

Text: Rev 19.1-8

Our question this time will take a few messages to answer. Here it is:

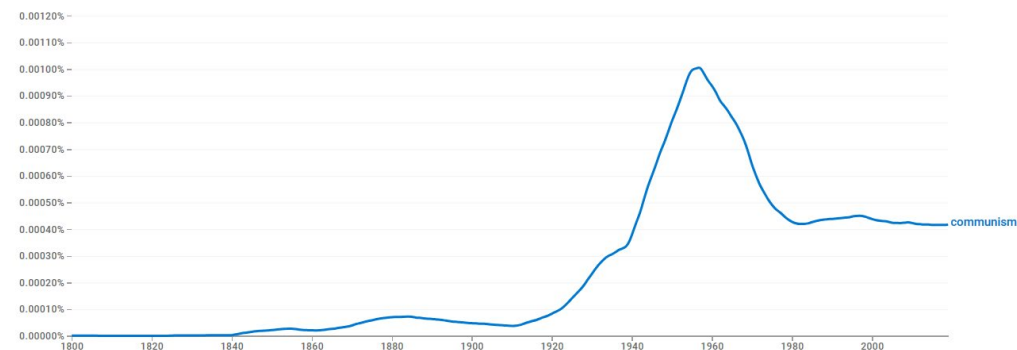
“What does the Bible say about communism?”

The short answer is, “nothing.”

Of course, when a short answer is that short, I have to give you a *much* longer answer.

When I say the Bible says nothing about communism, it is of course because communism is a relatively modern concept.

According to Google books, the term enters English literature in the early 1800s, but has hardly any mentions until the mid-1800s, but it isn't until the middle of the 20th century that it has any significant frequency, and has leveled off since the mid-1980s. That arc follows the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, which stands to reason.



There are two main ways of looking at the term:

1. A theory of social organization based on community ownership of all property
2. A political doctrine or movement / A system of government¹

As a theory, similar ideas were suggested as far back as Plato, but the term communism didn't come into discussion until the Industrial Revolution and the writings of Karl Marx.

¹ Summarized definitions from “Communism, n. Meanings, Etymology and More,” Oxford English Dictionary, accessed August 12, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/communism_n?tab=meaning_and_use.

During the Industrial Revolution, technological progress leaped forward, increasing the wealth of many, but very often at the expense of workers who labored in unsafe conditions and at very low pay.

Technology outstripped regulation; greed exploited conditions

Karl Marx observed this, saw those conditions as unjust and concluded that the only way to reform capitalism was to overthrow it. Consequently, he developed communism as a revolutionary theory.

“His theory has three main aspects: first, a materialist conception of history; second, a critique of capitalism and its inner workings; and third, an account of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its eventual replacement by communism.”²

Because of the revolutionary aspect of Marx’s communism, it was held in bad odor by Western democracies, though radicals in these countries would embrace it one way or another.

The term “socialism” is sometimes used synonymously with “communism,” but there are key differences.

“A theory or system of social organization based on state or collective ownership and regulation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange for the common benefit of all members of society; advocacy or practice of such a system, esp. as a political movement.”³

Communism is more political and revolutionary, while socialism embodies its core principles and economic theory.

One fellow put it this way in his diary:

I learn that the great distinction between communism and socialism is that the latter believes in payment according to work done, and the former does not.⁴

In other words, the two ideas are closely related, but not identical.

² “Communism - Marxist Theory, Class Struggle, Revolution,” Encyclopedia Britannica, August 9, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/communism>.

³ “Socialism, n. Meanings, Etymology and More,” Oxford English Dictionary, accessed August 12, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/socialism_n?tab=meaning_and_use.

⁴ W. E. Forster, *Diary* 11 May in T. W. Reid, *Life William Edward Forster* (1888) vol. I. vii. 237

Ultimately, the question is this: does the Bible teach principles in accord with socialism/communism, or does it teach principles that oppose them?

I'd like to give a comprehensive answer, but today I just want to introduce the things I plan to talk about.

Our text for today, when we get there, is Rev 19.1-8.

Proposition: The Bible opposes the foundational concepts of communism/socialism and submits to the divine concepts of God's Lordship.

I. Opposing philosophical foundations: materialism vs. supernaturalism

"His theory has three main aspects: first, a materialist conception of history; ..." ⁵

A. Materialism defined: "*Philosophy*. The theory or belief that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications..." ⁶

B. Biblical supernaturalism

Ac 17.24-25 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

Jn 4.24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

II. Opposing social organizations: collectivism vs. godly stewardship

"His theory has three main aspects: ... second, a critique of capitalism and its inner workings; ..." ⁷

This is all one with socialism, an economic philosophy of collective ownership of property (socialism as distinguished from communism allows *some* private ownership, with caveats).

⁵ "Communism - Marxist Theory, Class Struggle, Revolution."

⁶ "Materialism, n.," Oxford English Dictionary, accessed August 12, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/materialism_n?tab=meaning_and_use#37804075.

⁷ "Communism - Marxist Theory, Class Struggle, Revolution," Encyclopedia Britannica, August 9, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/communism>.

- A. Collectivism (and unfettered capitalism) ignores essential sinful human nature
1. The tendency toward sloth
 2. The tendency toward greed
- B. In the Biblical economy, men are God's stewards
1. God owns everything

Ps 50.12 "If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains."

2. Man serves God in managing the world God created

Gn 1.26 ¶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Gn 1.28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

III. Opposing violent revolution: communism vs. theocracy

"His theory has three main aspects ... third, an account of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its eventual replacement by communism."⁸

- A. Communism is simply an anti-God form of government

Jas 4.1-2 ¶ What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?² You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

⁸ "Communism - Marxist Theory, Class Struggle, Revolution," Encyclopedia Britannica, August 9, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/communism>.

B. God-centered believers long for God's government

Rev 19.1-8 ¶ After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; ² BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER." ³ And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER." ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" ⁵ And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." ⁶ Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns." ⁷ "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." ⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The Bible opposes the foundational concepts of communism/socialism and submits to the divine concepts of God's Lordship.