

Our Financial Obligations

Matthew 22:15-22

Intro:

1. Each of us have certain financial obligations: paying for the Christmas gifts you used your credit card to buy; income taxes; automobile registration; insurance premiums; etc.
2. Just like us, these people were required to pay taxes.
3. But unlike us, they paid outrageous taxes to a foreign government whose army occupied their country!
4. The question is just as valid for us to ask as it was for them: "Is it God's desire for us to pay taxes"? - **v17**

I. v17 - The Significance of the Question

A. **v15-16** - The people who asked it were significant.

1. The Pharisees were the religious legalists; the conservative right & quietly anti Roman.
2. The Herodians were somewhat religiously indifferent; the liberal left & very pro Roman.

B. **v16** - The buttering up process they used was significant.

1. **Teacher** - They really didn't recognize His authority to teach!
2. **We know you are a man of integrity** - They considered Him a false teacher!
3. **You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.**
 - a. In other words, "Their opinions don't sway your teachings."
 - b. The implication: "Certainly you can tell us what you really feel about this question!"

C. **v17** - The question itself is significant.

1. **Is it right to pay taxes . . . ?** = (κῆνσοϋ), where we get our word "census". This was the poll tax paid whenever a census was taken.
2. If the Lord would have said simply, "No":
 - a. This would have been un-refuted testimony that He supported rebellion & sided with the Zealot party which was a capitol offense.
 - b. They had on their side:
 1. The jealousy of Rome.
 2. The tyranny of Pilate. **ILL: Judas of Galilee (Act 5:37)**
 3. The cowardice of Herod Antipas.
 - c. In **Lk 23:2** they actually did accuse the Lord before Pilate of a teaching not to pay taxes to Caesar!
3. If the Lord would have said simply, "Yes":
 - a. His listeners would have been shocked.
 - b. He would have lost His credibility in His claim to be the Messiah/King of Israel!

II. v21 - Answer: Return to the Government What Belongs to the Government

A. The background philosophies behind the question contradicted each other.

1. The right to coin money implies the authority to tax it! The Maccabees felt so strongly about this that they immediately began coining money as soon as they came to power.
2. The Zealot Party claimed that to pay tribute to any authority other than God alone showed loyalty to that authority more than to God.

B. Lord Jesus provided a basic universal spiritual principle here - church & state fall into completely different spheres of authority!

1. Loyalty to one in no way takes away your allegiance to the other!
2. **Romans 13** says that all secular government is ordained of God.

C. Therefore: support your secular government financially & obey its laws except where those laws might conflict with God's will!

1. Government provides services you should pay taxes for:

- a. Coinage.
- b. Protection: military & police.
- c. Trade negotiations.
- d. Regulations to have an orderly society.

2. The Lord commanded obedience to secular laws! ILL: Carrying a Soldier's Burden for One Mile (Matt 5:41)

III. v21 - Answer: Return to God What Belongs to God

A. What belongs to God?

1. You! Everything you see & experience!
2. You were created by God & you were redeemed by God! (Ps 139:13-16)
3. ILL: The Boy Who Lost His Little Boat - "You're Mine Twice!"

B. So - What did the Lord mean here?

1. The Tithe!

- a. Lev 27:30 - A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.
- b. The tithe belongs to the Lord. It is His demand from what belongs to Him!
- c. You give offerings - you pay tithes!

2. Things you need to be aware of.

- a. Half of the Lord's teachings in the New Testament are about stewardship of material possessions.
- b. In the Gospels, 1 verse in 7 are about stewardship of material possessions.
- c. Sixteen of the parables Jesus taught are about stewardship of material possessions.

C. So - the Tithe, like taxes, is your obligation to your Creator! The freewill offering, like gifts to loved ones, are expressions of your love to your Redeemer!

Give cheerfully of whatever your government & your God ask of you!
THEN: give sacrificially beyond that as an expression of your love!

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