



A Discourse on Jubilee among Indonesian Pentecostals and Charismatics

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to describe the Pentecostal-Charismatic discourse about the Jubilee. The study is a qualitative-descriptive study and used literature study approach. Sampling was conducted to Pentecostal-Charismatic circles in several Pentecostal-Charismatic denominations. The data sources are documents in the forms of sermons, magazines, brochures, Jubilee Committee work reports, articles, liturgies, and songs about the Jubilee. Results show that the Pentecostal-Charismatic perspective regarding the Jubilee was generally different from that of the non-Pentecostal-Charismatic. According to Pentecostals-Charismatics, slave liberation meant to be restoration of a man from sin, from shackles of bondage of the evil one, from sickness, from weakness, and from inner wounds & want/poverty by the power of Jesus' cross; Then, the land that must be returned to its original owner was defined as the return of humans to their right position, that is, before they fall into sin. Regarding the relevance of land regulations in the Jubilee was the arrangement of the organizational structure or church management, in which the older generation began to retire and was replaced by the younger generation; whereas the rest itself was intended for humans to be able to have a fellowship with God, so that they do not get greedy and can appreciate others' property.

Key words: Jubilee; Discourse; Pentecostals-Charismatics.

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INTRODUCTION

The Jubilee is the typical regulation of the ancient Israelites originated from the traditions of the Old Testament Jews (Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61:1-2, as quoted in Luke 4:18-19). It was celebrated only once in 50 years, counting from the time the Israelites entered the promised land. The Sabbath year (Shemittah) occurred every seven years, and at the end of the seven cycles of seven (49), the Israelites celebrated the Jubilee as the culmination of the cycle of seven Sabbath years. The Jubilee itself was the culmination or perfection of the Sabbath: the seventh day was called the Sabbath, the seventh year was the Sabbath year, and after seven Sabbath years, the year following (the 50th) was a Jubilee, which was the Sabbath of the Sabbath years.

As described by Jusuf BS (2010), there were actually three stipulations regarding the Jubilee, namely: 1) all Israelite slaves must be set free, 2) all inherited assets that had been purchased must be returned to their original owners, and 3) the land should not be tilled, and what grew by itself in the Jubilee should not be reaped. The second stipulation referred to the fact that Israelites view their God as the land's real owner and their job was just to cultivate it. Therefore, when an Israelite man bought a land, in no way the man should consider himself to have bought the land, merely buying *the right* to cultivate it instead.

However, various views have emerged regarding Jubilee year in present day. Some associate it with an anniversary event in a certain number of years, such as the 25th, 75th, or 125th. There are also those who call the 70th anniversary as

the Jubilee, such as PGI (the Communion of Churches in Indonesia) during its 70th anniversary on May 25th, 2020. Others have also mentioned that 2015 was the Great Jubilee which sprung up many seminars on the matter that year.

Regarding 2015 as the Great Jubilee, the claim was connected to Jewish calendar change from the year of Ayin Hey (5775) to the year of Ayin Vav (5776) happening exactly at the sunset of September 13th, 2015. This turn of the year was claimed as the Great Jubilee which was then further alleged as the last Jubilee before the second coming of Jesus (Soegi, 2015). It should be noted that these seminars were opposed by the Theological Department of the Indonesian Bethel Church Synod (GBI, 2015).

Among Protestants, the Jubilee has three major themes, i.e.: rest, freedom, and restoration. Baker (1996, pp. 267–268) stated,

God's people – both the ancient Israelites and present-day Christianity – are called to 'celebrate the Jubilee' by stopping exploitation of the environment, seeking liberation for humans and taking action towards equal distribution of land ownership....

Singgih (1995) mentioned that the main relevance of the Jubilee explanation in the Old Testament to the situation in Indonesia remains in the land sector. Sitompul (1995) stated that the spirit of Jubilee should be a frame of reference for Christians to fight for a more just economic system. Baxter (1993, p. 133) mentioned that the Sabbath year regulations were wise and very useful for the land, since both the land and people could rest. He also opined that it was also useful for controlling a human greed, since in the year of Jubilee, controlling the greed must take place two years in a row (49th and 50th).

Based on these views, it becomes clear that the Jubilee was instituted to curb greed and covetousness. Wealth distribution was also a possible objective; by not letting land or capital accumulate in the hands of few landlords, while many people were in poverty (Baxter, 1993). Even so, Baker (1996) stated that the bridge over the gap between the rich and the poor was not attempted by enacting

a law that benefited the poor and harmed the rich, because surely powerful and influential people in society would oppose it. It was not also attempted with an appeal to the rich to be generous and give some of their advantages to the poor, but the Jubilee concept demanded a structure within the society that regulated land ownership equitably.

