

B. A Review of Homelessness in the New Testament

1) Social Analysis (P. 74-78)

- a) The Oppressive Socio-Economic, Political System
- b) The Oppressive Tax System
- c) The Oppressive Temple System
- d) The Oppressive Purity System
- e) The Oppressive Patriarchy

2) The Homeless Minjung in the Days of Jesus (P. 79-93)

- a) The Poor Peasants
- b) The Sick and Disabled
- c) The Social Outcasts and the Gentiles
- d) Women
- e) Jesus, the Homeless Minjung
- f) The Wealthy Homeless

3). The Way to Home (Jubilee/Liberation) (P. 94-108)

- a) Jesus' Move from Nazareth to Capernaum
- b) The Announcement of Jubilee (Luke 4:16-30)
- c) Subversion (Reversal)
- d) Suffering and Death
- e) Resurrection

4). Those Who Came Home (Jubilee/Liberation) (P. 109-121)

- a) The Destitute Poor Come Home
- b) The Rich Zacchaeus Comes Home
- c) The Sick and Disabled Come Home
- d) The Social Outcasts, Sinners and Gentiles Come Home
- e) Women Come Home

5) Conclusion (P. 122-125)

- a) The Last Judgment for Home and Homelessness (Matt. 25:31-46)
- b) God's Perfect Home, *Oikos, Shalom* (Rev. 21:1-22:5)

INTRODUCTION

Understanding who the homeless were in New Testament times, and how Jesus responded, including his teachings and actions, may motivate the Christian Church to apply Jesus' position to our own policies for the poor and homeless. While fully recognizing and retaining the spiritual side of Jesus as "our LORD and Savior," this chapter will focus on Jesus' teaching and action in the particular socio-political and economic context of his time. Whether he really said and did them is not the focus of the issue. This chapter will closely read the texts as the Gospel writers present them. In order to achieve this goal, this dissertation includes extensive research done by scholars on the historical, socio-economic, political and archaeological context of the N. T. era. Therefore, it will be fair to say that this dissertation is not the study of the "Historical Jesus," per se. It simply aims to help the Christian Church and other congregations find the Biblical base to engage in the mission of ending homelessness following the footsteps of our LORD, Jesus Christ.

1) **A Social Analysis of the Root Cause of Poverty and Homelessness**

a) **The Oppressive Sociopolitical Economic, Political System**

"The annexation of Palestine by Rome in 63 B.C. generated both political conflict and severe economic pressure. First-century Palestine was shaped by several dominant forces: the Israelite traditions (linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage), the Roman Empire (political control), and Hellenism (the pervasive cultural influence over the whole Mediterranean and Middle East)."¹

In 37 B.C.E. Herod the Great, a Jew, came to power in Palestine as a Roman puppet King. A symbol of oppressive tyranny, he ruled until his death in 4 B.C.E., shortly after the birth of Jesus. This Herod was the one who killed the male children in Bethlehem because he was frightened by the prospect of a new king. The demise of the brutal tyrant triggered a wide-spread revolt that swirled across the land during Jesus' childhood.²

In Palestine, religious and economic institutions were embedded in kinship or politics. Kin relations interpenetrated political, economic, and religious institutions; power relations structured village, economic, and religious life. For example, the emperor of Rome was not only supreme commander of the government and military *princes*, but was *Pontifex Maximus* (highest priest) of Roman religion and posthumously voted divine status by the Senate. Successive political rulers of Palestine appointed the Jerusalem high priests. The Hasmoneans ruled Judea as both kings and high priests.³

¹ K.C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 9-10.

² Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 40, 42. Upon his death, Herod's kingdom was divided into three parts. His son, Herod Antipas, ruled the district of Galilee west of the lake, including Jesus' hometown Nazareth. Herod the Great had ruled at the time of Jesus' birth but died shortly afterwards. Herod Antipas, his son, was a contemporary of Jesus. It was Herod Antipas who executed John the Baptist and whom Jesus called a fox. (Luke 13:32) During his trial, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. Phillip, a second son of Herod the Great, ruled northeast of the lake of Galilee for thirty seven years. Herod's third son Archelaus governed the third and southern portion of Herod's kingdom with Jerusalem in its center. Joseph, returning from Egypt with the baby Jesus, was afraid to go to Judea when he heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father. So Joseph settled in Nazareth, ruled by Herod Antipas. (Matt. 2:22-23). . . . Archelaus killed three thousand Jewish rioters. Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 41-42.

The different parts of Palestine were successively ruled by Roman client-rulers (first the Hasmoneans, and then the Herodians), prefects, and procurators. Ancient Mediterranean politics were run solely in the interests of the urban elite rulers and their retainers; the rule was hierarchical, aristocratic, and extractive, with the peasants having virtually no say in the process.⁴

The society of early Roman Palestine had an extractive economy wherein goods were taken from the agrarian producers and redistributed by the powerful. The fundamental flow was in a vertical social direction. For the non-elite family or individual, proportionately fewer goods and services flowed in a “horizontal” direction; the elite controlled the product of most of the land and the labor of most people. Society was also layered—elite above, non-elite below. In the Roman Empire, elites (rulers, military commanders, priests) inhabited the cities and large estates; non-elites (peasants, artisans, fishers, laborers, and expendable people of various kinds) populated the outskirts of cities, towns, and country villages.⁵

While the small number of elites competed for the right to control and tax peasant families, peasant families were kept at a subsistence level. These empires are exploitative in that peasants have little say in the control of production or taxation. Much of the peasant families’ produce (the so-called surplus) is extracted by the aristocratic families in the form of labor, produce, and money (through the instrument of tithes, taxes, tolls, rents, tributes, and confiscation).⁶

First-century Palestine had basically two economic classes: upper and lower. In peasant societies rooted in agriculture, ninety percent or more of the people are usually poor peasants. Wealth is based on land ownership, with much of it in the hands of wealthy absentee landlords. A small upper class accounted for ten percent or less of the population. These were the landowners, hereditary aristocrats, appointed bureaucrats, chief priests, merchants, government officials, and various official servants who served the needs of the governing class. The rest of the people, likely ninety percent or more, were in the lower class. Mostly poor peasants living precariously, hand-to-mouth, they were at the mercy of weather, famine, pestilence, bandits, and war. Most were farmers. On the fringe of the lower class were ‘unclean’ occupations such as leather tanning. At the bottom of the bottom were the outcasts—peasants forced off their land, wandering vagabonds, beggars, and lepers. These down-and-outers may have numbered some ten percent of the peasant class. In Galilee, where much of Jesus’ ministry took place, there existed both the extremely rich and the miserably poor, the latter being the lot of the majority of the people. The *few* lived in luxury while the *many* lived in poverty.⁷

³ Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 72-73. Jesus challenged the three major social institutions: politics, religion, and economics. And as often happens, the three were woven together. The rich aristocrats, the chief priests and Sadducees in Jerusalem, owned large estates in Galilee, which trapped small tenant farmers. These ruling elite also controlled the mighty Jewish Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin. This body, in turn, supervised the temple ritual and religious regulations. This same upper crust of Jerusalem was in cahoots with the Romans. The wealthy welcomed the Roman occupation because it protected them from bandits and supported the system that fed their wealth. These ruling Jewish elite cheered when the Romans crushed zealous freedom fighters. The religious leaders were likely part of the crowd that shouted, “Crucify him, and crucify him.” They too considered Jesus more dangerous than the rebel leader Barabbas, 81-82.

b) The Oppressive Tax System:

Roman rule had brought a second system of taxation, which was added to the system of tithes contained within the Torah. In the Jewish social world, the tithes required by the Torah were understood as divine laws and functioned as its tax system. The tithes supported the priests, the temple and temple staff (the Levites), and the poor. Taken together, the various tithes added up to slightly over 20 percent per year. To this system of taxation, the Romans added their own. The two with the greatest effect on farmers were the land tax (1 percent of its value) and crop tax (12 ½ percent of the produce). There were other Roman taxes as well (customs, toll, tribute); but even without them, the combined total of Jewish and Roman taxes on farmers amounted to about 35 percent. Moreover, the way in which the Roman taxes were collected exacerbated the problem. Rome sold the privilege of collecting taxes to “tax farmers,” who paid Rome a fixed amount and whose own profit depended on the percentage they added to the taxes. The Jewish people were powerless to affect either system of taxation. One was dictated by Roman policy, over which they had no control; the other was required by divine revelation. The Roman taxes were enforced by police power, the Jewish taxes were not. One had no choice but to pay the Roman taxes, or lose one’s land. Some Jewish farmers could not pay even the Roman taxes and thus lost their land, creating growing number of landless day laborers, widespread emigration, and a social class of robbers and beggars.⁸

Therefore, the social ferment in first-century Galilee was stirred not only by Roman rule but also by the harsh economy. Some peasant farmers owned small plots of land, but rising debt often pushed them off their land. They were forced to mortgage their property to pay taxes amounting sometimes to half of their harvest. Tax collectors and estate owners then snatched the land from indebted peasants, who couldn’t pay their bills. In agrarian societies, such as Palestine, the ruler and the wealthiest five percent often control as much as sixty-five percent of the national wealth.⁹

c) The Oppressive Temple System

The influence of the Temple in early Roman Palestine was so pervasive that it was called “the hub of a redistributive economy.” Goods and services, raw materials, crops, animals—all flowed to this central point. There, these goods were redistributed in ways not necessarily benefiting their original producers. Religious ideology legitimated and sustained this arrangement.¹⁰

In the Temple, the level of corruption involving the various people who received a profit or commission or a kick-back from the sale of animals and the changing of money had made it practically impossible for the poor to carry out the sacrifices required by the Law. So many commissions were built in to the price of animals used in sacrifices that the cost had become prohibitive for the poor. Thus the Temple and its sacrificial worship had become inaccessible to the poor. God’s house could no longer be thought of as a “house of prayer.”

⁸ Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 84-85.

⁹ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 76-77.

¹⁰ Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 156.

Literally and figuratively the Temple had become a den of robbers, and the chief robber was the high priest.¹¹

The temple became the seat of social, political, and economic life and the power base in the Jewish community.¹² No wonder Jesus cleansed the Temple by turning over the tables of the money exchangers. The Temple was another form of oppression rather than comfort for the poor peasants.

d) The Oppressive Purity System

Marcus Borg has done extensive research on the social customs around the Purity System in Jesus' days. He notes, "It was the purity system that created a world with sharp social boundaries between pure and impure, righteous and sinner, whole and not whole, male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile."¹³ Borg continues, "Rules surrounding meals were deeply embedded in the purity system. Those rules governed not only what might be eaten and how it should be prepared, but also with whom one might eat. Pharisees would not eat with somebody who was impure, and no decent person would share a meal with an outcast. Tax collectors were among the worst of the untouchables, and *sinner*s were considered impure people, dirty people."¹⁴ [Emphasis mine.]

In the Book of Leviticus laws forbid a disabled person from being a priest, brand lepers as unclean outcasts from the human community, and stigmatize a woman as unclean during her menstrual period or after giving birth.¹⁵

The Jesus' movement gathered around the table and shared their food and drink. While the Pharisees pursued Israel's calling as a "nation of priests" by carefully observing the ritual purity of the "holy table" and by eating their meals "like priests," Jesus and his movement did not observe these purity regulations and even shared their meals with "sinners." The central symbolic actualization of the *basileia* vision of Jesus is not the cultic meal but the festive table of a royal banquet or wedding feast. This difference in emphasis was probably one of the major conflict points between the Jesus movement and the Pharisaic movement.¹⁶

e) The Oppressive Patriarchy

The Feminist Dictionary defines patriarchy as "the rule of the father." Patriarchy refers to a system of legal, social, economic, and political relations that validate and enforce the sovereignty of male heads of families over dependent persons in the household. In classical patriarchal systems, as were found in Hebrew, Greek, and Roman societies, dependent persons included wives, unmarried daughters, dependent sons, and

¹¹ Page, *Jesus and Land*, 123. The Sadducees controlled the Temple and any business conducted there.

They received either a commission on or profit from the items sold or the money exchanged there. Furthermore, they were the party of wealthy, the aristocracy. Josephus emphasizes this point; "The Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side." The Pharisees also held the power to administer civil law on behalf of the Roman procurators, 124.

¹² Brian K. Blount, "Run the Risk," in *Renewing the Vision*, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell, (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000), 113.

¹³ Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995), 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

¹⁵ Robert A. Chestnut, "To Bless the Whole Human Family," in *Renewing Vision*, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell, (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000), 79.

¹⁶ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 119-120.

slaves.¹⁷

Traditional patriarchal law denied women's autonomous civil status. Women were treated legally as permanent minors and dependents of fathers and husbands. They had no rights to represent themselves politically as legal persons. Their right to inherit and transmit property was also limited. Civilly, women were non-persons who were represented by their male guardians. The daughter or wife was in some sense property or chattel, regarded as being owned by her father or husband. Women's legal status was assimilated into that of children and slaves as dependents and quasi property, as persons who had no right to assert their own will but who were bound under a yoke of obedience and servitude to their lords. The term 'lord' was used simultaneously for God as LORD of the world, the aristocracy masters of the lower classes, and finally male head of household as lord of his wife, children and servants.¹⁸

It was a scandal for a man to appear in public with a woman. A woman's word was considered useless in court. It was better to burn a copy of the Torah than to allow a woman to touch it. If any man taught his daughter the Torah, it is as though he taught her lechery. Women were excluded from most parts of the temple. Nor were they counted in calculating the quorum needed for a meeting in the synagogue. First century Jewish men thanked God in their daily prayer that they were not Gentiles, slaves, or women."¹⁹

Radford Ruether informs us that, in the patriarchal family, parents' rights included the right to beat their children and even the right to kill or sell their children. The right to kill girl children has been exercised throughout history. Such patriarchal interpretation of women justifies almost limitless violence against women. A patriarchal society blames victims for the abuse, verbal and physical violence delivered against them, including rape, as if they asked for it. Therefore, there was no sympathy, compensation, or restraint of their violators, but only insult added to injury.²⁰

Therefore, the life of young girls began in abuse and continued in oppression, that is, if they survive the abuse into adulthood.

¹⁷ Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, "Patriarchy," in *Dictionary of Feminist Theology*, eds. Russell & Clarkson, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 205.

¹⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home," in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*, eds. Carlson Brown & Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 31. The oft-repeated metaphor, drawn from St. Paul, that the woman has no head of her own, but her husband is her head as she is his body, sums up the subjugated status of woman. Aristotle taught women were secondary biological species. The male contributed the form of the child in procreation. The woman was only an incubator who grew the child in her body. Every male seed would produce a perfect image of its maker, namely another male. . . . Female by nature, inferior in her capacity for thought, will, and physical activity. As women were natural slaves; it was their nature to be obedient servants in all things to their heads and masters. Scholastic theology adopted this theory and defined women as misbegotten males who have, by nature, a defective capacity for humanity. Theologically, this was expressed by Augustine's theory that women in themselves lacked the image of God. . . . Women also could not represent Christ, who is perfect humanity. Therefore, only men could be priests and represent Christ in the Christian community, as well as provide headship in secular society. According to Luther, Eve was originally equal to Adam in the original creation; but because of her sin she was punished by God, demoted to a far inferior creature and she must suffer subjugation to the male as a punishment for her sin. Carlson Brown & Bohn, eds, 31- 32.

¹⁹ Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Complete Evangelism* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1997), 75.

²⁰ Radford Ruether, *Violence*, 33-34.

2) The Homeless Minjung in the Days of Jesus

Under such oppressive and discriminative systems, peasants, social outcasts, sinners, Gentiles, and women, including Jesus himself, were among the poor homeless population in every way. In the following pages, the situation of each population will be reviewed separately:

a) The Poor Peasants Are Homeless Minjung.

I have borrowed *minjung* (pronounced minjoong) from Korean Minjung Theology that identifies peasants as ‘minjung.’ It is a combination of two Chinese characters, *min*, translated as “people,” and *jung*, “the mass.” These two letters, *minjung*, can be translated as “the mass of people.” Social scientists define *minjung* as economically exploited people and *Minjung* also perceive themselves as powerless and oppressed for various reasons: class, status, race, culture, religion, etc.²¹

In the N. T., one out of every sixteen verses is about the poor. In the Gospels, the number is one out of every ten verses; in Luke’s Gospel one of every seven, and in the book of James one of every five.²²

In the N. T., the primary word for the poor is *ptochos*, which refers to someone like a beggar who is completely destitute and must seek help from others. It is the Greek equivalent of *ani* and *dal*. Thus the primary connotation of *the poor* in the Scriptures has to do with low economic status usually due to calamity or some form of oppression.²³

The collective term “the poor” was the hungry, the unemployed, the sick, the discouraged, and the sad and suffering. The poor are the subjected, oppressed and humiliated people, *ochlos*. The poor are sick, crippled, homeless. (Luke 14:21-22) They are beggars in the streets. (Matt. 11:2-5) They are held liable for their debts to the extent of their own bodies and that of their families. (Matt. 18:23-35; Luke 12:58) Often enough they had to accept slavery and prostitution. which meant a total loss of all their rights. The poor are “non-persons,” “sub-humans,” “dehumanized,” “human fodder.”²⁴

Peasants were among the poorest of the population: “Peasant, (Hebrew ‘*am ha-‘ares*, *perazon*, *ikkar*; Greek *georgos*, *agroikos*; Latin *agricola*, *rusticus*, *colonus*) is a farmer or animal herder in an agrarian society; one whose livelihood was derived directly from the land. At a higher level of abstraction; “peasants” can describe all non-elites in an agrarian

²¹ Sook Ja Chung & Sun Ai Park, “Minjung Theology,” in *Dictionary of Feminist Theology*, ed. Russell & Clarkson, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 184. *Minjung* Theology has developed a sociopolitical biography of Korean Christians in the midst of the Korean people’s struggle for their just and basic rights during the 1970s. Minjung theologians seek to preserve the subjecthood of the *minjung* through their own definition of themselves, which is a relational definition, particularly in terms of power. Korean feminist theologians call Korean oppressed women the *minjung* of *minjung*. In the first category are “*minjung* women,” those doubly oppressed as *minjung* and women under poor political, economic, and social conditions. In the other category are “women *minjung*,” those discriminated against under the power of male “domination because they are women.” Both *minjung* and women *minjung* live in the full feeling of *han* which is a collective experience of oppression among the *minjung* of Korea, 184-185.

