

## “THE LIBERTY BELL”

"Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. 'And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. (Leviticus 25:9-10 NKJV)

These verses contain the words inscribed on the Liberty Bell, “..proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants.” These verses come from one of the most exciting chapters of the Old Testament. Leviticus 25 expands the concept of the Sabbath to create Sabbath years every seven years in which everyone put aside the raising of crops, and the daily toil to earn a living. The servants, the animals, and the land were given a rest. It was similar to the sabbatical year given to college professors even today. It was a year for renewal, creative endeavors, seeking and serving the LORD.

After seven successive sets of seven years there was to be a Jubilee Year. In this year there was a radical redistribution of wealth. All debts were cancelled, all land was returned to the families to which it originally belonged. Everyone who had become a servant because of poverty or indebtedness was set free.

“..proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants.”

These Sabbath years and Jubilee years were a prophetic picture of the coming of Christ. He was sent into the world by God to proclaim liberty:

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; (Isaiah 61:1 NKJV)

Why were those words from Leviticus 25 inscribed on the Liberty Bell? Did the American colonists intend to observe Sabbath years and Jubilee years in this new land. They probably did. Their beliefs about Christ's Second Coming were those of the Presbyterians and the Puritans – that the world will gradually be made to conform to God's laws until it is almost like heaven. Then Christ will return in triumph to reign over a transformed world.

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 NKJV)

Most of those who came to America came to escape political and religious persecution. Some came as indentured servants, others as craftsmen or farmers. They wanted to be free to establish a society based on Biblical principles. The Rhode Island Charter of 1663 begins, "We submit our persons, lives, and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords and to all those perfect and most absolute laws of His given in His Holy Word."

It is understandable how the words "...proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants." and the concept of Sabbath years and Jubilee years – periodic forgiveness of debts, redistribution of the land to each family, freeing of slaves, and the release of prisoners was a compelling vision of hope for the colonists.

The Liberty Bell was rung to call together the first Continental Congress in 1774, after the Battle of Lexington and Concord in 1775, and after the signing of the Declaration of Independence in July 1776. The Declaration of Independence shows the dependence of the American patriots on God as the source of liberty. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of happiness." On the face of every United States coin is stamped "Liberty – In God We Trust"

"Oh beautiful for pilgrim feet, Whose stern impassioned stress A thoroughfare for freedom beat Across the wilderness. America! America! God mend thine every flaw. Confirm thy soul in self-control. Thy liberty in law." Already, before the Declaration of Independence, residents of the American colonies, with the exception of the African slaves, were the freest people on earth at that time. The American "experiment" in democracy caused excitement throughout Europe.

## The Cost of Freedom

The last sentence of the Declaration of Independence is, "And for the support of this Declaration, with firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor." John Quincy Adams wrote, "Posterity – you will never know how much it has cost my generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make good use of it." Of the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence, five were captured by the British and tortured to death. Nine more died in the War. Two lost their sons in the War; one had two sons who were captured by the British. Twelve had their homes sacked, looted, occupied by troops, or burned.

Mel Gibson's movie "The Patriot" shows the sufferings of ordinary citizens and how they were often drawn into the War unwillingly. During the Revolutionary War many fought on the side of the British and over a million fled to Canada. The cost of freedom for those who fought to preserve liberty was not only blood spilt on the battlefield and losses of homes, farms, and businesses but the loss of longtime friends and family unity.

The cost of freedom was not paid in full by the blood and losses of the early patriots. It has been paid and continues to be paid in every generation on many foreign shores by the men and women of our armed forces. It is by God's mercy and the brave dedication of our warriors that no foreign invader has trod our soil.

Jesus promised, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." The freedom which Jesus Christ promised was paid for by His suffering and death upon the cross. His was a perfect and complete sacrifice.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:14-15 NKJV)

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1 NKJV)

## The Broken Promise of Freedom – The Crack in the Liberty Bell

The Liberty Bell was rung on April 6, 1783 to announce a treaty of peace with Great Britain ending an eight year long War of Independence. Our nation was recognized as an independent, sovereign nation. This was truly a new birth of freedom.

The Treaty of Paris was a betrayal of the patriots' hopes and vision. As part of the Treaty of Paris the United States had to promise not to pass any laws which would cancel a debt owed to a British merchant. This was aimed directly at the hopes and plans to institute Sabbath years and Jubilee years. In order to get the Constitution adopted by all the States, the institution of slavery was allowed to continue. The concept of Sabbath and Jubilee survived in fragments shaping our laws on bankruptcy, inheritance, pardons, homesteads, and eventually in the emancipation of slaves.

Fifty years (a Jubilee) after the signing of the Declaration of Independence the two men who were pivotal in writing and having it adopted Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died on July 4, 1826. Fifty years after the establishment of our country there was still slavery, landless people, and indebtedness. The Liberty Bell was rung and it cracked – its proclamation became hollow.

In the United States we have achieved the greatest dimensions of individual freedom, justice, and equality of any human endeavor or society. But they are imperfect and they pale in comparison to the perfect freedom purchased for us by Jesus Christ on the cross. He accomplished the redemption of human society and all of creation prophesied by the Sabbath years and Jubilee years. His kingdom is our blessed hope. He will not disappoint us.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. " (John 8:31-32,36 NKJV)