

“Is It Lawful To Give Tribute Unto Caesar Or Not?”

No. 178

Introduction.

I. During Christ’s ministry His enemies were afraid to harm Him because of His popularity with the multitudes. Instead of laying hands on Him they decided to attack Him with tricky questions. They hoped through these questions to embarrass and to destroy Christ.

II. Matthew records one such attack in the 22nd chapter of his gospel. (Matt. 22:15-22).

15 Then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap Him in what He said.

16 And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.

17 "Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? 19 "Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." 22 And hearing this, they marveled, and leaving Him, they went away.

III. Matthew informs us the disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians teamed together to ask Christ the question, “Is it lawful to give tribute (a poll-tax) to Caesar, or not?”

I. **Pharisees And Herodians** - It is strange the disciples of the Pharisees and Herodians would unite to ask Christ this particular question.

A. The **Pharisees** were, a Jewish sect, noted for their self-righteousness and strict adherence to the traditions of the elders. They taught it was wrong to pay tribute to the Roman government and utterly despised tax-collectors. Their disciples had the same views.

B. The **Herodians** were a Jewish party that favored the Herods and Roman rulership. They insisted it was lawful to pay tribute to a foreign power.

1. So they only thing these men had in common was their bitter hatred for Jesus.

2. The saying, “War makes strange bed-fellows” is certainly true in this case. Evil often unites to fight good.

II. **Dilemma** - These men thought their question presented Christ with an unsolvable dilemma.

A. If Jesus said it was lawful to pay taxes unto Caesar this would make Him very unpopular among the Jews who thought it was wrong. If He said it was not lawful to pay taxes unto Caesar the Herodians

were ready to prosecute Him for treason as an enemy of Caesar.

B. They did not care how Christ answered the question. They thought they had Him either way.

III. **Christ's Answer** - Jesus was not, however, deceived by their trickery. (Matt. 22:19-22).

A. In Christ's reply to these men He laid down an important rule of life. He taught citizenship in His kingdom does not relieve one of responsibility to the earthly kingdoms. As citizens of this world the Christian has a number of responsibilities toward the government.

1. In the first place, he has the obligation to **obey the laws of the land**.

a. Paul wrote.

ROM 13:1 Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.5 Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

b. Peter wrote.

1PE 2:13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

c. These passages set forth that the government has been ordained by God. Christians have the the responsibility to obey the laws of the land. This we do for the Lord's sake that we might silence foolish men. We must obey them unless they conflict with God's law. (Acts 5:27-29).

2. In the second place, the Christian have the responsibility to **cooperate with the authorities**. (Tit. 3:1-2a).
 - a. We are not to be bitter and antagonistic. We are not be a thorn in the flesh.
 - b. Christians ought to be a blessing to their leaders and to their country.
 - c. Christians should respect the laws of the land and contribute to the welfare of their country through good works and fervent prayers.
 3. In the third place, the Christian has the responsibility to **pay taxes**.
 - a. Jesus emphasized this fact when he said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.”
 - b. He also stressed this fact by **His own personal example of paying taxes**. (Matt. 17:24-27).
 - c. Paul emphasized this. (Rom. 13:6-7a).
 4. In the fourth place, the Christian has the responsibility to give **honor**. (Rom. 13:7; 1 Pet. 2:17d).
 - a. Paul teaches here that Christians should honor those in positions of authority.
 - b. We should not speak evil of our rulers, but should obey them.
 - c. It is noteworthy that neither Paul nor Peter nor John or any of the other New Testament writers ever spoke unkind words about Nero though he was a very wicked emperor.
 5. In the fifth place, the Christian has the responsibility to **pray for the leaders of the government**. (1 Tim. 2:1-2).
 - a. Paul teaches we are to pray for those in high places because prayers have the power to change the course of the world.
 - b. **Benjamin Franklin**, the noted statesman, was convinced of this fact. A number of years ago in the Constitutional Convention of this country he rose and said, “I have lived, sir, a long time and the longer I live the more convincing proof I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall without his notice, is it possible that an empire can rise without his aid?” Franklin went on to say, “I therefore move that we have a prayer in this assembly every morning.”
 - c. This great statesman recognized the value of prayer in the shaping of the affairs of the world. Let us not forget to pray for the leaders of our land. Prayer is not a waste. Prayer moves the Hand that controls the universe!
- B. In Christ’s reply to the disciples of the Pharisees and Herodians He also laid down another important rule of life. He taught we are to render unto God the things that are God’s. At this time let’s consider some of the things we owe God.
1. We owe God our **time**. (Col. 4:5).

- a. The word “redeeming” here means to “rescue” or “recover” our time from waste.
- b. As Christians we are not to waste the precious time God has entrusted to us. We are to use it wisely in His service. Part of our time should be used earning a living. Christians must not be lazy depending on others to sustain them. Part of our time should be used for relaxation and recreation. All work and no play is not good for a person. A generous portion of our time should be used studying and meditating upon God’s word. We should use part of our time worshiping God and working in His service.
- c. R.E. Neighbour has written these words on using time wisely for God.

<p>The days are passing swiftly by, Let us redeem them, Lord, for thee; Not waste a moment as they fly, Nay, e’en the seconds may we buy, Until Thy face we see.</p> <p>May we spend well each hour, each day, In turning loss to perfect gain; May this be ours; to point the way, And bring to others Heaven’s ray, Some sunshine ‘mid their rain.</p>	<p>May we like sunbeams from the blue, Seek out each heaving, aching breast; May we like sun-bursts, e’er break through The clouds, to give to hearts, anew, The promise of sweet rest.</p>
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2. We owe God **our money**. (Psa. 24:1; 1 Cor. 16:2).

- a. Christians must give a generous portion of their income to God.
- b. God is not pleased with our scraps. Those who fail to give generously are robbing God of His due.

3. We owe God our **talents**.

- a. We should not waste or abuse them. We should use our talents for the advancement of the kingdom. If we use our talents for God, we will be rewarded. If we fail to use our talents for God we will be condemned. (Matt. 25:14-30).
- b. Let this parable serve as a warning to us.

4. The Christian also owes God the **devotion of his heart**.

- a. He is to love God with his whole heart.
- b. He is to love God above all else in the world. (Matt. 22:37).
- c. Loving God with all our heart means we keep His commandments and we put Him first. (1 Jn. 5:3; Matt. 6:33).

Conclusion.

- I. Yes, we, as Christians, owe God our time, our money, our talents, and our hearts.
- II. The non-Christian also owes God all these things. Unless he surrenders all these to God he will be lost.
- III. If you have not yielded your life to God, you need to do so now. Will you come forward and submit your life to Him as we stand and sing?

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