²² Wallis, *The Souls*, 178. Wallis and his colleagues discovered *several thousand* verses in the Bible on the poor and God’s response to injustice. [Emphasis mine.] They found it to be the second most prominent theme in the Hebrew Scriptures: the first was idolatry, and the two often were related. Jim Wallis, *God’s Politics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 212.

²³ Sider, *Rich Christians*, 41.

²⁴ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Way*, 99.

society, both in villages and cities, including fishers and artisans, potters, weavers, woodworkers, ironsmiths, etc. Terms of derision were often used of peasants by the elite, for example: “insignificant ones” (*asematatoi*; *life* 35) and “the masses” (*hoi polloi*; Ant. 20.255; see Judg. 5:7, 11; Jer. 31:24; 2 Esd 9:17; Sir 38:25-26; 2 Tim 2:6).²⁵

These poor masses were called “people of the land.” At one time this simply meant the “common people” who lived outside the city. The Pharisees, avoiding contact with the “people of the land,” even refused to eat with them. The religiously careless were so scorned they couldn’t testify in court nor be the guardian of an orphan. Pharisees wouldn’t marry them and considered their women unclean vermin. Galilee was a heartland of common folk. The Galilean population included a large number of slaves and many Jews who had absorbed some Greek culture. Most Galileans were poorly educated and ignorant of the finer point of religious law. Said, R. Eleazar, “One may butcher a people of the land on a Day of Atonement that happens to fall on a Sabbath.” His disciples said to him, “Master, say ‘slaughter,’ instead of the vile word butcher.” But he replied, “Slaughtering requires a benediction, butchering does not.”...Nazareth, in the heart of the people of the land country, was Jesus’ home. The masses of Nazareth lived in poverty.”²⁶

The name “people of the land” and their circumstances are synonymous with the Korean term, *minjung*.

Wealth accumulated at the top of the social pyramid. The social pyramid was a mirror of Rome’s heavenly order. The divine Roman hierarchy can be seen as legitimating the system that transferred wealth from the many poor to the elite few.²⁷ So the Gospel of Matthew rightly states, “the people sat in darkness and in the shadow of death”(Is. 42:7; Matt. 4: 16). How did peasants respond to such an oppression?

Anthropologists who study peasants note that peasants do not often revolt or even voice their feelings of hostility and oppression against elites. They usually find covert ways of protesting: keeping secrets or lying to elites, hiding taxable goods, sabotage. . . . But when the pressures of rents, taxation, tolls, duties, and confiscation became too heavy for peasants to bear, one means of extreme resistance to the imperial powers and wealthy elites was banditry. Groups of bandits raided country estates and Roman garrison for both survival and revenge against those who had forced them from their lands or into poverty. The Roman means of dealing with rebels and bandits was public execution by crucifixion—humiliating, torturing, and killing the “deviants” in a manner that would warn others about attempting similar strategies against the state.²⁸

Roman armies periodically tried to smother peasants’ revolts through “search and destroy” campaigns of terror. The armies ravaged villages, slaughtered the elderly, and

²⁵ Hanson and Oakman. *Palestine*, 201. Agrarian society is a society in which primary production and subsistence centers around agriculture (such as all of those in the ancient Mediterranean) as opposed to hunter/gatherer, fishing, or industrial societies. “Advanced agrarian” are identified by their use of iron tools, the dominance of the plow over the hoe, and the use of large animals (oxen, donkeys, horses) for plowing and carting. (see 1Sam. 13:19-21; Jer. 52:16; Luke 9:62; 1Cor. 9:10) Artisan is a craftsperson who does hand fabrication, usually of a complete product, a pot or table, for example. (see Exod. 35:35; Sir. 9:17, 38:27-34; Mark 6:3; Acts 19:24) ²⁵ Hanson and Oakman. *Palestine*, 194.

²⁶ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 75-76.

²⁷ Wes Howard Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire* (Maryknoll: Maryknoll Publishing Co., 1999), 96-97.

²⁸ Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 90, 95.

took thousands back to Rome to sell as slaves. As a grim remind of their brutality, Roman soldiers crucified hundreds of people on crosses along the public roads, a warning for other would-be revolters. At times they crucified, butchered, or enslaved the entire populations. About the time Jesus was born, not far from where he likely grew up, the Romans burned houses and enslaved thousands to squelch the popular revolt of 4 B.C.E. But the fire of freedom, ignited by Judas the Hamerer, couldn't be extinguished. It flared up again and again in the era of Jesus and eventually erupted into two full-scale Roman-Jewish wars in 66 C.E. and again in 132 C.E. Rome finally smothered the Jewish revolters for good in 135 C.E. when it destroyed Jerusalem.²⁹

b) The Sick and Disabled Were Homeless Minjung

Jesus encountered many sick and disabled people throughout his ministry—the blind, the lepers, the mentally ill, the paralyzed, and many others. Some of them were homeless beggars. The oppressive social system, wars, revolts and mass murders no doubt caused much loss—many who were crippled, death and broken families with widows, orphans, and poverty—which then produced unresolvable, inconsolable, deep seated, long-lasting, bitter pain, sorrow, mourn, rage, hatred, guilt, hopelessness, helplessness, and depression. All of this Koreans name in one word “*han*”. The resulting effect could have led people to physical, emotional, and spiritual sickness, disability and homelessness. On top of such painful ailments, society judged them as “unclean” or “demon-possessed or sinners.” They were despised, marginalized, avoided, and alienated as permanent “others.” When the sick were women and Gentile, the treatment was worse because of their gender, race and social status.

Research done by modern medical professionals supports an understanding of the impact on body and mind: “Ninety percent of all physical problems have emotional roots. We feel emotions in our bodies. Most everyone tends to experience unpleasant emotions as unpleasant bodily symptoms and thus to feel physically distressed when emotionally distressed.”³⁰

One of the reasons strong negative emotions can cause illness, even infectious disease, is that they may, over time, disrupt the immune system. Glandular activity sends hormones coursing through the bloodstream, which in turn send messages back to the nervous system. Sometimes immediately, but more often gradually, these messages wear down the immune system. In a sense our immunity against disease is affected by the emotions we feel. . . . One's immune system patrols and guards the body against attackers both from without and from within. It is a complex system consisting of about a trillion cells called *lymphocytes* and about a hundred million trillion molecules called *antibodies*. Dr. Steven Locke, M.D. sums up the role of the immune system as “a surveillance mechanism that protects the host from disease-causing microorganisms. It regulates susceptibility to cancers,

²⁹ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 39-40.

Rebel leaders arose throughout the country. Beyond Jerusalem, the outlying districts of Galilee, Judea and Perea erupted in bloody disorder. One of the Herod's former slaves, named Simon, led guerrilla attacks on the Herodian palaces and estates of the wealthy. The Roman commander in Syria moved his armies into Palestine. He burned Sepphoris to the ground and sold its Jewish population into slavery. The Roman commander killed two thousand rebels. Jesus was likely less than ten years old as the violence happened nearby so the memories surely shaped his outlook.

³⁰ Haefen, Karren, Frandsen & Smith, *Mind/Body Health*, 1.

infectious diseases, allergies, and autoimmune disorders.”³¹

Davies claims, "Instances of the demon-possession Jesus encountered are to be found much more commonly among classes and kinds of persons who are otherwise unable to aggressively respond to oppression and insult. Demon-possession is more often than not a coping mechanism, an attempt to solve problems resulting from unsatisfactory personal relationships by those whose social status is so subordinate that they have no other effective recourse.”³²

Therefore, it is obvious that the illness and disabilities in Jesus’ days may have been the symptoms and consequence of socio-economic injustice.

c) Social Outcasts, Sinners and Gentiles are Homeless Minjung

The Gentiles were unclean outsiders in Jewish society. To most Jews, Gentiles were pagan dogs who polluted racial purity.³³ Therefore, association with gentiles would corrupt the Jew and make him or her unclean and therefore equally unacceptable to the Jewish community and presumably to the Jewish God.³⁴

Blount shares, “In Jesus’ time, if you were a Gentile you weren’t even allowed in the temple, only in the outer courtyard. And if, God forbid, you were sick or lame or in some other health-related way unclean, you weren’t even allowed on the premises.”³⁵

The *oikos* (household) in the Greco-Roman world reflected the racism and sexism that were built into the Greco-Roman definition of the individual household. By definition not everyone in the household is a candidate for living well. This was possible only for the one who was truly freed by the *oikos*, namely, the *pater familias*, the household, the owner of all household property. Slavery and subordination meant having access to livelihood through the sufferance of the *pater potestas*. The other members of the household, slaves, women, children, tenants, workers, assistants in crafts and trade, were all defined as unfree and perhaps unclean also.³⁶

Samaritans were treated as Gentiles and sinners. Jews hated and discriminated against the Samaritans for they were mixed people racially and religiously. A chasm of stereotypical prejudice separated the Jews from the Samaritans so that they would not eat together, worship together, intermarry or even share the same physical space if it could be avoided. Funk notes, “Galilean pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for festivals often went through Samaria. The only way to avoid transit through this hostile territory was to cross the Jordan south of the Sea of Galilee, journey south through Trans-Jordan or Perea, and then re-cross the Jordan at Jericho, to ascend to Jerusalem along the Jericho road. The Jews hated Samaritan so much that they even built an “interstate highway” to go around

³¹ Ibid., 5, 31.

³² Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer* (New York: The Continuum Pub. Co., 1995), 37. In Korean there is an old saying; “when a woman is full of ‘Han,’ it can frost even in summer.”

³³ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 197. Kraybill informs us that the original Jubilee vision applied only to Hebrews. Gentile slaves and their debts weren’t released in the seventh year. Hebrews could charge Gentiles interests on loans. Jews expected God’s vengeance to fall on Gentiles, 198

³⁴ Spong, *Change or Die*, 122-123.

³⁵ Blount, *Run the Risk*, 113.

³⁶ Meeks, *The Economist*, 94.

the country of Samaria.³⁷

Tax collectors were outcasts in Jewish society; they were “a no-good, money-grubbing, cheating, Roman collaborator,” as most of the people of that day would have called them. Tax collectors were Jews empowered by the Roman government to collect all the taxes they could. They were permitted to keep any excess above what the government required. So they were despised. People would cross the street to pass on the other side when they saw a tax collector coming. So when Jesus spoke of two men, a Pharisee and a tax collector, it was as though he had spoken of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and a rapist, or the President of the United States and a prostitute.³⁸

Tax collectors were treated as sinners. The term “sinner” was not yet defined theologically and universally. It was used as a social concept, as we see from the paired concepts: well—sick, righteous—sinners, Pharisees—tax collectors. In the eyes of the scribes and Pharisees, “sinners” are Jews who are not able or willing to keep the Torah and to follow the path of righteousness. Tax collectors are Jews who have leased the customs from Gentiles and call in taxes for the Roman occupying power. In the eyes of just and pure Jews, they were corrupt collaborators with the occupying power, infamous to the highest degree. By joining company with these sinners and tax collectors, Jesus was embarking on a social conflict which was religiously determined—the cleft between the just and the unjust, the good and the bad.³⁹

The country people (*am hearts*) were despised by Pharisees because they did not keep the law. They were so poor that they were not in a position to do so. Prostitutes were despised by the righteous; these are women who had no other possibility except to sell their own bodies and they were called “sinners,” because they could not keep the law. The social cleft between rich and poor is in most cases the reason for the cleft between good and evil, the righteous and sinners.⁴⁰

In short, the Purity System in Jewish custom condemned as sinners and social outcasts the Gentiles and all those who lived an ethically unsound life, especially women, racially mixed persons such as Samaritans, and those engaged with cheating jobs such as tax collectors. The sick and disabled were among the social outcasts who were despised, alienated and marginalized in Jewish society. Therefore, they were among the homeless population emotionally and spiritually if not physically homeless.

d) **Women are Homeless Minjung**

Under this oppressive patriarchal system, as well as the socioeconomic, political,

³⁷ Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 175. Josephus records one horrible incident that illustrates the enmity between the two groups. In 52 C.E., a group of Galilean pilgrims was attacked and some of them were killed after they crossed the border into Samaria at the village of Jenin. In retaliation, Judean guerrilla forces from Jerusalem raided some Samaritan villages, slaughtered the inhabitants, and burned the towns. The Romans intervened; they crucified or beheaded numerous notables on both sides of the conflict and delivered one of their own tribunes, who had bungled his job, over to the people of Jerusalem. They then dragged him through the streets behind a horse and had him beheaded. It is thus understandable that the labels *Samaritan* and *Judean* stood in considerable tension with each other.

³⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 85.

³⁹ Moltmann, *The Way*, 113.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

tax, temple and purity systems, women were homeless *minjung*. Scholars contend: Gender division is rooted in male fears of the female. Ancient Israelites did not simply construe females as different, but potentially *dangerous*. A man was believed to be overpowered by a woman simply by his looking at her (Philo, *On the Virtues*, 38-30). Women were often categorized as fundamentally sinful, for example, in the proverbial statements of Ben Sira, “Do not look upon anyone for beauty, and do not sit among women. For as moths emerge from garments, and a woman’s wickedness emerges from a woman. Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does well. And it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace” (Sir. 42:12-14; see also Philo, *Hypothetica* 11:14-17).⁴¹

Scripture introduces us to widows, Hagar, the Levite’s wife/concubine, foreign women, Jephthah’s daughter, Mary Magdalene, the hemorrhaging woman, the bent-over woman, a woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan woman at the well, and many more as representatives of the abused, exploited and homeless women in ancient Jewish society.

I add Mary, the mother of Jesus, to the list of homeless women. Many people place Mary on a pedestal like an untouchable doll who doesn’t know any pain. And very few people want to remember her agony and pain. Scholars have already pointed out that she was from a poor peasant family who knew the pain of poverty and oppression. There is something else that puts her on homeless list: On the cover of the book titled The Passion of the LORD is James Noel’s art work of Mary, in a kneeling position beneath the cross of Jesus and in a posture of embracing all three dying men on the cross with her wide-open arms. Noel explains:

The painting I made for this book’s cover is my attempt to capture this idea visually. . . . In my painting Mary’s gesture beneath the cross and her central placement in the painting implies that she is lifting up her arms in grief over the cruel and violent deaths suffered by all three figures, not just Jesus. All three of the crucified are her boys, and because of her love for these boys, her sons, she also is undergoing crucifixion. Mary’s gesture expresses her wish to take all her boys down from the cross or to die in their place. The sun will set, and she will be condemned to endure the weight of her grief. During the long days and nights that lie ahead, she will beseechingly lift up her arms to God in the same gesture.⁴²

Mary experienced her own death with her son dying on the cross. If God suffers with a dying son so does the human biological mother. Many mothers who experienced the death of their sons by violence can concur with that statement wholeheartedly. So Mary represents all women whose sons were crucified on the cross as bandits in her time, and also in later times by being drowned in alcohol, or poisoned by drugs, or shot to death on their ghetto streets, or assaulted and murdered by poverty and hopelessness, even bombed by unwanted wars. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was one of the pain-grief-stricken and

⁴¹ Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*, 24-25. According to Moltmann-Wendell, Women often enjoyed more respect in Gnostic circles than in the mainstream church which was gradually coming into being. The mainstream church, adapted to the patriarchal social structures of society, did not offer women the same opportunities as Gnostic groups: Elisabeth. Moltmann-Wendell, *The Women Around Jesus*, Trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroads Pub.1982), 5.

