

“THE POLITICS OF JESUS”

In a few short weeks, our politically polarized nation will go to the polls and elect the 45th President of the United States.

Everyone agrees that this is the most critical election in modern history and the outcome will determine the course of our nation for the rest of our lifetime.

The 2 people at the top of each ticket have the lowest approval ratings ever. For the first time in our history, most of the votes cast will not be so much FOR one candidate as they are a vote AGAINST the other.

Like many people who are really serious about their Christian faith, I admit to being quite swept up in the process and emotions run deep on both sides. Record numbers of people are watching the debates and voicing their opinions.

But in the midst of all the uproar, at some point we need to ask ourselves, “What does Jesus say about it all?” What are the “Politics of Jesus?”

Matthew 22:15-22

For the answer to that, we have to look at the only time in His earthly ministry that Jesus spoke directly about politics...

I. The Defining Moment

Matthew 22:15-22

15 Then the Pharisees met together to plot how to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested. 16 They sent some of their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to meet with him. "Teacher," they said, "we know how honest you are. You teach the way of God truthfully. You are impartial and don't play favorites. 17 Now tell us what you think about this: Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

Their question was...

A. “What Are Your Politics?”

1. We need to understand the backdrop for the question:

- This was the “poll tax” the Romans required of every Jew, equaling about one day’s wages
- The Jews hated this reminder that they were under Roman government
- So the question was a trap! If He said “Don’t pay”, it would get him in trouble with the government; if He said “Pay it”, it would get Him in trouble with the Jews.

2. These people hated Jesus. They had not been able to trip him up on matters of religion; so they tried to trap him in matters of politics.

18 But Jesus knew their evil motives. "You hypocrites!" he said. "Why are you trying to trap me? 19 Here, show me the coin used for the tax." When they handed him a Roman coin,* 20 he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?"

21 "Caesar's," they replied.

a. Jesus already knew the answer, because all the coins of the day were stamped with image of Augustus Caesar, the Emperor of Rome.

b. Even today, a nation’s money bears the image of its rulers.

3. And then the Lord answers their question with one of His most famous sayings; one verse of scripture that reveals “The Politics Of Jesus”...

"Well, then," he said, "give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

Matthew 22:21

4. Here is the genius of Jesus; He totally disarmed His enemies with one word...

“Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.”

Matthew 22:21

a. The money has Caesar’s image. It’s his. So give it to him. Pay your taxes.

b. Keep the law. Drive the speed limit. If God has blessed you to live in a land where you can have a say, vote!

5. But it cuts both ways...in the same way you give back to Caesar the things stamped with his image and likeness, you must give back to God everything that is stamped with HIS image and likeness...which is WHAT?

a. Don't miss this...they didn't. To be a Pharisee meant that you had memorized the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the Bible!

b. When asked them whose image and likeness was stamped on their money, they all knew He was referring to the creation of man!

“And God said, let us make man in our own image and after our likeness...”

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

Genesis 1:26, 27

YOU AND I ARE ‘STAMPED’ WITH THE IMAGE OF GOD!

c. When they tried to trap Him, He turned the tables on them! He reminded them that they owed their tax money to Caesar...but they owed their entire SELVES to God!

His reply amazed them, and they went away.

Matthew 22:22

***Greek word for “amazed”-they “marveled”; “admired”**

6. Jesus had turned the question of how we relate to *politics* into a question about how we are to relate to *God*!

a. Money bears the image of the State; so give the money to the State

b. But you and I bear the image of God; so we must give ourselves to God!

B. Crisis Brings Clarity

1. Our country's in crisis. This election is big.

2. Christians need to be praying; to be informed; and by all means, to VOTE.

3. But I have to put it all into perspective:

Our greatest problem is not giving Caesar what belongs to Caesar; our greatest problem is giving to Caesar what belongs to God.

a. **Our TIME:** Some Christians do NOTHING to stay informed on what's going on politically. But others spend more time watching FOX News than reading their Bibles! And half of us don't even vote, as if on Election Day you have something more important to do!

b. **Our MONEY:** We pay our taxes because we fear what Caesar will do if we don't. But do we fear God enough to pay our tithes? If you don't pay your taxes you can go to jail. But if you don't honor God, who knows what worse things may come upon you?

c. **Our PASSIONS:** I have Christian friends who get all stirred up and angry about politics...but they don't even go to church every week. They are upset that Christians won't vote but they themselves spend no time at all winning the lost and making disciples.

4. It IS important for us to participate! God has placed in a nation where we can vote!

“When the righteous rule, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rulers, the people groan.”

Proverbs 29:2

4. Nevertheless, there are 3 areas where these words of Jesus apply:

Our true IDENTITY-Our first ALLEGIANCE-Our ultimate HOPE

II. 3 Things To Remember During The Election Season

A. First: **Our Ultimate Identity Is From God, Not From Caesar**

1. When we let Caesar or the State define us, we give to the State that which belongs only to God.

2. I am troubled at how our identity as the people of God has become subsumed by politics.

a. Instead of being salt and light to a sinful world and being known for our love and righteousness, we have allowed ourselves to be divided into political identities:

- A Conservative or a Liberal

- On the Right or on the Left
- A Republican or a Democrat
- Living in a Red state or a Blue state

3. When we let ourselves be defined by our politics, we are giving Caesar something that belongs only to God.

“It would be a great victory for Satan if he could use politics to divide the people of God.”

