

Christian

Restorative Justice

Human Dignity, Work, & Wealth

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# Race Relations & the Distribution of Work & Wealth

- 1989 Supreme Court Case *J. A. Croson v. City of Richmond, VA*



# Whose Justice? Which Order?

- Meritocratic: Reward, punish
- Distributive: Baseline wealth
- Libertarian: Maximize freedom
- Restorative: Relationship
  
- How do you order and organize these?

# The Christian Order of Social Justice

- Restorative: God's relational order
- Distributive: Wealth for all
- Meritocratic: Reward, punish
- Libertarian: Legitimate concerns, but incompatible premises
  
- Grounded in the historicity of Jesus and his resurrection, with Scripture as a witness

# Human Dignity, Work, and Wealth: Three Foundation Points in the Story

- The Creation Order (Genesis 1 – 11)
- The Law of Israel (Leviticus 25, etc.)
- The Teaching of Jesus (Matthew 19, etc.)

# Foundation Point #1: Genesis 1 – 11

Homer's Iliad  
(European)

**Atrahasis**  
(**Babylonian/Akkadian**)

Zoroastrian Avesta  
(Old Iranian)

**Genesis 1 – 11**  
(**Hebrew**)

**Homer's Iliad  
(European)**

Problem:  
Overpopulation,  
wickedness, earth  
burdened

First Threat: Zeus  
sends the Theban  
War; many  
destroyed

Second Threat:  
Zeus plans to  
destroy all by  
thunderbolts;  
Momos dissuades  
Zeus

**Atrahasis  
(Babylonian/Akkadian)**

Creation (1.1-351): the  
work of the gods and the  
creation of humans

First Threat (1.352-415):  
Humans numerically  
increase; plague from the  
gods to limit  
overcrowding; Enki's help

Second Threat (II.i.1-  
II.v.21) Humanity's  
numerical increase;  
drought from the gods;  
Enki's help

**Zoroastrian Avesta  
(Old Iranian)**

Creation: Ahura  
Mazda tells Yima  
(human) to be king  
over creation

First Threat:  
Overpopulation;  
Yima asks the earth  
goddess Armaiti to  
expand herself

Second Threat:  
Overpopulation;  
Yima asks the earth  
goddess Armaiti to  
expand herself

**Genesis 1 – 11  
(Hebrew)**

Creation (1:1-2:3): God  
creates the world and  
humans and blesses  
them

First Threat (2:4-4:26):  
Genealogy of heavens  
and earth; the Fall;  
God promises victory  
to the seed of the  
woman; Cain kills  
Abel and settles in a  
city; God preserves  
Seth

Second Threat (5:1-  
9:29): Genealogy of  
Adam to Noah;  
human violence; God  
destroys the world  
through the flood;  
God preserves Noah  
and family

**Homer's Iliad  
(European)**

Third Threat:  
Momos suggests  
that Thebis marry a  
mortal to create  
Achilles and that  
Zeus father Helen  
of Troy; war results  
between the Greeks  
and the barbarians

Resolution: Many  
destroyed by Trojan  
War, earth  
lightened of her  
burdened

**Atrahasis  
(Babylonian/Akkadian)**

Third Threat (II.v.22-  
III.vi.4): Humanity's  
numerical increase,  
Atrahasis Flood, salvation  
in boat

Resolution (III.vi.5-  
viii.18): Numerical  
increase; compromise  
between Enlil and Enki;  
humans cursed with  
natural barrenness, high  
infant mortality rate, cult  
prostitution (to separate  
sex and procreation)

**Zoroastrian Avesta  
(Old Iranian)**

Third Threat:  
Overpopulation;  
Yima asks the earth  
goddess Armaiti to  
expand herself

Resolution: Ahura  
Mazda sends a deadly  
winter with heavy  
snowfall to punish  
overcrowding; Yima  
told to build a three  
storied enclosure to  
survive; humanity  
destroyed outside  
while a boy and girl  
born in enclosure  
every 40 years

**Genesis 1 – 11  
(Hebrew)**

Third Threat (10:1-  
11:9): Genealogy of  
Shem, Ham, Japheth;  
Tower of Babel and  
dispersion

Resolution (11:10-26):  
Genealogy of Shem;  
introduction of Abram  
(In 11:27ff., God calls  
Abram out of Ur to  
begin Israel.)



