

The church as a digital jubilee community: A liberating missiology for victims of online gambling, illegal online lending, and cyber slavery

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Abstract: This article formulates the church's missiological response to online gambling, illegal online lending, and cyber slavery, which form a single continuum of digital debt bondage in Indonesia. PPATK data record IDR 286.84 trillion circulating through online gambling in 2025, involving 12.3 million depositors, mostly low-income, while the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights documents hundreds of thousands of people, Indonesians among them, trafficked into online scam compounds. Existing ecclesial responses remain moralistic and individualising, or charitable and episodic. Situated in missiology, this literature study analyzes secondary data within Richard Osmer's four tasks of practical theology. Its theological norm emerges from an intertextual-canonical reading of Leviticus 25 through the Nazareth manifesto (Luke 4:18-19) and the earliest church's praxis (Acts 2 and 4), transposed into the platform economy as the digital Jubilee community. The resulting missional praxis has three movements: becoming an alternative economic community, serving victims through transformative diakonia, and speaking prophetically. The article reclaims Jubilee from prosperity theology's domestication, restoring its socio-structural meaning, and proposes that Indonesian Pentecostalism mature its spiritual-warfare imagination from individual demonology toward discernment of structural powers.

Keywords: cyber slavery, digital Jubilee, liberating missiology, online gambling, theology of debt

Introduction

Online gambling has become one of the gravest social emergencies in Indonesia. The Indonesian Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (Pusat Pelaporan dan Analisis Transaksi Keuangan, PPATK) records that funds circulating through online gambling in 2025 reached IDR 286.84 trillion across 422.1 million transactions. That figure fell by roughly 20 percent from 2024, when it broke through IDR 359.81 trillion; yet the number of depositors held steady at 12.3 million people transacting through banks, digital wallets, and the QRIS payment network.¹ These statistics are not neutral numbers. The victim profile shows that most players (71.6 percent) earn less than IDR 5 million per month while carrying debts

¹ Pusat Pelaporan dan Analisis Transaksi Keuangan (PPATK) "Catatan Capaian Strategis PPATK Tahun 2025: Menjaga Kedaulatan dan Integritas Ekonomi Bangsa" Press Release No. B/001/HM.05/3.1/I/2026, January 28, 2026.

outside the banking system, and that some eighty thousand children under the age of ten have already been exposed to the practice.² Online gambling, in other words, is not a peripheral vice touching a handful of high-rolling gamblers; it is an engine of impoverishment striking at the very social base on which the majority of Indonesia's church members live.

This article proceeds from a single descriptive observation that serves as its premise: online gambling, illegal online lending, and cyber slavery are not three separate problems but one continuum of debt bondage mediated by digital infrastructure. Gambling losses generate debt; that debt is patched over with predatory illegal online loans; the resulting entrapment destroys a person's good name and leaves them vulnerable to the lure of fraudulent job offers; and at the far end of the chain, some are trafficked into transnational online scam compounds and coerced into becoming perpetrators of cybercrime themselves. PPATK itself affirms that online gambling money flows are entangled with other criminal offenses such as fraud, narcotics, and human trafficking.³ At the regional scale, the UN Human Rights Office has documented hundreds of thousands of people—at least 120,000 in Myanmar and around 100,000 in Cambodia, Indonesian nationals among them—detained and forced to run online scams, with one crucial affirmation attached: they are victims, not criminals.⁴

Responses to this emergency have emerged, but the map is lopsided. The state has formed an eradication task force, blocked millions of items of content, and strengthened the anti-money-laundering regime; the results are real, visible in the decline in circulating funds. Yet the persistence of more than twelve million depositors exposes the limits of a repressive approach that never touches the demand side: addiction and economic vulnerability. Religious communities have affirmed that gambling is forbidden and sinful through moral appeals.⁵ Within Christian circles, the dominant response moves along two tracks: ethical preaching that counsels congregations to steer clear of gambling, and incidental charitable assistance. The available theological scholarship generally stops at the pastoral-individual register as well—for example, models of pastoral accompaniment for young people addicted to online gambling.⁶ These approaches are valuable, but they are not yet adequate, for what confronts the church is not merely individual moral weakness.

What confronts the church is an economic structure designed to hold people captive, and naming it demands theological articulation rather than sociological description alone. In the vocabulary of Christian theology, a structure that systemically produces captivity cannot be understood as the mere aggregate of mistaken individual choices; it is sin becoming institutional—an order whose operative power exceeds the intentions of its agents and that compels even good people to act oppressively once they are inside it. The Christian tradition

² PPATK, "Promensisko 2025: Menjawab Ancaman Judi Online dan Kejahatan Digital lewat Aksi", Press Release, 2025.

³ PPATK, "Pemerintah Tegaskan Perang Total terhadap Judi Online dan Pencucian Uang", November 4, 2025.

⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Online Scam Operations and Trafficking into Forced Criminality in Southeast Asia: Recommendations for a Human Rights Response* (Bangkok: OHCHR, 2023), 7.

⁵ To be completed: references for the MUI fatwa on online gambling, the statement or pastoral message of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), and the relevant documents of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI) or of other religious mass organizations.

⁶ Fabian Heikson Rapar Samuel Tangkuman and Maria Elisa Tulangouw, "Pendampingan Pastoral terhadap Pemuda yang Kecanduan Judi Online", *PASOLO: Jurnal Ilmu Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 2 (2025): 14–24.

offers two categories: the New Testament language of the Powers, which locates institutions as realities with both an outer manifestation and a spiritual interiority; and Jesus' own personification of Mammon, which marks money as a power capable of demanding worship. This theological articulation is what distinguishes the present analysis from ordinary socio-economic critique, and it is likewise what demands an answer that is itself structural. That answer has long been available within the canon, and its name is Jubilee.

Jubilee must be introduced here, on the map of the problem, rather than later as a conclusion, for it is precisely as the antithesis of a debt regime that it acquires its meaning. Leviticus 25 is the most complete institutional answer the Bible possesses to captivity through debt, and it is designed to read economic collapse as a graduated process—precisely the continuum just mapped: the brother who falls into poverty, the land that is sold, and the person sold on account of debt. Four features make it apt as an antithesis. First, its diagnostic precision: it answers debt bondage, not poverty in general. Second, its character is structural and periodic rather than charitable and episodic; it is correction institutionalized, not mercy awaiting the generosity of the well-off. Third, its canonical trajectory issues in Jesus's messianic program, so Jubilee is Christ's own agenda and therefore the church's task. Fourth, Luke's proclamation opens with the anointing of the Spirit, so the paradigm is firmly rooted in pneumatology. The regime of digital mammon and Jubilee thus stand opposed as two mutually exclusive orders: one makes the human being a creditor's permanent asset; the other declares the human being God's own and therefore incapable of being permanently owned by anyone.

The same gap is visible on the academic map. Global missiology has already marked the digital realm as one of mission's frontiers: the Fourth Lausanne Congress at Seoul-Incheon (2024) placed digital communities and people on the move among the urgent gaps in mission while urging polycentric models of global collaboration.⁷ At the same time, a theology of debt has developed rapidly in recent scholarly conversation through works that read financial capitalism theologically. Yet no single constructive framework has brought together the stream of emergency data on online gambling in Indonesia, the theology of debt, and missiology. So far as the authors have been able to determine, there exists as yet no missiological articulation that treats the continuum of online gambling, illegal lending, and cyber slavery as a locus of the church's mission in Indonesia. This article intends to fill that gap.

The choice of missiology rather than Christian ethics requires explicit justification, since both are equally legitimate frames for discussing gambling. Christian ethics asks which actions are right and wrong for the moral agent, and on that question the answer has long been available and is scarcely disputed: gambling is destructive and is therefore rejected. That is precisely where the difficulty lies. Existing ecclesial responses already operate at maximum capacity within the framework of normative ethics—declaring the prohibition and calling for repentance—and the results remain inadequate. What has not yet been answered is not the ethical question “is gambling a sin?” but the missiological question “what is the church's calling as a community sent into the midst of a structure that produces captivity?” Missiology asks after the identity and sending of a community rather than the rightness of individual acts;

⁷ Lausanne Movement, “Seoul-Incheon 2024: The Fourth Lausanne Congress,” accessed July 15, 2026, <https://lausanne.org/gathering/seoul-2024>.

it positions the victim as the neighbor to whom the church is sent, not as the transgressor who must be rebuked. This shift of category is what is at stake in the present article: from moral judgment upon individuals to the formation of a community that becomes a sign of liberation.

The thesis advanced here is as follows: the church is called to become a digital Jubilee community—a fellowship that, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, makes present a liberation that is formative, diaconal, and prophetic for those held captive by digital debt, as a continuation of the proclamation of “the year of the Lord’s favor” declared by Jesus at Nazareth (Luke 4:18–19) and rooted in the Jubilee institution of Leviticus 25. This formulation likewise insists that such a mission of liberation is not a side project among the church’s social activities but an integral dimension of its missionary identity: the church does not merely possess a program for helping victims; it is called to become an alternative social space in which the logic of digital Mammon does not obtain. The thesis is not advanced as a freestanding claim but as a proposition whose demonstration proceeds in four sequential steps: descriptive demonstration that the three phenomena do in fact constitute one continuum and not three separate problems; interpretive demonstration that the continuum runs according to a designed logic of extraction rather than an accidental accumulation of moral weakness; normative demonstration that Jubilee canonically speaks to precisely this problem and is not being forced upon it; and pragmatic demonstration that the paradigm can be translated into congregational praxis that is concrete and open to inspection.

