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Podcast

RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES  
P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901  
Phone: 304.520.0030  
Email: [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)

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Herb Montgomery

“This story might have spoken to those in Luke’s culture, but it would not work to threaten people in our culture with a burning afterlife. It’s much more realistic to focus on the gains and losses we experience in this life when we practice this kind of indifferent exclusion.”



## Stories that Shape Us

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of Luke:

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ He

said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’” (Luke 16:19-31)

Folk tales about reversing circumstances in the next life were a staple in Jesus’ world, in Hellenistic, Roman, and Jewish culture. The author of Luke choosing to contrast the lived realities of the rich and the poor is consistent with the theme of economic justice in this version of the Jesus story.

I love the cultural diversity and richness in this week’s story. The influence of Hellenism comes through in an eternally burning Hades, yet this folk tale is also thoroughly Jewish with the poor person being whisked away, not to a Christian heaven, but to the bosom of father Abraham.

J. Jeremias reminds us,

“In order to understand the parable in detail and as a whole, it is essential to recognize the first part derives from a well-known folk material...This is the Egyptian folktale of the journey of Osiris, the son of Setme Chamois to the underworld...Alexandrian Jews brought this story to Palestine, where it became very popular as the story of the poor scholar and the rich publican Bar Ma’Jan.” (Parables, p. 183)

In Luke’s gospel, the author drops the focus on tension between a scholar and a tax collector and replaces it with the tension between the rich and the poor.

I also want to say something about the Hellenistic idea of flaming torment in the afterlife in this story due to its abuse by Christians throughout history.

This week’s story is a folk tale, but the 1st Century historian Josephus does tell us that some Pharisees taught of an eternal punishment after death.

“They [the Pharisees] say that all souls are imperishable, but that the souls of good men only pass into other bodies while the souls of evil men are subject to eternal [aidious] punishment [timoria]. (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Vol. II, Chapter 8, Paragraph 14; words in brackets added.)

The Pharisaical schools weren’t monolithic: they had a rich diversity of ideas about afterlife and resurrection. Josephus’ report could not have been true of all Pharisees, then, but there must have been enough for Josephus to describe their beliefs this way.

The words Josephus used to communicate what these Pharisees were teaching are also interesting. The Greek word he used for eternal is *aidious* and the Greek word he used for punishment is *timoria*. According to Louw and Nida’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, *aidious* meant “Pertaining to an unlimited duration of time.” *Timoria*, on the other hand, meant “to punish, with the implication of causing people to suffer what they deserve.” Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* explains that the nature of this word is “penal and has reference to the

*continued on page 3*



***“Stories...” continued from page 2***

satisfaction of him who inflicts.” *Timoria*, then is a retributive punishment to satisfy something in the person inflicting the suffering, who feels the offender must experience punishment.

But every time the gospel authors write about Jesus speaking of some type of punishment or reversal of fates either in this life or the next, they use the Greek phrase *aionion kolasis* for eternal punishment (see Matthew 25:46).

*Aionion kolasis* was a known phrase among Hellenistic Jews, many of whom populated the region of Galilee where Jesus travelled and taught. Philo, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher who was a contemporary of Jesus, wrote, “It is better not to promise than not to give prompt assistance, for no blame follows in the former case, but in the latter there is dissatisfaction from the weaker class, and a deep hatred and eternal [*aionion*] chastisement [*kolasis*] from such as are more powerful.” (Philo, *Fragments*)

Mounce’s *Concise Greek English Dictionary of the New Testament* tells us that *aionion* is an indeterminate adjective, “indeterminate as to duration.” Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* tells us *anionion* “gives prominence to the immeasurableness of eternity.” In other words, it’s not that it lasts forever, but that it takes forever for whatever this adjective is describing to accomplish its purpose. We have as much time as it takes, no matter how long that is.

The meanings of the word *kolasis* are why this topic pricks my interest. Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* confirms what we learned earlier about *timoria* and compares this with the difference of *kolasis*, “The noted definition of Aristotle, which distinguishes *kolasis* from *timoria* is that *kolasis* is disciplinary and has reference to him who suffers, while the latter *timoria* is penal and has reference to the satisfaction of him who inflicts.”

In *Protagoras*, Plato writes, “If you will think, Socrates, of the nature of punishment, you will see at once that in the opinion of mankind virtue may be acquired; no one punishes [*kolasis*] the evil-doer under the notion, or for the

reason, that he has done wrong—only the unreasonable fury of a beast acts in that manner. But he who desires to inflict rational punishment [*kolasis*] does not retaliate for a past wrong which cannot be undone; he has regard to the future, and is desirous that the man who is punished [*kolosis*], and he who sees him punished, may be deterred from doing wrong again. He punishes for the sake of prevention, thereby clearly implying that virtue is capable of being taught.”