# Comparison of Stories: Genesis

- Similarities:
  - a fivefold structure
  - problems caused by humanity
  - a concern for population
  - divine judgment of some sort
- Differences:
  - “All other traditions view population control as the solution to urban overcrowding. Genesis offers dispersion, the nomadic way of life. Genesis 1 – 11 then constitutes a rejection of...civilization itself, if its continuance requires human existence to be treated as a contingent good. For Genesis the existence of a new human was always good.”

(Kikawada & Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*, p.38)

# Foundation Point #2: The Law of Israel

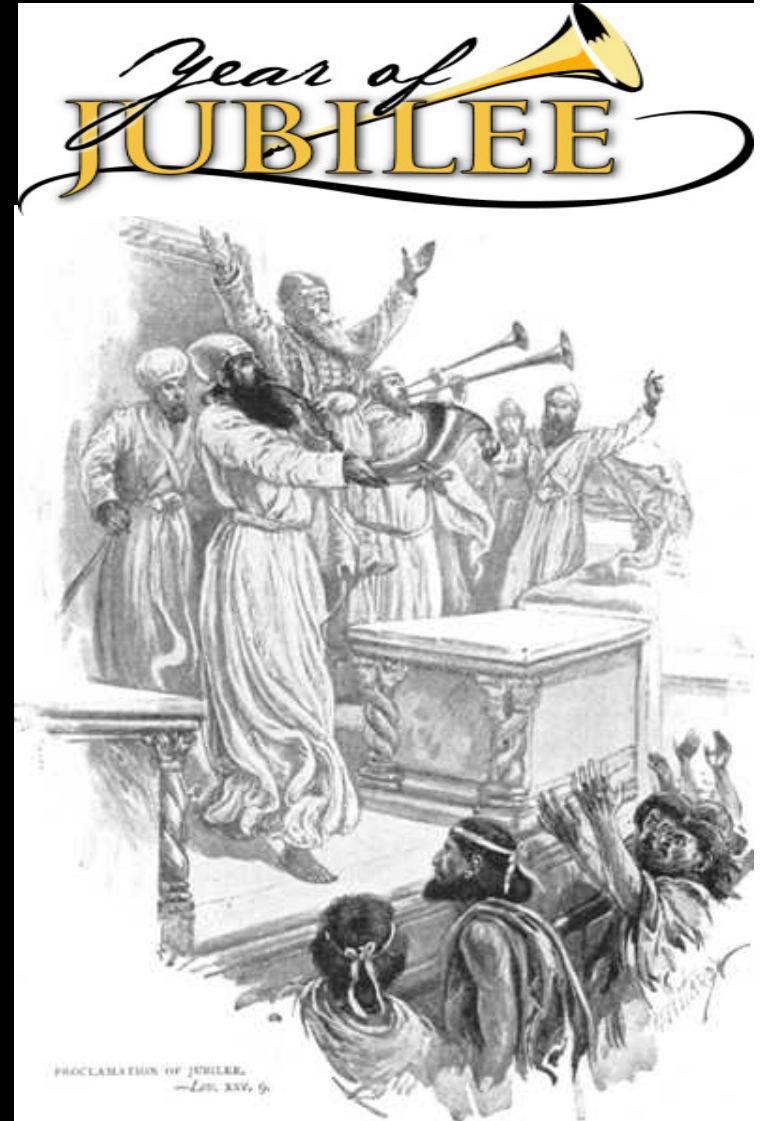
## Mosaic Israel: Land

- Leviticus 25
- Deuteronomy 15, 24
- Isaiah 58
  
- Proverbs 10:4, etc.