The predicate “digital” performs three functions: it names the site of captivity in the present, it marks the mode of the church’s response, and it insists that what is undertaken is a paradigmatic transposition rather than a repristination of ancient agrarian law. The concept is likewise to be distinguished from the discourse of the digital sabbath: the digital sabbath is a personal discipline of rest from screens, whereas the digital Jubilee is structural-communal restoration from captivity.

Methodologically, this article stands within the discipline of missiology. Richard Osmer’s four tasks of practical theology—descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic—are employed as a procedural framework ordering the flow of reasoning, not as a disciplinary claim displacing missiology.⁸ This clarification matters because it determines how the normative section is to be read: the biblical reading running from Leviticus 25 to Acts is not intended as freestanding exegesis but as the execution of the normative task, yielding a paradigm for missional praxis. That reading is carried out intertextually and canonically: Leviticus 25 is read together with Deuteronomy 15 and Isaiah 61, then through the Nazareth manifesto in Luke 4 and the Zacchaeus narrative in Luke 19, and on to the praxis of the earliest church in Acts 2 and 4, with attention to the lexical chain *deror–aphesis* that binds the whole together. Transposition into the contemporary context follows a paradigmatic hermeneutic: transfer at the level of the law’s purpose rather than at the level of its mechanism.

Data were gathered through a literature study employing secondary document analysis: official PPATK reports, reports of the UN Human Rights Office, ecclesial documents, and academic literature and biblical scholarship. This design must be stated openly along with its consequences. The article undertakes no field observation, interviews, or surveys of victims or congregations; the descriptive-empirical task is executed at the level of verified secondary data, which within Osmer’s framework constitutes a semiformal and legitimate form of *priestly*

⁸ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

listening but one that cannot substitute for listening at first hand. Consequently, the construction offered here has the status of a missiological proposal awaiting field testing, and this limitation is restated in the conclusion. The order of discussion follows the four tasks: the first section maps the anatomy of digital captivity; the second reads the logic that drives it; the third builds the theological norm of Jubilee and constructs the concept of digital Jubilee; the fourth formulates the church's missionary praxis in three movements: becoming, serving, and speaking out.

One final clarification concerning scope. This article is written from and for the Indonesian ecclesial context broadly conceived, but at several points it advances implications addressed specifically to the Pentecostal tradition—the tradition of widest growth in Indonesia and the one whose spiritual-warfare imagination is at once the most relevant and the most in need of maturation in the face of structural powers. Those particular implications are advanced at the close of the second section and in the third movement of the fourth, and they are not intended to narrow the article's relevance for other traditions.

The anatomy of digital captivity: Online gambling, illegal lending, and cyber slavery as a single continuum

The descriptive-empirical task demands honesty toward the data. In 2025, funds circulating through online gambling totaled IDR 286.84 trillion across 422.1 million transactions, with total deposits of IDR 36.01 trillion (down from IDR 51.3 trillion in 2024), alongside a significant shift in deposit methods toward the QRIS channel.⁹ That decline deserves credit as the result of collaborative enforcement, but the absolute figures remain staggering: hundreds of trillions of rupiah siphoned from household economies into criminal networks in a single year. Accessibility is the key word. Gambling that once required physical presence in a hidden venue is now present in everyone's pocket, infiltrating through social media advertisements, sports-streaming links, and games on children's devices. It disguises itself as cheap entertainment for the working class while operating as a suction pump that draws wealth from the bottom up.

The victim profile confirms its predatory character. Nearly three-quarters of players (71.6 percent) earn less than IDR 5 million per month and carry debts outside banks, cooperatives, and credit cards; in the first quarter of 2025 alone, children between the ages of ten and sixteen deposited more than IDR 2.2 billion, and some eighty thousand children under the age of ten have already been exposed.¹⁰ The social impact is layered: household conflict and domestic violence, the loss of family savings and assets, children cut off from their basic needs, derivative crimes committed to cover losses, and the tragic cases of lives lost that are reported again and again. For the church, this description is not distant statistics: the shattered families in question sit in the pews, and some conceal their wounds precisely because they fear being judged.

The second link in the chain is illegal online lending. As losses accumulate, the easiest fix is an unsecured lending app that disburses funds within minutes, with opaque daily interest and penalties, and access terms that require the borrower's entire phone contacts. Upon default, the collection machinery operates through humiliation: terrorising the victim and

⁹ PPATK, "Catatan Capaian Strategis PPATK Tahun 2025."

¹⁰ PPATK, "Promensisko 2025."

shaming them before family, colleagues, and even fellow congregants. PPATK data show this: of the 8.8 million online gamblers recorded in 2024, some 3.8 million held loans outside formal financial institutions.¹¹ The pattern of digging one hole to fill another spirals ever deeper, and the engineered shame isolates victims from community—including from the church—at precisely the moment they most need help.

