

Acts Chapter 4 Con't

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Date: 12 December 2011

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[0 : 00] This is our July 12 class, and we are in Acts chapter 4, discussing the early believers and their communism.

And that is precisely what it is, although as they were practicing it, it had absolutely little or nothing to do with what we think of today as communism that is instilled by the government, such as is in Cuba or was in the Soviet Union or anyplace else.

But communism simply means everybody having everything in common. They put everything into one common pot. And sometimes they lived in a commune, which simply means everybody living together, sharing the same thing, sharing the same kind of responsibilities, sharing the same benefits and all the rest of it.

Communism is something that works very well and is very efficient on paper and in theory.

But when you go to implement it and bring into the mix the human nature that we are all made of, it just won't fly.

[1 : 12] Someone said that dog won't hunt. It just doesn't work because the main thing that communism does not take into consideration, and by the way, socialism is the same way, a lot of difference, not a lot of difference between socialism and communism.

In my estimation, the greatest distinction between socialism and communism is that socialism enacts its will through legislation and passing laws.

Communism enacts its will through the barrel of a gun. That's essentially the only difference.

Communism is nothing more than a more extreme form of socialism.

And when you take into consideration the basic nature of man and how he is constructed, socialism, communism is absolutely positively doomed to fail.

It cannot possibly succeed. Because you see, one of the premises of communism is, in fact, one of the very first most basic premises of communism, it's point number one in the Humanist Manifesto is, there is no God, period.

[2 : 34] There is no deity. There is no higher power. It is the people. Man is the ultimate. That's all there is. And man is perfectible.

That is, man can in and of himself, through proper education, through proper employment, through proper indoctrination, man can bring in utopia.

Man can create heaven here on earth. That's the basic premise of communism. And it looks to man and his ability and his potential to be able to do that.

But capitalism, which we find scattered throughout the scriptures, Old and New Testament, takes into consideration the basic nature of humanity, and it says that man inwardly is corrupt in his nature.

And by the way, we are being killed today by corruption in our governments. Mexico, the United States, all of these countries, corruption is just rampant.

[3 : 46] And that's the thing that is doing us in. Because the nature of humanity is he is a flawed human being. We tend to be self-centered, self-serving, and self-seeking.

That's the way we are. So, you've got to have some kind of a system where constraints are placed upon man so that he cannot run away with himself.

And our founding fathers, who brought forth not only the Declaration of Independence, but the Constitution, were men who were fully familiar with the fallenness of human nature.

They knew man was not to be trusted. And you'd be surprised how many people here in the United States living under the benefit and protection of the Constitution do not understand they simply do not understand and they are not taught this in school that the Constitution was drafted not for the sake of government, but for the sake of the governed.

It is we the people. That's the basis for the Constitution. And the founding fathers drafted that document to protect the people from the government.

[5 : 03] Boy, have we ever lost sight of that. And do you know why it was originally set up that way? It was because of the government under which we had been struggling.

It was Great Britain and the king. And all our founding fathers were trying to do was to make sure that we did not establish a government in the United States that would in effect be nothing but a replacement of the same kind from which we came.

They wanted to take safeguards against that. So, we are going to build into this Constitution certain things that will protect the people from an intrusive government.

And they made that quite clear. Adams and Jefferson and all of them. Because they knew the nature of man. They knew how he tends to manipulate things. And that became the whole basis became the whole basis for the establishment of our legislature and the judicial and the executive. Those three branches were all designed for the specific purpose of not allowing any one segment of the government to develop too much power.

[6 : 26] You've got to have a check and balance. You've got to have a way to rein in government. Otherwise, it will run amok and it will subjugate the people in the same way that the government of Great Britain did under the king in the colonies here in the 1700s.

But that is so frequently lost sight of. Most Americans today don't have a clue to what I just told you. And it ought to be common knowledge. It ought to be common knowledge. But it isn't taught unfortunately in many of our schools.

So here in Acts chapter 4 they are pooling all of their resources and they are doing this I think and we took you there. We won't go there again but we took you to Matthew 19 where Jesus was dealing with the rich young ruler and they were talking about kingdom conditions and he told this young man who was concerned about having a place in the kingdom and Jesus said you've kept all these things since your youth up okay then liquidate all of your assets sell everything you've got give your money to the poor and come and follow me and he went away sorrowful because he had many possessions.

