

Excerpt from Mark Notes on 11 QMelchizedek (pp. 22-23)

On the other hand, the 490 years can be seen as a period of ten Jubilees, 49 x 10. This is how 11QMelchizedek saw it, a Qumran document which is extraordinarily important for the understanding of Christian origins. We shall quote its second column as presented in the edition indicated in the footnote below.¹

Col. II 1 [...] ... [...] *2* [...] And as for what he said: *Lev 25:13* «In [this] year of jubilee, [you shall return, each one, to his respective property]», concerning it he said: *Deut 15:2* «Th[is] is *3* [the manner of the release:] every creditor shall release what he lent [to his neighbor. He shall not coerce his neighbor or his brother, for it has been proclaimed] a release *4* for G[od]». Its interpretation] for the last days refers to the captives, who [...] and whose *5* teachers have been hidden and kept secret, and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, who *6* will make them return. And liberty will be proclaimed for them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities. And this [wil]l [happen] *7* in the first week of the jubilee which follows the ni[ne] jubilees. And the d[ay of atone]ment is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee *8* in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi]zedek. [...] ... over [the]m ... [...] accor[ding to] a[ll] their [wor]ks, for *9* it is the time for the «year of grace» of Melchizedek, and of [his] arm[ies, the nat]ion of the holy ones of God, of the rule of judgment, as is written *10* about him in the songs of David, who said: *Ps 82:1* «Elohim will [st]and in the assem[bly of God,] in the midst of the gods he judges». And about him he sai[d: *Ps 7:8-9* «And] above [it,] *11* to the heights, return: God will judge the peoples». As for what he sa[id: *Ps 82:2* «How long will you] judge unjustly and show partial[ity] to the wicked? [Se]lah.» *12* Its interpretation concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot, wh[o ...] turn[ing aside] from the commandments of God to [commit evil.] *13* But, Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance of Go[d's] judgments, [and on that day he will fr]e[e them from the hand of] Belial and from the hand of all the spirits of his lot.] *14* To his aid (shall come) all «the gods of [justice]; and h]e is the one w[ho ...] all the sons of God, and ... [...] *15* This [...] is the day of [peace about whi]ch he said [...] through Isa[iah] the prophet, who said: [*Isa 52:7* «How] beautiful *16* upon the mountains are the feet [of] the messen[ger who] announces peace, the mess[enger of good who announces salvati]on, [sa]ying to Zio: your God [reigns.]] *17* Its interpretation i[s] the anointed of the spir[it] as Dan[iel] said [about him: *Dan 9:25* «Until an anointed, a prince, it is seven weeks.» And the messenger of] *19* good who announ[ces salvation] is the one about whom it is written that [...] *20* «To comfo[rt] the [afflicted]», its interpretation:] to instruct them in all the ages of the wo[rld ...] *21* in truth ... [...] ... [...] *22* [...] has turned away from Belial and will re[turn ...] ... [...] *23* [...] in the judgment[s of] God, as it is written about him: [*Isa 52:7* «Saying to Zi]on: your God rules.» [«Zion» i[s] *24* [the congregation of all the sons of justice, those] who establish the covenant, those who avoid walking [on the pa]th of the people. And «Your God» is *25* Melchizedek, who will fr]e[e them from the

¹ *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition. Volume 2 (4Q274-11Q31)* (F. García Martínez – E.J.C. Tigchelaar, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997), 1206-1207.

hand of Belial. And as for what he said: *Lev 25:9* «You shall blow the horn in
all the land of

Let's see what this means for the understanding of Christian origins. First, it speaks of the Jubilee, when each exiled person or slave who had been sold returned to his land and family, since all his debts (for which he was exiled or sold) were remitted. The word "remission" (in the above text, "release"), is in Hebrew *šmittah*; it comes from *Deut 15:1-6*, which is linked to the great "liberty" of the Jubilee in *Jer 34:8-16*. But the more important term is *dôrôr*, the "liberty" of *Lev 25:10*, of *Jer 34:8* (which never actually took place), and, especially, of *Isa 61:1*. It is this latter passage that Jesus reads in his first speech in *Luke 4:17-22*, when he says that that prophecy had been fulfilled "today." So that in primitive Christian tradition, there is the idea of a final Jubilee which must be fulfilled; we can very well see in the Lord's Prayer a clear echo of this final forgiveness and pardoning of all debts.² The Lucan version reads "forgive us our *sins*, for we ourselves forgive our *debtors*" (*Luke 11:4*).

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The final Jubilee, like all Jubilees (*Lev 25:9*), would take place on the great Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, when all sins were forgiven, including the worst ones, *Lev 16:16*. It was the only day that the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, with the blood of the young bull and of the he-goat, in order to expiate sins. This is what the Epistle to the Hebrews considers to be a mere figure ("type") fulfilled by Jesus, *Heb 9*, the eternal high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, *Heb 7* (Jesus' sacrifice is the "antitype").

² *Heb 4:1-11* speaks of the Sabbath "rest" which awaits us; *Josh 1:13* speaks of entry into the Land as "rest," but in verse 15 there is mention of those who have yet to enter the rest. *Rev 14:13* speaks of the rest which those who die in the Lord enjoy, and *22:1-5* is the return to Eden, for the curse is over.