The furthest end of this chain is cyber slavery. The 2023 report of the UN Human Rights Office documents criminal syndicates coercing hundreds of thousands of people into online scam operations across Southeast Asia: at least 120,000 in Myanmar and around 100,000 in Cambodia, with victims drawn from across ASEAN, Indonesia included, and from farther afield.¹² They are recruited through fraudulent job advertisements promising high salaries, have their passports confiscated, are confined within wire-fenced compounds, are burdened with daily fraud quotas, and are tortured when they fail. A follow-up report released in early 2026 describes compounds the size of small towns guarded by armed men, complete with the practice of torture for those who do not meet quota.¹³ Here the continuum reaches its most naked form: ancient debt slavery has returned, this time facilitated by digital technology.

The structural character of the phenomenon becomes still clearer once the money is traced. From 2017 through the third quarter of 2025, monitored online gambling flows exceeded IDR 1,000 trillion, and the proceeds were laundered through nominee accounts, crypto assets, and cross-border payment gateways, with the principal operators domiciled outside Indonesian jurisdiction.¹⁴ Online gambling thus functions as the node linking money laundering, fraud, narcotics trafficking, and human trafficking within a single transnational criminal ecosystem. The descriptive conclusion is unambiguous: what confronts us is not a collection of personal sins that happens to be large but an organized and well-capitalized extraction industry sheltering behind cross-border complexity.

The state has not stood idle. A task force to eradicate online gambling has formed, involving law enforcement, financial authorities, and relevant ministries; within six months, it blocked more than one million items of gambling-related content; and strengthening the anti-money-laundering committee has reinforced interagency coordination.¹⁵ The achievement is real: the 20 percent decline in circulating funds is evidence that enforcement has had an effect. Repressive instruments, however, work on the supply side; they block sites and freeze accounts, but they do not heal addiction, do not restore the economies of families already ruined, and do not build communal resilience. It is precisely that demand side that is the space most fittingly occupied by communities of faith.

What of the religious response? Religious authorities in Indonesia are all but unanimous in declaring gambling forbidden and sinful and in calling for repentance; moral campaigns have been intensified from the pulpit. Within Christian circles, alongside ethical preaching, pastoral studies have appeared, offering models of accompaniment for addicts—a contribution deserving appreciation, as seen in the proposal of holistic pastoral

¹¹ PPATK, “Promensisko 2025.”

¹² OHCHR, *Online Scam Operations*, 7; see also OHCHR, “Hundreds of Thousands Trafficked to Work as Online Scammers in SE Asia, Says UN Report,” press release, August 29, 2023.

¹³ OHCHR, “UN Report Details Grave Abuses against Those Trafficked into Scam Centres,” press release, February 20, 2026.

¹⁴ PPATK, “Pemerintah Tegaskan Perang Total.”

¹⁵ PPATK, “Pemerintah Tegaskan Perang Total”; PPATK, “Promensisko 2025.”

accompaniment for young people addicted to online gambling.¹⁶ Nearly all of those responses, however, treat the problem as a moral deviation or an individual crisis. Structural analysis is almost entirely absent, and, more fundamentally, there is as yet no framework that treats this continuum as a whole as a locus of the church's mission as a community, rather than as an object of counseling by individual ministers.

The anatomy sketched above yields a single descriptive conclusion: from the phone screen in the family living room to the razor-wire compound on the Myanmar border, everything operates as one continuum of digital debt bondage preying upon the most vulnerable. That continuum cannot be adequately explained by the category of individual weakness of faith. What is required is an interpretive reading that discloses the logic behind it: why the digital architecture is so effective and so captivating, how debt forms the human being, and what sort of power is in fact at work. That is the task borne by the section that follows.

Reading the logic of extraction: Engineered addiction, indebted humanity, and mammon as a power

The first finding of the interpretive task is this: gambling addiction is not an accident but the product of engineering. Natasha Dow Schüll's ethnography of the machine-gambling industry shows that gambling devices are meticulously designed to produce the condition players call *the zone*—a dissociative state in which awareness of time, money, and the body dissolves, and all that remains is the continuation of play.¹⁷ Online gambling applications transfer that entire technology to the mobile phone: randomized reward schedules that keep the brain expecting, near-miss sensations that register as wins, spin speeds that dull deliberation, and round-the-clock availability without pause. The pastoral implication is significant: to rebuke victims simply for weakness of faith is to misdirect the charge, since what they face is an architecture designed precisely to subdue the will.