⁴² James A. Noel, “Were You There,” in *The Passion of the LORD*, ed. James A. Noel and Matthew V. Johnson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005),41-42. When my son died I too died that night and kept dying for many days, months, years and decades in an unbearable and inconsolable pain and grief. I am still crying and still dying with him.

homeless women in her day and in all the days of women's history.

e) **Jesus, the Homeless Minjung**

Jesus goes on the list of homeless *minjung*: He was born homeless (Luke 2:7) and was homeless in his infancy as an exile in Egypt. (Matt. 2:13-15) He grew up in a poor peasant setting. Several shreds of evidence place him with the poor of Galilee. Mary describes herself as a person of "low estate" in her song of exaltation. (Luke 1:48) The prescribed offering for the dedication of a child in Jerusalem was a lamb and a dove. But Mary and Joseph brought only two doves, (Luke 2:24: compare Lev. 12:6-8) an acceptable practice for the poor families unable to afford a lamb.⁴³

Jesus also was homeless during his ministry (Matt. 8:20); he died homeless; his voice crying out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mark 15:34) is strong evidence of his feeling of being abandoned and homeless. "Jesus' home was semi-pagan Galilee, whose inhabitants, because they were often of mixed blood and open to foreign influence, were despised by the ethnically pure Judeans living to the south. Jesus was a Jew.⁴⁴ Jesus arrived on the scene and operated from the very margin of society.⁴⁵

According to Borg, "Jesus probably became a woodworker (in Greek, *tekton*). The word *tekton* was different from carpenter. A *tekton* was at the lower end of the peasant class, more marginalized than a peasant who still owned a small piece of land. A *tekton* belonged to a family that had lost its land."⁴⁶ Jesus had no regular income during his public ministry. Nor did he have a home of his own. Jesus warned an eager follower who promised to follow him everywhere, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt.8:20). He sent out disciples with very little to sustain them. (Luke 9:3; 10:4)⁴⁷ "Jesus was 'Galilean,' 'Jewish' and 'peasant.' This describes his social class. He came from the bottom of society. He was landless [homeless]. The ultimate insult by the Jewish religious leaders was 'Are you from Galilee, too?' (John 7:41, 52) That the Messiah could possibly come from Galilee was, for respectable Jews, highly doubtful. Jesus was the son of an artisan, *tekton*. Those he recruited for his earliest (Luke 5:1-11, 27-28) network were peasants, fishers, and

⁴³ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 80. Bruce's view, "'He did not know where to find shelter' refers to the humiliation of the Son of Man, which many disciples found it hard to accept. A suggestion made by T.W. Manson, is that the Son of Man refers to God's elect community, the true believing Israel. If the Son of Man has this corporate sense, then foxes and the birds might be expected to have a comparable sense. The birds of the air (the Roman overlords), the foxes (the Edomite interlopers), have made their position secure. The true Israel is disinherited by them: The Edomite interlopers were Herod; Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, is described by Jesus as 'that fox' in Luke 13:32. But it is unlikely that the would-be disciple would have understood those allusions; it is best to take the words referring to Jesus himself. The saying refers to the continuing hardship and loneliness involved in *following* the Son of Man." F.F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1983), 159-160.

⁴⁴ Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 33.

⁴⁵ Robert Thornton Henderson, *Subversive Jesus* (Colorado: NavPress, 2001), 87-88.

⁴⁶ Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 26.

⁴⁷ Sider, *Rich Christians*, 49.

artisans from Galilean villages and towns.⁴⁸

Jesus is among the homeless guests. In Matt. 25: 35-36, 40, 42-43, 45, Jesus says that when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned and welcome the homeless we have done these acts for Jesus himself, and when don't do it for them we haven't don't it for Jesus himself. (25: 31-46) Therefore, Jesus seems to identify with them; he is among the homeless guests. In Jesus Christ, God comes to dwell among us as guest; as a homeless baby; as an adult with no place to lay his head; as a convict, abandoned and scorned by others. He epitomizes the needy stranger, dependent on the hospitality of others. He asks for hospitality from a Samaritan woman (John 4) and a rich tax collector (Luke 19) and receives it gladly from many others.⁴⁹

Jesus was a guest of a Samaritan woman asking for water. Jesus stayed in Samaria as a guest. To Zacchaeus' home, Jesus invites himself as a guest. (Luke 19:1-10)

Bakke claims that the Gospel according to Matthew begins with a cemetery tour in Matthew 1:1-16—a genealogy in which five women are mentioned: Tamar (Canaanite), Rahab (a Canaanite prostitute), Bathsheba (Uriah's wife, Hittite), Ruth (Moabite), and Mary (Jew), the mother of Jesus. All four, except Mary, were foreigners, mixed race, and all had histories of varying degrees of scandal. In his culture having scandalous ancestors would make him margin of margins.⁵⁰

Jesus was homeless when he was denied and even sold by one of his core group of twelve disciples and rejected by his own people in being turned over to foreign occupation forces, their enemy, to be killed by the cruelest punishment—on the cross. Moltmann summarizes how Jesus died as one of the *minjung* of his day:

Jesus died *the death of the slave*. Jesus died *the death of a poor man*. The Son of Man from Galilee without power, without rights and without a home suffered the fate of a slave in the Roman Empire. In Phil. 2 he is described; 'the form of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who humiliated himself,' was 'the form of a slave'. If this is a reference to Jesus humble origins among the humiliated people of Galilee, then in his suffering and death Jesus shared the fate of these enslaved people. Jesus was one of these people, the poorest of the poor; a tortured, abused and crucified slave. In this sense 'the sufferings of Christ' are also the sufferings of the powerless masses of the poor.⁵¹

⁴⁸ John Driver, "The Kingdom of God: Goal of Messianic Mission," in *The Transfiguration of Mission*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 201. Jesus was reported to be a controversial child of peasant parents in an occupied nation, on the edge of the empire. Henderson, *Subversive Jesus*, 88.

⁴⁹ Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Jesus Christ as Host and Guest," in *Renewing the Vision*, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000), 14.

⁵⁰ Bakke, *Urban Christian*, 75-76. "According to Early Church tradition, Matthew became a pastor in Syria, and his stress on these foreign women had a pastoral reason. He was trying to convince the Syrians that the gospel was not just for Jews or for people living in the Promised Land. Matthew's account includes the visitors from the East, and he ends his Gospel with Jesus' instruction to his followers to go into all the nations and make disciples. Matthew's text condemns racism in any form. On his human side Jesus got his blood from the world, as well as shedding it for the world. We are saved by the blood of the mixed-race Savior of the world. John said 'He came to that which was his own and his own people did not accept him'", 77-78.

⁵¹ Moltmann, *The Way*, 168.

f) The Wealthy Homeless.

All of the people mentioned above as homeless *minjung* were victims of the socioeconomic system and exploitation of elites, but there were the wealthy homeless who never could come home because they worshipped wealth. For example,

The Rich Fool in Luke 12:13-21 Kraybill interprets:

1) wealth is selfish expansion at the expense of the poor; 2) the rich man lives as though there is no God; 3) his only focus is the good life for ‘me and only me;’ wallowing in self-obsession, the fool is callused to the needs of others; 4) God doesn’t ask about his motives; he snatches away his life; 5) the story is not just only about greed but also a warning about fragility of life and the true goods that count for eternity; 6) the fool’s refusal to practice Jubilee—his captivity by wealth damns his soul. The rich who enter God’s reign give generously. In so doing they save their souls because they followed God’s will. We find an inversion between kingdom values and societal standards. Jesus is very clear. Other values govern the upside-down kingdom. Investment portfolios don’t measure a persons’ worth. Financial growth doesn’t equal higher status in the kingdom. In God’s new order, covetousness and the pursuit of excessive profit and privilege are wrong. The mindset which builds bigger barns for selfish purpose is clearly named: it’s greed.⁵²

The Rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31

Boice contends that there is a contrast between the earthly conditions of the rich man and the beggar. There is a contrast between their true state, the rich man actually being poor and the poor man actually being rich. There is a contrast between their experience in death; the poor rich man grew poorer, the rich poor man richer. This is a contrast between the natural unfolding of the poor man’s experience and the abrupt awakening of the rich man to spiritual realities. There is this final contrast: Between the *hopelessness* of the rich man’s condition after death and the *hopefulness* of his condition before. After death there is no possibility of change. But in this life there is.⁵³

The whole point was that the prestigious, the religious, those who were supposed to be close to God, showed that their hearts were far from the heart of God. The one despised and alienated by the people of God demonstrated that he and his values were close to the heart of God. The foremost is living in relationship with God and with all those to whom God draws especially near—the poor, the poor in spirit, the brokenhearted, the hungry, those who weep, the meek of the earth, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, those with hearts of integrity, the peacemakers, the persecuted, and the oppressed. These are the ones to whom Jesus drew especially near throughout his ministry, as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God.⁵⁴

A Rich Young Lawyer in Matt. 19:16-26; Mark 10: 17-27; Luke 10:25-37; 18:18-27

A consideration of the story of the rich young lawyer leads to a significant discussion about the coming home issue. Matthew calls him “someone” in 19:16 and Luke calls him “a lawyer” in Luke 10:25 and “a ruler” in 18:18. In three gospels report he was rich or

⁵² Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 108-109.

⁵³ Boice, *The Parable*, 215. Boice thinks that the rich man was a Jew. He was probably an outstanding member of his community, such people generally act religious. The rich man probably went to the synagogue and did what was expected of him. He would have recited prayers. However, God-seeking prayer had never fallen from his lips: Boice, *The Parable*, 214-215.

⁵⁴ Gerald W. Schlabach, *Who is My Neighbor* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1990), 73, 77.

had many possessions. (Matt. 19:22, Mark 10:22, Luke 18:23) Jesus gives different responses to the lawyer's question "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In two accounts, Matthew (19:16-26) and Mark (10:17-27), Jesus responds with a camel and needle story and in Luke (10:25-37) with the Good Samaritan story.

In two accounts, when the rich lawyer heard Jesus' request to "sell all you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then follow me," (Matt. 19:21-22, Luke 18:22b-23) as a way of coming home, he went away "grieving" or "sad" into homelessness because "he was very rich or had many possessions."

To the question "what must I do to inherit eternal life," Jesus links eternal life to wealth. The rich ruler grew up in a devout family. He knows God's commandments. He not only knows the creeds, he lives them in his daily life. Jesus answers his big question by pointing to one deficiency. He must sell his possessions. They are ruling his life, not God. To experience the reign of God, to gain eternal treasure, he must sell his possessions. Wealth has captured his heart and claimed his allegiance. Selling out will not only feed the hungry; it will also refocus his attention on the heavenly kingdom. Jesus invites him to 'come, follow me.' Selling all was, in this case, a necessary first step. But the ruler turns away sadly because the grip of mammon is simply too strong. He forfeits eternal life.⁵⁵

Jesus saw the rich young ruler's chief obstruction to a life of following Christ—coming home—laid in his possessions (which he proved by turning away)⁵⁶ The rich young lawyer walked away into dark homelessness not because he was rich but he refused to come home in Jesus.

This teaching was not given to one special individual; it was intended for Jesus' followers in general. He urged them to have the right priorities, to seek God's kingdom and righteousness above all else. (Matt. 6:33) But it is very difficult to do this, he maintained, if one's attention is preoccupied by material wealth. Experience shows that some wealthy men and women have promoted the kingdom of God above their worldly concerns. Up to this point the rich man was not unwilling to become one of them. But the sticking point came when he was asked to unburden himself of his property.⁵⁷

Regarding the fundamental question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life," Salvation, Boice offers the following explanation:

The irrevocable word of God remains valid, that he who observes the law perfectly will live. He who always loves God and his fellow-man will inherit eternal life. But no man has ever been able to observe this law perfectly, nor can anyone do so. No man can ever inherit eternal life on the grounds of his own merit. The Law has said, "Do this and thou shall live," while Christ says, "I have given you eternal life through grace, and this new life in you will enable you to have real love towards God and your fellow-men and to carry it out in practice; then we will live like that Samaritan. So that by faith we are absolved from the death we deserve and inherit eternal life." This, however, does not remove the obligation to

⁵⁵ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 113. Self-inflicted homelessness can include the denying or running away by disciples (Matt. 26:31, 47-50, 56, 69-75; Luke 22:31-34; John 18:25-27); Roman emperors and Jewish collaborators (Matt. 27:24, 26; Mark 15; 15; Luke 23:24, John 19:16), Jewish Collaborators. e.g. Herod (Matt. 27:20-23, 25; Mark 14:1; 15:1; Luke 23:1-2, 21, 23, John 19:6-7, 12, 15): They will become permanently homeless of their choice.

⁵⁶ Boice, *The Parables*, 107.

⁵⁷ F.F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1983), 176.

obey Jesus' words, "go, and do thou likewise." If we are justified we will have it and it will increasingly and inevitably express itself in forgiveness of and service to others, just as God has forgiven and served us. We are not justified by works. But if we do not have works, we are not justified. We are not Christians.⁵⁸

Wesley concurs: "Salvation offered in our gospel came with not *pre*-conditions, but *post*-conditions."⁵⁹

The Camel and The Eye of the Needle:

The young ruler's rejection of Jesus' challenge elicited Jesus' famous reactions:⁶⁰ Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:24-25). It is not merely difficult, it is impossible for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God, just as it is not merely difficult but impossible for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, even a needle of the largest size. The listeners were dismayed, "Then who can be saved?" 'Being saved' in the Gospels is a further synonym for entering the kingdom of God and inheriting eternal life.⁶¹

Jesus was using the language of hyperbole, which was intended to drive the lesson home; it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God—humanly impossible, Jesus concedes, for God, with whom nothing is impossible, can even save a rich man. But if so, then the rich man's heart must be changed, by having its attachment to material riches replaced by attachment to the true riches, "treasure in heaven." What was it about riches that made Jesus regard them as an obstacle to entrance into the kingdom? Simply the fact that those who had riches relied on them, like the rich farmer in the parable (Luke 12:16-21), who encouraged himself with the thought of the great wealth which he had stored up for a long time to come, or his counterpart today whose investments are bringing in a comfortable, inflation-proof income.⁶²

Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" He replied, "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God." (Luke 18: 26-27)

"What is impossible for mortals is possible for God" seems to be one of the most

⁵⁸ Boice, *The Parables*, 154-155, 204.

⁵⁹ David Lowes Watson, "Proclaiming Christ in All His Offices: Priest, Prophet, and Potentate," in *The Portion of the Poor*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 124.

⁶⁰ J. Philip Wogaman, *Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 14.

⁶¹ Bruce, *Hard Sayings*, 182. "The 'eye of a needle' is the reference to a small opening giving independent access or egress through a much larger city gate. Visitors are sometimes shown such a small entrance in one of the city gates of Jerusalem or another Eastern city and are told that this is what Jesus had in mind. If a man approaches the city gate on camel-back when it is closed, he can dismount and get through the small entrance on foot, but there is no way for a camel to do so, especially if it is loaded. It is ordinarily impossible for a camel to get through such a narrow opening, But this charming explanation is of relatively recent date; there is no evidence that such a subsidiary entrance was called the eye of a needle in biblical times. Others points out that there is a Greek word (*kamilos*) meaning 'cable' very similar in appearance and sound to the word (*kamelos*) meaning 'camel'. Some read 'it is easier for a rope to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' In Jewish rabbinical literature an *elephant* passing through the eye of a needle is a figure of speech for sheer impossibilities," 181-182.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 182

misunderstood passages. When the rich hears this part, they feel relieved because they hear that God is going to do something for them so that the rich can get into eternal life too perhaps by the grace of God. This doesn't mean God will miraculously drag the wealthy through the kingdom's gate. It means, rather, that God's grace can inspire and free even rich people from wealth's demonic grip and motivate them to practice Jubilee. Everything is possible when people open their lives to God's reign.⁶³

The Good Samaritan story (Luke 10:25-37)

In the Lukan text, the lawyer gives the answer to his own question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life, 'love God and my neighbor?'" Jesus said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But the lawyer asks again, "And who is my neighbor?" [Emphasis mine]. Jesus' response to the lawyer's neighbor question was the story of Good Samaritan. According to Borg,

The parable is often interpreted about a helpful neighbor, but in fact it had a much more pointed meaning in the first-century Jewish social world. It was a critique of a way of life ordered around purity. The priest and Levite were obligated to maintain a certain level of purity; contact with death was a source of major impurity; and the wounded man is described as "half-dead," who could incur impurity if he was dead. Thus the priest and Levite passed by out of observance of the purity laws. The Samaritan, [who was impure] on the other hand, is described as the one who acted "compassionately." Thus this parable was originally a pointed attack on the purity system and an advocacy of another way: compassion.⁶⁴

The neighbor was not the wounded man. The neighbor was the Samaritan who *approached* the wounded man and *made him his neighbor*. He enters into the wounded man's situation. Not just any man but *a man who had suffered injustice and violence and needed help from someone who was able to have com-compassion on him*. To have 'compassion' means 'to suffer with.' It means to suffer alongside, to enter fully into the situation of the other, sharing whatever comes. The initiative is not taken to fulfill some formal religious obligation but to act out of care and concern for the other. The Greek word referring to 'compassion' in Luke 10:33, can be translated, 'because his heart was melting.' 'Compassion' really means 'inter-human justice.'⁶⁵

Funk suggests:

God's domain is open to outcasts. The despised half-breed becomes the instrument of compassion and grace in the story of "Good Samaritan; Judeans would have choked on that irony. Cross-over means one's willingness to cut the ties to comfortable tradition. Jesus steadily privileged those marginalized in his society—the diseased, the infirm, women, children, toll collectors, Gentile suppliants, perhaps even Samaritans—precisely because they were regarded as the *enemy*, the outsider, the victim. The Samaritan as helper was an implausible role in the everyday world of Jesus; that is what makes the Samaritan plausible as a helper in a story told by Jesus.⁶⁶

⁶³ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 114.

⁶⁴ Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 55.

⁶⁵ McAfee Brown, *News*, 111-112.

⁶⁶ Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 177, 179.

