

God, the People of God, and the Poor (Part 2)

Lecture Outline for REL 200

Oct. 15, 2007

I. Introduction to the Bible

- A. The story of the Bible is the story about God!
- B. The story of God's concern for the poor *continues*.
- C. Difference between the two Testaments?
 - 1. No . . .
 - 2. Instead, Christ's . . .
 - 3. Example: 2 Cor 8:9.

II. The Story of Jesus

A. Opening Sermon (in Luke's Gospel):

"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 4:18-19).

*Recalls what Jewish imagery?

B. Other Gospels, besides Luke's, include similar themes

- 1. Jesus is criticized . . . (cf. Matt 22; Luke 14);
- 2. Was Jesus poor? (cf. Luke 2:24);
 - *Birch?
- 3. His mission?

-in Luke, the "poor" are often classified _____;
(Luke 7:22; 14:13, 21);

C. Summary of Jesus' mission

*Two samples of Jesus' speaking on the poor:

*Luke 16:14-31
(condemnation of . . .)

*Matt 25:31-46
(may determine what?)

D. Sider on “Jesus & the Poor”

III. The Story of the ‘Early Church’ (The Book of Acts)

A. The Book of Acts

*Communal Sharing: read Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35.

*One model for what?

IV. The Story of Paul’s Collection

A. Paul rarely deals

B. But one of his primary tasks was to do what? (Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16);

C. Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem*

1. *Historical* rationale:

a. To convince

b. To witness . . .

2. *Theological* rationale:

a. Read Romans 15:27!

b. For Georgi, this act represents

D. This kind of commitment to the poor was
(M. Hengel; W. Meeks);

V. The Story of James

- A. Closest to the perspective of the OT prophets on
- B. Support of orphans and widows is called *true religion* (James 1:27).
- C. Speaks about oppression of the poor (cf. James 5:4-5)

VI. Continuation in the Early (Second Cent.) Church

- A. *Ebionites*: “poor ones”
- B. The *Didache*, an early 2nd century Christian document, poses *two ways*:
 - “way of death”: includes what?
- C. Cyprian (mid-3rd cent theologian) believed what?

VII. Some Concluding Comments

- A. Observations? Surprises?
- B. Final Comments
 - 1. The NT advocates a distinctive solidarity with the poor, which is clearly seen in Jesus’ association with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned (Matt 25);
 - 2. Despite the commitment to the poor from early Christians, this did not extinguish all class conflict among them (cf. 1 Cor 11; James 2);
 - 3. “The witness of both Old and New Testaments makes clear that concern for the less fortunate is not an optional activity for the people of God, nor is it only a minor requirement” (Birch, “Hunger, Poverty, and Biblical Religion”)
 - 4. The story of God contains a consistent, thorough commitment to the poor, which includes the consistent attempt to participate in this calling. So, what will we do?