

INTRO: IMO, most modern communism is imposed upon people, either by force or by deceit. And if it is chosen, people soon find out that it work only if some strongman or party elite enforces things. Property and wealth belong to the government. (Socialism says you own it, but the government tells you what to do with it.) The Bible favors no form of government or economic, nevertheless...

I. GOD HAS ORDAINED AUTHORITY IN THE WORLD

A. Beginning with fatherhood; it all stems from this

1. in Genesis, both church and state in one man (2 kingdoms)
2. Exodus reinforces with 4th commandment, and institutes priesthood
3. so Jesus taught (Mt.22:21 WRT Caesar) and exemplified (Lk.2:51 Was subject to...; Jn.19:22 Pilate, no authority but from God)
4. Rom.13 teaches obedience to civil authority (us, constitution)
5. 1 Peter 2:18 says obey, even if authority is ungodly or unkind
6. Acts 5:29 exception if commanded to transgress Scripture

B. Authority in New Testament era has latitude

1. Old Testament = moral civil, ceremonial; last 2 fulfilled by Jesus
2. although rulers and church do well to study Bible times
3. worthwhile principles in Old Testament examples
4. Hear O Israel...these words...teach them diligently to...
- 5 e.g. Prov.13:24 he who spares his rod hates his son; but he who loves him disciplines him promptly
6. today's psychology and penology notwithstanding
7. purpose of civil authority in Rom.13 = reward good, punish evil
8. details of government and punishment are not dictated
9. you be judge of results of lax father and government authority

C. Post-Pentecost congregation operated within Roman authority

1. either emperor or Roman senate
2. granting latitude to local 'tetrarchs'
3. and even Sanhedrin and temple police
4. but no Social Security or welfare system, hence need in text for support, especially under persecution, job loss

(continued)

II. THIS TEXT IS DESCRIPTIVE, NOT PRESCRIPTIVE

A. These people were of one heart and one soul (v.32)

1. what created such unity!?
2. most were Jewish; some hellenists; cross-cultural
3. all had been baptized and taught by the apostles
4. taught (Acts 2:36) "You crucified God's Son" (Atonement!)
5. Acts 2:38f.) Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins...
you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost
6. penitent, forgiven sinners, loving their Redeemer
7. 2:42 who continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and
fellowship and breaking bread and prayers

B. None regarded his possessions as his own (v.32) ergo, God's

1. did not love money or possessions
2. loved God so much, money seemed unimportant
3. like romance novel of rich girl choosing love over wealthy man
4. besides, possessions are transitory (Ok. 12:20 rich foolish farmer)
5. **Lord** owns all; we are only stewards of what is His
6. they gave willingly, illustrating firstfruits principle
7. because of an attitude within their godly hearts
8. no coercion from government or church authority

C. God's grace rested upon them all (v.33b)

1. 'grace' as in heavenly benediction at end of divine service
2. in such a congregation, all heeded the apostles' teaching
3. note that witness/loyalty was to **Jesus**, not to the congregation
4. which is where the emphasis **must** remain; it's all about Jesus

CONCLUSION: OK, I confess; sermon title was only an attention getter. That congregation in Jerusalem was **not** practicing communism. It was practicing the love of Christ Jesus in their hearts and souls, and consequently, in their actions. And so it also ought to be, even today, in every area of a believer's life. Amen.