Therefore, the Samaritan's neighborliness was not hindered by a *legalistic application of the law*; the precise thing that hindered the lawyer who asked the original question and possibly also hindered the priest and Levite. [*Emphasis mine.*] Those men were fanatics about the law and were also mean-minded legalists who used their approaches to Scripture to limit it and thus escape the law's true scope and meaning.⁶⁷

"Who is my neighbor" was more significant than the rich lawyer realized. Another way to ask is, "Where do I live?" or "Where do I find life?" or "Where is my heart"? Jesus is saying that if the wealthy of his day intend to enter God's reign, they have to give up their wealth which they have gained selfishly and oppressively. They must share possessions with the less fortunate to fulfill in part their hope of sharing in the riches of the reign of God. This ruler can't receive eternal life because he rejects Jesus' call. We cannot overstress the role of *sharing* in Luke's missiology. Challenging the rich to share is part of the good news to the poor."⁶⁸

Therefore, every sufferer whom we can assist has a claim of neighbor-love upon us which we cannot repudiate without injuring him and dishonoring God. The second thing that might have hindered the Samaritan's show of love for the sufferer was *nationality or religion*. Jesus might have wanted to stress in particular that the only one who stopped to help the disabled was a Samaritan. The Jews hated the Samaritans and could not speak civilly of them. The outcast had acted as a neighbor though he had ample cause not to care, hated as he was, whereas the Jewish priest and Levite would not show mercy even to one of their own nationality. Christ's point is that love must transcend nationality, race and religion.⁶⁹

Biblical "neighbor-love" implies active commitment to the well-being of who or what is loved. Next, where systemic injustice causes suffering, seeking the well-being or good of those who suffer entails challenging that injustice. The challenge includes seeing systemic evil for what it is and acknowledging it, resisting it, and pioneering more just alternatives. According to Luther, neighbor-love has at least three dimensions: 1) Love manifest in service to neighbor, even if it may bring great danger to self and family; 2) love manifest in disclosing and theologically denouncing oppression or exploitation of those who are vulnerable, where it is perceived; and 3) love manifest in ways of living that counter prevailing cultural norms where those norms exploit the vulnerable or defy God in some other way. Loving in these forms, "we become hands and feet of Christ, for the healing of the world."⁷⁰

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who resisted Hitler in Germany during World War II, wrote,

⁶⁷ Boice, *The Parables*, 152.

⁶⁸ Maynard-Reid, *Evangelism*, 86.

⁶⁹ Boice, *The Parables*, 152- 153. About 750 years before the time of Christ, the Assyrians had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, where Samaria was located, had deported the Jewish population and then had resettled the area with their own people. It is not possible to transport an entire population, of course, so some Jews remained (Perhaps they had hidden out in caves, bribed their captors, or escaped deportation in some other way.) Those Jews intermarried with the newcomers, thereby producing a race that was half-Assyrian and half-Jewish. To the Jews of the south that was an unforgivable sin. In their judgment the Samaritans had clearly forfeited their Jewish heritage. Besides they had their own religion. When the Jews of the south returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity and began to rebuild their Temple, the Samaritans offered to help. But because they were despised as half-breed outcasts, the Jews refused their offer, which angered the Samaritans enough to cause them to build their own Temple on Mount Gerizim. That became a rival Temple which in turn became the center for a rival religion.

⁷⁰ Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Public Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 23-24.

"Neighborliness is not a quality in other people, it is simply their claim on ourselves." Kraybill claims:

God's love for us transforms our economic behavior. Mercy, not accumulation, becomes our new yardstick for measuring success. Generous giving replaces conspicuous consumption. God's highest command forms the core of his upside-down way. Loving God with all our heart means loving our neighbors as much as ourselves. And this means caring, sharing, giving—valuing our neighbor's welfare as much as our own. Care for our neighbor strips the old demons of their grip. Jesus invites us to treat the poor as our neighbor as our self."⁷¹

Or we choose to become their neighbor. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, "We are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will only be an initial act. One day we must see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed on their life's highway."⁷² Few commentators are raising the issue with the robber or the victimizer or the socioeconomic meaning of frequent robbery on the Jericho road. Elsewhere in preceding chapters, I wrote about the oppressive and exploitive socioeconomic and political situation of Jesus' days; victimized poor peasants often turned into beggars, robbers and bandits to survive. The robber on the Jericho road could have been a victim himself of the system. That doesn't condone his behavior, but we have to pay attention to the society that created poor, beggars and robbers and condemn it along with the violent behavior of the robber. Therefore, the neighborliness must include advocacy for policy change.

In short, the conversation between Jesus and the rich young ruler illustrated rich insight to the connection between our wealth and eternal life and defined true neighborliness. All three rich men quoted above can go on the list of the homeless because every one of them had turned around from God in order to worship their mammon. The texts made it clear that they didn't have eternal life because they are not in God. They rather are lost in their wealth with no home to go to.

3) The Way to Home (Jesus' Jubilee/Liberation)

a) Jesus Moves from Nazareth to Capernaum

Jesus prepared his ministry by moving out of Nazareth. Matthew records, "Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum in Galilee of the Gentiles to save the people who sat in darkness and shadow of death. (Matt. 4:12-17)

Jesus grew up and lived in Nazareth. (Matt.2: 19-23; Luke 4:16; John 1:45) Since Nazareth was populated by an ultra-Conservative Hasidic sect, the residents of Nazareth were similar theologically to the Essenes, inwardly-focused, isolationists who thought that the Messiah would come from within their clan. They, like the Essenes, thought that they were the sole possessors of the truth of God's law and that all other groups were heretical. Since Jesus

⁷¹ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 130.

⁷² Schlabach, *Neighbor*, 108.

grew up in Nazareth, he could have been educated and influenced by the inwardly focused theology of the Nazareth population.⁷³

Page claims, “Jesus made an intentional shift from the rigid fundamentalism of his youth to a more moderate theological position. This shift is demonstrated in his move from Nazareth to Capernaum (Kfar Nahum), a more moderate village closely aligned with theology of the House of Hillel. To move from Nazareth to Capernaum would be compared to moving from a small rural community to an urban metropolis, where one would be exposed to things totally alien to one’s upbringing and experience. Jesus moved theologically to the left, rejecting the strict, narrow-minded, religiously biased position of his own sect/clan in favor of the more inclusive, pluralistic position of the Pharisees of Capernaum.”⁷⁴

The people of Judea, and also Galilee and Peraea, hated the Romans for their repressive rule. Many of the common people who did not possess their religious zeal nevertheless supported their effort and hoped that one day the Romans would be driven out. Zealots were looking for a charismatic figure to help them rally the people to revolt against Rome. Certainly the Zealots saw in Jesus a potential ally, or at the least a popular and charismatic figure around whom they could unite the masses in their revolt against Rome, a revolt in which God would be on their side. And the Romans were as determined to keep the peace and to control the masses as were the Zealots to disrupt the peace and inspire the masses to revolt. Judea had been a cacophony of political unrest since the days just prior to the death of Herod the Great. The situation was so volatile that Rome had instituted direct rule by replacing Herod Archelaus with a series of Roman procurators. Pontius Pilate, who ruled Judea for Rome, had come to Palestine in 26 C.E.⁷⁵

When Pontius Pilate entered on his procuratorship in AD 26 and immediately reconfirmed Caiaphas as high priest, he fell heir to a country that had been wracked by continuous violence. Judea was a battleground. If Pontius Pilate were to make his mark

⁷³ Page, *Jesus and Land*, 34-38. The name *Nazareth* is probably taken from the Hebrew word *netzer*, means “a shoot,” (Isaiah 11:1-2). The village was so named Nazareth because the residents considered themselves the *netzer* (*shoot*) from the clan of David, from whom the Messiah would come. Nazareth was so small and insignificant that the Assyrians did not even bother to occupy it. Most of the inhabitants of Nazareth belonged to the same extended family, the clan of the Nazarene.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 63. Capernaum was a village located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The archaeological record indicates that Capernaum had been occupied as early as the Middle Bronze Period, but there is also evidence of habitation during the Late Bronze, Persian, and Hellenistic periods. The town was separated into two sections; an upper and a lower area. The wealthy lived in the upper part of the town now occupied by a Greek Orthodox Church and monastery. Even today remains of large villas dating to the Roman Period (63 B.C.E.-323 C.E.) are found here. During the time of Jesus we would expect to find Jairus (the leader of the Capernaum synagogue), the Roman centurion (see Matthew 8 and Luke 7) and, perhaps, Levi the tax collector living in the upper part of the town. The lower city was inhabited by the poor, including Jesus and his disciples, who lived in the home of Simon Peter’s mother-in-law. The synagogue was also located here in the lower city. The major industry of the town was fishing. However, agriculture would have been prevalent as well. . . . Jesus probably moved here because this was the home of his earliest followers and disciples (Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and the unnamed disciples, perhaps John). In Capernaum, he was able to establish an association with a group of men who were already partners in a fishing business and who probably were living together in an insula owned by Simon’s mother-in-law. (see Mark 1:29-30; Luke 5:10) Perhaps these men were not only followers of Jesus but also leaders of others. . . . For the House of Hillel, the laws of loving God and loving one’s neighbor took precedence over all other laws, including restrictions concerning the Sabbath. Page, *Land*, 66-67, 82.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

and show himself worthy of advancement in the hierarchy of imperial power, it was essential that he impress the emperor with his ability to maintain law and order in a land which had proven itself to be a seedbed of dissidence, disorder, and violence. Unless, then, Pontius Pilate were shrewd enough to govern this unruly people, his tenure as procurator was bound to be extremely short. Jesus found himself caught between these two diametrically opposed forces, which were moving toward a point of confrontation and climax.⁷⁶

b) The Announcement of Jubilee in Luke 4:16-30 (Is. 61:1-3)

Isaiah 61:1-2 is the Foundation of Luke 4:18-30.

“The spirit of the LORD GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor” (Is. 61:1-2a). “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor” (Luke 4:16-18). This text is a very significant one for several reasons, 1) it is Jesus’ ‘inaugural sermon’ or ‘the first public announcement’ of his ministry, 2) it is Jesus’ Jubilee speech which became his principle throughout his ministry and also became the core text for liberation theologies throughout the world. The Luke 4:18-21 discourse highlights one of the central themes of Luke: Jesus fulfills the O. T. promises by offering salvation to the marginalized and those without hope. The reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 as Jesus’ first public act is foundation for his missiology.⁷⁷

The Spirit of the LORD

Davies and Borg would consider Jesus as a “spirited person” or “a person possessed by the Spirit of God. ‘Christ’ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew ‘Messiah,’ ‘the anointed one.’ If Jesus believed himself to be one who was anointed, and so to have had a special role to which he was appointed by God, it is his initial possession experience. If Jesus labeled the Spirit ‘the Son,’ then he was both the Son of God and the Christ.”⁷⁸

Isaiah’s and Luke’s versions are virtually identical. The theme of Isaiah’s passage is *reversal*, celebrating the fact that things are getting turned around and offering hope to those who had no reason to hope. Individuals who mourn will be given a *garland* [symbol of rejoicing] instead of ashes [symbol of sadness], the oil of *gladness* instead of mourning, the mantle of *praise* instead of a faint spirit (Is. 61:1-3). “They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall rise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations” (Is. 61:4). “This verse simply highlights the prominence of the theme of social reversal in the portions Jesus quotes: the *poor*, whose lives have been one succession after another of bad news, will get good news; the *captives*, whose lives have consisted of being bound, will be released; the *blind*, who have been denied sight, will

⁷⁶ Ibid., 121.

⁷⁷ Maynard-Reid, *Evangelism*, 68.

⁷⁸ Davies, *The Healer*, 148.

see again; and the *oppressed*, whose lives have been nothing but enslavement, will be freed. Everything is reversed.”⁷⁹

Good News to the Poor means releasing, letting go, forgiving, restoring, images of messianic hope. This is what the Messiah, the Anointed One, is all about. Using Is. 61:1-2, first, Jesus reveals *he* is the Messiah. Second, his role is to bring liberating news to the poor, the blind, the slaves, and the oppressed. Third, this is the proclamation of God’s favorable year. Then Jesus concludes with dynamite: “‘*Today* this Scripture has been fulfilled in *your* hearing.’ The messianic announcement is alive today in your presence. You are the witness to it. I am much more than Joseph’s little boy, *I am the Messiah!*”⁸⁰

Is. 61:1-3 indicates a “reversal.” “Reversal” is that those who have been conditioned to expect bad news to continue are now promised good news. Things are going to change. Isaiah backs up his claims with examples. “The brokenhearted,” instead of being further pummeled by life, will have their wounds bound up; they will be healed. The “captives,” instead of being still more tightly constricted, will be liberated. The “prisoners,” instead of being denied parole, or having their sentences further extended, will discover that the prison doors are open, and they are free.⁸¹

In Jesus’ inaugural speech, he upholds the widow of Zarephath, who accepted the prophet Elijah, and also the story of healing a Gentile leper, Naaman, a Syrian. The crowd could not handle his elevation of a Gentile woman and a sick foreigner as a good example of faith and accepting a prophet of the LORD.⁸²

The Poor:

We may do injustice to the Luke’s intent if we limit the poor and other categories in the passage (woman, sick, Gentiles) only to a metaphorical interpretation and let such meaning take precedence over the physical and socioeconomic sense. For Luke, the poor is first of all are persons without economic resources. They are the ones given good news and hope, and they receive special attention in Luke’s evangelistic program.”⁸³

In their original O. T. setting, Is. 61:1-2a unquestionably referred to physical oppression and captivity. In Luke 4:18-19, it is clear that Jesus is referring to material and physical problems. The mission of the Incarnate One included freeing the oppressed and

⁷⁹ McAfee Brown, *News*, 93-94.

⁸⁰ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 85.

⁸¹ McAfee Brown, *Reclaiming*, 34-35. McAfee Brown also claims: “Those who experience reversals will become *oaks of righteousness*, planted by God. Oaks are noted for being durable and large and strong, in contrast to weak reeds or tiny trees that can’t survive heavy winds or bad weather. For the afflicted and those who mourn, the gift of new beginnings is given without any strings attached. But when God promises to make us oaks of righteousness, a task is imposed. If we truly to be oaks of righteousness, we are to participate directly in creating new conditions for others. *We are to be the instruments through whom God brings about the reversals*. This text doesn’t just give us a promise, it gives us a series of marching orders. The agenda that is laid on the oaks of righteousness. ‘They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations (Is. 61:4)’. The ruling *imperative* is equally strong. The verbs Isaiah marshals: “build up ... raise up ... repair.” Those are verbs that are meant to describe us. We are not to sit back and wait for God to do all that. We are to be the ones *through whom* God does all that. To the degree that God has effected reversals in our lives, we must work to effect reversals in other people’s lives.” McAfee Brown, *Bible*, 37.

⁸² Maynard-Reid, *Evangelism*, 76.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 69

healing the blind who are singled out as recipients of Jesus' gospel.⁸⁴

Jubilee

Jesus' statement in Luke ends with a promised announcement: "to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor." As in Is. 61, this phrase is intended to assure the disappointed that God has not forgotten them, but would come to their aid by ushering in the year of the LORD's favor, "Jubilee," which is a time of salvation characterized by good news for the poor, blind, oppressed, and captives.

This text does not repeat explicitly the four cardinal elements in the Sabbath and Jubilee texts—*cancellation of debts, freeing of slaves, return to family lands, and rest for the land and for workers*. They do however point directly to the essence of the Jubilee mandates in that they promise to overcome oppression and suffering. It goes beyond the specific mandates of the earlier texts and proclaims a comprehensive response to oppression and poverty as God's intention. This text thus serves as a summary of the various Isaiah traditions which speak concretely to the various oppressions, sufferings, and illness of God's people with promises of liberation, hope, and healing.⁸⁵

The literal meaning of Jubilee was certainly good news in Nazareth. The poor could say good-bye to their debts. Those driven into slavery because of debts could now come home. Peasants forced to sell land would see it returned once again to their family. No question about it, this was *very* good news! But there is more. Jesus wasn't making another Jubilee proclamation. This Jubilee message appears in Is. 29:18, 35:5 and 61:1. They are age-old descriptions in Eastern culture for the time of *salvation*, where tears, sorrow, and grief will end. Jesus added lepers and the dead to the list of the saved. Both are missing from Isaiah passages. Listeners in the synagogue would have heard him saying, "The Messiah is *here!* Salvation is dawning. The Kingdom of God is *near*. God's presence has broken in among you *now*."⁸⁶ "The Jubilee had arrived: Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." He was the good news to the poor; it would be an age in which love would triumph over greed, light over darkness, freedom over enslavement, and hope over despair. Jesus was announcing the birth of a just and peaceful world.⁸⁷

Therefore, the Jubilee prevented those greedy barons from buying up more and more land at the expense of the poor. Jubilee is bringing the outsiders inside so that they are back home for good. Therefore, Jesus decided to act as the liberator who is on the side of the oppressed to free them. Jubilee also lifts up a new image of the oppressed, of great worth, the privileged focus of God's own care. Finally it gives us a new image of discipleship, entering into the way of Jesus with the poor. It carries a new answer to the question, "Who do you say that I am?" Neither passive victim nor dominating LORD, Jesus is the liberating Word of God in solidarity with the poor.⁸⁸

The year of the LORD's favor in the text focuses on liberation as God's primary intention for God's people. Liberation here cannot be spiritualized into a pietistic or religious matter.

⁸⁴ Sider, *Rich Christians*, 47.