And all we have here in Acts chapter 4 is these people very honestly earnestly sincerely starting to meet those kingdom conditions because they understood that the kingdom of heaven coming to earth that John the Baptist preached and that Jesus preached was still a possibility was still on God's blueprint even though we crucify the Messiah Peter made it clear that if Israel as a nation will repent God will send him back then at that time and this program would get underway so all they are doing is beginning to meet those conditions of the kingdom and I'm sure that their heart was in it and this possibility of this kingdom being established was very real to them and it isn't until later in the book of Acts that it becomes very clear that this whole kingdom concept that will one day be realized is being set aside because of the perpetual continued unbelief of Israel and God is raising up a whole new entity called the body of Christ this is all new and that won't be coming out until later in the book of Acts so here we are still dealing with the nation of Israel and fellas

I need to emphasize how terribly terribly important this is I've said it before let me say it again you understand this is all Jewish every bit of this is Jewish there are no non-Jews that even come into the picture until you get to Cornelius in Acts chapter 10 and that is a real watershed portion of scripture it's very very important and let's go for just a moment to Psalm 147 I want to just show you a passage here that really kind of spells this out Psalm 147 and it is a description of God and his goodness to Israel and I can't take the time to read the whole psalm let's just jump in with verse 18 if we may Psalm 147 and verse 18 the psalmist is speaking of the

[10 : 11] Lord God of Israel and in verse 18 he says he sends forth his word and melts them he causes his wind to blow and the waters to flow he declares his words to Jacob to Jacob now when the psalmist wrote this which was about a thousand years before Christ was born when David the psalmist wrote this where was Jacob Jacob was dead long since dead remember Abraham Isaac and Jacob way back Jacob had been dead for what 1600 years 1700 years so what does he mean when he says he declares his words to Jacob he's not talking about Jacob the man he's talking about Jacob the nation well who is Jacob the nation it's

Jacob's twelve sons beginning with Reuben and Simeon and Levi and all of those fellows he's talking about the whole house of Israel in fact we know that Jacob's name was changed to Israel remember that so here in verse 19 he says he declares his words to Jacob all that means is is that God spoke his message to Israel the nation his statutes and his ordinances to Israel Israel is

nothing but another name for Jacob and look at verse 20 he has not dealt thus with any nation and as for his ordinances they have not known them this is an exclusivity that David is claiming here and he's saying that God has done specific things to the nation of Israel that he has not done for any other nation and if you're interested in just pursuing this a little bit look at Amos back in the minor prophets Hosea Joel and Amos in chapter 3 of Amos the prophet says hear this word which the Lord has spoken against you sons of Israel against the entire family which he brought up from the land of Egypt and look at verse 2 you only have I chosen among all the families of the earth what does that mean it means exactly what it says it means that God has not related himself to any other nation like he has related himself and connected himself to Israel you only have I chosen among all the families of the earth therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities in other words he is simply saying listen you occupy a special covenant position with me and that's why I am going to take you to the woodshed that's why I am going to discipline you that's why I am going to punish you and chastise you because you have got inside information with me that none of the other nations have and this is a really important concept

John absolutely absolutely the principle that Christ reiterated in the gospels is unto whom much is given of him shall much be required you only of all the nations of the earth have I known and then in Romans you're right absolutely absolutely for what son is he whom the Lord chasteneth not and if you do not endure chastening or discipline for of all our partakers then are you bastards and not sons this is the writer of Hebrews and he said in the same way that in the same way that you do not discipline the kids next door because they're not your responsibility they're not your kids but you discipline your kids because they are yours and you love them and you have an investment in them that you don't have in the kids next door and that's exactly what God is saying and here in Romans chapter 9

Romans chapter 9 Paul says I am telling the truth in Christ I am not lying my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart for I could wish that I myself were accursed separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh he's talking about his fellow Jews who are Israelites and look at this list Israelites to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the temple services and the promises whose are the fathers and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh what other nation could make those claims what other nation had this kind of information none of them this is exclusively

