

# What Does the Bible Teach About Capitalism? Or, Is God an American?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

## Introduction:

- A. Luke 12:13-34
- B. What is the best system of government and economics in the world?
  1. The answer will depend on who you ask and where they come from.
  2. Everyone believes that God is on the side of their nation in a war.
  3. Everyone believes that God approves their form of government.
  4. Everyone believes that God ordained their type of economic system.
  5. Many of my brethren believe that God is an American.
- C. Humans must have a form of exchange
  1. What did it take to get to services today? A house, a be an alarm, a clock, meals, clothing, car, highways, traffic laws, and all that goes into producing them.
  2. Since we cannot do those things for ourselves, we specialize in one thing and exchange with others who have specialized in other things.
- D. No pure economic system exists in the world. Pure economic systems are theories, not realities.
  1. At any given time in history in every country of the world a variety of systems are used simultaneously.
  2. Various systems are popular or unpopular with people. We often discuss the pros and cons of each system. For example, communism is a system that many Americans love to hate.
  3. What is disturbing is when Christians begin to think that their way is the only acceptable way, and that it is ordained and preferred by God.

## I. TYPES OF ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

- A. Market economy operates by voluntary exchange. It is not planned or controlled by a central authority.
  1. Anarchism is a complete rejection of any central authority, such as government. Individuals should have complete free choice with no government involvement. Concentration of decision power even in corporations is also rejected.
  2. Capitalism is private ownership of goods and production allowing personal profit. Ideally, government involvement is minimal and the free market determines direction based on supply and demand. Emphasis is placed on competition and profit.
- B. Planned economy has a central authority making a wide range of decisions pertaining to production and wages.
  1. Feudalism is ownership of all land held by a central authority (king) who grants rights to portions of the land based on a contract of loyalty and service. These people in turn subdivided their land to other individuals based on contracts of loyalty and service. Lowest are non-land owners who simply exchange service for protection.

2. Socialism is collective or government ownership and management of production and distribution. Emphasis is placed on cooperation and social service.
3. Communism is a form of socialism where property is held in common; there is no private ownership. Individuals are held to be equal and share an equal benefit from the common property.

## II. IS ONE ECONOMIC SYSTEM MORE MORAL THAN ANOTHER?

- A. "Any economic system must be based on a considerable degree of honesty and altruistic behavior in order to function." (Robert H. Nelson, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland)
- B. Anarchism fails because it denies the legitimacy of government to exist.
  1. Rom. 13:1-7 - Government is needed to address good and evil.
  2. There will always be products that some will be willing to purchase and others to sell that are neither good for the individual or for society as a whole: recreational drugs, pornography, prostitution, et al.
  3. Should you be able to hire an assassin, if you can find someone willing to kill a fellow human? Extortion?
  4. There is a whole host of sinful practices that would be readily engaged by the citizens unless government imposed a moral standard.
- C. Capitalism is limited morally because it tends to reward the greedy.
  1. Greed exists independent of any economic system.
  2. However, the right to private ownership is noted in the Bible - Acts 5:4
  3. Capitalism provides no incentive for aiding the poor.
    - a. People must be encouraged to help the poor - Eph. 4:28
    - b. Capitalism allows one to earn more than he needs, so that he will have the means to help the needy.
- D. Socialism's decision making body is prone to corruption.
  1. Ecc. 5:8 - Don't be surprised by corruption in government.
  2. Because men can be corrupt and because socialism concentrates decision making power in the hands of a few, the possibility of system being corrupted is quite high.
  3. Socialism has problems with creating envy.
    - a. Those who are more productive are told they must give to all, whether they agree or not.
    - b. Those who are less productive demand that they share what the productive earn. This is institutionalized envy.
  4. Scriptures teach diversification is better than centralization - Ecc. 11:6
- E. Communism rewards laziness.
  1. Since income is fixed regardless of effort, there is no motivation to provide additional effort.
  2. "But weren't the early Christians communistic?" It is a mistake to associate generosity with communism.
  3. In communism, there is no choice about sharing. Everything is held in common whether you want to or not.
    - a. Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37; 2Cor. 9:5-14

4. Communistic systems in history prove that people remain materialistic.

### **III. MORALITY IS NOT FOUND IN A PARTICULAR ECONOMIC SYSTEM**

- A. But no economic system can operate without morals and moral people.
  - 1. There cannot be an exchange of goods or services without a basic trust between the producer and consumer. Lying is bad for the economy.
  - 2. The problem with economic models is that they leave God out of the equation. Israel learned this the hard way - Haggai 1:6-11, 2:17-19
  - 3. Righteousness must precede prosperity - 2Cor. 9:10-11
- B. Why isn't morality considered? Because its effects and impact are not measurable scientifically or economically; but, its absence is evident in the failures of governments and economies.

### **IV. CHRISTIANS HAVE A UNIQUE VIEW OF ECONOMICS**

- A. We don't serve money - Luke 16:13
- B. Yet we use money to accomplish God's will - Luke 16:9
- C. God judges our faithfulness, in part, by our handling of money - Luke 16:10-11
- D. Christians see themselves as stewards of God, and that all they have belongs to God Who gave it.
- E. Whatever they have, they use to the best of their ability to do what is right.
  - 1. Luke 12:33-34; Matt. 6:19-21