That engineering unfolds within a wider economic ecosystem. Shoshana Zuboff names its underlying logic surveillance capitalism: human experience is harvested as behavioral surplus, processed into prediction, and used to direct action—including the precise targeting of gambling advertisements at those most vulnerable.¹⁸ Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias call this order data colonialism: as the old colonialism seized land, the new colonialism seizes life itself as raw material available for exploitation.¹⁹ Online gambling operates exactly at the intersection of the two. It is not merely a game that happens to be available online but an extraction machine harvesting data on vulnerability—late-night waking hours, spending patterns, histories of loss—to mine the last rupiah from the thinnest pockets.

The next layer is debt. Maurizio Lazzarato argues that debt within financial capitalism is not merely an economic transaction but a technology for the formation of subjects: the creditor-debtor relation produces the “indebted man,” whose life is disciplined by the obligation to

¹⁶ Tangkuman and Tulangouw, “Pendampingan Pastoral terhadap Pemuda.”

¹⁷ Natasha Dow Schüll, *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 2.

¹⁸ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019), 8–10.

¹⁹ Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonising Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), xiii–xv.

repay, whose future is mortgaged, and whose interior life is inhabited by guilt.²⁰ This analysis illuminates the workings of illegal lending with startling precision. The collection terror that shames the victim before all their contacts is not an excess but the very core of the technology: shame is an instrument for governing the poor. From here, too, comes the answer to why victims fall silent and withdraw from community, and why a healing response cannot consist of moral advice alone but must take the form of a community that dismantles that regime of shame with grace.

David Graeber situates all of this within a long history: for five thousand years, debt has been a relation of power disguised as morality. The maxim that debts must be paid appears to be a neutral ethical truth, whereas historically it has again and again been the instrument that turned free people into slaves—which is why ancient civilizations knew periodic debt cancellation precisely as a means of preventing social collapse.²¹ The online scam compounds of Southeast Asia display the return of that ancient debt slavery in digital packaging: people are ensnared by recruitment fees and manufactured “debts,” and then their bodies and their time are confiscated in payment. This history matters for the argument of this article, for it shows that the Torah was not naive: Jubilee law arose precisely in anticipation of cycles of collapse of just this kind.

The sociological reading above demands theological naming, as was already signaled in the introduction. Jesus gives the power that competes with God a personal name—Mammon: “You cannot serve God and Mammon” (Luke 16:13)—a personification signaling that money can cease to be an instrument and begin to be a master. Walter Wink’s framework of the Powers helps explain this: every institution has an outer manifestation and a spiritual interiority, and a fallen power must be named, unmasked, and engaged.²² In that idiom, the “rulers of the air” of the present day do not float in the ether; they operate through recommendation algorithms, architectures of addiction, and collection machinery—concrete structures that shape the behavior of millions.²³

For the Pentecostal tradition, which, as stated in the introduction, is one of this article’s particular addressees, the analysis is also an invitation to reorientation. A spiritual-warfare imagination hitherto focused on individual demonology needs to mature into discernment of structural powers: to pray and fast against online gambling means also to read PPATK reports, to understand application design, and to demand platform accountability. Amos Yong shows that a fully developed pneumatology issues precisely in political theology: the Spirit poured out on all flesh enables the messianic community to embody an alternative way of life amid the various politico-economic regimes of “Caesar.”²⁴ Mature spiritual warfare therefore integrates prayer, social analysis, and praxis rather than choosing among them.

The interpretive synthesis can be formulated through recent theologies of debt. Kathryn Tanner shows that financialized capitalism chains the person to their past through debt that

²⁰ Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012), 30–33.

²¹ David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2011), 8.

²² Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 61–66.

²³ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 3–5.

²⁴ Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 21–23.

falls due and to their future through targets that pursue them, whereas God's economy of grace works in the opposite direction: severing the determination of the past and opening the future.²⁵ Devin Singh adds a deeper genealogy: money and theology have long borrowed one another's language, so that money easily behaves as a rival theology demanding its own faith, its own sacrifice, and its own liturgy.²⁶ From all of these readings, the regime of online gambling, illegal lending, and cyber slavery is most aptly named one thing: a regime of digital Mammon, in which sin becomes structurally institutionalized. Against a structure, the only adequate answer is a norm that is likewise structural.

Jubilee as a paradigm for liberating missiology: From Leviticus 25 to Luke 4 and the praxis of the earliest church

This section carries out the normative task within Osmer's framework, and its biblical reading yields a paradigm for mission rather than freestanding exegesis. Its method is intertextual-canonical: Leviticus 25 is read together with Deuteronomy 15 and Isaiah 61, then through Luke 4 and 19, and on to Acts 2 and 4, with the lexical chain *deror-aphesis* as the connective thread. Leviticus 25 orders two interwoven institutions: the sabbatical year for the land in every seventh year, and the Jubilee in the fiftieth year—the sabbath of all sabbaths—proclaimed with the trumpet on the Day of Atonement. In that year, liberty (Hebrew *deror*) is proclaimed to all the inhabitants of the land (Lev. 25:10): land that has been sold reverts to its ancestral family, and those sold on account of debt are set free. The pericope is arranged in graduated fashion, following the escalation of poverty: from the brother who falls into poverty and sells his land, through the prohibition of taking interest and usury from him (25:35–38), the institution of redemption by a kinsman (*gō'ēl*), to the prohibition against permanently enslaving a fellow Israelite (25:39–43).²⁷ The Torah, in other words, reads the reality of economic collapse in stages—precisely like the gambling-lending-slavery continuum mapped above—and installs a brake at each stage.