[16:09] Israel and that has to be kept in mind and then when you come over to chapter 10 chapter 10 brethren my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation for I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge for not knowing about God's righteousness seeking to establish their own they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God and here they have this inside track and they of all people should have known better but you know what their problem was they have an old sin nature just like all the rest of us and in every human heart there is that propensity for rebellion and self centeredness and it was no different for the Jew in chapter 11 God has not rejected his people has he may it never be

I too am an Israelite a descendant of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin you can see just how utterly Jewish this is and while we're dealing with the epistles we might as well come over to that really very clear passage that spells it out in Ephesians chapter 2 it is a remarkable passage Ephesians chapter 2 and let's just jump in with verse 11 Paul in writing to the Ephesians is reminding these non-Jews remember Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles a Gentile is not a Jew and he is writing to this church that he had visited earlier and established now he's writing this letter back to them and he's reminding them of some things and in verse 11 he says therefore remember that formerly you the Gentiles in the flesh who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision now whenever you see uncircumcision that simply is another term for Gentile and when you see circumcision that's another name for Jew because this was characteristic of them circumcision which is performed in the flesh by human hands and look at verse 12 remember that you you uncircumcised you Gentiles you were at that time separate from Christ excluded from the commonwealth of Israel strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world that's really serious stuff this is saying you people didn't have prayer you were completely isolated because God had vested everything regarding his knowledge information about him and everything revealed it to Israel and where were the Gentiles just out in the dark dumb worshipping idols statues many gods all the rest of it you

people were so out of it you didn't even know how out of it you were yeah that's true absolutely one of the reasons that he raised up

Israel and this is made clear Old Testament and new was that they would be a light to the Gentiles but they weren't interested in being a light to the Gentiles remember Jonah he wasn't interested in going to Nineveh and when God spared the city Jonah was put out with him went and sat under a tree and pouted because God had been kind to the Gentiles this is a kind of a national jealousy type thing you know and it's it's well having no hope and without God in the world but now verse 13 in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off just because you were Gentiles and out of it you have been brought near by the blood of Christ wow what a contrast incredible contrast and fellas when you just keep this Jewishness in mind not only throughout the Old

Testament which is pretty obvious but where so many Christians make what I am convinced is a huge mistake that's really hard to recover from is that they insist on Matthew 1:1 ok here's the beginning of Christianity no it isn't it isn't even close and we tend to think that just because it's called the New Testament it's Christianity no it isn't it is Jewish Jewish Jewish all the way through Jesus Christ came of the seed of David to fulfill the promises that God gave to the fathers he is a minister to the circumcision to fulfill the promises God gave to the fathers who are the fathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob and God made those promises through them and he Christ came and when Christ came and his life story on earth is played out in Matthew Mark Luke and John all of his ministry was under the

[21 : 57] Mosaic law he kept the Sabbath he observed the kosher food all the rest of it he did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill the law so what you need to do is maintain the Jewish continuity between the Old Testament and the New and what causes a lot of people to lose that continuity is the fact that from the time the Old Testament closes until the time the New Testament opens 400 years called the intertestamental period and during those 400 years there was no revelation coming forth from God it's also called the silent 400 years because God wasn't speaking now there was a lot that was taking place in Israel and it was the time of the Maccabees and the time of the

Greeks and the Ptolemies and so on and the empire of Alexander the Great had crumbled upon his death and was divided up into four of his generals and these were the dynamics that were taking place during those 400 silent years but what we've got to do is see the Jewish continuity between the close of the Old Testament and the opening of what we call the New Testament and maintain that continuity don't allow a break to take place there where you start thinking well the Old Testament that's all Jewish the New Testament beginning with Matthew 1:1 that's all Christian no it no it isn't the Jewishness continues right on up into the book of Acts and those who were there on the day of Pentecost all Jews and they were Jews from all over the Mediterranean world but they were all Jews that's why they were there it was a