Pastor Todd Wilson

a. I don't want to divide with my brothers by party. But some issues go beyond politics!

b. Let me get personal: I simply do not understand how anyone who calls themselves a Christian can be pro-choice or vote for any candidate who is pro-abortion. The platform of one of our major parties includes a plank that supports aborting a baby right up to one minute before its born!

c. I don't understand the candidate in a recent debate assured the nation he's a devout Roman Catholic, but that even though his church is pro-life, he as a U.S. Senator wants to make sure that a woman has the right to abort her baby if she chooses. Talk about hypocrisy!

d. Abortion is not a political issue. It's a moral issue. And anyone who supports it has innocent blood on their hands. Period.

4. Caesar forces us to define ourselves when we register to vote; we have to check a box as to Republican, Democrat, Independent...

a. But our true political identity is not of this earth!

“But our citizenship is in heaven...”

Philippians 3:20

“citizenship” from the Greek word “politeuma”

5. God is not a Republican! Or a Democrat. He will not allow Himself to be defined by a political party. And neither should we!

B. Second: Our First Allegiance Is To God, Not Caesar

1. I'm grateful to be an American and I love my country. But I love God more.

2. We are blessed to live in the greatest nation on earth. Our country was founded on Christian principles. So much so that some of fail to realize that we can

3. But some of God's people give more allegiance to the flag than they do to God.

a. Example: Some Christians are more upset about the pro football player who won't stand up for the national anthem than they are about the 97% of American Christians who won't honor God with their tithe.

4. We live in the greatest country on earth. But how great is a country that honors itself above God?

a. Our public schools won't allow public prayer; but they do require the kids to pledge allegiance to the flag

b. Our kids can wear a sweater to school with an American flag on it, but if you show up in a sweatshirt with a scripture on it, they'll send you home

ALL IN WHAT THEY CALL "SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE"...BUT IS REALY A PERVERSION OF WHAT IS REALLY IN THE CONSTITUTION...WHICH MOST CHRISTIANS HAVEN'T EVEN READ.

5. We must not be blinded by a misplaced patriotism that puts the nation ahead of the God of the nation.

6. From the beginning, Caesar always competed with God for our primary allegiance...

a. Jesus was clear: Give Caesar what's his. Pay your taxes. Obey the law...UNTIL your allegiance to the law would require putting your allegiance to God in 2nd place!

b. Our Christian freedoms are under attack. Laws, like the gay marriage ruling, are going to require us to choose whom to obey:

Acts 5:27-29

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

7. We can pledge allegiance to the flag; as long as we remember that our first allegiance is to God.

C. Third: Our Ultimate Hope Is In God Not In Caesar

1. I've been voting in Presidential elections for 48 years; this will be the 14th time I've had the privilege to cast a vote for President.

2. Sometimes my guy won. Sometimes not. But with the exception of 1 (back in the 80's), I have been disappointed in all of them. And the reason I get disappointed is that I put too much hope in them.

a. When the Church doesn't do its job to win the lost and make disciples, we end up putting our hopes in some kind of political salvation:

b. No wonder God sees to it that we are disappointed!

3. But I'm not staying home! I'm going to vote again. But I'm not going to put my ultimate hope in whoever is elected. That belongs to God.

III. The Gospel Itself Is Political!

A. Politics Is Government

1. Whenever we say, **“Jesus is Lord”**, we have made a political statement!

2. Jesus Christ is Lord.

a. Jesus means “Savior”

b. Christ means Messiah, or “Anointed One”

c. But “Lord” is a *governmental* term; He is “King” of kings and “Lord” of lords. His government is above all governments.

3. The world didn't mind Jesus as Savior...or Messiah...they were able to compartmentalize Him until He touched the political world!

a. That's what put Him on trial:

Luke 23:1-3

Then the entire council took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. 2 They began to state their case: "This man has been leading our people astray by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king."

3 So Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied, "You have said it."

He assured them..

His Kingdom was not of this world...meaning it was not the "source"!

b. The trial was about Jesus as a *King*:

14 It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people,* "Look, here is your king!" 15 "Away with him," they yelled. "Away with him! Crucify him!" "What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back. 16 Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified.

4. Jesus was crucified over His politics!

Luke 23:38

38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

5. In the early church, the issues was over politics!

a. Under Roman government, the Emperor was considered Divine; people greeted each other with the saying, "Caesar is Lord"; but the early church refused to say it!

Acts 17:5-7

5 But some of the Jews were jealous, so they gathered some troublemakers from the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of Jason, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the

crowd.* 6 Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers* instead and took them before the city council. "Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world," they shouted, "and now they are here disturbing our city, too. 7 And Jason has welcomed them into his home.

They are all guilty of treason against Caesar, for they profess allegiance to another king, named Jesus."

6. It is the same today: Caesar doesn't mind the church as long as it "stays on the reservation." But we will soon be forced to choose:

Acts 16:19-21

19 Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. 20 "The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials. 21 **"They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice."**

a. We are to honor Caesar with his own; obey the laws UNTIL it means disobeying God.

7. One final verse:

And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations...and then the end will come.

Matthew 24:14

8. Are we in the end times? Not until the Church preaches and lives according to....

"The Politics Of Jesus"