

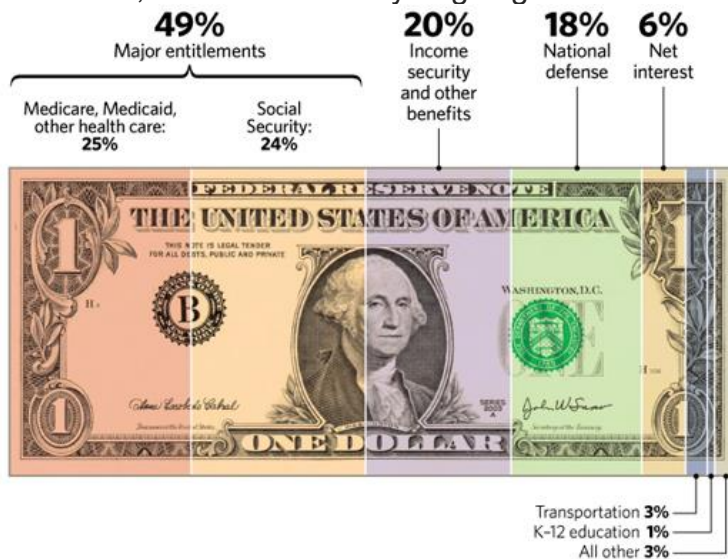
Matthew 22:1-14 “What Does Jesus Say about Government?”

1.14.18



Do you know who this is pictured on that coin (front and back)? Well, let me offer to you a quote and see if it will help you figure out who it is... Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s.” That is the image of Tiberius, who was the Caesar, or Emperor of Rome when Jesus made that statement. That statement is one of the best-known statements of Jesus. What does it mean? “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s?” Pay your taxes, right? Right.

And today is January 14th...so tax season is upon us... April 16th (we get an extra day this year, because the 15th is on a Sunday) will be here before you know it. Taxes. We pay a lot of them don't we? Do you know where your Federal Tax dollar is going? According to the Heritage Foundation, here's where they're going...



Did you know only 80% of these obligations are covered by tax revenue? The other 20% is borrowed from our younger generations. And currently that debt is up to \$20.6 TRILLION. That's frightening isn't it? Yes, we must continue to pay our taxes, if not for the younger generations... But, the truth is...Jesus said so and it's this statement we'll use to see “What Jesus Has to Say About Government.”

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 22, verse 15.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on what we call Palm Sunday to the praises of the people...



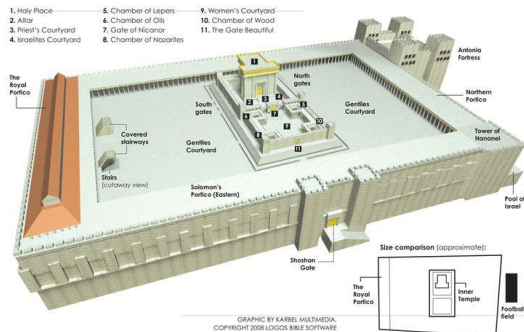
They thought He was the conquering Messiah who would overthrow Rome, but instead...Jesus would go to the Temple on Monday and overthrow the money-changers tables...



Jesus would proclaim the Temple as “MY HOUSE,” and that incensed the religious leaders...the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Teachers of the law. Well, after cleansing the Temple on Monday, Jesus was back on Tuesday, this time...teaching the people in the courtyard under **Solomon’s Portico**...

Herod’s Temple

King Herod the Great began renovations on the Second Temple approximately 20-19 BC. The entire temple wasn’t completed until approximately 62-64 AD, only to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.



The people were packed into those Gentile courtyards and what they saw and heard was the systematic tearing down of the false teaching of the religious leaders... **See the scene...**



This was a public showdown between the false and the truth.

It was tense and it was contentious. Jesus was calling out these religious leaders and exposing their hypocrisy! You see, for three years He has been preaching and teaching and performing miracles, giving proof He's the Messiah, yet they refused to believe. Instead they totally reject Him, and within three days, they'll have Him executed by the Romans on a cross.