The text itself states its theological rationale. Land may not be sold in perpetuity, “for the land is mine; you are strangers and sojourners with me” (Lev. 25:23), and human beings may not be permanently owned, “for they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt” (25:42, 55). Those two claims of divine ownership form the foundation of Jubilee's economic anthropology: a human being cannot become the permanent asset of any creditor because they already belong to God, and the earth cannot be accumulated without limit because God is its owner. Jubilee is the memory of the Exodus institutionalized in the calendar: liberation from Egypt translated into an economic order that refuses the emergence of new “Egypt” among the people. This is the most direct antithesis conceivable to a logic of extraction that treats the human being as a resource to be mined without limit.

The ancient Near Eastern background sharpens its distinctiveness further. The term “*deror*” is cognate with “*andurārum*,” the edict of release from debt and slavery occasionally proclaimed by Mesopotamian kings, typically at the outset of a reign, as an act of political

²⁵ Kathryn Tanner, *Christianity and the New Spirit of Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 234.

²⁶ Devin Singh, *Divine Currency: The Theological Power of Money in the West* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 3–5.

²⁷ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3B (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2151–2157.

clemency. Moshe Weinfeld documents that kinship while marking Israel's innovation: what elsewhere was the *ad hoc* mercy of a ruler, the Torah transformed into a scheduled divine statute independent of the throne's generosity.²⁸ Liberation, accordingly, is not a gift bestowed by those in power but a right grounded in God's sovereignty. For missiology, this shift is decisive: a church that proclaims Jubilee is not commending optional philanthropy on the part of the economy's winners but announcing an order that is the right of the oppressed before God.

Was Jubilee ever fully practiced in Israel's history? Evidence of its implementation is thin, and some scholars judge it a legislative utopia. Yet John Bergsma shows that it is precisely the history of its interpretation that demonstrates its vitality: Isaiah 61 takes up Jubilee language and transposes it into eschatological hope—good news for the poor, release for captives, and the year of the Lord's favor—while the Qumran text 11QMelchizedek reads Jubilee as an end-time liberation to be proclaimed by a heavenly liberator.²⁹ As a vision institutionalized in hope, Jubilee functions normatively precisely when it is not implemented: it stands as a permanent critique of every order that permits human beings to be owned on account of debt. This trajectory comes to rest in the synagogue at Nazareth.

At Nazareth, Jesus opened his ministry by reading from the scroll of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor ... to proclaim release to those held captive ... to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim that the year of the Lord's favor has come" (Luke 4:18–19). The Jubiliary weave of the passage is philologically tight: the Septuagint renders "deror" and "Jubilee" with *aphesis* (Lev. 25:10 LXX), the very word that appears twice in that citation by way of Isaiah 61 and the interpolated Isaiah 58:6, and that is at the same time Luke's standard term for the forgiveness of sins.³⁰ Classic studies confirm that the Nazareth manifesto is a Jubiliary proclamation programming the whole of Jesus' ministry in Luke,³¹ a reading reinforced by Joel Green's narrative commentary³² and popularized within Christian ethics through the line running from André Trocmé to John Howard Yoder.³³ Two things are decisive for this article's thesis: Jubilee is the Messiah's agenda, and that agenda opens with the anointing of the Spirit.

Luke then shows Jubilee become flesh in narrative. The encounter with Zacchaeus culminates in economic restitution—half his possessions to the poor and fourfold restoration to those he had defrauded—and it is at precisely that point that Jesus declares, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:8–9): a salvation made visible in the reversal of relations to possessions.³⁴ The same line continues into the earliest church: the fellowship born

²⁸ Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 571–572.

²⁹ John S. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 115 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 281.

³⁰ Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 35–37.

³¹ Robert B. Sloan, *The Favorable Year of the Lord: A Study of Jubiliary Theology in the Gospel of Luke* (Austin: Schola Press, 1977), 20.

³² Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 210–213.

³³ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 28–33.

³⁴ Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee*, 64–68.

of the outpouring of the Spirit is marked by loosened ownership, a shared table, and the declaration that “there was not one among them who was in need” (Acts 4:34), a direct echo of the ideal of the sabbatical law in Deuteronomy 15:4. Luke Timothy Johnson shows that in the Lukan double work, the disposition toward possessions functions as the outward sign of the inward human response to God.³⁵ In Luke’s hands, Jubilee ceases to be a calendar and becomes the way of life of the messianic community.