Photo by Francesco Alberti on Unsplash

The purpose of *kolasis*, then, is to deter others and to discipline or transform the one who experiences it. This implies that the gospel authors using this term want us to imagine a Jesus who taught a restorative punishment rather than a retributive one. If this discipline is to take place in the afterlife, then the people receiving it have all the time that it will take. This kind of punishment is intended to be something that someone passes through and is changed by, not an inescapable fate people are abandoned to.

Even though we’ve been considering Hellenistic sources so far, the idea of using fire to symbolize removing something considered harmful, like fire removes dross from gold, is also a Jewish idea and part of the Hebrew scriptures:

“The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: ‘Who of us can dwell with the CONSUMING fire? Who of us can dwell with THE EVERLASTING BURNING?’ Those who walk righteously and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil.” (Isaiah 33:14, emphasis added.)

In this passage, those who dwell with “the everlasting burning” are the righteous. From this we might understand that the righteous are those who go through this kind of experience and are transformed.

Back to our reading. This story might have spoken to those in Luke’s culture, but it would not work to threaten people in our culture with a burning afterlife. It’s much more realistic to focus on the gains and losses we experience in this life when we practice indifferent exclusion in the ways of the unnamed rich person in this story.

Gustavo Guitierrez writes,

“The poor are a by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible. They are marginalized by our social and cultural world. They are the oppressed, exploited proletariat, robbed of the fruit of their labor and despoiled of their humanity. Hence the poverty of the poor is not a call to generous relief action, but a demand that we go and build a different social order.” (*The Power of the Poor in History*, p. 44)

How this week are you being called to prioritize those our present system marginalizes or disenfranchises, politically, socially, economically, or in all three ways?

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# RHM's Recommended Reading for October

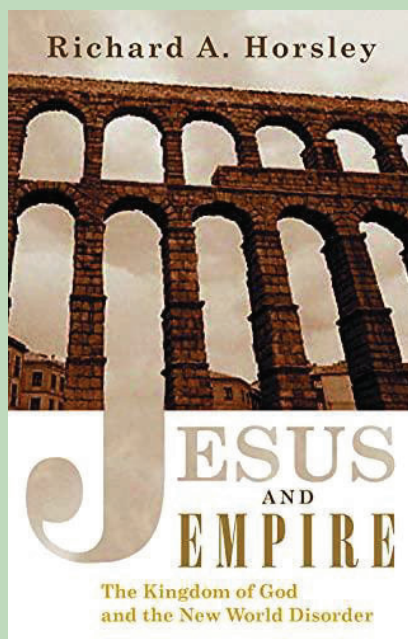
## ***Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder***

by Richard A. Horsley

Building on his earlier studies of Jesus, Galilee, and the social upheavals in Roman Palestine, Horsley focuses his attention on how Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God relates to Roman and Herodian power politics. In addition he examines how modern ideologies relate to Jesus' proclamation.

One of RHM's favorites for 2022!

Remember, you don't have to order this book through amazon.com, but if you do, please consider using Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com) and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your designated charity for a portion of your purchase to be donated to RHM at no additional cost to you.



*"Stories..." continued from page 3*

## HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. What stories have shaped you in your journey? Share one with your group.
3. What can you do this week, big or small, to continue setting in motion the work of shaping our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone?

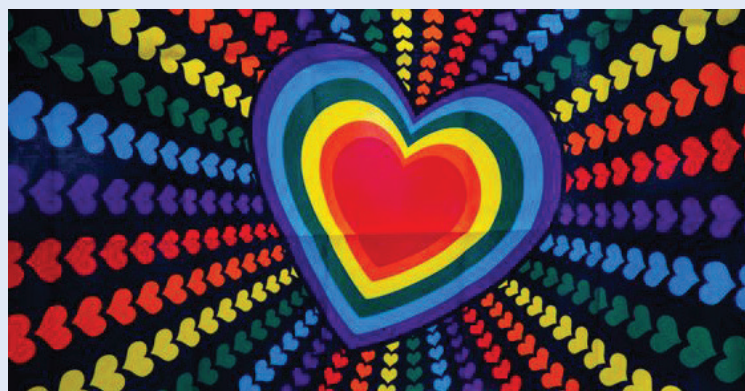
Thanks for checking in with us today.