Jewish feast and they were gathered there for the feast of Pentecost and the Jewishness continues on until you get to the passage earlier Acts chapter 10 that was Cornelius was a Gentile Roman army officer and when Peter was called to go to the home of Cornelius a Gentile he didn't even want to go and the reason he didn't was because he's not a Jew he's not Jewish why should I go there God's only interested in the Jew right and that was his big mistake and of course we know God used Peter to make an incredible breakthrough and then when he explained what he had done to other Jews who questioned his going to Cornelius they're scratching their head and saying well then God has also granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles what that can't be can it is God really interested in Gentiles well you should have known that all along you were supposed to be a light to the Gentiles but you weren't interested so now God has taken a disobedient nation the nation of Israel and he's taken them off of center stage and set them aside and he's bringing in a whole new thing and it's called the church which is the body of Christ this fellas this is a concept that is never mentioned in the Old Testament you search from Genesis to Malachi and you will not find the church which is the body of Christ in the Old Testament that's because we are not a subject of prophecy we are mystery mystery means not hitherto revealed and not able to be known unless it is revealed and if you want to know what that mystery is read Ephesians chapter 3 and Paul says that this was a mystery which in times past was not made known to the sons of men didn't know it never imagined it never thought of it but

God is doing a whole new thing and when you understand this and see the intense Jewishness of these portions that are typically considered to be Christian it makes the Bible just open up and

blossom like a rose and it makes so much sense questions or comments anybody is this thoroughly confusing or are we clear if you got questions or even if you have objections feel free to raise them that doesn't bother me in the least because if anybody can dispute or disprove what I say I want you to do so I feel you owe it to me because we are here looking for truth we're not here just to give somebody's opinion okay well we'll pursue this a little bit further then until the food comes here in [27 : 21] Acts chapter 4 they are taking all of their possessions and they are laying them down at the apostles feet verse 35 and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need and Joseph who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas in other words like a lot of people in the Bible they had two different names that they went by one was Joseph and the other was Barnabas which is being interpreted the son of consolation he was a Levite and of the country of Cyprus having land sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet now as far as we can determine this Barnabas is going to be the same one who will team up with the apostle Paul he will be the only one who would even give Saul of Tarsus the time of day because everybody else was scared the death of

Saul of Tarsus except Barnabas and he believed that his conversion was real and he comforted and consoled Paul or the one who was to become Paul and let me just make this notation if I may it says being interpreted the son of consolation that simply means that Barnabas Barnabas was the kind of a guy who had the gift of encouraging people uplifting people strengthening people causing people to see a ray of daylight when everything looked dark and hopeless that's the son of consolation that means that if you had a Barnabas for a friend you are blessed Barnabas as I said was the only one who would put his arm around Saul of Tarsus and say welcome to the fold brother and he got him on board and encouraged him in the things of the Lord and this expression the son of consolation is used numerous ways in the

New Testament remember James and John sons of Zebedee they are called sons of thunder because their attitudes and lifestyle and demeanor kind of like thunder striking you know they wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans wanted to just zap from God right here sons of thunder and Judas is referred to as a son of perdition that means he's just like perdition condemnation which was his end and when you say the one is the son of you mean he is just like that which begot him and we could even put that appellation on the person of Jesus Christ as the son of God he's just like the one who sent him so we'll continue on through with Acts chapter four just one other thing I want to leave with you Barnabas who was a Levite had land and sold it and I don't know if you recall this or not but Barnabas didn't have any business owning land in the first place so maybe he sold it partly out of guilt and partly out of contributing to the kingdom effort because in the Old Testament when the children of Israel came into the land of Israel it was all divided up and apportioned off to the tribes remember all of these borders tribe of Manasseh was given this plot of land the tribe of Issachar was given this land and the tribe of Manasseh was given this land but the text specifically says but unto the Levites no land was given the tribe of Levi did not get any real estate and the Lord said I am their inheritance all the others will inherit land but Israel the tribe of Levi will not be given land because I the Lord am their inheritance so they weren't supposed to have land anyway that means of course they didn't have any ability to produce crops or plant vineyards or anything like that through their gifts and through their tithes and offerings because they didn't have the wherewithal to raise crops or do anything like that themselves so thank you for being here this morning and enjoy your breakfast