But for now, Jesus is still teaching and they are still trying to figure out how to kill him. This morning we'll see how the Pharisees have now called in reinforcements. The Herodians...

Matthew 22:15-22

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?" ¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." ²² When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

Church family, this is a crazy scene. You've got religious leaders and political leaders, who normally couldn't stand being in the same room with each other, working together to bring down Jesus.

Let me explain. You know these guys hate him...



Again, the Pharisees hate him because He has unmasked their pride and self-righteousness. They hate Him because He has captured the people's hearts, and so they are green with envy and jealousy. They hate Him because He's everything they're not. He's the truth...and their full of lies. He's loving and mixes with the people...and they wouldn't rub shoulders with the common man if you paid Him. So, it makes sense why they hate Him so and why they want to kill...He's everything they're not!

And so, they send in some new guys... Did you catch that...

Matthew 22:15-16a

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians...

They sent some young guys that they've trained, that Jesus has never seen before. By now, Jesus recognizes all the faces of the other guys. So, you've got some young bucks who are going to try to trip up Jesus... and you've got some men called Herodians. Who are these guys?

Well, quite simple: They are the politicians. Herodians are called such because they were identified with King Herod and his political party. Remember, Herod was a puppet-King, put in place by the Romans to keep peace in Israel. The Herodians were his men who were tasked with that job...keep the peace. They saw Jesus as a threat. Why?

Because the crowds were growing and they were hearing of a potential overthrow of Rome. Now this wasn't coming from Jesus, but from the people who thought Jesus was going to be a military King. **And all of this thinking was egged on by the Pharisees**, who apparently went to the Herodians and said... "You better stop this guy or riots will break out and Herod will lose his position and authority and you'll lose yours." So, the Pharisees and Herodians are strange bedfellows. And so, here they come... And they say...

Matthew 22:16b-17

"Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

These guys are smooth. They're trying to sweet-talk Jesus with false flattery to see if they can trick Him. They politely called Him, "Teacher," oh, what false sincerity. They said, "You're a truth teller and aren't swayed by public opinion." And that was true! **And** it's a good point for us to consider... **Are you swayed by public opinion?** By what others think? Are you willing to sacrifice what you believe, so that won't look bad in the court of public opinion...even though you know it's wrong? The truth is...many people, including Christians today, will go along with the crowd no matter what...

In fact a couple of recent studies prove this to be true? It was reported in *World* magazine back in October. Here's the headline... See in the middle of the screens:



In secular morality, the majority rules

The article stated, "Parents of teens commonly hear, 'Everybody else is doing it!' But adolescents aren't the only ones who judge right or wrong by others' actions." Two studies on morality showed the choices of the majority often dictate society's moral standards.

In one study, published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, researchers [found] social conformity strongly influences beliefs about right and wrong, meaning changes in the social environment can quickly alter people's moral compasses. However, Lead Researcher, Andreas Olsson said in a statement, "The fact that a behavior is common doesn't automatically mean that it's right—this idea is based on flawed logic that confuses what's popular with moral values."

The article also reported: "In a similar study published in the journal, *Management Science*, researchers showed 273 study participants a video of a single die roll and asked them to report what number they saw. The researchers paid the participants according to whatever number they reported—the higher the number, the higher the pay. Those who participated as individuals responded much more honestly than those in a group. Even people who responded honestly as individuals later lied when they were part of a group and they saw everyone else lying to get more money."

You see, group decision-making helps people justify their own dishonest behavior. It's the majority that seems to determine what's right and wrong in most people's minds today, even if the individual knows in their own heart it's wrong.

Listen Church Family, contrary to public opinion...there is objective truth and it's called the Bible, the Word of God, and when we stick with God's Word, then we can never be prisoners to the changing tide of public opinion. Why? Because the principles taught in God's Word are timeless and apply in all situations, no matter what the majority says.