Kristiani (2019) calls the Jubilee an act of good economic regulation. It was God's way of arrangement so that the poor and foreigners alike had food in ancient Israelite society. Mamahit (2010) stated that the main motive behind the Sabbath year institution was humanity, independence, and a special form of emancipation towards slaves, which was considered as a social blueprint built on the concepts of justice and equality. It was an anticipation of the development of the Israeli society which has been increasingly complex in socio-economic terms, indicated by the emergence of social monarchy groups, elites, traders, landlords, and other social groups. Aritonang (2020) linked the Jubilee with the preservation of nature/environment. He stated, through all of this, God reminded us to respect and appreciate the nature and other people, treat them proportionally, and give them time to rest to recover.

It appears that for Protestants the Jubilee is meant to: 1) stop the environment exploitation; 2) liberate humans and take action towards equal distribution of land ownership; 2) become a frame of reference for fighting for a more just economic system; 3) control the human greed, curb greed and covetousness; 4) bridge the gap between rich and poor; 5) be a good economic arrangement; 6) emphasize humanity, independence or freedom; 7) be a social blueprint built on the concepts of justice and equality; and 8) preserve the nature/environment.

Previously, there had been at least four articles discussing the Jubilee. The first article was written by Timotius Fu (2010) which discussed the meaning and application of the Sabbath rest for Christians. It emphasized the commandment to have a day of rest, and that day must be held on the

seventh day. The second article written by Fitriani (2020) examined the relevance of the stipulations about the Sabbath in God's 10 Commandments for today's believers. The content questioned whether the stipulations regarding the Sabbath were still relevant for today's believers. The third article by Budiman and Objantoro (2021) examined the implications of the Sabbath significance for the land in Leviticus 25:1-7. The fourth article, in the form of a thesis, was written by Tuasela (2014) who concluded that in Leviticus 25:1-28 there is an ideology formulation of the land.

Based on the background aforementioned, how is the Pentecostal-Charismatic discourse on the Jubilee? Is it the same as that of the Protestants' in general or different from it? Discourse means a conversation, word, sentence, paragraph, or an essay realized in the form of a complete essay or report, such as a book, article, speech, or sermon. The so-called Pentecostal-Charismatic circles in this paper are not all Pentecostal-Charismatic ones, but are only limited to few people in several Pentecostal-Charismatic denominations.

In light of the problem statement, this study aims to answer them by describing discourses or expressions about the Jubilee in Indonesian Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, both in the form of oral and written communications, such as conversations, words, sentences, paragraphs, or essays contained in sermons, magazines, work reports, articles, songbooks, symbols, formulations, video/audio, and brochures. The description is expected to enrich the significance of the Jubilee that exists in the Protestant cycles so far.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative-descriptive study of literature. The method's use was intended to collect data and information with the help of various materials, the results of which became the basic function and main tool for research in the field, in the form of written or oral words from people or doers who could be observed (Gilbert et al., 2018; Kartono, 1986; Zaluchu, 2020, 2021). This study

purposively sampled several people of the Pentecostal-Charismatic circles whose views were expressed in the sermons, magazines, work reports, articles, songbooks, symbols, formulations, videos/audios, and brochures about the Jubilee. Data were obtained from documents in the sermons, magazines, work reports, articles, song books, symbols, formulations, videos/audios, and brochures containing the Jubilee found in the Pentecostal-Charismatic circles.

The steps taken were: 1) data collection through review of documents such as sermons, magazines, brochures, work reports of the Jubilee Committee, articles, liturgies, and songs; 2) data reduction and categorization in order to filter the raw data, then choosing which data was relevant to support the research; 3) result presentation in narration to make it easier to follow; and 4) conclusion drawing.

RESULTS

The discourse on the Jubilee among the Pentecostals-Charismatics in Indonesia was as follows:

In Sermons

Indrawan Eleas, the pastor of the Pringgading Isa Almasih Church, in his sermon entitled "*Tahun Rahmat Tuhan*" ("The Year of God's Grace"), alluded to Luke chapter 4. He stated that, "The year of God's grace means the year of God's goodness... every day, until eternity. There will be no counting of days" (Eleas, 2008). In his other sermon entitled "*Dengan Semangat Tahun Yobel, Kita Tingkatkan Kebersamaan Dalam Membangun Manusia Seutuhnya*" ("By the Spirit of the Jubilee Year, We Increase Togetherness in Building our Whole Mankind"), Indrawan Eleas said that the three contents of the Jubilee were fulfilled in the presence of Jesus Christ.