## Foundation Point #2: The Law of Israel

“This fiftieth year is sacred—it is a time of freedom and of celebration when everyone will receive back their original property, and indentured servants will return home to their families...The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me.”  
(Leviticus 25:10, 23)





# Foundation Point #2: The Law of Israel as a Partial Restoration of Creation

- Creation: The original humanity
  - God parted the waters (Gen.1:6)
  - God placed Adam and Eve in a garden (Gen.2)
  - God gave the “garden land” for all



# Foundation Point #2: The Law of Israel as a Partial Restoration of Creation

- Exodus: A new humanity
  - God parted the waters (Ex.14)
  - God led Israel back to a “garden land” (Num.13)
  - God gave the “garden land” to all Israelites (Dt.11)





# Foundation Point #3: Jesus and the Further Restoration of Creation

- Jesus restores God's original creation order for how we:
  - Express sexuality and marriage (Mt.19:3 – 12)
  - Share wealth (Mt.19:13 – 30)
  - Share power and honor (Mt.20:1 – 28)



# Foundation Point #3: Jesus and the Further Restoration of Creation

- Jesus restores God's original creation order for how we:
  - Express sexuality and marriage (Mt.19:3 – 12)
    - 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning...' (Mt.19:4)
    - 'Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you... but from the beginning...' (Mt.19:8)
  - Share wealth (Mt.19:13 – 30)
    - 'In the regeneration...' (Mt.19:28)
  - Share power and honor (Mt.20:1 – 28)
- Thus, we have responsibilities, not just rights



# Foundation Point #3: Jesus and the Further Restoration of Creation



## Church: Table

- Matthew 6:19 – 34; 19:13 – 30
- Luke 6, 12, 14; Acts 2, 4, 6
- 2 Corinthians 8 – 9
  
- 2 Thessalonians 3:10 – 12



# Comparing Moses and Jesus: Marriage

## Moses

- Hardness of heart
- Divorce permitted

## Jesus

- No hardness of heart
- Divorce permitted for adultery only

# Comparing Moses and Jesus: Economics

## Moses

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- Pass down land based on family inheritance (Lev.25; Dt.11)
- Generously lend to those in need (Dt.15:8)
- Forgive debts every seven years (Ex.21:1 – 8; Dt.15:12 – 15) or on jubilee year (Lev.25:40 – 41)

## Jesus

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- Separate yourself from land in principle (Mt.6:19 – 34; 19:3 – 12)
- Generously lend to those in need (Mt.5:42)
- Forgive debts all the time (Mt.6:12; 18:21 – 35)

# Comparing Moses and Jesus: Economics

## Moses

- Hardness of heart
- Land ownership permitted based on family inheritance
- Fixed time table for debt forgiveness

## Jesus

- No hardness of heart
- No theological basis for family inheritance; unlimited generosity
- Debt forgiveness happens all the time

# Christian Restorative Justice: Human Dignity, Work, & Wealth



Libertarian justice allows the rich and powerful to make any and all kinds of work contracts, especially based on who offers the cheapest labor and land

- We are pushing the true cost of our economic actions onto the poor, the vulnerable, and our future children

# Christian Restorative Justice: Human Dignity, Work, & Wealth



Capitalism prioritizes profit at the expense of labor and land (human rights questions and environmental questions, respectively) primarily because the true cost on people of unhealthy products and workplaces, along with environmental pollution, are not known to us and not easy to quantify

- God's original design in creation and in Jesus' new humanity (His restorative justice) is that His people be mindful of need and vulnerability, display His character of forgiving debts; it disqualifies libertarian justice at the root

# Christian Restorative Justice: Human Dignity, Work, & Wealth



Labor protection laws

- Environmental protection laws
- Revise corporate law
  - Corporate limited liability violates many standards of justice, including meritocratic justice and biblical restorative justice
- Progressive taxation policies are good
  - Drop tax benefits for owning more than 1 home
  - High inheritance & estate taxes beyond a certain income