From that trajectory, the concept of digital Jubilee can be constructed responsibly. The key is the paradigmatic hermeneutic as formulated by Christopher Wright: Israel’s law is transposed not at the level of its mechanism but at the level of its purpose.³⁶ What is carried over into the platform economy is not the fifty-year cycle or the restoration of land but Jubilee’s four purposes: the protection of the vulnerable from the snare of debt; the prohibition of permanent ownership of human beings by any creditor whatsoever; the restoration of productive capacity rather than mere almsgiving; and periodic structural correction of oppressive accumulation. In light of the sabbath economics formulated by Walter Brueggemann³⁷ and Ched Myers,³⁸ digital Jubilee means a community that refuses the logic of scarcity and accumulation and practices shared sufficiency in the domain that is now the most captivating of all: the digital-financial. The concept must be distinguished from the digital sabbath: the digital sabbath is a personal discipline of rest from the screen; digital Jubilee is structural-communal liberation from captivity. The sabbath answers exhaustion; Jubilee answers slavery.

This construction must be honest about the objections it faces. First, the dark text of Leviticus 25:44–46, which permits the enslavement of foreigners, must not be concealed; it is met with a trajectory hermeneutic: the logic of belonging to God that limits the enslavement of fellow Israelites moves within the canon toward christological universalization, when in Christ “there is neither slave nor free” (Gal. 3:28) and a slave is returned “no longer as a slave but ... as a beloved brother” (Phlm. 16). Second, the concern about moral hazard—might not debt relief sustain addiction? It is answered by the structure of Jubilee itself: what is restored is capacity, that is, land as a means of production, not release without formation; the praxis must therefore include accompaniment and recovery. Third, precision of target: this article’s critique is aimed at illegal and predatory lending, not at licensed, regulation-compliant digital finance. Finally, Jubilee is not esoteric language: the Jubilee 2000 movement made it a global idiom of debt cancellation, and the Jubilee of 2025 proclaimed through the bull *Spes Non Confundit*³⁹ reaffirmed that the goods of the earth are destined for all, accompanying that affirmation with a call for the cancellation of poor nations’ debts in acknowledgment of the North’s ecological debt to the South.⁴⁰ Jubilee is a living public language, and the church in Indonesia is called to speak it in its own house.

³⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, SBL Dissertation Series 39 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 137.

³⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 76.

³⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Money and Possessions*, Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 185.

³⁸ Ched Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics* (Washington, DC: Tell the Word, 2001), 12–14.

³⁹ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit: Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025* (2024), art. 16.

⁴⁰ Francis, “Message for the 58th World Day of Peace (1 January 2025).”

The praxis of a digital jubilee community: Becoming, serving, and speaking out

The pragmatic task is to translate norms into transforming leadership. Its point of departure is ecclesiological: mission is participation in the *missio Dei*, and its primary agent is not a program but a community. David Bosch insists that the church carries out its mission first of all by being an alternative society in the midst of the world,⁴¹ and Lesslie Newbigin formulates the point densely: the only hermeneutic of the gospel capable of convincing the world is a congregation that lives it.⁴² Jubiliary liberation must therefore be seen before it can be proclaimed. From this starting point, the praxis of a digital Jubilee community is formulated in three graduated movements—becoming, serving, and speaking out—consonant with an integral mission that refuses the dichotomy between evangelism and social responsibility,⁴³ and with the ecumenical current that locates mission precisely at the margins.⁴⁴

The first movement begins with the congregation's internal economy. A digital Jubilee community makes a counter-order visible through the transparency and accountability of church finances—for the credibility of any preaching about Mammon collapses if the congregation's own treasury is opaque; through a culture of mutual responsibility in which no member falls alone; and through concrete instruments: an interest-free emergency diaconal fund, the strengthening of credit unions and congregational cooperatives as real alternatives to predatory lending, and catechesis in financial and digital literacy as part of discipleship rather than as a supplementary seminar. Included here is the church's own integrity: refusing offerings indicated to be gambling proceeds, so that its table does not become a laundering machine for Mammon. At this point the local congregation genuinely functions as a sign: a social space in which the logic of extraction ceases to apply.

Still within the same movement, the digital Jubilee community is a community of recovery. Designed addiction can be countered only by designed togetherness: support groups for addicts and their families working alongside addiction professionals; digital discipleship that forms disciplines of device use and the curation of one's online environment; and, most decisively, a shame-free space. If the regime of illegal lending governs through shame, the church resists it with grace: confession received without judgment, the restoration of a good name, and patient accompaniment through relapse. Worship and prayer function formatively here rather than decoratively: liturgy forms counter-desires, redirecting the longing for *the zone* toward an encounter that liberates. Here the fullness of the Spirit manifests its public fruit, as in the first Pentecostal community at Jerusalem.