⁸⁵ Kinsler and Kinsler, *Jubilee*, 16.

⁸⁶ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 93.

⁸⁷ Maynard-Reid, *Evangelism*, 69-71.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Consider Jesus* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 1990), 93.

It is connected with socio-economic oppression, which in ancient times was primarily manifest in the distribution of the land, debt servicing, and labor relations. Throughout its history Israel allowed huge gap between the rich and poor through the practice of usury, the accumulation of land, and slavery. Therefore, the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee provided divine mandates to resist and reverse these gaps so that all God's people might enjoy fullness of life.⁸⁹ That is the good news!

Jeremias notes, "New creation has begun. The wretched hear the good news, the prison-doors are open, the oppressed breathe again the air of freedom, blind pilgrims see the light, and the day of salvation is here."⁹⁰

The usual reading of Jesus' inaugural sermon often spiritualizes its meaning. We often assume Jesus proclaimed release to the captives of sin, gave sight to the spiritual blind, and offered liberty to those oppressed by spiritual bondage. Although this is true, the O. T. background of the text expands its meaning by rooting it in practical social realities. "The year of the LORD's favor" refers to the Hebrew Jubilee. Jesus thus links his messianic role back to the Jubilee. The sermon is, in essence, a Jubilee proclamation.⁹¹

The important thing is the *nature* of the Jubilee, is a program for radical social change. No one who takes the Jubilee seriously can accuse Jesus of preaching only a "spiritual," individualistic message. The Jubilee emphasis means that Jesus' mission is "a visible socio-political-economic restructuring of relations among the people of God." The message is shatteringly direct: the good news is for the poor and oppressed; it is liberation from bondage, whether the bondage is political, economic, social or all three. Debts will be canceled, slavery will be annulled, and vast land holdings will be broken up. Everything will be restructured.⁹²

The Denouncement of the Jews' Expectations

"But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian"(Lk 4:25-30).

Jesus courageously offered to the Gentiles words of grace instead of vengeance. The day of favored people was over. The Jubilee kingdom was universal. It knew no ethnic barriers, no ethnic favorites. This was the startling news that incited rage in the Nazareth

⁸⁹ Kinsler and Kinsler, *Jubilee*, 17.

⁹⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 117.

⁹¹ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 85

⁹² McAfee Brown, *News*, 96. McAfee Brown raises questions and answers: Who is most threatened by a reversal of the way things are? Those who have made it under existing arrangement and therefore *like* the way things are. Who is most threatened if prisoners are freed? The jailers, who will not only lose their job but may even lose their lives if the released inmates are sufficiently resentful of their treatment during incarceration. Who is most threatened if oppressed are liberated? The oppressors who have built their own prosperity out of the exploitation of others. It is the *beneficiaries* of an Economic system, a political structure, or a religious establishment who are most threatened by change, most perturbed by talk of 'reversal,' most inclined to silence such talk and exterminate such speakers. This is true whether they are deliberately sought to oppress or are merely the compliant recipients of the benefits of oppressive actions by others. McAfee Brown, *News*, 97.

crowd. Instead of a day of God's vengeance against Gentiles, Jesus had announced a day of universal mercy and forgiveness. Jesus, Gentile-lover, was a false prophet. And so they chased him out of town and tried to shove him over a cliff.⁹³

Jesus quickly denounced their expectation; the Nazarenes had been waiting for years—and their ancestors for decades, even centuries—for God to break into history, and their entire existence was predicated on their being the clan through which God would be revealed to all of the Jewish people. Now Jesus wipes out their hopes and desires. Jesus would not allow himself to be used by members of his clan and village for their own political and religious agenda.⁹⁴

The Disappointed, Outraged Synagogue

In fact, Jesus omitted a phrase from the Isaiah passage concerning “a Day of Vengeance” (Is. 61:2b), when God would punish the wicked. He said just the opposite. God, in fact, would extend mercy and liberation even to the wicked. This upside-down announcement infuriated the crowd.⁹⁵ And his punch line insulted Jewish pride when he claimed that God used the Gentiles in Hebrew history. The Jubilee restoration wasn't only for Jews. Now, in the words of Jesus, it restored *every one*—even Gentiles.

Because it soon became clear that Jesus' perception of the kingdom differed from the popular views. Jewish opposition in the synagogue was so violent that they almost killed Jesus. Scholars have suggested that the Lukan text may well have been intended as a brief preview of Jesus' messianic mission.⁹⁶

Jesus' core message in Luke's account (4:16-30), Isaiah's account (61:1-4) and Jesus' response to John's question (Matt. 11:4-5; Luke 7:22) is an absolute reversal of the poverty, hunger, oppression to joyful liberation. This is Jesus' Jubilee.

Moltmann concludes, “the gospel of the kingdom of God is proclaimed to “the poor:”

On the one hand, the justice of God is presented as the right to have pity on the most pitiable; on the other hand assured the future of the kingdom of God that begins among the people who suffer most from acts of violence and injustice. The gospel assures the poor of God's life-giving, newly creating activity. The gospel is realistic, not idealistic. It does not bring new teaching; it brings a new reality. That is why what is most important for Jesus is his quarrel with poverty, sickness, and demonism and forsakenness, not his quarrel with the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. . . . It brings them *a new dignity*. The poor, the slaves and the prostitute are no longer the passive objects of oppression and humiliation; they are now their own conscious subjects, with all the dignity of God's first children. With this assurance and awareness, the poor, slaves and prostitutes can get up out of the dust and help themselves. They no longer adopt the system of values of their exploiters, according to which it is only the rich who are real persons. The inward acceptance by the poor themselves of the values of the rich is a severe obstacle to their self-liberation. It made poverty self-destructive, and produces self-hate in the poor themselves. The gospel about the kingdom of God which belongs to the poor, vanquishes their self-hatred, and gives the poor courage, so that they can live with “their heads held high” and can “walk erect.” The

⁹³ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 94.

⁹⁴ Page, *Jesus and Land*, 81.

⁹⁵ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 85.

⁹⁶ Driver, *The Kingdom*, 90.

poor becomes God's children in this world of violence and injustice. The kingdom of God becomes "the messianic kingdom of the poor."⁹⁷

Jubilee is Jesus' way of bringing people home; land comes home to its original owner; the slaves (man, women and children) reunite with their own beloved families; Therefore, Jubilee is a loud shouting for coming-home-news – physically, emotionally and spiritually.

c) Subversion – Reversal

There was a profound difference between the approach of Jesus and that of all the other political, social, and religious groups of the period. Sadducees and Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes all had in common their willingness to accept the Jewish social system; the monarchy, the temple, the priesthood, and the right of the Jewish people to a place of divine favor among the family of nations. For his part, Jesus rejected all of this. Jesus calls for radical change and renewal. According to the messianic evangel, there is sharing instead of accumulation, there is compassionate service instead of seizing.⁹⁸

Henderson calls this Jesus *subversive* and even *counter-subversive*. 'The sheer *radicalness* of who Jesus is, the sheer *otherness* of what he taught, the sheer *unexpectedness* of what he did, these continue to be far too *subversive* (and controversial) for many, if not most, who hear them for the first time.⁹⁹ Jesus thus *redefines everything*.

The *joy* he offers is his own joy, which is experienced by accomplishing the Father's will, and that included a cross. The *peace* that Jesus offers is "not as the world offers" but comes from being at one with God in a relationship of intimacy and love. *Success*, in kingdom terms, is only faithfulness to God's mission unto the very end, and in the midst of trials and chaos. *Wealth* is described in terms of true riches, *not* silver or gold, stocks and investments, but treasures laid up in heaven, namely faith and obedience to the teachings of Jesus. *Power* is defined in terms of weakness and servanthood, not in political collaborations and quests for the top spot, not in triumphalism. *Freedom* in kingdom living is in being formed by Jesus' Word, by the Truth.¹⁰⁰ [*Emphasis is mine.*]

Henderson further asserts:

When Jesus said, "I am the *Light*," he exposed the darkness in human hearts and the world; when he said "I am the *truth*," he exposed all that was false; when he said, "I am the *Way*," he exposed the false paths to God, the alien allegiances, and idolatries of the day; when he said, "I am the *Life*" he exposed all that was part of the Death; when he said, "I am the *Bread* of Life," he exposed the false shepherds who did not feed God's hungry sheep with true food; when he said, "I am the *Water* of Life," he spoke to the incredible spiritual thirst that was not being assuaged by those who were ostensibly making God's promise real the people. . . . This is the flavor of the "upside-down kingdom" and "the blue print of the New Creation." [*Emphasis mine*]¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Moltmann, *The Way*, 99, 101.

⁹⁸ Driver, *The Kingdom*, 203-204.

⁹⁹ Henderson, *Subversive Jesus*, 86. Henderson asserts: "the rebellion against God by our human parents at the beginning of the biblical story was by any definition a *subversion* of God's *Shalom*. The redemptive event of Jesus in human history was designed to *subvert the subversion*."

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 111, 98. The kingdom is always in a head-on collision with the idols of contemporary life—the idols of economic power, political power, ethnic power, social power, even ecclesiastical power to which men and women sell their souls.

Jesus' conversion and subversion include building an alternative community: The word "repentance" Jesus uttered carries with it the idea of total transformation of mind by which we forsake one life and enter into another. It is the threshold of Jesus' invitation to leave the dominion of darkness and enter into the dominion of God's dear Son, and this totally by God's grace. God is willing to do what is necessary to make it happen despite what we may deserve. This is an alternative community.

Meeks urges that the alternative messianic community must be based on the new interpretation of triune God. We need to reconstruct the social doctrine of the Trinity: God is a community of persons united in giving themselves to each other and to the world. The Triune God is the inexhaustible life that the three persons share in common, in which they are present with one another, for one another, and in one another. God is a community in which persons find their distinct identities in mutual relationships of self-giving. God "has" God's self precisely in giving God's self away.¹⁰²

Jesus chose as his mission strategy the creation of a new community composed of people already living transformed lives. The first Christians were not simply human individuals interacting with superhuman powers. When reading the N. T. text in the socio-religious and socio-political context, messianic groups look as much like small societies as other first-century religious communities. The messianic groups were concerned not only with religion but with all of life. They were totalistic in a way no pagan cultic association was. Their goals were having to do with "salvation" in a comprehensive sense. Viewed sociologically, messianic groups constituted—more or less consciously, explicitly, comprehensively, and radically—an alternative to the established socio-religious order. In N. T. perspective, it was the only viable alternative in a broken and dying world.¹⁰³

The alternative society means *alternative* economy, *alternative* education, *alternative* piety, *alternative* ritual, *alternative* festivals. Once you were not a people at all; but now you are God's people. The alternative community included people previously separated by social or economic boundaries; city folk with some financial resources soon joined the core group of rural, relatively poor Galileans. Hellenists—Greek speaking Jews of the Diaspora—converted and entered the first messianic community; most of the members of the messianic groups from the Roman Empire were slaves, freedmen, freeborn Roman citizens of low rank, non-Romans; they were a family. They were children of God; they were brothers and sisters; they refer to one another as "beloved."¹⁰⁴

All of the above alternative community was Jesus' actualization of his Jubilee to bring all those rejected, throw-away people home. It was subversion in the society Jesus lived in and it became a threat to Roman occupation forces and Jewish collaborators and gets Jesus into trouble.

Jesus Subversion includes Calling for Repentance and Conversion

Jesus urged people to turn from their existing oppressive system and come into the

¹⁰² Meeks, *The Economist*, 111.

¹⁰³ Larry Miller, "The Christ is as Messianic Society: Creation and Instrument of Transfigured Mission," in *The Transfiguration of Mission*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 136-137.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 137-139.

Kingdom of God, a new home. “Repent” and “repentance” are often closely linked to “sinners” and “forgiveness” in Luke, (Greek *aphesis*), and have a wide range of meaning: freeing bonded slaves, cancellation of monetary debts, eschatological liberation, and forgiveness of an individual sins.¹⁰⁵ Kraybill argues that conversion, which doesn’t involve economic change, isn’t complete conversion. Jesus not only condemns greed in first-century Palestine; he calls for a perpetual Jubilee.¹⁰⁶

Conversion leads to salvation: Salvation is not simply a private relationship between God and the individual. Salvation is not an abstract idea but it is an end to all death and injustice. It includes all transforming acts. Any action taken to effect a reversal of evil-spiritual, social, economic, political, physical, and psychological- is salvific.¹⁰⁷

In short, Jesus’ Jubilee announcement - his action, teaching, healing, reversing most of oppressive rules and customs of the day, and calling for conversion, alternative community building with the poor and oppressed peasants and social outcasts and sinners- became a threat to the power of Roman-occupation government and Jewish ruling leaders. Eventually Jesus’ popular Jubilee mission led him to a serious trouble.

d) Suffering and Death of Christ

Discussion of the Socio-political Causes of Jesus’ Suffering:

Jesus posed a threat to the urban elites. He gathered large crowds wherever he went. Rumors had begun to spread about his healings and exorcisms, his radical statements about Roman taxation, the Jerusalem temple. He was known to flaunt the scribe’s conservative interpretations of the Sabbath and purity laws. And, Jesus was accused of actually being a pretender to the royal throne of Judea (a messiah), meaning he was a threat to both the Roman rule of Palestine and the leadership role of the high priestly families. They feared his recruitment of a large group, and the crowds spoke of him in terms of traditional Judean kingship. He was crucified as a perceived enemy of the Romans and the Jerusalem priestly elite. How do authorities usually deal with someone who refuses to conform and who fails to fit widely accepted categories? Execution usually works well. Public crucifixion was usually a great damper on popular movement. Little did they know that this execution would not be the last word.¹⁰⁸

Henderson informs us that none of several political-religious parties of Jesus’ day, *Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Herodians, Priests and Levites, Rome and Other Religions*, accepted Jesus. They became his continual irritants. Jesus termed some of them “white-washed tombs” and others “a bunch of snakes.” Their animosity eventually produced violence [irrational anger].¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Maynard-Reid, *Evangelism*, 109.

¹⁰⁶ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 118.

¹⁰⁷ Maynard-Reid, *Evangelism*, 99-100.

¹⁰⁸ Hanson and Oakman. *Palestine*, 94- 95.

¹⁰⁹ Henderson, *Subversive Jesus*, 109. The Essenes were the escapists: forsake this fallen and unholy scene and wait for God’s intervention. So they built a monastery at Qumran and instituted a very disciplined life for themselves. They saw no hope apart from this isolation and discipline. The Zealots were the political terrorists, or guerillas, of the Jewish people. Their plan was to disrupt, to assassinate, to bring down the Roman rule by any means necessary. The Pharisees were the purists, the fundamentalists. Well-meaning individuals, they knew that the judgment of God had come upon the Jews in former days because of neglect

The Catholic bishops agree with others that the death of Jesus historically was no accident. His preaching and enacting of the coming reign of God posed a threat to the established givens of religious and civil power.¹¹⁰

Argument on God's Suffering and Theological Understanding of the Cross

Johnson suggests:

A God who literally suffers on the cross, thereby identifies with the suffering of the whole world. He rejects both options as deficient; on the one hand, to say that God does not suffer is to make of God an unfeeling monster in the face of so much suffering today. On the other hand, it is not right to say that God suffers without any choice in the matter. This is the human, finite way of suffering—it overtakes us and holds us in its grip. It is part of our creatureliness that we cannot escape. But such a condition would not do justice to God who is supreme over all the earth.¹¹¹

Schillebeeckx contends that the Father does not hand Jesus over or deliver him to suffering. This makes God into a kind of sadist. To say that God willed Jesus to suffer makes God less good than a normal human being would be. Historically speaking, Jesus was condemned to death unjustly, a victim of human sinfulness and rejection. God wills life and not death, joy and not suffering, both for Jesus and for everyone else. God enters into compassionate solidarity with Jesus on the cross, keeping faith with him, not abandoning him. God is present in the most of absence.¹¹²

Hall's theology of the cross conveys that *God identifies with humanity*. God, in love with the creation, now enters into full solidarity with the creature. God will not be God in isolation but only a God who is with *us* and for *us*. Through an impossible act of grace and self-sacrifice, God bridges the unbridgeable gulf between eternity and time. The One who is never mentioned in the Hebraic Scriptures except in conjunction with the world of human and other created beings—this earthward-yearning God of Israel becomes now “Emmanuel.”¹¹³

Meeks asserts:

in keeping the Torah. They were determined to never let that happen again, if they could help it. So they stacked up law upon law, laws to interpret laws, until it all became oppressive. The Sadducees may be likened to the official board of a lot of contemporary churches. They had a continual “wet finger in the wind” to be sure that nothing reflected negatively on the religious establishment that might be detrimental to the economy for which they were responsible. The Herodians were the political opportunists who were neither fish nor fowl. The Herodian lineage of kings were not properly Jews, but Edomites. But they moved into a vacuum and made an alliance between captive Israel and the Roman Empire. The Priests and Levites, the “Temple Guard,” as they have sometimes been sarcastically referred to, were essentially the clergy, the church professionals, the ecclesiastical elite. The Roman government was itself a religion. “Caesar is Lord!” Add to this the fact that the city of Caesarea Philippi was the home of shrines to many gods even before Herod built a temple there in honor of the Emperor Augustus. The acceptance of the multiplicity of religions and the outright worship of government was very much a part of the scene into which Jesus came. None of these parties accepted Jesus. They became his continual irritants, 108-109.

