

Was Jesus a socialist?

1. economic and political system based on public or collective ownership of the means of production, rather than private ownership
2. belief that government not the individual, can best decide for a fair system of community, through wealth redistribution, worker control, and, often, state regulation
3. **Ownership:** Production, land, and capital are owned by the state, cooperatives, or the community as a whole.
4. **Goal:** To achieve greater equality in society by reducing the divide between the rich and poor.

Jesus taught us to give to the poor, and a greedy rich person would not enter heaven, therefore, He must have opposed capitalism or personal property ownership.

Luke 3:11 – If you have 2 shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with the hungry.

Matt 19:21 – if you want to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor. Vs 23 – it is very hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Other verses... NOT so much...

John 12: Then Mary took about a pint^[a] of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet. Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵“Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.^[b]” ⁶He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸You will always have the poor among you,^[c] but you will not always have me.”

Matt 25:14 - “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, ^[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey...vs 23 - “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things... vs 28 - ““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them

Matt 20 – workers in the vineyard – all paid by the discretion of the owner.(the owner decided, not the collective)

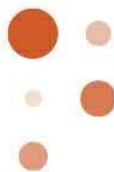
“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

Capitalism –

1. a person who invests in trade and industry for profit
2. private individuals own and control property and businesses.
3. Success and failure is determined by the wisdom, management and shrewdness of the individual.

Biblical ideas about stewardship –

1. Work hard and there will be reward
2. Take healthy risks (buy a field, sell all you have, etc) not reckless indiscretions.
3. Do NOT be unethical or greedy
4. The reason to acquire wealth is to be benevolent and generous.



WAS JESUS A SOCIALIST?

LAWRENCE REED

Was Jesus a socialist?

Well, if socialism is nothing more than being kind to other people, then you might think the answer is yes. But you can be kind to other people and be a capitalist. John D. Rockefeller probably gave away more money than anyone in human history, and he was certainly a capitalist. Bill Gates and Warren Buffet have given away millions, too.

To get an accurate answer to our question, we need to define socialism.

Socialism is the concentration of power into the hands of government elites to achieve the following purposes: central planning of the economy and the radical redistribution of wealth.

Jesus never called for any of that.

Nowhere in the New Testament does he advocate for the government to punish the rich—or even to use tax money to help the poor. Nor does he promote the ideas of state ownership of businesses or central planning of the economy.

In Luke 12, Jesus is confronted by a man who wants him to redistribute wealth. “Master,” the man says to Jesus, “tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replies, “Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?” and then he rebukes the man for being envious of his sibling.

How about Jesus’s Parable of the Talents (talents were a form of money in Jesus’s day)? A man entrusted three of his workers with his wealth. The two who invested the money and made a profit were praised and the one who buried his share so he wouldn’t lose any of it was reprimanded. Sounds a lot more like an endorsement for capitalism than socialism, doesn’t it?

Yes, Jesus spoke of the difficulty for a rich man to enter Heaven, but not because having money is evil. It’s not money; rather, it is the *love* of money, the New Testament tells us, that leads to evil. Jesus was warning us not to put acquisition of money and material possessions above our spiritual and moral lives.

Was Jesus promoting a socialist model when he kicked the “moneychangers” out of the Temple in Jerusalem? Again, the answer is no. Note the location where the incident occurred: it was in the holiest of places—God’s house. Jesus was not angry at buying and selling in and of themselves; he was angry that these things happened in a house of prayer. He never drove

a “moneychanger” from a marketplace or from a bank.

Jesus advises us to be of “generous spirit”—to show kindness, to assist the widow and the orphan. But he clearly means this to be *our* responsibility, not the government’s.

Consider Jesus’s Good Samaritan story. A traveler comes upon a man at the side of a road. The man had been beaten and robbed and left half-dead. What did the traveler, the Good Samaritan, do? He helps the unfortunate man on the spot, with his own resources.

Ask yourself: To help the poor, would Jesus prefer that you give your money freely to the Salvation Army, for example, or have it taxed by politicians to fund a welfare bureaucracy?

Progressives like to point out that Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” But that has absolutely nothing to do with high taxes or wealth redistribution. It was the seed for the idea of separating church and state. It certainly wasn’t the same as saying that whatever Caesar says is his must then be so, no matter how much he demands or what he intends to use it for.

So, there is no evidence that Jesus was a socialist. And there is lots of evidence that he supported free markets.

In addition to the Parable of the Talents, Jesus offers his Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. In it, a landowner hires some laborers to pick grapes. Near the end of the day, he realizes he needs more workers to get the job done.

To recruit them, he agrees to pay a full day’s wage for just one hour of work. When one of the laborers who had worked an entire day complains, the landowner answers, “I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money?” That’s a testament to the principles of supply and demand, of private property, and of voluntary contracts, not socialism.

Jesus never endorsed the forced redistribution of wealth. That idea is rooted in envy, something that he, and the Tenth of the Ten Commandments, railed against.

Most importantly, Jesus cared about helping the less fortunate. He never would have approved anything that undermines wealth creation. And the only thing that has ever created wealth and lifted masses of people out of poverty is free market capitalism.

Read the New Testament. The plain meaning of the text is loud and clear: Jesus was not a socialist.

He couldn’t be. He loved people, not the state.

I’m Lawrence Reed, president of the Foundation for Economic Education, for Prager University.