

The Year of Jubilee.

NOVEMBER 20

LEVITICUS XXV: 8-17.

Golden Text, *Psalms* 50: 15.

THE WEEKLY SABBATH was made for man, Mark 2: 27, for rest to his body, and that his mind be free to engage in the worship of God, who is honoured by its observance, Isa. 58: 13, 14. Ezek. 20: 12. The Sabbatical year was one of rest to the land, vs. 1-7. The YEAR OF JUBILEE is the crowning extension of the same system—the most extraordinary of all civil institutions, in which no special religious observances were prescribed. It was held every fiftieth year, so that two Sabbatical years came together in which there was to be neither sowing nor reaping. It commenced on the great day of Atonement, v. 9. In this year all prisoners were released, slaves were made free, and debtors were absolved. The most marked feature, however, was that every inheritance in the land of Israel was then to be restored to its original owner. It was a year of redemption and restoration. The reasons for it were, (1) to prevent the land falling into the hands of a few rich people, and to relieve those who had been reduced to poverty. (2) To vindicate the right of each Israelite to his share in the land of promise. (3) To preserve the integrity of the tribes and families, that their genealogies might be faithfully recorded. Hence that of Jesus Christ at his birth is readily traced to David and the tribe of Judah, Matt. 1: 1, 6, 17. By law a Jew could not sell his land, v. 23. He could only mortgage it, with a right of redemption, or sell the produce of it for a given time, always with the understanding that it might be redeemed at any time by the owner, or his next of kin, and that in the year of Jubilee it must revert to him without any payment whatever. On this ground Naboth refused to sell his vineyard to Ahab, 1 Kings 21: 3. V. 9. *The trumpet of Jubilee*—The trumpet was used by the priests alone to proclaim the approach of feasts. The giving of the Law was thus heralded, Exo. 20: 18. At the last day the trumpet shall sound, 1 Cor. 15: 52. V. 11-13. *Ye shall not sow*—How then shall the people live for two whole years? (1) There was a promise of unusual increase in the 6th year, v. 21, to which reference is made in 2 Kings 19: 29, and Isa. 37: 30. (2) They were permitted to use the spontaneous fruits of the field, though not to reap nor store them, vs. 5, 7. V. 14. *Shall not oppress one another*—the rich should not over-reach or take advantage of the poor in trading with them, 1 Sam. 12: 3, 4. V. 15, 16. *The number of years*—purchases of land were to be regulated by the number of years till the next Jubilee—the nearer the Jubilee the less the price, seeing that then it reverted to the seller. This "Land Bill," framed by God, was strictly in keeping with His covenant to Israel, and intended to promote their national well-being when they should settle in Canaan. It is not clear, however, that it was very faithfully observed on their part. It is supposed to have fallen into disuse altogether from the time of the Babylonish Captivity. It is referred to in Isa. 61: 1, 2. Ezek. 46: 16-18. The world's Jubilee will be when all the Kingdoms shall be CHRIST'S.

The Serpent in the Wilderness.

NOVEMBER 27.

NUMBERS XXI. 1-9.

Golden Text, *John* 3: 14, 15.

THE ISRAELITES were now in the fortieth year of their wilderness life—in the southern part of the Valley of Arabah, which extends from the Dead Sea to the head of the east branch of the Red Sea—see map. V. 1. *King Arad*—rather the Canaanite king of *Arad*—a small town in the south of Judea, 20 miles from Hebron. *The way of the spies*—through the desert of Zin, the route taken by the spies sent into Canaan by Moses 38 years earlier, ch. 13: 21-23. *Fought*—just as the Canaanites had done 38 years before, ch. 14: 45. This check would teach the Israelites that Canaan was not to be gained without a hard struggle; and it has a lesson for us, 1 Thes. 3: 3-4. V. 5. *Will utterly destroy*—This vow of extermination gave name to the place, *Hormah*—utter desolation; though it was not accomplished till after the passage of Jordan, Josh. 12: 7, 14. V. 4. *Mount Hor*—half way between the Dead Sea and the eastern branch of the Red Sea, rises to a height of 6,000 feet. Here Aaron died, and was buried, ch. 20: 28. *To compass*—to go round about. *Edom*—Idumea. Turning south, they skirted the base of the mountain of Seir till their southern extremity was reached, and proceeded along the eastern side towards Moab. *Discouraged*—by thus turning away from Canaan and prolonging their weary wanderings. So near the promised land, yet debarred from entering it! V. 5. *Spake against God*—the old spirit of insubordination re-appears in an outburst of murmuring at the scarcity of water and, still more inexcusable, in expressions of disgust at the *mannâ*—the bread from heaven on which they had lived so many years! V. 6. *Fiery serpents*—so called from the virulence of their poison and the pain caused by their bite. The whole peninsula was infested with these reptiles, though God had hitherto protected His people from their attacks, Deut. 8: 15. V. 7. *We have sinned*—Confession of sin is a necessary precursor to conversion. The serpent is frequently used as an emblem of the evil One and of sin, Gen. 3: 1. Ps. 58: 3, 4. And sin is a serpent whose bite is more deadly than that of the cobra. *Moses prayed*—Feeling themselves unworthy of being heard, the people ask Moses to intercede for them. We too, need, and we have, an Advocate, 1 John 2: 1. V. 8. *Upon a pole*—that all might see it. This peculiar remedy was to show God's power and grace, and also that it might be a type of the power of faith in Christ to heal all who look up to Him for the pardon of sin, John 3: 14, 15, and 12: 32-34. See also Is. 45: 22 and 55: 1-3; Jn. 3: 16; Rev. 22: 17, etc. *Shall live*—Those who look to Jesus shall have life eternal, Jn. 3: 15; Rom. 6: 23. The brazen serpent was only an emblem, in itself impotent for evil; so Christ, in the likeness of sinful flesh, was yet without sin, 1 Jn. 3: 5; but the Saviour of sinners, 1 Tim. 1: 15. For the subsequent history of the brazen serpent, see 2 Kings, 18: 4. The true teaching of this passage is summed up in the Golden Text. We have an admirable definition of saving Faith in the Shorter Catechism.