You see, the Herodians were right, unlike them, He wasn't intimidated by anyone, and nor should we be. Young people...don't you let Twitter and Snapchat dictate what you know to be true. So the Herodians said...

Matthew 22:17-19

¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius.

Remember this...



That's what they brought Jesus. A denarius...which was one day's pay for a common laborer in the first century. It's interesting, isn't it, that Jesus didn't have even a denarius. He said, "You bring me a coin." You know...everyone in that crowd knew they had plenty of money. See the coin again...



On the front was Tiberius' face...the Emperor and on the back was him sitting on a throne, in a priestly robe, with a crown on his head. You see, the Emperors of Rome demanded that you worship them as a god. They actually believed they were a god. And what is more, if you were brought before the Emperor, and you didn't bow to him, you could be killed.

Of course the Jews aren't going to bow to a human being and this is what the Herodians and the Pharisees knew. They knew the Jewish people hated the Romans because they required Emperor Worship and so every time they bought something with a Roman coin, they had to be confronted with the fact that they

were captives to the Romans and that the Romans demanded their allegiance.

So, as Jesus held that coin...the tension was so thick, you could cut it with a knife. See this depiction of that scene...



These men were ready to set the trap: "Do we pay taxes to Caesar?"

Now, before we see the response of Jesus, let me explain what this tax is. It's a census tax, or what is called a "poll tax," that every citizen under Roman authority had to pay annually. It was used, much like our taxes are used, to pay for keeping up the roads, streets, parks...paying the government officials, the soldiers, etc. But, it was such a disgusting thing in the Jewish mind for them to have to pay tribute to a pagan ruler. They, after all, were the people of God; and yet, they are in bondage to these Roman pagans.

And so, the Herodians and Pharisees disciples knew this poll tax was tremendously unpopular with the people and they felt Jesus would have to say, "Don't you DARE pay this tax to those pagans!" And so, here's the CRUX OF THE TRAP...if Jesus actually said that...then the Herodians...could have Jesus arrested for insurrection...going against the government of Rome!

But Jesus...oh...He was so on to them and you do you know why? Because Jesus doesn't have a blind side. You can never catch Jesus off guard, because He's omniscient...all knowing! Watch...

Matthew 22:18-21

¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

And there it is...one of the most profound statements of all history... "Render to Caesar, that which is Caesar's..." Do you know what the word "RENDER" means? You say, "Yeah...it means to pay a debt." That's correct!

But, you see, when the Pharisees and the Herodians asked in verse 17, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar..." The word for "pay" in the Greek means to "GIVE," as in offering a gift...as in what you would do as an act of worship. **See the difference?** And that's why Jesus changed the word and said, "Render" instead of "Give." Again... "RENDER" means to pay off a debt or an obligation...it speaks of responsibility.

This is profound. You see, Jesus was not going to walk into the trap of their semantics...the wording of these fakes...He was going to change the dialog to match truth... He said in essence... **"You are getting**

the benefit of Roman roads, Roman protection from enemy nations...Roman justice, so pay your debt, pay your obligation, it's your responsibility!"

Turn to Romans 13. this teaching of Jesus is so profound and it's repeated over and over again throughout the New Testament. We'll just look it in Romans 13. Paul repeats to the believers in (of all places...ROME)...what Jesus taught...

Romans 13:1-7

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Let me ask you: "Will you pay your taxes this April 16th?" Jesus said we should...it's our obligation...it's our duty...it's our responsibility as citizens.

But, I know what some of you might be thinking... You might say, "**But a wait a minute...should we honor the government in all things, no matter what they tell us to do?**" No...not if the government asks us to do against God and His Word. That's why Jesus didn't end the statement, **with just** "Render unto Caesar, that which is Caesar's..." He continued...

Matthew 22:21

²¹ ... "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

And this idea was illustrated by the Apostles Peter and John in Acts chapter 4. Remember when they were hauled before the authorities?