¹¹⁰ Johnson, *Consider Jesus*, 75-76.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 124.

¹¹³ Hall, *Suffering*, 108.

God becomes the economist in the sense of housekeeper, homemaker, the steward, the diakonos, or the household slave. The epitome of this claim is found in Jesus who, “though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a household slave, *doulos*” (Phil. 2:6-7). God overcomes human mastery by becoming a slave. God in Jesus performs the lowest and dirtiest work conceivable by taking upon Godself the sin and evil of all human beings. This is household economist work which only God as household Economist can do. And it was not only sin and evil God takes on but also the result of sin and evil, death itself. Thus the center of God’s economy is found in the cross of Christ. “We are convinced that one had died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised”(2 Cor. 5:14-15).¹¹⁴

The deepest suffering of the Son is the experience of being Godforsaken, of being infinitely separated from the one with whom he had claimed the greatest intimacy, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”(Mark 15: 34). The deepest suffering of the Father, on the other hand, is his suffering the death of the Son. This is a deeper suffering, just as our suffering through the death of a loved one is greater than our suffering our own death. The Father gives away the Son and the Son gives himself away; both go outside themselves and both suffer. Thus with the cross before us we must criticize every concept of God that defines God as radically individual, self-sufficient, and passionless, just as we must criticize every concept of the divine that depicts the Spirit as sheer dynamism, motivation, or empowerment without suffering.¹¹⁵

Moltmann claims,

When the crucified Jesus is called “the image of the invisible God,” the meaning is that *this* is God and God is like *this*. God is not greater than he is in this humiliation. God is not more glorious than he is in this self-surrender. God is not more powerful than he is in this helplessness. God is not more divine than he in this humanity. God is not dead, death is in God. God suffers by us. He suffers with us. Suffering is in God. . . . God does not ultimately reject, nor is he ultimately rejected, rejection is within God. . . .When he brings his history to completion, his suffering will be transformed into joy, and thereby our suffering as well. . . . Suffering is where God and human beings meet. It is the one place where all persons—kings, priests, paupers, and prostitutes—recognize themselves as frail and transient human beings in need of God’s saving love. Suffering brings us closer to God and God closer to us. Suffering, despite all its inhumanity and cruelty, paradoxically enables humans to long for humanity, find it, treasure it, and defend it with all their might. God suffers because God would be *with us*. Echoing Luther’s last written words (Wir sind Bettler, class ist wahr, We are beggars, that is certain), the Roman Catholic theologian Johannes Merz writes, “We are all beggars. We are all members of a species that is not sufficient unto itself. We are all creatures plagued by unending doubts and restless, unsatisfied hearts. Of all creatures, we are the poorest and the most incomplete. Our needs are always beyond our capacities, and we only find ourselves when we lose ourselves.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Meeks, *The Economist*, 92-93.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 170-171

¹¹⁶ Hall, *Suffering*, 112-113, 117. There is one simple but often overlooked question that neither liberation theology nor resurrection theology must suppress: Who pays the price of freedom? According to the exodus story, Pharaoh and his army must be destroyed that Israel may become free. This negative side of liberation belongs inevitably to the root experience of Israel, the destruction of the demonic power. When prophets subsequently promised the people in the Babylonian Exile the new and final exodus into freedom, they developed various concepts about the “ransom” for Israel. . . . God sends a servant to pay the ransom for

On the cross Jesus dies in forsakenness by God and people. “He bore our sickness and took upon himself our pains and through his wounds we are healed” (Is. 53:4, 5). This is how the gospel saw it. So Jesus heals not only through “power” and “authority” but also through his suffering and helplessness. In this wider sense of salvation as the overcoming of death and the raising to eternal life, people are healed not through Jesus’ miracles, but through Jesus’ wounds; that is, they are gathered into the indestructible love of God.¹¹⁷

Henderson concludes that the Cross is rather the consummation of Jesus’ work of love in rescuing God’s creation from its chaos, from its *missing-the-point*, from its deserved destruction, from God’s displeasure and holy wrath. The Cross is the heart of restoring *Shalom*. The Cross is far too *irrational* for the rational, and it is far too *irreligious* for the religious. The Cross really does not conform to any human categories. It is beyond that which any mind could ever even imagine, or even want to imagine. It is also far too radical and disruptive and subversive and controversial for sophisticated user-friendly church marketers. The Cross is an offense to *comfort-zone Christianity*.¹¹⁸

In short, Jesus experienced first hand a life of poverty, oppression and unjust murder on the cross as one of the poor homeless peasant, *minjung* in his days. Jesus’ subversion and death were his own peculiar ways of bringing himself and others home by emptying himself entirely for others. This is salvation, healing, liberation and coming home.

Jesus Loved Perfectly

Jesus’ whole mission of Jubilee—coming home—through his suffering and death stemmed from his perfect love for us. The very foundation of Jesus’ new kingdom rests on love, *agape* love. The Greek word *agape* means unconditional love. Wholly unselfish, *agape* surpasses self-interest, passion, friendship, and benevolence. *Agape* is more than unselfish feeling. It acts. It loves unlovable, even enemies. Compassion, generosity, forgiveness, mercy—these are the essence of *agape*. *Agape* flows from the King of the kingdom, who is like a loving parent. The ruler’s subjects aren’t slaves but children. Citizens in this new order love generously because a gracious Parent has overwhelmed them. Divine love stirs their own.¹¹⁹ Jesus was the incarnate of God’s love, God’s love for all the poor suffering homeless peasants of Jesus’ day. As John 3: 16 states, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

The extent of his full love is well described by Spong:

When his disciples forsook him, he loved his forsakers. When one of them denied him and another betrayed him, he loved the denier and betrayer. When his enemies abused him, he loved his abusers. When they killed him, he loved his killers. He was the one condemned to die, but he gave his life away even as they took it from him. He gave forgiveness to the soldiers. (Luke 23:34) He gave assurance to the penitent thief. (Luke 23:43) Here was a

Israel’s liberation, to pay the price of freedom. God takes on the necessary burden and the sacrifices of the liberation of humankind. Moltmann-Wendel and Moltmann, *Humanity*, 58-59.

¹¹⁷ Moltmann, *The Way*, 110.

¹¹⁸ Henderson, *Subversive Jesus*, 102. Source: *Luther Place: A Church As Hospice*. The Luther Place is a shelter ministry at the Lutheran Church in America in Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁹ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 167.

whole human being who lived fully, who loved wastefully, and who had the courage to be himself under every set of circumstances. He was thus a human portrait of the meaning of God, understood as the source of life, the source of love, and the ground of being.¹²⁰

His absolute love is based on his compassion, also from God. 'Passion' comes from the Latin word that means "to feel," and the prefix *com* means "with." Compassion thus means feeling of the suffering of somebody else and being moved by that suffering to do something. *Mercy* wears a human face, and *compassion* a human heart.¹²¹ Jesus' compassion brought all the suffering home!

e) **Resurrection as Coming Home**

Moltmann-Wendel asserts that at the heart of the O. T. tradition is the exodus from political slavery into the Promised Land. At the heart of the N. T. tradition is the resurrection from death into the life of the messianic kingdom. They further affirm that God is humiliated in order that human beings may stand up. God suffers death that humans may live. Let all people therefore recognize that the ground of our freedom is the cross of Christ, the power of our freedom is the Resurrection of Christ, and the truth of our freedom is life-giving creative love.¹²²

Resurrection appears as the sign of God's liberation breaking into this world. It reveals that ultimately the loving power of God is stronger than death and evil. The risen Christ embodies God's intention on behalf of everyone who is oppressed; in the end, the murderer will not triumph over his victim. In this light, the ruling Christ is in league, not with dominating powers who cause so much suffering, but with those who suffer, as the ground of their hope. He is the LORD, the crucified one who liberates.¹²³

According to Meeks, "God the Father calls the Son out of his bondage to death." Thus the Economist is known as the One who, "gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17). The Resurrection Economist is enfleshed in the poor man Jesus and in him identifies with the poor.¹²⁴ The Resurrection is not just a private occurrence in and for Jesus; it is the beginning of the "new creation." Thus the Resurrection has significance for the whole household, the whole cosmos.

¹²⁰ Spong, *Change or Die*, 128. Moltmann suggests, "Out of love God freely chooses to be affected by what affects others, so that when people sin and suffer this influences the divine being. In this view, God suffers not out of a deficiency of weakness in the divine nature, but out of fullness of love. For it is of the essence of love to be affected by what is happening to the one you love, and to suffer or rejoice as a result."

Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Consider Jesus* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 1990), 120. Siegel links spirituality and love: "The only way you can live forever is to love somebody; then you can really leave a gift behind. And when you live that way, as I have seen happen with people who have physical illness, it is even possible to decide when you die. You can say, 'Thank you, I've used my body to its limit. I have loved as much as I possibly can, and I'm leaving at two o'clock today.' And you go. Then maybe you spend half an hour dying and the rest of your day living. But when these things are not done, you may spend a lot of your life dying, and only a little loving." Haefen, et al, *Mind/Body Health*, 386.

¹²¹ Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 47.

¹²² Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann. *Humanity in God* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983), 58, 60.

¹²³ Johnson, *Consider Jesus*, 92.

¹²⁴ Meeks, *The Economist*, 91.

Resurrection is overcoming and winning everything that represents “death” and therefore it is “coming Home” for Jesus and for all humanity.

In short, Jesus turned the cross upside down and made that instrument of murder into a symbol of hope, love, life and the way of coming home.

4). Those Who Came Home (Jubilee/Liberation)

According to Schussler Fiorenza, the earliest gospel strata assert again and again that Jesus claimed the *basileia* for *three* distinct groups of people: (1) the destitute poor; (2) the sick and crippled; and (3) tax collectors, sinners, and prostitutes:¹²⁵

a) The Destitute Poor Come Home

Wherever Jesus goes into Galilee, the poor gather round him. He teaches them. They bring him their sick. He heals them. They move about with him. The distress of the people awakens in him the divine compassion. (Mark 6:34) His call to discipleship is directed to ‘the multitude with his disciples’ (Mark 8:34). The ‘multitude’ is the poor, the homeless, the ‘non-persons.’ They have no identity, no voice, no power and no representative. . . shutting them out into a social no-man’s land. They are the crowd without ‘shepherds’, without any religious or recognizable ethnic identity. In Galilee ‘the multitude’ in this sense was *de facto* the poor Jewish country people. So Jesus’ solidarity with these people has a certain universalism which takes in all the poor who have been reduced to misery. Jesus takes as his family ‘the damned of this earth’ and discovers among them the dawning future of the kingdom and God’s new creation. His compassion is the form which the divine justice takes in an unjust world. These ‘last will be the first.’ Jesus does not merely *go* to the people in the name of God. He is actually their representative, just as the people represent him. He is one of theirs, and they are the least of his brothers and sisters. (Matt. 25:40)¹²⁶

This is exactly the way Jesus brought the poor home in himself. However, the poor cannot come home economically on their own without the rich experience of Jubilee.

The Jubilee for the Rich is Good News for the Poor

Wealth and poverty cannot stand alone independent from each other because they are intertwined. For the poor to come home economically the rich must experience Jubilee. The two must experience Jubilee together and so they can come home together.

If peasants are poor because they are economically exploited by the rich and the political system, something must happen to the rich and the system so that the poor can overcome their poverty. For the poor to come home means that the rich must end their exploitation and sort out what belongs to whom and return it to the poor.

Wealth is a problem when one is wealthy before the others are. The problem is *differentiating wealth*, the condition in which some are poor while others are rich. The early Christian theologians deplored the fact that under the institutions of private property the rich could live luxuriously while others were reduced to dehumanizing poverty. The

¹²⁵ Schussler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 122.

¹²⁶ Moltmann, *The Way*, 149.

discrepancy of wealth and poverty distorts human community and thus ruins the purpose of property which is to serve human community. . . . Using property justly means the rich are accountable for meeting the essential needs of the poor from their surplus wealth. It is God who has entitled the poor to what they need for life. The rich are in jeopardy of being thieves. If you claim as your own what is common, *koina*, by right, it is clear that you are forcibly taking what belongs to another. Not to share one's resources, the refusal to take part in redistribution, is robbery.¹²⁷

Meeks claims:

The wealthy often become oppressors. The counter-term for the poor is "the man of violence," who makes someone else poor and enriches himself at the other's expense. The rich have the power. (Luke 1:46-54) They can hoard grain and force up prices so that they make the poor poorer. The tax-collector is rich because he cheats (Luke 19:1-10) and exploits the powerless, who cannot defend themselves. God of the rich is mammon, and he is an unjust god. The rich have to be exposed as the unjust and the men of violence. When Jesus proclaim the gospel to the poor, they are explicitly or non-explicitly proclaiming to the rich God's judgment. (Luke 6:24)¹²⁸

From the stories of rich men, it is obvious that wealth can lead the rich to spiritual homelessness because wherever our treasure is, there is our heart will be also, which means cutting themselves off from God. (Matt. 6:21) Ken Sehested writes, "Feasting on the bounty of the earth is not our sin." The pitfall comes as we eat in isolation from the needs of the poor. It is simply not possible to love God while we neglect the suffering of our neighbors.¹²⁹

Augustine said:

The superfluous things of the wealthy are the necessities of the poor. When superfluous things are possessed, other's property is possessed. Thus the rich have a compensatory obligation in justice to bestow from their surplus goods what is needed to sustain the deprived. Redistributing possessions is thus basically an act of restitution. Not from your own do you bestow upon the poor man, but you make return from what is his. Property is meant to serve the livelihood of others, not their domination and exploitation. This is the basic reason that the Christian tradition through the Reformation condemned the injustice of usury. Basil, Aquinas, and Luther all point to usury as a way of enslaving the borrower. Usury damages the community because of the "unlimited bosom of the rich."¹³⁰

The rich too can have new life in the kingdom if they cast off the shackles of possessions.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Meeks, *The Economist*, 115-116, 122.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 99-100.

¹²⁹ Schlabach, *Neighbor*, 31.

¹³⁰ Meeks, *The Economist*, 122.

¹³¹ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 111. According to Kraybill, the meaning of "rich" all depends on our social context and points of comparison. By looking *up* the ladder, we're *never* rich. Staring up the ladder makes us feel poor. The ones above us are also looking up and feeling poor. So the feeling of poverty spirals ever upward among the rich because no one can ever have enough, 131. The upside-down Jubilee perspective reminds us that once we were slaves, once we were captives. This reminder shift our focus downward, where the biblical spotlight always points. When we follow the biblical spotlight, we look down and realize we're rich. When we look down, things suddenly appear different and we are moved to compassion. The Jubilee message strikes home, 132.

Moltmann suggests the gospel has two faces: Jesus proclaims to the poor the kingdom of God without any conditions, and calls them blessed because the kingdom is already theirs. But the gospel of kingdom meets the rich with the *call to conversion*. (Mark 1:15) Conversion means turning round, the turn from violence to justice, from isolation to community, from death to life¹³² and from homelessness to a permanent home.

b) The Rich Zacchaeus Comes Home (Luke 19:1-9)

An excellent example of how the rich can come home in an eternal life is the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus had no need for tough words about selling possessions. When Jesus said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.’ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. . . . Zacchaeus said to the LORD, ‘Half of my possessions I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house’” (Luke 19:1-10). As a tax collector, Zacchaeus’ source of wealth was also the source of his spiritual poverty. He was famished for human relationships. When Jesus looked up into the sycamore tree, he only had to call Zacchaeus once. He offered relationship, the chance for true wealth.¹³³

Zacchaeus was rich as a chief tax “farmer” of the district. Tax collectors often used force and fraud to make a financial killing. Tax bosses like Zacchaeus sometimes even embezzled from their employees. Then tax collectors and especially the tax bosses were despised. This was because they often cheated and used force to collect taxes. Tax bosses were stigmatized. They weren’t allowed to be judges nor could they serve as witnesses in court. Like Gentile slaves, they were even denied the civil and political rights granted to blemished bastards. Money from a tax collector couldn’t be given for alms because it was tainted. Eating and associating with tax collectors would contaminate the righteous. It would have been unthinkable for a Pharisee to lunch with Zacchaeus. Yet Jesus took him to lunch. The rabbis and scribes would have joyfully spit in his face. Jesus deliberately contaminated himself by eating with this outcast at his elaborate mansion. Jesus’ care and compassion move Zacchaeus so that he decides to practice Jubilee. “Look, half of my possessions, LORD, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much” (Luke 19:8). What counts is a change of heart that produces economic change.¹³⁴

Jesus affirms his action, “Today *salvation* has come to this house. This man has been saved! He has joined the people of God.” Jesus ties personal salvation to social ethics. What is impossible with humans is possible with God. By the grace of God, a rich man has walked through the eye of the needle. Jubilee is under way.

As Maynard-Reid claims, “Zacchaeus’ conversion involved a radical transformation of his relationship both with God and his fellow oppressed human beings. Conversion for Zacchaeus meant not only turning from his social sins and rejecting his past life of unjust oppression but also it meant turning to a life which involved making restitution to those he defrauded, and sharing his possessions with the poor. Only then does Jesus announce,

¹³² Moltmann, *The Way*, 102.

¹³³ Schlabach, *Neighbor*, 74.

¹³⁴ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 115-116.

