God said he would accept atonement (forgiveness) for our sins by certain sacrifices listed in Leviticus. There are sacrifices listed for the Year of Jubilee. There is a price to pay to forgive. God asked his people to forgive debt. To rest the land by not gaining rewards off of it every seven years. There is humbleness and some amount of humiliation to talk and forgive. A price would be paid. It takes courage and bravery to forgive. To rest and let God provide. Some people would laugh at you. There is a price. Proverbs 22:4 "*Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honor and life.*"

The parallel lines between the Old and New Testaments are clear. When creation works together in love and humility, we all benefit. A forgiven friend yields love and a restored

relationship. A rested land will yield more harvest. A rested body will be healthier the next day. Why is humanity not willing to pay a small price to rest? I would even say they are not willing to sacrifice time to gain a healthy lifestyle. Shouldn't we forgive people's debt to us eventually? Jesus says in Matthew 5:24 to "*leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*" God and Jesus found it important to forgive in order to set things right. To keep balance in creation.

It's interesting that Jesus told the people to forgive first and then offer your gift to the Lord. God asked the people to forgive debt and then sacrifice an offering to the Lord. Swirling around in-between these concepts is a command to rest. Rest from anger. Rest from work. Rest from anything that makes you tired and weary. Yet, Jesus made it even easier if you would just follow him and rest.

Matthew 11:28-30 "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*"