Firstly, He brought deliverance, not from human slavery, but from sin, the shackles of the bondage of the evil one by the power of the cross of Jesus. Secondly, He returned the inheritance to the

owner. The heirloom taken by the ruler of darkness is returned by Jesus' sacrifice so that it returns to the right position. Thirdly, uncultivated fields were associated with Ephesians 2, by implying that in His rest, not a day of rest for a week, but forever (Eleeas, 1996).

Timotius Arifin, the pastor of the Rock Indonesian Bethel Church, Denpasar - Bali, in a sermon, alluded to Isaiah 61, interpreting it as how Jesus of Nazareth was anointed with the power to cast out demons, heal sickness, and eliminate weakness (Arifin, 1997).

Ferdi Godjali (2020) stated in one of his sermons that one can only enter the Annual Sabbath after passing the Weekly Sabbath. Similarly, one can be in the Jubilee after being in the Annual Sabbath. The Weekly Sabbath is on the seventh day, the Annual Sabbath is in the seventh year, and the Jubilee is in the fiftieth year. Therefore, the Jubilee is seven times of the Annual Sabbath plus one year. It happens only once in 50 years, and so it is the year of perfection. The Jubilee, according to Godjali (2020), is an allusion to the spiritual. Through the Daily Sabbath, a believer is changed by God, day by day, until he enters the Annual Sabbath. Finally, the believer is transformed to perfection and united to God. Believers will celebrate the first Jubilee when they enter the eternity. If a person neglects the weekly Sabbath, s/he cannot celebrate the Jubilee: by neglecting the weekly Sabbath, one is disqualified from celebrating the Annual Sabbath, which in turn disqualify him/her further in the celebration of the Jubilee (Godjali, 2020).

In a sermon at the Grace Republic prayer meeting entitled *Sekarang Adalah Tahun Pembebasan* (Now Is the Year of Liberation), the preacher mentioned that the last Jubilee was when Jesus died. The preacher interpreted that when Jesus died on the cross, it was actually the last Jubilee. Since Jesus died on the cross, that has been the real Jubilee; that has been the year of real deliverance. The real Jubilee has begun since Jesus died on the cross. Therefore, believers in Jesus, believers now

are in the Jubilee, they are in the year of deliverance (The Grace Republic, 2019).

In Magazines

Jusuf BS (2010) in the *Tulang Elisa* Magazine, connected the Jubilee with the Sabbath. It was said there, the Jubilee is the culmination/perfection of the Sabbath. Therefore, believers must first understand the meaning of the Sabbath day, as well as the Sabbath year, after that they will understand the meaning of the Jubilee correctly. For him, the meaning of the Sabbath is not literal but spiritual.

The meaning of the daily Sabbath is to stop from one's own actions, efforts and strength, and depend on God. The hallmark of a person experiencing the weekly Sabbath is that his heart is filled with peace; while the typical sign of people who experience the Sabbath year/field Sabbath, is a great passion to serve God and sacrifice for God's work. Why is there poverty, no blessing, and why are the fields, even they themselves, also sold? It is all the result of sin. At the time of the Jubilee, everything is restored as before, as before one falls into sin (Jusuf BS, 2010).

Yahya Mulyono, in an article in *Pelita Kasih* Magazine published by Pringgading Isa Almasih Church, Semarang, entitled *Beritakan Tahun Pembebasan* (Proclaim the Year of Liberation) stated that the meaning of the Jubilee for the present context includes two things: the liberation of social and spiritual problems, namely slavery to sin and the debt of sin (Mulyono, 1996).

Samuel Budi Prasetya (n.d.), in an interview with *Cressendo* magazine, entitled *Yobelium HUT Proklamasi RI* (Jubilee of the Anniversary of Indonesian Independence), stated that the relevance of the Jubilee is more metaphorical. The stipulation regarding 'not allowed to cultivate land' was a regulation, that was the regulation of land for the sake of the sustainability and maintenance of the land fertility itself. The relevance of the land regulation is the arrangement of the organizational structure or church management, in order that the

older generation begins to stop working and is replaced by the younger generation, so that the younger generation can also play an active role in the ministry, while the older ones do not just stop, but they guide the younger ones; then regarding 'the total rest from work', Samuel Budi Prasetya thought that the purpose of this stipulation was in order that humans could rest and have fellowship with God, and humans would not become greedy; about 'returning the land to its owner and letting the slaves go free', Prasetya interpreted it as a human call to respect the property of others. A person must be aware of which one is his and which is not. By that he can realize that 10% of his property belongs to God, and will not corrupt or manipulate company assets (Prasetya, n.d.).