The second movement, serving, is transformative *diakonia* for victims both outside and inside the church's fence. For victims of online gambling and illegal lending: legal accompaniment and mediated debt restructuring in cooperation with the financial services authority and legal aid institutions; protection from collection terror, including literacy in debtors' rights and the securing of personal data; and economic restoration through job

⁴¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 10.

⁴² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 119.

⁴³ C. René Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2010), 20.

⁴⁴ Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2013), art. 6.

training, sound microfinance, and employment networks within the congregation. The Jubilee principle governs the form this takes: what is returned is “land” as productive capacity and dignity, not mere relief payments. This kind of diakonia demands institutionalization: dedicated service units at congregational, classis, and synodical levels, with trained volunteers, referral protocols, and cross-institutional partnerships, lest compassion evaporate into improvisation.

Particular attention must be given to survivors of cyber slavery. The church can take part in networks for the repatriation and reintegration of trafficking victims: providing trauma accompaniment that makes room for lament and for gradual recovery, assisting socio-economic reintegration, and—crucially—resisting stigmatization. The UN Human Rights Office's principle must be echoed from the pulpit: those forced to run scams are victims, not criminals.⁴⁵ A community of faith that welcomes survivors without labels supplies precisely what the state cannot: the restoration of meaning and of trust. For families whose members remain trapped inside scam compounds, the church is present in case advocacy and as a scaffold of hope—a ministry demanding long breath and cross-border cooperation.

The third movement, speaking out, is the prophetic dimension. The church supports and monitors law enforcement through the task force, the anti-money-laundering committee, and content blocking, while pressing for more structural change: accountability for negligent digital platforms and payment channels, stronger financial consumer protection against predatory lending, and asset recovery for victims. This voice is not an expansion of ecclesiastical power but the discharge of the church's public calling. Here the specific implication for the Pentecostal tradition takes practical form: this tradition possesses capital of which it is often unaware, for the research of Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori displays a global wave of progressive Pentecostalism fusing charismatic spirituality with persistent social engagement, and Amos Yong has laid its theological foundation.⁴⁶ For a digital Jubilee community, speaking out is another form of sounding the trumpet: proclaiming liberation in the public square.

The movement of speaking out reaches its summit in collaboration. Online gambling is a common enemy of all religious communities in Indonesia; rarely does a public issue supply so concrete a basis for interfaith cooperation. The church can join hands with other religious organizations and with government in public education, victim accompaniment, and policy advocacy: a religious moderation that does not stop at discourse but is tested in work. In the end, all of these practices are guarded by two markers. First, eschatological humility: the church is the sign and the anticipation of the year of favor, not its fulfillment; the success of mission is not measured by the disappearance of Mammon, which awaits final judgment, but by concrete liberations that can be witnessed. Second, pneumatological dependence: as at Nazareth, the proclamation of liberation is legitimate only if it is born of the Spirit's anointing; without that, the digital Jubilee community degenerates into an exhausting nongovernmental organization.

⁴⁵ OHCHR, “Hundreds of Thousands Trafficked.”

⁴⁶ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 24; Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 21–23.

Conclusion

This article has used the four tasks of practical theology as a procedural framework to establish a single missiological thesis: the church is called to become a digital Jubilee community in the face of a continuum of debt bondage running from online gambling through illegal lending to cyber slavery. Descriptively, that continuum has proven to be a single chain preying on the most vulnerable. Interpretively, it reads as a regime of digital Mammon. Normatively, Leviticus 25, read intertextually and canonically through the Nazareth manifesto and the earliest church's praxis, offers a structural paradigm of liberation: protection for the vulnerable, prohibition of owning persons, restoration of capacity, and periodic correction. Pragmatically, that paradigm takes flesh in three movements: becoming, serving, and speaking out.

The article's contribution operates on three levels. Conceptually, it offers Indonesian missiology the category of the digital Jubilee community. Practically, it supplies a three-movement framework that congregations can implement. Critically, it reclaims Jubilee from domestication by prosperity theology and restores it to its original socio-structural meaning, while proposing that the Pentecostal tradition mature its spiritual-warfare imagination from individual demonology toward discernment of structural powers.

The article's limitations must be stated openly. As a literature study using secondary-data analysis, it includes no field observation, no interviews with victims or their companions, and no congregational survey; it is a missiological proposal awaiting testing. Further research is needed, including ethnography of congregations that accompany victims, the development and evaluation of tested diaconal models, and interdisciplinary research alongside addiction science, law, and public policy. The direction of the calling, however, is already clear. As long as more than twelve million people continue to deposit their last hope in machines of digital extraction, proclaiming "the year of the Lord's favor" is not liturgical nostalgia but the church's most urgent missional mandate in Indonesia today.

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