

Theme: The Pharisees and Herodians try to trap Jesus in a false dilemma about paying taxes, but in His brilliant answer Jesus provides the basis for a Christian view of government and citizenship.

I. Intro - One Day, Five Key Conflicts

- A. There are five key conflicts in Jerusalem in Mark
- B. All involve delegates from the Sanhedrin
- C. These all happen on one day in the Temple
- D. Interestingly the same is recorded in Matthew and Luke

Story	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Jesus' authority/Parable of the Wicked Tenants	21:23-27; 33-46	11:27-33; 12:1-12	20:1-19
Paying Taxes To Caesar	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26
Marriage at the resurrection	22:23-33	12:18-27	20:27-40
The greatest commandment	22:34-40	12:28-34	(10:25-37)
Whose Son is the Christ	22:41-46	12:35-40	20:41-44

- E. Today - conflict 2 - paying taxes to Caesar

II. Trying To Trap Jesus

- A. Pharisees and Herodians work together against Jesus

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. Mark 12:13

1. The same groups did this in Galilee (Mark 3:1-6)
2. These would normally not work together, but both oppose Jesus so they join together.
 - a. Herodians compromise to support Herod & Rome
 - b. Pharisees are strict legalists who don't like Herod

- c. But both hate Jesus so they work together!

B. A two-part trap

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to **catch him** in his words. ¹⁴ They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their **hypocrisy**. "Why are you trying to **trap me**?" he asked. Mark 12:13-15

1. The question is not sincere - "catch", hypocrisy, trap
 - a. The word 'catch' is used for an animal trap
 - b. Jesus sees hypocrisy - this is not a sincere question
 - c. 'Trap' - normally tempt or test; also used for 'trap'
 - d. Their intent is not to discuss and learn - it is to catch Jesus in a verbal trap.
2. Part 1 of the trap - the bait
 - a. The bait is buttering Jesus up - you are a man of integrity...
 - b. This is an attempt to get Jesus to think they respect Him
 - c. This is an attempt to force Him to boldly speak an unpopular truth - one way or the other.
 - d. But Jesus sees through their hypocrisy!
3. Part 2 of the trap - the hook
 - a. The bait is buttering Jesus up - you are a man of integrity...
 - b. Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? Yes or no!

C. Understanding the trap of this question

1. The Roma tribute/census tax
 - a. First imposed in Judea in 6AD by Quirinius
 - b. Extremely unpopular - Judas the Galilean revolted and refused to pay (Josephus Antiquities 18.1.1)
 - c. He said it was a prelude to full slavery and an affront to the sovereignty of God.
 - d. Judas' revolt was crushed and he was killed (Acts 5:37), but the Zealots still refused to pay the tax.
 - e. The revolt and the Zealots were based in Galilee - Jesus' home area!
 - f. If Jesus said it was ok Zealots and other Galileans would turn against him.
 - g. If He said don't pay it, the Romans would consider Him an insurrectionist and arrest Him.
2. The other huge problem - the idolatrous coin
 - a. The only coin accepted to pay - the Roman denarius
 - b. Picture of the front and back of the coin
 - c. "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus" - a blasphemous claim to Deity!
 - d. Back had a woman - "Pontifex Maximus" - High Priest - another blasphemy of pagan religion.
 - e. To carry these coins was claimed to be supporting idolatry by some
 1. They spoke of pagan religion - have no other gods
 2. They had an image - make no image
3. How can Jesus answer? No matter which side He takes He will alienate half the people and possibly bring Roman authority down on His head.

III. Jesus' Brilliant Answer

- A. Jesus turns the tables on them!

"Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Mark 12:15-16

 1. Jesus does not even have one of the hated coins!
 2. But when He asks for one - they have one!
 3. They brought the 'idolatrous' coin into the Temple!
 4. This displays their hypocrisy for all to see - they claim the coins are idolatrous, but they have them!
- B. Give to Caesar what he gave to you

They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him. Mark 12:16-17

 1. Jesus' brilliant question - whose image and writing?
 2. The coin, the image, and the writing are Caesar's - he made, them, owned them, and distributed them.
 3. So, give back to Caesar what came from Caesar!
- C. Give to God what He gave to you - Yourself!

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 1. The coin was Caesar's image so it belonged to him

2. Human beings are the image of God - they belong to Him!
3. I owe myself - my body, soul, mind, everything I am - to God for I am His image.
4. This is what the people trying to trap Jesus were refusing to give to God - themselves!

