

WAS JESUS A SOCIALIST?

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Ecclesiastes 3:13 KJV

“And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.”

The idea that Jesus was a socialist (or even a communist) seems to be increasingly employed as an argument against traditional American values. There are several fundamental flaws to this argument though.

First, however, let's define socialism as well as communism. In communism, the government controls all industry and provides citizens with their basic necessities; there is no private ownership of property. In pure socialism, everything is shared by the community (even though there is usually a government involved to make sure everything is “equal”). Nevertheless, neither of these systems fulfill the design of our text (that a man should enjoy the good of all his labour). In communism, the government decides what you get as the result of your labour and in socialism, everything is shared (equally based on need) despite how much or little you labour. We could debate the various economic systems, but any system that does not let a person enjoy what they have worked for and earned, does not align with the Bible.

It is very clear from our text verse that God's design (and thus Jesus's design) is for a man to work and to enjoy what he has worked for. Furthermore, the scriptures teach that if a man will not work then he should not eat (1st Thessalonians 3:10). In the verses following, we are told that there were some in Thessalonica that were not working but were worried about what everyone else was doing; the exhortation to them was to “work with quietness and to eat their own bread”. Again, in Ephesians 4:28 we are told, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” So, in other words, a person who was a thief is supposed to quit stealing and to go to work with the intent that he may help the needy (this point will tie in later in the article as well). Certainly there are a plethora of scriptures for which we could examine on this topic, but we have seen repeatedly in these verses that the Bible teaches that a person is to work and to have that which he/she has earned.

Despite the fact that whatever the Bible teaches is by default what Jesus teaches, we will look at His personal ministry and His own spoken words. Jesus is often known for teaching and demonstrating things such as compassion, kindness, and integrity (see Matthew 14:14, Luke 6:31, and Luke 6:35 among others). Perhaps some may point to examples such as the feeding of the four thousand in Matthew 15:32-38 to advocate for social programs. But people often miss an important teaching of Jesus (as well as the rest of the Bible), and that is the teaching of personal responsibility.

Jesus, and the rest of the Bible, often speak of how we are personally responsible for following His commandments. Never are we told to give our money to the government and let them handle charitable deeds. In fact, Jesus goes as far as to tell us that when we give or do alms (helping the needy), we are to do it privately as to not receive the praise of men (Matthew 6:1-4). Recall again Ephesians 4:28, the thief was to work so that “he may have to give to him that needeth.” It is that person's personal responsibility to give to the needy; the instruction was not to “just let the government take care of it.” Moreover, Jesus tells us in Luke 20:25 to “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.” This tells us that there are things which belong to the government (taxes for example) and things which belong to God (such as our personal service). Both socialism and communism end up mixing the two together.

You may argue that socialism isn't government control but rather everyone getting their “fair share” or “everyone helping each other” but as we have demonstrated, this is incompatible with the clear teaching of working for and earning what is yours and personal responsibility for providing for the needy (among other things). God's design is that man work and then have compassion and give to those in need out of his own money and possessions.

So was Jesus a socialist? Or a communist? No and God forbid. But what matters more than if Jesus was a socialist or communist or capitalist, or even Democrat or Republican, is that He is the Saviour. In the economy of sin, we all owe a debt which we cannot pay, yet Jesus paid a debt which He did not owe. Do you know Him as your Saviour? Turn from your sin and turn to the Saviour. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

If you have any questions or would like to speak to someone about salvation, contact:

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