

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS



Pastor's Class August 2020



The Biblical Alternative to Rapacious Economies



Four Case-studies

I am informed, in part, by...



I studied with Walter for many years and my thinking about biblical economics is deeply shaped by his work. This book is a great beginning place if you are looking for a place to begin thinking through this topic.

INTERPRETATION
Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church



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MONEY AND POSSESSIONS

FOREWORD BY RICHARD HORSLEY

WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

God's Vision of Covenantal Economics



● Economics of Empires and Kings

- Money flows to an ever-smaller subset of people who amass excess / surplus capital.
- This tends to be an economy with a Darwinian slant — we compete for scarce resources and the weak are meant to be eliminated.
- It is a fearful, anxious, way of ordering the economy. The average person is meant to be anxious enough that they do not cause trouble and the shop / consume a lot.
- It claims to be meritocracy . . . but does not deliver.

● The Alternative Script Offered by Bible

- No one has too much. No one has too little.
- The “problem” of the non-productive elements of society is solved not by extermination - but by neighborly compassion.
- This alternative invites a relaxed and trusting ordering of the economy which we are not anxiously grasping after scarce resources . . . but are trusting in the God who is surprisingly generative.
- This is a grace-based system. We are warned to remember that we have not gotten our wealth.

No Distinction Between Liberals and Conservatives



- We are — **all of us** — wedded to the rat-race economy and we are all, liberals and conservatives alike, deeply challenged by the idea of rearranging our economic lives along the lines of biblical economics.
- This is why Jesus is so insistent that we **cannot serve two masters**. He knows that the normative patterns of our economic lives are inconsistent with the Kingdom of Heaven.
- I suspect that *most* of the theological angst I feel stems from my refusal to *choose*. I want to both be a good Christian AND continue amassing wealth in ways that disregard the needs of people who are an inconvenience to me.

I

PHARAOH VERSUS EXODUS

II

SOLOMON VERSUS PROPHETS

III

NEHEMIAH VERSUS
PERSIAN COLLABORATORS

IV

JESUS/PAUL VERSUS ROMANS



PHARAOH VERSUS EXODUS



Genesis 47

Exodus 1, 15-20

Moses explicates the commandments

▣ **Care for the Poor — Deut. 15:7** If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. **8** You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. **9** Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, “The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,” and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt. **10** Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. **11** Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.”

Moses explicates the commandments

- ▣ **Care of the poor in making loans — Deut. 24:10** When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. 11 You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. 12 If the person is poor, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as the pledge. 13 You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbor may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the LORD your God.
- ▣ **Deut. 24:14** You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. 15 You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

Moses explicates the commandments

▣ **Deut. 24:17** You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. 18 Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

▣ **Deut. 24:19** When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. 20 When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

▣ **Deut. 24:21** When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. 22 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

Moses explicates the commandments

- ▣ **Preserving Human Dignity of those in the wrong —**
- ▣ **Deut. 25:1 Suppose two persons have a dispute and enter into litigation, and the judges decide between them, declaring one to be in the right and the other to be in the wrong. 2 If the one in the wrong deserves to be flogged, the judge shall make that person lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of lashes proportionate to the offense. 3 Forty lashes may be given but not more; if more lashes than these are given, your neighbor will be degraded in your sight.**

Moses' Third Address

▣ This commandment is not too hard — Deut. 30:11 Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?” 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?” 14 No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

Moses' Third Address

▣ Blessings or Curses; Life or Death . . . it's our choice!

▣ Deut. 30:15 See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. 16 If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, 20 loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.