IV. Applying the Word

A. Learning from Jesus' methodology

1. Jesus refused to answer a false dichotomy
2. They demanded an either/or, yes or no response
3. Jesus simply refused to play this game or answer this way because such an answer would be based on a false way of viewing reality.
4. Both those who refused to pay the tax and those who willingly paid the tax were viewing the issue and life through a political lens - and Jesus rejected this view.
5. To even answer this question as asked is to give in to political idolatry!
6. We are in the same situation today - everything is reduced to political soundbites and we are ordered to choose a side.
7. Christians must follow Jesus and keep getting to the root issues involved.
8. Those on either side who are unwilling to dig down to deeper issues are warped and self-condemned. We should pray for them but refuse to take their bait for it is a trap.

B. Learning from Jesus' answer - the two kingdoms

1. Jesus' answer became the seedbed for a Christian doctrine of government and a Christian's responsibilities as a citizen.
2. This is a HUGE topic so it would take a whole series to cover it, but I will give some comments.
3. See the discussion guide for teachings and series.
4. After Hours - how to respond to civil authorities
5. A few key points for us to learn from this Scripture
 - a. We must avoid the false dichotomy of total embrace or total rejection of involvement with the government
 1. Some Christians have capitulated to politics and government, letting current culture and politics dominate the church. Those who do this lose their ability to speak prophetically to the sins of the government and culture.
 2. Some Christians have historically rejected any involvement with the government as dirty, sinful, and unlawful for Christians - this is a false idea. Those who do this lose the ability to influence the government and culture with biblical principles and godly virtues.
 3. We are called to interact with and even serve in government, but never forget that our ultimate loyalty is to God's kingdom, not our country or government.
 - b. We must avoid the false uniting of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man.
 1. In the Old Covenant, the kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Israel were united as one entity.
 2. In the New Covenant, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man are distinct BY THE DESIGN AND WILL OF GOD.
 3. The goal of Christian citizenship and political involvement in the New Covenant is NOT to unite church and state - these are distinct by God's design and will.

- c. We must avoid false dichotomies of theocracy and a public square devoid of any hint of Christianity.
 - 1. The idea that it must either be a total unity of Church and state or “leave your faith out of politics” is a false dichotomy.
 - 2. The goal is NOT merging Church and State but a Christian MUST be governed by their faith in every area of life - including political involvement.
 - 3. Every citizen in a democracy works to see their worldview reflected in the culture, laws, and institutions of that society - including Christians.
- d. We must avoid the temptation to have either government or Church attempt to dominate the other
 - 1. The Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages ruled over civil governments in a manner inconsistent with the new covenant.
 - 2. The Caesars’, the Nazi’s and other totalitarian regimes attempted to dominate the Church in an unbiblical manner - this must always be resisted.
 - 3. Fallen humans will always be tempted to establish their own rule, but God’s two kingdoms must be kept distinct as He designs during this age.
- e. We must remember that the role of the Church and the individual Christian are distinct.
 - 1. The Church is only the representative of God’s Kingdom and is not called to political entanglement but rather to the proclamation of the Gospel and ministry to God’s people.
 - 2. Individual Christians are members of both kingdoms, and faithful disciples must serve both kingdoms.
 - 3. This means that while the Church is not political, individual believers can and should be involved in politics and government.
- f. We must avoid the temptation to triumphalism or despair based on political trends and outcomes
 - 1. Many will speak as if the fate of the world depends on the next election - as if one result will establish the Kingdom of God and the other will end it.

- 2. The Kingdom of God is not dependent upon the Kingdom of Man but rather transcends it and will survive the fall of every human kingdom.
- 3. Our ultimate citizenship is in the kingdom of God, and this is where our hope lies. Therefore, although we labor in the kingdom of man, our hope is always and only in the ultimate triumph of God and His eternal kingdom.

C. The Table of God’s Kingdom

- 1. This Table reminds us of our true citizenship!
- 2. This Table reminds us that our King Jesus has conquered death, made us citizens in the Kingdom of God, and will return to rule and reign forever!
- 3. Apostles Creed and Table

The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man

Mark 12:13-17

August 4, 2024

Communion

1 Timothy 6:15-16

Teaching keywords: Two kingdoms; citizenship; government; heavenly citizenship; discipleship; Christian life

May God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to Whom be honor and might forever - may He bless you with every covenant blessing so that you may go forth and be a blessing! Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15-16

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Mark 12:13-17