

# 1. The Jewish Roots of Divine Mercy

## Pope Francis and the Jubilee Year of Mercy

1. Jubilee “Year of Mercy”: December 8, 2015—November 20, 2016
2. Pope Francis, Bull of Indiction, *The Face of Mercy* (Misericordiae Vultus)
3. What is the Jubilee Year of Mercy?
  - a. Biblical Roots of the Mercy
  - b. Biblical Roots of the Jubilee

Pope Saint John Paul II: [M]ercy signifies a *special power of love*, which *prevails over the sin and infidelity* of the chosen people.

Pope Francis: [M]ercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is as it were *love's second name* and, at the same time, *the specific manner in which love is revealed and effected vis-a-vis the reality of the evil* that is in the world. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 7)

## “Mercy” in the Old Testament

1. Two Hebrew Words for “Mercy”:
  - a. *Hesed*: “steadfast love/faithfulness” (masculine)
  - b. *Raham*: “compassion” (feminine)
2. One Greek Root Word for Mercy: *eleos* (compare, “Lord, have mercy” *kyrie elēson*)
3. Latin word for Mercy: *misericordia* from “to pity” (*misereri*) and “heart” (*cor*)

## Moses and the God of Mercy (Exodus 34)

<sup>5</sup>And the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God *merciful* (Hebrew *raham*; Greek *eleēmōn*) and gracious, *slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*, <sup>7</sup>keeping *steadfast love* (Hebrew *hesed*; Greek *eleos*) *for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” (Exodus 34:5-7)

## The Jubilee Year of Mercy (Leviticus 25)

<sup>8</sup>“And you shall count seven weeks of years, *seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall be to you forty-nine years*. <sup>9</sup> Then you shall send abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; on *the day of atonement* you shall send abroad the trumpet throughout all your land. <sup>10</sup> And you shall hallow *the fiftieth year*, and *proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants*; it shall be a *jubilee for you*, when each of you shall *return to his property* and each of you shall *return to his family*. <sup>11</sup> A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you; in it you shall neither sow, nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. <sup>12</sup> For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat what it yields out of the field. <sup>13</sup> “In this year of jubilee each of you shall *return to his property*. <sup>14</sup> *And if you sell to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another...* (Leviticus 25:8-14)

### The Coming of the Messiah: The Jubilee of 490 Years (Daniel 9)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>20</sup> While I [Daniel] was speaking and praying... <sup>21</sup> the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. <sup>22</sup> He came and he said to me, <sup>23</sup> "...At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, and I have come to tell it to you... therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

<sup>24</sup> "Seventy weeks of years [7 X 70 = 490 Years] are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy. <sup>25</sup> Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of a messiah (Hebrew *mashiah*), a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. <sup>26</sup> And after the sixty-two weeks, a messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed. <sup>27</sup> And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." (Daniel 9:20-27)

#### *The Coming of the Messiah (Daniel 9)*

<i>Daniel's Prophecy</i>	<i>Historical Events</i>	<i>Dates</i>
"Going forth of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem."	Decree to Rebuild Temple by King Artaxerxes of Persia	c. 457 BC
"Seventy Weeks of Years"	70 x 7 Years= 490 years	457BC-33AD
"Messiah" will be "Cut off"	Jesus is Crucified	ca. 33 AD
"City and Sanctuary" will be Destroyed	Temple and Jerusalem Destroyed by Romans	70 AD

### The Timing of the Messiah's Coming

Josephus: We are convinced... that Daniel spoke with God, for he did not only prophesy future events, as did the other prophets, but *he also determined the time at which these would come to pass.* (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 10.267-68; trans. LCL)

Eusebius: [W]e must count the numbers, that is to say the seventy weeks, which are 490 years, from the going forth of the word of answer and from the building of Jerusalem. *This took pace in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, King of Persia.* For Nehemiah his cup-bearer made the request, and received the answer that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and the order went forth to carry it out... *And from that date to the coming of Christ is seventy weeks.* (Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel*, 8.2.389; trans. W. J. Ferrar)

<sup>1</sup> See Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ* (New York: Image, 2016).

**Jesus' First Sermon in Nazareth: Proclaiming the Jubilee of the Messiah (Luke 4)**

<sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day. And he stood up to read; <sup>17</sup> and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

<sup>18</sup> “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*”

<sup>20</sup> And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> And he began to say to them, “*Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*” (Luke 4:16-21)

**Peter’s Question: How Many Times Should I Forgive (Matthew 18)**

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but *seventy times seven* [=490 times]” (Matthew 18:21-22)

**The Crucifixion of Jesus: The Blood and the Water (John 19)**

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; <sup>33</sup> but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> *But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.* <sup>35</sup> He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. (John 19:32-35)

**The Blood and Water from the Side of the Temple**

At the south-western corner [of the Altar] there were two holes like two narrow nostrils by which *the blood that was poured* over the western base and the southern base *used to run down and mingle in the water-channel and flow out into the brook Kidron.* (Mishnah Middoth 3:2; trans. Herbert Danby)

**St. Faustina and the Meaning of the Divine Mercy Image of Jesus**

When, on one occasion, my confessor told me to ask the Lord Jesus the meaning of the two rays in the image, I answered, “Very well, I will ask the Lord.” During prayer I heard these words within me: “The two rays denote Blood and Water. The pale [=white] ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous. The red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls... These two rays issued forth from the very depths of My tender mercy when My agonized heart was open on the Cross... Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My Mercy... Proclaim that Mercy is the greatest attribute of God. (St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, no. 299).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See esp. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC, *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told: Now is the Time of Mercy* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2015).

### **Pope Francis: Is Mercy Opposed to Justice?**

Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe... Saint Augustine... says: "It is easier for God to hold back anger than mercy". And so it is. God's anger lasts but a moment, his mercy forever. If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough. Experience shows that an appeal to justice alone will result in its destruction. This is why God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness. Yet this does not mean that justice should be devalued or rendered superfluous. On the contrary: anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelopes it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice... God's justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the Cross of Christ is God's judgement on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life. (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 20)

### **Pope Francis on Timing of the Jubilee Year: 50 Years after Vatican II**

I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on *the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world.

We recall the poignant words of Saint John XXIII when, opening the Council, he indicated the path to follow: "*Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity...* The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children". (Pope Francis, *The Face of Mercy*, no. 4)

#### **Join Dr. Pitre's Email List!**

**Receive free teachings, updates on new releases, and more.**

Kindly fill out the two lines below -- legibly -- and return this page to Dr. Pitre's media table (or you can keep this page and sign up at the media table).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_