You can find Renewed Heart Ministries on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts. Also, if you enjoy listening to the *Jesus for Everyone* podcast, please like and subscribe to the JFE podcast through the podcast platform you use and consider taking some time to give us a review. This helps others find our podcast as well.

And if you'd like to reach out to us through email, you can reach us at [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)

Right where you are, keep living in love, choosing compassion, taking action, and working toward justice.

I love each of you dearly. ■



## Weekly HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

***"I've experienced paradigm shifts in my thinking that are transforming my spiritual journey."***

That's what one participant recently wrote. Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church hosts a Zoom-HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in Renewed Heart Ministries weekly eSight articles and the Jesus For Everyone podcast published each Friday. The time of each Zoom session will be on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific/10:00 p.m. Eastern. Email us at: [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com) for the link for the Zoom meeting.



## Upcoming Events

**November 26, 2022**

**Good News Fellowship**

(via Zoom)

Toronto, Ontario Canada

304.520.0030



# SOCIAL JESUS

*A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice*



## Last Month's "Social Jesus" Blog Posts on Patheos

Articles posted each week at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/)



### ***Faith and Political Harm (Part 1 of 3)***

"To hear this parable, however, we must again remove some of the Christian theological wax from our ears."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/faith-political-harm-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/faith-political-harm-part1/)

### ***Faith and Political Harm (Part 2 of 3)***

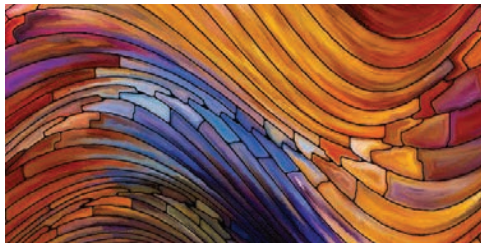
"As peasants who could not imagine a world without feudalism. As we find it difficult to imagine a world without capitalism. In this story, listeners could not imagine a world without Roman imperial rule."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/faith-political-harm-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/faith-political-harm-part2/)

### ***Faith and Political Harm (Part 3 of 3)***

"These stories cared about the concrete harm being done to the marginalized and exploited. Today, they should move us to do the same."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/faith-political-harm-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/faith-political-harm-part3/)



### ***Stories that Shape Us (Part 1 of 3)***

"Folk tales about reversing circumstances in the next life were a staple in Hellenistic, Roman, and Jewish culture."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/stories-that-shape-us-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/stories-that-shape-us-part1/)

### ***Stories that Shape Us (Part 2 of 3)***

"This is a retributive punishment to satisfy the person inflicting the suffering who feels the offender must experience punishment."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/stories-that-shape-us-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/stories-that-shape-us-part2/)

### ***Stories that Shape Us (Part 3 of 3)***

"It's much more realistic to focus on the gains and losses we experience in this life when we practice indifferent exclusion."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/stories-that-shape-us-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/stories-that-shape-us-part3/)



### ***Jesus and Another Story of Debt Cancellation (Part 1 of 3)***

"This week's reading can be difficult for us in our capitalist culture to grasp."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/jesus-another-story-debt-cancellation-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/jesus-another-story-debt-cancellation-part1/)

### ***Jesus and Another Story of Debt Cancellation (Part 2 of 3)***

"It's not about everyone having the same quantity, but everyone having the same quality. Some people don't need as much to thrive. Others need more."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/jesus-another-story-debt-cancellation-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/jesus-another-story-debt-cancellation-part2/)

### ***Jesus and Another Story of Debt Cancellation (Part 3 of 3)***

"What I glean from this story is a call to look at my priorities within our system as I imagine and work toward a different iteration of our world. What am I prioritizing?"

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/personal-cost-causing-division-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/personal-cost-causing-division-part3/)

*continued on page 6*



### **A Preferential Option and Student Debt Forgiveness (Part 1 of 3)**

"This week's reading includes arguably two of the most famous stories associated with Jesus today."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/preferential-option-student-debt-forgiveness-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/preferential-option-student-debt-forgiveness-part1/)

### **A Preferential Option and Student Debt Forgiveness (Part 2 of 3)**

"In those schools of interpretation, 'a preferential option' for the one being harmed, excluded, and/or oppressed is foundational."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/preferential-option-student-debt-forgiveness-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/preferential-option-student-debt-forgiveness-part2/)

### **A Preferential Option and Student Debt Forgiveness (Part 3 of 3)**

"In a society that privileges certain ones by pushing others to the edges and undersides of their society, we have to practice a preferential option for those being marginalized to bring things back into balance."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/preferential-option-student-debt-forgiveness-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/preferential-option-student-debt-forgiveness-part3/)