In a Brochure

In a brochure issued by *Pemuda Bagi Kristus* (the Youth For Christ) of the Pringgading Isa Almasih Church, entitled 'This is the Year of Liberation', it was stated, "The spiritual meaning of the year of liberation is the existence of liberation concerning human dignity as a whole, namely liberation from the clutches of sin, inner wounds, want/poverty, arbitrariness and injustice (PRBK, 1996).

In the Jubilee Committee Work Report

In the work report of the Jubilee Event Section Committee of the Isa Almasih Church Synod, it was stated that the Jubilee has very deep meaning: the restoration from sin/evil, the law of slavery; the establishment of the true liberty for the children of God; the liberation from systems of sin slavery/moral depravity (Lydia, 1996).

In an Article

Suratno (2018) stated that the Jubilee will be a year of independence for people who live in slavery and of no debt. For those who are in debt, this is the Year of Jubilee. God will free them.

In Liturgy and Song

The Isa Almasih Church Synod celebrated Jubilee year with a unique liturgy. First, the liturgy started with trumpet blasts. The Jubilee Opening Ceremony of the Isa Almasih Church Synod was accompanied by the trumpet blowing from 7 trumpeters wearing white linen robes. In the Committee's report it was written that "... 7 is a perfect number, the white linen robes symbolize the priest's attire, as the Word of God in Leviticus 25:9." (Lydia, 1996). Second, the spotlight of this liturgy was in the form of breaking a chain. In the same occasion, the General Chairperson of the Isa Almasih Church Synod, Eliata Suteja, inaugurated the celebration by breaking a chain, declaring, "In the name of the Lord Jesus, we break the bonds of sin" (Pringgading, Video, 1996). Third, a special song was sung. In the lyrics of the song entitled "The Year of Jubilee" the following verse is found: "Brethren, listen to the trumpet, bringing deliverance to all people. Don't you know, it's the year of Jubilee, raise your hands; let the captives go free. This is the year of liberation, this is the year of liberation, all captives are released. The lame and the blind, leap up and shout for joy, for this is the year of liberation (Agung, n.d.).

Based on the above discourse, several things can be concluded from the Jubilee celebration in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles: 1) The Jubilee year should be understood in a spiritual sense. The Jubilee speaks of God's goodness and also about Jesus who was anointed with the power to cast out demons, heal sickness, and remove infirmities; 2) Regarding the liberation of slaves, it is not literally letting slaves go free, but liberating humans from sin, the shackles of bondage of the evil one, by the power of the cross of Jesus; delivering humans from social and spiritual problems; freeing humans from the clutches of sin, inner wounds, want/poverty, arbitrariness and injustice; restoring them from sin/evil; and liberating from the systems of slavery to sin/moral depravity; 3) "Returning the land to its owner" is defined as returning humans to the right position; escaping poverty; and nullifying

debt. The relevance of the land regulation in the Jubilee is the arrangement of the organizational structure or church management, so that the older generation begins to stop working and is replaced /by the younger generation; 4) The purpose of rest is to have a fellowship with God, and in order that humans will not become greedy, and can appreciate others' property.

DISCUSSION

According to Baxter (1993), the Sabbath year institution was a wise and very useful rule for lands to stop producing and people to rest & to control their greed. According to Singgih (1995), this regulation was deliberately emphasized so that it was clear that in Israel no one could dominate one another all the time.

According to Sitompul (1995), such a stipulation was intended to create awareness that in fact a human was never fully the owner of the land and could not control another (servant) absolutely. The emphasis on not working on the Sabbath Day and not sowing on the Sabbath Year was a form of renewed belief in God's providence. It was because God had promised that He Himself would command the blessing (Leviticus 25:20-21). For this reason, land should not be managed at will, but instead must be given rest to guarantee circulation of its fertility (Sitompul, 1995). According to Mulder (1963), the stipulation contained a social dimension while according to Sipahutar (2019), the land needed rest. In the seventh year, land was neither planted nor reaped. When the land was not forced to produce, the soil nutrients returned and the land was ready to be planted again.