“Today salvation has come to this house.”¹³⁵ Zacchaeus is not only inwardly liberated from all the ties of his possessions, but actually does reparation. Bosch emphasizes that liberation *from* is also liberation *to*, else it is not an expression of salvation.¹³⁶

Zacchaeus and the rich young ruler made opposite choices about Jubilee. Both were rich in material possessions and in positions of power. Both met Jesus, but they walked away in different directions: Kraybill contends:

Things are quite upside-down. The rich young ruler has perfect theology but lacks obedience. Zacchaeus has a lousy or nonexistent theology but practices Jubilee. The ruler hopes for eternal life but refuses to share and can't squeeze through the needle's eye. Zacchaeus probably gives little thought to life eternal, but his new care for the poor opens the needle's eye. The religious leader runs up to Jesus. In contrast, Jesus invites himself to lunch with a sinner who is moved by his compassion. [In the story of the rich young ruler] economic concern stagnate faith. [In the story of Zacchaeus] faith drives the economic agenda. Here we have two contradictory responses to the gospel, opposite reactions to the poor. On the one hand, good theology, no Jubilee, and condemnation. On the other hand, scant theology, Jubilee, and true salvation. In both stories private spiritual experience connects to social justice and to economic justice.¹³⁷ [Emphasis is mine.]

Conversion has a horizontal dimension which involves not only a point turning *from*, but also a process of turning *to* (Christ).¹³⁸ According to Jim Wallis, repentance, the Greek word *metanoia* speaks the language of transformation, meaning a change of orientation, character, and direction that is so pronounced and dramatic that the very form and purpose of a life is decisively altered, reshaped, and turned around.¹³⁹

When John the Baptist demanded people to repent and bear fruit, “Crowds asked him what shall we do?” John’s reply was in the same light as Jesus’ words, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” When tax collectors asked him, “What shall we do?” John again told them “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” When soldiers asked him, “What shall we do?” John told them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages. (Luke 3:10-14)

Again, for the poor to come home economically the wealthy must be first liberated from their greed. Sharing their wealth with the poor will be the good news for the poor as well as for the rich because both will experience Jubilee, coming home; one returned it and the other restored what was lost. It is good news for the rich because one then comes into the heart of God. Zacchaeus proved that can happen.

c) The Sick and Disabled Come Home

Scripture reports that Jesus healed many sick and disabled persons: The blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26), a blind beggar—Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46), a man born blind

¹³⁵ Maynard-Reid, *Evangelism*, 119.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹³⁷ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 116

¹³⁸ Maynard-Reid, *Evangelism*, 117

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

(John 9:1-8), lepers (Mark 1:40-44; Luke 5:12-14); paralytics (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-20), a mute (Matt. 9:32), demonic people at Gerasenes (Mark 5:1-20) and in Capernaum (Luke 4:31-36), 7 demons from Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:1-3), the hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5: 25-34), a bent-over-woman (Luke 13:10-17), and a mute (Matt. 9:32), withered hand (Mark 3:1-5), the epileptic (demonic) boy (Matt. 17:14-18; Mark 9:14), dead Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21-23, 35-42), the dead widow's son (Luke 7:11-15), dead Lazarus (John 11:1-44), sick Gentile (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30), the lame, maimed, the blind, the mute and many others. (Matt. 15:29-31)

The sick and disabled were treated unclean under the Purity Law. They were constantly dependent on other's help and charity and people despised, alienated, and marginalized them. And therefore, when Jesus saw the sick he felt *compassion* (Matt. 20: 34; Luke 7:13) and was moved to heal them.

Exorcism

The expulsion of demons and the healing of the sick are the mark of Jesus' ministry from the very beginning. Miraculous healings and exorcisms were common enough elsewhere in the ancient world as well. However, in Jesus' case their context is unique; for this context is the dawn of the lordship of the divine life in this era of Godless death. The Lordship of God drives out of creation the powers of destruction, which are demons and idols, and heals the created beings who have been damaged by them. If the kingdom of God is coming as Jesus proclaimed, then salvation is coming as well. If salvation comes to the whole creation, then the health of all created beings is the result—health of body and soul, individual and community, human beings and nature.¹⁴⁰

Davies argues:

Except in the cases where a clear psychopathology exists, and they are comparatively rare, individuals who experience possessions do so (consciously or unconsciously) for their own benefit and for the benefit of their local social groups. Possession is not, per se, a pathological disorder. Possession plays a significant part in the enhancement of status. One result of possession is to enable people who lack other means of protection and self-promotion to advance their interests and improve their lot by escaping, if only temporarily, from the confining bonds of their allotted stations in society.¹⁴¹

In a world that viewed mental illness as demon possession, Jesus was said to have confronted a deranged man who could not be bound with ropes and chains and who lived ostracized among the tombs of the dead. Jesus then called even this life back into wholeness. (Mark 5:1-13)¹⁴² The cause of demonic possession is said to be the response to the Roman domination of Galilee and the resulting extraordinary excessive taxation and indebtedness of Galileans; the act of exorcism is assumed to be a political act with anti-Roman overtones. Davies calls the Gerasene demonic an anti-Roman allegory as it stands in Mark. *It is an imaginative allegory, not a historical reminiscence.*¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Moltmann, *The Way*, 104. In Jesus' days, the demons were viewed as forces, conceived of in personal terms, which are destructive of life and annihilate being itself. They enslave men and women, and make them dependent. They destroy personality and derange the organism. They are characterized by their pleasure in tormenting. They rouse the death-wish in human beings—between soul and body, between one human being and another, and in whole social systems, 106.

¹⁴¹ Davies, *The Healer*, 38.

¹⁴² Spong, *Change or Die*, 125.

¹⁴³ Davies, *The Healer*, 39.

Salvation and Healing

Every sick person experiences healing in a different way, because diseases and possessions differ. And the same is true about the experience of deliverance from affliction and liberation from oppression. It is only the summing-up which says that Jesus healed, and that with the Lordship of God's salvation has come. Salvation, then, is the summing-up of all the healings. Salvation is an entity which includes the wholeness and well-being of human beings. Salvation is for the *totus homo*; it is not merely salvation of the individual soul. It includes the health of the body. Jesus makes the whole human being well. (John 7:23)¹⁴⁴

It is very significant to understand what healing meant for the sick especially by *touching* or the *laying on of hands*. He *touched* lepers (Mark 1:41), the dead (Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14), eyes of the blind (Matt. 20:34; Mark 8:22-23, 25), *laid hands on* the bent-over-back (Luke 13:13), and he also allowed the sick to *touch* him, as Scripture reports, "They brought all who were sick and begged him that they might *touch* even the fringe of his cloak; and all who *touched* it were healed" (Matt. 14:34-36, Mark 6: 56). The hemorrhaging woman came up behind Jesus in the crowd and *touched* his cloak and immediately she was healed of her disease. (Mark 5: 27-29) [*Emphasis mine.*]

All those Jesus *touched* or those who *touched* Jesus were healed. He broke the rule of the Purity System that prohibited touching lepers, the sick or the dead because they were unclean. It is also significant to know that when he healed the sick he used words or expressions that were uplifting, encouraging, convincing, affirming, freeing, empowering such as "*Friend, Your sins are forgiven you* (Mark 2:5b; Luke 5:20)," "*Rise*" (Luke 7:14), "*Come out*" (of the grave/death) (John 11:43), "*Your faith made you well,*" "*Believe*" (Mark 5: 34; Mark 9:23-24, 10:52; Luke 7:50, 17:19, 18:42), "*Receive*" (Luke 18:42), "*Do not fear, only* (Mark 5:36), "*Go*" or "*Go home*" (Mark 5:19; Luke 5:14, 17:14), "*Go in peace*" (Luke 7:50), "*You are set free from your ailment*" (Luke 13:12).

Faith:

¹⁴⁴ Moltmann, *The Way*, 107- 108. The word "salvation" comes from the same root as "salve," a healing ointment. Salvation thus has to do with healing the wounds of existence. Wounds of existence are many and deep. Some of these wounds are inflicted on us, some are the result of our own doing, and some we inflict on others. Salvation in the Bible has both a divine and a human aspect: Salvation comes from God, and salvation is something that we experience Borg, *The God*, 157. The real theological difficulty of the stories about Jesus' healings, however, is raised by his passion and his death in helplessness on the cross. "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One (Luke 23:35)." But this is just what Jesus apparently cannot do. The healing powers that emanate from him, and the authority he has over demons, are given him not for himself but for others. They act through him, but they are not at his disposal. They issue from him but he cannot keep and use them for himself. There are no miracles on the road of his passion. Moltmann, *The Way*, 110. But there is a difference between salvation and healing: *Healing* vanquishes illness and creates health. Yet it does not vanquish the power of death. But salvation in its full and completed form is the annihilation of the power of death and the raising of men and women to eternal life. Even the dead whom Jesus healed and raised, Lazarus, for example, were still subject to the power of death, and later died again. Healings and salvation are related to one another in such a way that the *healings* are signs, this side of death, of God's power of resurrection or, as John says, signs of Christ's glory; while *salvation* is the fulfillment of these prefigured real promises in the raising of the dead to eternal life. Just as healing overcomes sickness, so salvation overcomes death. Because every sickness is a threat to life, and is therefore a foreshadowing of death, every healing is a living foretoken of the Resurrection. The therapeutic significance of redemption lies in the healing of men and women in their essential being—that is, in the becoming whole of what has been separated by death. Borg, *The God*, 109.

In many healing incidents Jesus either saw the faith that came to meet him, or actually said, “Your faith has made you well.” Where there is faith, the power which goes out of Jesus “works wonders.” Where faith was lacking, as in his home town Nazareth, he could not do anything. (Mark 6:6) Faith has to be understood, not merely as sincere trust, but also as the urgent desire of the person concerned. The woman with the issue of blood approached Jesus from behind, out of the crowd, and defiled him by the touch of his garment. (Mark 5:30) He praised her belief that she would be healed, and blessed her with the ‘peace’ (Mark 5:34). The Canaanite woman ran after him in order to get help for her daughter. She trapped him with his own words, the words with which he had rejected her, “The dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” He praised her obstinate will, “Be it done for you as you desire” (Matt.15:28). When Jesus and faith meet in this reciprocal activity, healing can happen. It was evidently women, who in a patriarchal society had few rights and a lower social standing, through their urgent call for the power in Jesus. And Jesus himself grew from the expectation and faith of these women. He surpassed himself, he grew beyond himself. He grew into the One whom he will be, God’s messiah.¹⁴⁵

Secular medical professionals report on the effect of faith for healing: According to Benson, medical and scientific research is demonstrating that what the mind believes can have tremendous influence over the body. Belief or faith, whether it’s deep in the mind or heart or focused on some outside object such as a physician, can play a key role in generating a response in the body. Just having a strong belief is enough to cause things to happen in our physiology. In his book *Super Immunity*, psychologist Paul Pearsall sums up research conducted at Michigan State University that proves that a single cell can be controlled by how we think. In describing the study results, Pearsall says that “the mind alters every cell in the body.”¹⁴⁶

Harvard’s Borysenko studied cancer patients who were considered to be long-term survivors; she found that the attribute they had in common was strong faith.¹⁴⁷ Davies notes that faith in a healer who promises forgiveness and access to the power of God can immediately alleviate anxiety, stress, and guilt and so permit the full functioning of the somatic immune system that may, in turn, eliminate diseases of viral, bacterial origins.¹⁴⁸

The interiorized guilt is then manifested by self-punishment such as blindness, or paralysis, or dermatitis. It is assumed in psychoanalytic theory that the manner of the displayed conversion disorder will correlate in some way with the nature of the event that gave rise to the guilt in the first place. Conversion disorder is technically defined as follows: The essential feature of this disorder is an alteration or loss of physical functioning that suggests physical disorder, but that instead is apparently an expression of psychological conflict or

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 111.

¹⁴⁶ Haefen, et al, *Mind/Body Health*, 422. Faith has been shown in countless studies to have a powerful influence over the body. So great is its power, in fact, that faith has been used to successfully relieve headaches, reduce angina pains, control hypertension, overcome insomnia, prevent hyperventilation attacks, help alleviate backaches, enhance cancer treatment, control panic attacks, help alleviate backaches, enhance cancer treatment, control panic attacks, reduce cholesterol levels, reduce overall stress, and alleviate the symptoms of anxiety—which include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, short temper, and inability to get along with others.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 423.

¹⁴⁸ Davies, *The Healer*, 77.

need. The sickness Jesus healed such as dumbness, deafness, blindness, paralysis, and excessive menstrual bleeding probably were the kinds of disorders discussed above.¹⁴⁹

Forgiveness:

The problems that were thought to arise from the presence of demons would be resolved when the demons were overpowered by a more powerful supernatural force, the power of God. In healing activity, priests or scribes and Pharisees acted on *behalf* of God but Jesus acted *as* God. As Mark's account says a son of man who forgive sins (2:10), acts *as* God. Therefore, elimination of sin is formal permission to forgive oneself. When forgiveness is granted by God or, in this case, Jesus presenting himself as the spirit of God, then what happens is that an individual has divine permission to forgive himself or herself. So forgiveness happens and, with it, the conversion symptomatology that guilt or trauma brought about fades away. Psychological factors would lead to the elimination of the presenting symptoms. This is how supernatural events can be understood to be historical events.¹⁵⁰

A modern doctors supports this, "Dr. Siegel realized that he was a healer, and that, his role was to "guide people into self-forgiveness," so that they will no longer feel that they needed to atone, to get them to understand that they are not sinners, and to provide a path to self-healing and self-love. What Siegel discovered was the spiritual dimension of health is a dimension that could transform people and the way they thought about themselves and their illness.¹⁵¹

Hope:

Those sick in Jesus days experienced much rejection, alienation, disappointment and discouragement. Jesus' welcoming, compassion and care for the sick gave them much hope to be healed. All those who came to Jesus hoping to be healed were healed.

Dr. Siegel states:

"Hope" as 'a wealth of optimism, a want of fear' is apparently one of the strongest influences on health and the human body. David Steind Rast suggests, "Hope looks at all things the way a mother looks at her child, with a passion for the possible." University of Kansas psychologist C. Rick Snyder believes, "Hope is a pragmatic, goal-oriented attitude, a stance a person assumes in the face of difficulty." . . . "A growing body of evidence shows that the attitude of hope boosts the immune system, improving health in general. The stories told by patients and physicians alike also demonstrate that hope is a powerful healer and sustainer that can help patients overcome the effects of even terminal illness. The late Norman Cousins is perhaps best known for his work with what he called 'the biology of hope.' As he explains it, hope is tremendous expectation, and expectation can have powerful influence over the human body."¹⁵²

Love:

In Jesus' days, those who were sick and disabled were hated and despised by their

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 70-71.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 75.

¹⁵¹ Haefen, et al, *Mind/Body Health*, 377-378.

¹⁵² Ibid., 443, 449. Researchers stress that helplessness and hopelessness are not the same thing. Hope can exist in the face of utter helplessness. Helplessness is what you feel in the situation where you can do absolutely nothing, like the heart attack patient in intensive care. But hope can be especially important in times like that, when there is nothing else to do, 446.

own society and even by themselves and had never experienced the kind of love Jesus offered them. In his rare and exceptional love in their time they all were healed. Larry Dossey, M.D., co-chair of the Panel on Mind/Body Interventions of the National Institutes of Health, wrote:

Love is one of the most celebrated emotions: Throughout history, “tender loving care” uniformly has been recognized as a valuable element in healing. . . . Studies have also shown that human interaction itself has a biological value. Human interaction causes changes in blood pressure, heart rate, and blood chemistry. Those changes promote good health for the heart. . . . After careful analysis of thousands of his patients, psychiatrist Alfred Alder wrote, “Love is an important key in the healing process. People who become more loving and less fearful, who replace negative thoughts with the emotion of love, are often able to achieve physical healing.” Bernie Siegel, prominent Yale surgeon and oncologist, claims that love is an important facet of all healing. “One of the most important effects of love is a boost of immune system function.” According to Karl Menninger, Love is “an element which binds and heals, which comforts and restores, which works for miracles.” Bernie Siegel says it best, “If you love, you can never be a failure.”¹⁵³

Self-Esteem:

Mary Magdalene caught by seven demons, the despised unclean Samaritan woman, the woman caught in adultery and the bent-over woman and many others had all the reasons under the sun to have feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem. But Jesus elevated and restored their self-esteem that resulted in healing from all sorts of illness and guilt. Jesus healed women equally as often as men from their captivities of illness, sin and guilt and showed that women share equality in the reign of God.