### **Rejection For Doing What Is Right (Part 1 of 3)**

"If your religion causes you to feel like you must reject your lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-binary, queer, or questioning kid, please find a different expression of your faith. Run; don't walk. Don't accept any expression of religion that calls you to reject your own children."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/rejection-doing-what-right-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/rejection-doing-what-right-part1/)

### **Rejection For Doing What Is Right (Part 2 of 3)**

"There is another way to interpret this week's passage: to prioritize working for a safe, compassionate, just world for everyone, especially those presently marginalized."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/rejection-doing-what-right-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/08/rejection-doing-what-right-part2/)

### **Rejection For Doing What Is Right (Part 3 of 3)**

"Our reading this week encourages us to recognize ahead of time that we may face negative feedback from those who are benefiting from the systems of this world, even when they are our relatives."

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/rejection-doing-what-right-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2022/09/rejection-doing-what-right-part3/)

## Quotable Quotes

"The social gospel calls for an expansion in the scope of salvation and for more religious dynamic to do the work of God. It requires more faith and not less. It offers a more thorough and durable salvation. It is able to create a more searching sense of sin and to preach repentance to the respectable and mighty who have ridden humanity to the mouth of hell."

— Walter Rauschenbusch;  
*A Theology for the Social Gospel*

"The Greek word for punishment is *kolasis*, which was not originally an ethical word at all. It originally meant the pruning of trees to make them grow better. I think it is true to say that in all Greek secular literature *kolasis* is never used of anything but remedial punishment. The word for eternal is *aionios*. It means more than everlasting, for Plato – who may have invented the word – plainly says that a thing may be everlasting and still not be *aionios*. The simplest way to put it is that *aionios* cannot be used properly of anyone but God; it is the word uniquely, as Plato saw it, of God. Eternal punishment is then literally that kind of remedial punishment which it befits God to give and which only God can give."

— William Barclay,  
*Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at Glasgow University and the author of many Biblical commentaries and books, including a translation of the New Testament, "Barclay New Testament," and "The Daily Study Bible Series"*



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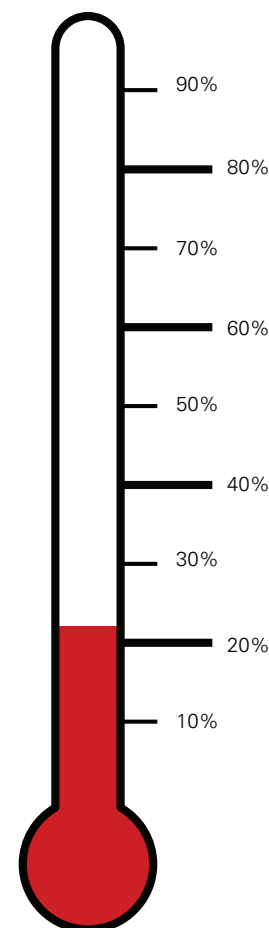
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**2022 Projected Budget Goal:  
\$185,000.00**

**Donations Received  
August 2022:  
\$4,335.50**

**Donations Received  
January through August:  
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\$5 or \$5,000,  
every amount helps us  
continue our work.**



**JESUS FOR  
EVERYONE**

Podcast

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***New episodes every Friday!***  
***The Jesus For Everyone***  
**podcast.**

A weekly podcast where we talk about the intersection of faith and societal justice and what a first-century, Jewish prophet of the poor from Galilee offers us today in our work of compassion, love and justice.

**[renewedheartministries.com/](http://renewedheartministries.com/)**  
**Podcasts**

Renewed Heart Ministries is a not-for-profit group that is passionate about rediscovering, following and helping others rediscover the teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. We believe these teachings have an intrinsic value in informing the work of nonviolently confronting, liberating and transforming our world into a safe, more just, more compassionate home for us all.

Everything we do here at Renewed Heart Ministries is for free. Even the many educational events that we hold in various venues. You can support our work either with a one-time gift or by becoming one of our monthly contributors by going to [RenewedHeartMinistries.com](http://RenewedHeartMinistries.com) and clicking the **donate** tab at the top right.

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And to those already supporting the work of Renewed Heart Ministries, your generous support makes it possible for us to exist and to continue being a presence for positive change in our world. So with all of our hearts, "Thank You."

Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.



Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

"The poor are a by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible . . . Hence the poverty of the poor is not a call to generous relief action, but a demand that we go and build a different social order."

Gustavo Gutierrez  
The Power of the Poor in History

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