About the Jubilee in the book of Trito-Isaiah, it was intended to provide comfort and to increase hope for those who returned from the Babylonian exile. At that time, they lived in humiliation, poverty, and suffering. The hope of a new age, as promised by Deutero-Isaiah, did not materialize. Therefore, there was tension and the people prioritized their own houses (Haggai 1:4). This lasted until the time of Nehemiah. Surely the

Jews were disappointed with such a condition. As mentioned by Bosch (2011), only the year of Jubilee, the year of God's grace, could give them a way out of their suffering. According to Barth (1996), such hopes were responded by the appearance of a servant of God who proclaimed deliverance and the year of God's grace. The question is, isn't such a stipulation considered to be radical, unrealistic, too idealistic and even utopian, and the instructions in it were mostly impractical? And has this stipulation ever come true and regularly celebrated in Israelites' history? According to Baker (1996), it seemed that the Jubilee was not regularly celebrated in ancient Israel. According to Singgih (1995), it was not certain that while in the land of Canaan, the Sabbath Year and the Jubilee were celebrated. Could it be that all this was just an ideal or dream that was expected to happen, but never happened in reality? According to Noorsena (2021), when this rule is to be applied literally, especially in modern times, it is quite difficult. For example, if this rule is to be applied to the Jews who, having returned to the Promised Land, bought lands from the Palestinians, they would have difficulty because they had to return it in the fiftieth year. Therefore, the rules are complicated. According to Aritonang (2020), the command was not an easy thing for the Israelites. It was because they did not necessarily have sufficient food supplies in the Sabbath and Jubilee years, so many also violated the rule. From the explanation above, it can be said that the idea of a Jubilee was considered as something radical, unrealistic, too idealistic and even utopian, impractical, difficult to implement.

That was why the Pentecostal-Charismatics argue that the Jubilee is not celebrated on this earth. As mentioned by Godjali (2020), the first Jubilee will be celebrated at the time of entry into the time of Eternity. Jusuf BS (2010) stated that the Jubilee can be experienced by God's people if they regularly undergo the Sabbath day and the Sabbath year up to seven times. Therefore, it is not just one field Sabbath, but continuously up to seven times. The Jubilee will occur at the Lord's second coming.

Therefore, the Jubilee will take place in the 1000-year Kingdom.

Regarding the year of the Great Jubilee, Rita Wahyu stated that the Jews themselves did not celebrate the year of 5776 (2015) as a Jubilee. The reason was that the Israeli does not currently have a Sanhedrin. When the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD by General Titus, the Israeli still had it. The Sanhedrin moved to Jamnia (Yavne) in the 90s AD, and moved again to the city of Usha in the lowlands in 140 AD. Later, it was not only that the Israeli did not have the Sanhedrin institution, but it was completely gone, along with the scattering of Jews into many nations. In 1949, the modern state of Israel was established, but it did not institute a Sanhedrin until now. So, although the Hebrew year 5776 was Great and even believed by some to be the 70th Jubilee, the Israelites did not celebrate it (Wahyu, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Although it was considered as something radical, unrealistic, impractical, difficult to implement, too idealistic and even so much utopian so that many violated it, the stipulation regarding the Jubilee has made a big and practical contribution to the people of Israel. Through this arrangement, God's people have learned to rest to the benefit of themselves and their lands. The stipulation also provided comfort and raised hope for the Israelites who returned from the Babylonian exile. In today's context, Protestant interpretation of this cultural

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institution has also contributed to encouraging God's people to stop exploiting the environment, seeking equal distribution of land ownership, fighting for a more just economic system, controlling the human covetousness and curbing greed, bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, managing the economy well, prioritizing humanity and freedom, seeking justice and equality, and protecting nature/environment.

However, it was found that the Pentecostal-Charismatic discourse saw Jubilee significance as an event of a man's restoration from sin, from the shackles of the evil one's power, from sickness, from weakness, from inner wounds, and from want/poverty by the power of the cross of Jesus, a person's restoration to their right place, as if before the Fall, and the reshuffling of church management which meant to be the beginning of the older generation's retirement from ministry in order to transition to the younger generation. A man must rest so that he can have a fellowship with God, and not become greedy and be able to appreciate others' property. According to some Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, the Jubilee is not celebrated here on earth, but in the eternity. It will be experienced by God's people if they have kept the Sabbath day as well as the Sabbath year up to seven times, regularly. It is not just one field sabbath, but continuously up to seven times. Only then will they be able to experience the Sabbath Jubilee on the Second Coming. It means the Jubilee happened in the millennium.

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