Modern medicine proves this:

“There is a growing body of evidence that a healthy self-esteem is one of the best things a person can do for overall health, both mental and physical. And a good, strong sense of self can boost the immune system, improve heart function, protect against disease, and aid in healing. Self-esteem is a sense of positive self-regard. It is a way of viewing oneself as a good person who is well in all aspects. It is feeling good about one’s capabilities, physical limitations, goals, place in the world, relationship to others, and more.”¹⁵⁴

Healing Is Kingdom Activity:

According to Schussler Fiorenza,

The *Basileia* of God is experientially available in the healing activity of Jesus. The *basileia* vision of Jesus makes people whole, healthy, cleansed, and strong. It restores people’s humanity and life. The salvation of the *basileia* is not confined to the soul but spells

¹⁵³ Ibid., 275, 279, 414, 608.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 485. According to medical professionals, self-esteem, the value we assign to ourselves, is generally based on five factors—two physical and three psychological. The physical factors are (1) our appearance and (2) our physical abilities. The psychological determinants are (1) how well we do in school (our perceived intelligence), (2) how confident we are in social situations, and (3) how we regard ourselves. Recent research by Finnish scientist Mirja Kalliopuska suggests that empathy—the ability to put oneself in the place of other people and appreciate their feeling—may also be linked to self-esteem, 486.

wholeness for the total person in her/his social relations. The exorcisms of Jesus acknowledge that there are dehumanizing powers in this world that are not under our control. What we today call oppressive power structures and dehumanizing power systems, apocalyptic language calls “evil spirits,” “Satan,” “Beelzebul,” “demons.” Therefore, if Jesus in the power of God casts out evil spirits and overcomes the evil powers that keep people in bondage, then the liberating power of God, “the *basileia*, has come (*ephthasen*) upon you” (Luke 11:20).¹⁵⁵

Thus, healing was Jubilee activity in which the sick got their health back, which was also liberation from the captivity of illness and disabilities, which is also coming home for those who were lost in illness, alienation, hopelessness.

d) The Social Outcasts, Sinners and Outsiders Come Home (Mark 2:15-17)

The list of sinners and social outcasts is long. They include, e.g. tax collectors, shepherds, peddlers, tanners, pigeon racers, widows, prostitutes, Gentiles, women, the Samaritan and the adulterous woman. “Jesus announced that the Spirit of God would transform sacred symbols—Sabbath observance, purity rituals, sacred boundaries, and even the mighty temple in Jerusalem. Many of the practices surrounding these symbols served to bolster tribal and national identity. The new kingdom would have bigger doors, bigger tables, and a much bigger family. The old ways created tribal identity through separation and exclusion. The new order welcomes everyone.”¹⁵⁶

Blount too emphasizes:

Jesus foresaw a world where God was interested in all people, not just the men, not just the Jews, but a world where the men and women could worship as equals, a world where God’s love was poured out upon Gentiles as well as Jews. He foresaw a world where those who were sick or lame, those who were lost or imprisoned, could enter and worship even though the leadership said they were unclean. He drew to himself women, children, tax collectors, sinners, prisoners, the lame and sick, the blind and even the dead, all the people who were considered in some religious or political sense unclean, and he was saying that all this must change. But talking about this kind of change in a world that did not desire it meant trouble. It did not make people *feel* good. That’s why Jesus was up there on the cross.¹⁵⁷

Jesus crossed every boundary of purity laws and welcomed all who were excluded because they were deemed impure on the outside, by those who were impure on the inside. “There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile”(Mark 7:15). “To say that purity is a matter of what is inside is radically to subvert a purity system constituted by external boundaries.”¹⁵⁸

The meal practice of Jesus had sociopolitical significance. He frequently ate with outcasts, as well as with others. His practice of “open commensality” incited criticism from the advocates of the purity system; Jesus was accused of “eating with tax collectors and sinners” and is charged with being “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” Tax collectors were among the worst of the untouchables, and *sinner*s should be given the meaning it had with a purity system; impure people, dirty people. The open table

¹⁵⁵ Schussler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 123.

¹⁵⁶ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 140.

¹⁵⁷ Blount, *Run the Risk*, 113-114.

¹⁵⁸ Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 54.

fellowship of Jesus was thus perceived as a challenge to the purity system. And it was: The meals of Jesus embodied his alternative vision of an inclusive community. The ethos of compassion led to an inclusive table fellowship, just as the ethos of purity led to a closed [exclusive] table fellowship.¹⁵⁹

Jesus' act was to actualize the Kingdom of God for the poor and sick. The parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:16-24) jolts the hearer into recognizing that the *basileia* includes everyone. Not the holiness of the elect but the wholeness of *all* is the central vision of Jesus.¹⁶⁰ Jesus' emphasis was on universal accessibility as opposed to the exclusivity of the Pharisees. His teaching was a radical departure from the legalistic behavioral approach [doctrinal purity standard] of Judaism.¹⁶¹ "The Pharisees are those who considered themselves insiders but who, from the later Christian perspective, were viewed as perpetual outsiders because they were unbelievers. The clue to the development of this contrast lies in how the contrast *insider/outsider* is understood. This paradox of Jesus—outsiders are in, insiders are out—throws light on another saying, 'I swear to you, the toll collectors and prostitutes will get into God's domain, but you will not.'¹⁶²

Jesus proclaimed *the kingdom of God* to the poor and bestowed *the power of God* on the sick; and in the same way he brought sinners and tax collectors *the justice of God*, which is the justice of grace. He demonstrated this publicly by sitting down at table with them. In the eschatological context of his own message, this shared meal is an anticipation of the eating and drinking of the righteous in the kingdom of God.¹⁶³

Guthrie supports this with, "The good news is that the God we come to know in the story of Jesus is a God who invites outsiders in, accepts the unacceptable, chooses the rejected, includes the excluded, and loves the unloved and unlovable—without any qualifications that must be met before they are eligible to be recipients of such love."¹⁶⁴ The power of God's *basileia* is realized in Jesus' table community with the poor, the sinners, the tax collectors, and prostitutes—with all those who do not belong to the 'holy people,' who are somehow deficient in the eyes of the righteous.¹⁶⁵

Kraybill concludes:

The tax collectors and sinners who ridiculed the rules of purity were considered filthy and were considered beyond the sight of God's redemption. The Pharisees shunned them. But Jesus excluded no one. He invited sinners to meals (Luke 15:2) and joined in their parties. (Mark 2:15; Matt. 9:10) This infuriated the Pharisees, who mocked him, saying "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners"(Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). Some scholars contend that Jesus' table fellowship with sinners and outcasts was the distinguishing mark that set him apart from the other religious prophets of his time. In

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 56. In the last week of his life, he brought his challenge to the center of the purity system, the temple, with his action of driving out the money changers and the sellers of sacrificial animals. His charge that the temple authorities had turned the temple into a "den of robbers" may refer to the economic interest that the temple elites had in the purity system.

¹⁶⁰ Schussler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 121.

¹⁶¹ Reggie McNeal, *Present Future* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publisher, 2003), 17.

¹⁶² Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 194.

¹⁶³ Moltmann, *The Way*, 112.

¹⁶⁴ Shirley C. Guthrie, "The Good News", in *Renewing the Vision*, ed. Cynthia M. Campbell, (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000), 5.

¹⁶⁵ Schussler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 120-121.

Palestine culture, inviting someone to a meal was a sign of honor. Sharing a meal signaled group boundaries, who were in the circle of friends and who were excluded. Dirty and polluted wicked people would never be invited by a Pharisee. The meal signaled peace, trust, intimacy, and forgiveness; sharing a table meant sharing life. In Hebrew culture, table fellowship also symbolized fellowship before God. Breaking bread around a common table brought a corporate blessing to all that joined in the meal. By eating with social rejects, the target of righteous wrath, Jesus embodies God's compassion for all. He signals their inclusion around the heavenly banquet table. He thus welcomes them into the community of salvation."¹⁶⁶

Jesus accomplished the law saying, "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Ex22:21).

e) **Women Come Home**

Women were the last to witness his death and the first to witness his Resurrection. But these women were close to him not only at the end, but during his lifetime and ministry as well. Many women were welcomed and healed. In the synoptic gospels, what these women do for Jesus is apparently just as important as what Jesus does for them. At his crucifixion the group of women stand there and see him die, 'perceive' his death, i.e. they share in his dying. They do not run away like the male disciples. The women proclaim the Easter message to the men. These women are close to the secret of Jesus' death and Resurrection. Without them, the stories seem to say, there would be no authentic witness of Jesus' death and Resurrection. In Jesus' voluntary 'service' (Mark 10:45), which is an alternative to political domination and subjection, the women are again closest to him. (Mark 15:41) In the fellowship of mutual service without domination and without servility, they live out the liberty which Jesus brought into the world. The closeness of the women to the service, death and Resurrection of Jesus is important not only for the women but for Jesus himself too. Here the fact that Jesus was a man is irrelevant. In the community of Jesus, the women manifested truly human existence that the new creation of all things and all conditions sets free.¹⁶⁷

Therefore, women owe a lot to Jesus for the Jubilee, for restoring their God-given dignity and identity as beloved God's people, both then and now. Those women who have come home in Jesus Christ must bring other women home who are still lost in poverty and oppression of tyrannies.

5) **Conclusion:**

a) **The Last Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46)**

This text is a very significant one because it is known as Jesus' last sermon prior to

¹⁶⁶ Kraybill, *Upside-Down*, 149-150. According to Kraybill, one of the six major divisions of the Mishnah is devoted entirely to rules about women. None of the divisions deal exclusively with men. The Mishnah section on uncleanness has seventy-nine legal paragraphs on the ritual contamination caused by menstruation! Women were excluded from public life. They belonged at home. When walking outside the house, they covered themselves with two veils to conceal their identity. A chief priest in Jerusalem didn't even recognize his own mother when he accused her of adultery. Strict women covered themselves at home so even their rafters wouldn't see a hair of their head! Social custom prohibited men from alone with women outside the home. Men dared not to look at married women or even greet them in the street. A woman was virtually a slave to her husband, washing his face, hands, and feet. If death threatened, the husband's life must be saved first. Under Jewish law, the husband alone had the right to divorce, 203-204.

¹⁶⁷ Moltmann, *The Way*, 146-147.

his crucifixion whereas Luke 4:16-30 was his first sermon prior to the beginning of his mission. In other words, Jesus announced jubilee for the poor and oppressed as the total goal of his ministry and he ended his ministry with reward and judgment for those who did or didn't participate in his Jubilee mission. The scripture records it, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. . . . And the king will answer them, truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Its parallel is terrifying, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me" (Matthew 25: 35-36, 40).

This text also raises the issues of eternal life. While some scholars think that there won't be any final judgment because God is love, others suggest there will be one, "There is after-life and there is the final judgment; all sins are not judged in this world, nor are all good deeds rewarded. The righteous do suffer. The guilty do go free. If this is a moral universe, that is, if it is created and ruled by a moral God, then there must be a reckoning hereafter in which those tables are balanced out. The good must prosper, and the evil must be punished."¹⁶⁸

Wallis suggests:

The most striking was that the people gathered in front of the throne of Christ in the story all really believed they are among his followers. And they must be completely stunned to learn that they will be separated and judged by how they have treated the poor. This judgment is not about right doctrine or good theology, not about personal piety or sexual ethics, not about church leadership or about success in ministry. It's about how we treated the most vulnerable people in our society, whom Jesus calls 'the least of these.' Jesus is, in fact, saying, 'I'll know how much you love me by how you treat them. Whatever you do for them, it's like you've done it for me. And, conversely, ignoring them is like ignoring me.'¹⁶⁹

Some scholars suggest that it is not simply individuals who are called to respond to the "least of these" but nations themselves. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, "Ultimately the great nation is a compassionate nation. No individual or nation can be great if it does not have a concern for 'the least of these.'"¹⁷⁰

Boice informs us, "There used to be an argument over justification between Christians and Catholics. Protestant said that salvation is by faith alone, *sola fide*. Catholics said that justification is by faith plus works, *fide et operae*. But today that disagreement is outmoded in the minds of most people."¹⁷¹

To most Protestants, the story is shocking because the text seems to judge people on the basis of works. It seems that those who did good to the poor received eternal life and those who didn't were punished into eternal fire. Most Protestants understand salvation

¹⁶⁸ Boice, *Parable*, 202.

¹⁶⁹ Jim Wallis, *God's Politics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 218.

¹⁷⁰ The Protestants for the Common Good, 1997, 6-7.

¹⁷¹ Boice, *Parable*, 202.

by grace through faith apart from works, and here the judgment is on the basis of what people have done for or not done for the needy. It is the care or neglect of those who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, or imprisoned. Boice contends:

Faith is important but asking what kind of faith? It is not a dead faith. A dead faith saves no one. It is a living faith. In that Jesus is one with the apostle James, who said, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" (James 2:14-17). There is an unbreakable connection that exists between what we believe and what we do, because we believe the gospel only because we are regenerate, and regenerate people will inevitably begin to live out the superior moral life of Christ. No one believes on Christ who has not been given a new nature, the nature of Jesus. . . . If we are justified we will have it and it will increasingly and inevitably express itself in forgiveness of and service to others, just as God has forgiven and served us. We are not justified by works. But if we do not have works, we are not justified. We are not Christians.¹⁷²

Wesley concurs: "The salvation offered in our gospel came with not *pre*-conditions, but *post* conditions."¹⁷³ It is only our feeding the hungry, our giving drink to the thirsty, our receiving the stranger our clothing the naked, our caring for the sick, and our visiting the prisoners that shows us truly to be Christ's disciples. Those things do not make us disciples, but their absence shows that we are not.¹⁷⁴ We cannot get away with giving excuses to God as the wicked complained that they did not see Jesus in those who were needy. To Jesus that is no excuse. He says, 'whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. (Matt. 25:45)¹⁷⁵ Therefore, the story of the last judgment is a salvation issue. "We are in bondage to many things: The bondage of poverty, illness, habits, helplessness, hopelessness and homelessness. And therefore, liberation from all of these is one of the central meanings of salvation and the central theme in the story of Jesus. According to Luke, Jesus' mission is, 'To proclaim release to the captives, and to let the oppressed go free,' is a story of salvation."¹⁷⁶

Watson notes, "The good news of salvation is not merely for persons, but for institutions, for systems, and for cities and nations. The healing that comes from God in Christ is for every dimension of humanity, and this will not come by individual conversions alone. The prophets, including Jesus of Nazareth, called on cities and nations to repent as well as persons. (Amos 5:14-17; Jonah 3:1-10; Micah 4:1-9; Matt. 11:20-24)¹⁷⁷

b) God's Perfect Home (Oikos) (Rev. 21:1- 22:5)

The Bible opens with a perfect home, the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:1-2:23), and closes with a perfect home, the New Heavenly City (Rev. 21:1-22:5). What originated in the Garden of Eden is now consummated in the City of God, which is nourished and healed by the river of life and the tree of life. This is the new home God restores.

In the later decades of the first century, Christianity, now spreading widely and growing in

¹⁷² Ibid., 204.

¹⁷³ Watson, *Proclaiming Christ*, 124.

¹⁷⁴ Boice, *Parable*, 154.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 205.

¹⁷⁶ Marcus J. Borg, *The God We Never Knew* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancoscp, 1997), 158-159.

¹⁷⁷ Watson, *Proclaiming Christ*, 126.

power, was making to itself bitter enemies in every rank of society, by Jew and Gentile. Persecution had begun under Nero. The leaders among the Christians could see clearly that the Church was entering upon a life-and-death struggle, a time of storm and stress, of great suffering. A great Christian prophet saw himself commissioned by God to bring to the Church his wonderful message designed on the one hand to forewarn the Church of its peril and arouse it to the purified, vigorous life; on the other, to fortify its courage and hope by revealing the ultimate destruction of the powers of evil, and the perfect consummation of the Christian hope in the establishment of the kingdom of God.¹⁷⁸

To comfort and give Christians courage who lived in fear of imminent persecution, John the prisoner in Patmos declares this vision of the New Jerusalem:

I saw Heaven and earth new-created. Gone the first Heaven, gone the first earth, and gone the sea. I saw the holy Jerusalem, new-created; descending out of Heaven...I heard a voice thundered from the Throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good – tears gone, crying gone, and pain gone – all first order of things gone... I'm the Beginning, I'm the Conclusion...The main street of the city was pure gold ...there was no sign of a Temple, for the Lord God .. And the Lamb is the Temple. The City doesn't need sun or moon for light. God's Glory is its light, the Lamb its lamp! it's gates never be shut by day, and there won't be any night. ...Water-of-Life River flowed from the Throne of God and the Lamb ..Right down the middle of the street. The Tree of Life was planted on each side of the River, producing twelve kinds of fruit, a ripe fruit each month." The leaves of the Tree are for healing the nations...The Throne of God and of the Lamb is at the center..."(Rev. 21:1-22:5).¹⁷⁹

Beckwith interprets "the New Jerusalem" as a renovation from that now existing. According to him, in v. 1, as in 20:11, the language suggests a prior removal of the old; in 21:5 the words, "I make all things new," denotes a renovation.¹⁸⁰

The most important news is the world is reversed, people are not in the midst of beasts but welcomed into God's household permanently. In that household, there is perfect shalom as God originally planned in the Garden of Eden.

The new home is built on the foundation of the inclusive love and the presence of God. This time there are Trees of Life with no test attached but only for the life of the people. In this New City, where God resides—God's oikos,—there is no rich, no poor, no cross, no persecution, no double taxation, no slavery, no hunger, no murder, no war, no disease, no discrimination, no racism, no prisons, no crying, no tears, no homelessness and no death. People can see and worship God every day. The city is so safe and every door is always open so people can come and go with no danger. In this New City, God's Home, God is the host and welcomes everyone always and forever. The Christian Church is called to restore God's perfect home so that all God's people can come home.

¹⁷⁸ Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 208-209.

¹⁷⁹ Eugene H. Peterson, "Revelation," in *The Message* (Colorado Spring: NavPress, 2002), 2263-2264.

¹⁸⁰ Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 750.