Acts 4:18-20

¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

You see, if there is a conflict between what the Governing authorities tell us to do and what God says in His Word...then, we have the right...and I would say, the obligation to refuse to adhere to any government authority who tells us to disobey God's Word. Let me give you an example. **See this man...**



That's former Atlanta fire chief, Kelvin Cochran. Two years ago, in January of 2015, Chief Cochran was fired for his stance that he took when he wrote a little booklet that just happened to mention that marriage, as stated in Scripture, is to be between ONLY a man and woman. Uh-oh...we all know those are fighting words today...and it was those words in that little booklet that believe it or not...got him fired by the city of Atlanta.

Well, thankfully, he took the City of Atlanta to court and a few weeks ago, a US District Court judge ruled that the City was wrong and the firing was unjustified and did not: "pass constitutional muster." After the ruling, Chief Cochran's attorney stated, "Chief Cochran is one of the most accomplished fire chiefs in the nation, but the city's actions placed every city employee, who may hold beliefs that city officials don't like, in jeopardy. Thankfully this decision shows that a religious or ideological test can not be used to fire a public servant and the government can not force its employees to get its permission before engaging in free speech."

But church family, please remember, we're living in a society today where the Government, and the courts have gone very liberal...particularly the appointment of judges by former President, Barack Obama. Many of these judges and their courts have become very, very hostile to Christians. And that hostility has permeated our culture. See this man...



That's baker, Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cake Shop of Lakewood, CO. He politely refused to bake a cake for a homosexual-couple's wedding, saying that to do so would violate his conscience and belief, as a Christian, that marriage is to be between a man and a woman. He offered three other bakeries in town who would bake the cake, but the couple refused and sued him via the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, a government agency.

His case is now before these folks...



...the Supreme Court and a decision will be rendered next summer and it's going to be huge! Truly, the decision handed down next summer will affect not only bakers, t-shirt makers, photographers, and wedding planners, but people like me, who will not marry a same-sex couple and people you like...who might be told you better violate your conscience and walk the company line.

Will the United States government be able to tell Christians how to live their lives? We'll see and if the ruling goes against Christians and their first amendment right to freedom of religion and the expression of that religion...well...there will be a lot of decisions to be made over whether or not we'll bow the knee to that decision. I'm one set of knees that won't, I can promise you that! Even if it means prison or death. I'm that resolute to the teachings of Jesus in Scripture.

And you see, this is the point of this encounter Jesus had with these men...



These men were bowing the knee...not to God...but to the political pressure of remaining in power...of keeping their positions... And they wouldn't submit to Jesus. Therefore, after having been handed their lunch by Jesus... verse 22 says that they left...

Matthew 22:22

²² When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

They marveled...what does that mean? They knew they were licked and they were totally embarrassed. And so the Bible says: **THEY LEFT HIM**. Did you catch those three words? So sad. It means to depart and never return.

Look at verse 21 again as we begin to close...Jesus said...

Matthew 22:21

²¹ ..."Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

What was it that Caesar was demanding that only God deserves? WORSHIP, ALLEGIANCE, SURRENDER! And that's the issue. Yes, Jesus taught... pay your taxes to Caesar, but don't you dare render to Caesar the things that are only to be given to God! Don't you dare surrender your worship to anyone else but God!

So, where are you placing your worship today? How can you tell what you worship? Well, it's whatever or whomever you can't get enough of. **That's your Caesar**. So, what is it? Who is it? What's your Caesar? For those men... (see the picture one last time)...



...their Caesar was power, prestige and money. And so, they offered their worship and allegiance to a pagan government, so they could have their gods. They refused to bow the knee to Jesus...and offer to Him what was rightfully due Him... NO, Jesus would get none of their WORSHIP! Instead in three days, He would get A CROSS!

How about you this morning? Jesus has shown Himself to you through His Word. NOW...Will you receive Him and give Him what He'd due...your life and your worship...OR will you bow the knee to Caesar?
