

Matthew 22:15-22

“Kingdom Support”

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As followers of Christ, we are dual citizens. We are subject to a heavenly Sovereign and an earthly sovereign. What is your responsibility to God and government? What would your community look like if you tried to be the best citizens of heaven and earth for Christ’s glory?

Study Guide Qs

Q1 *In what ways do you struggle with yielding to authority? How might it be related to submission to Christ?*

Q2 *What might be some additional characteristics of a good citizen of an earthly kingdom?*

Q3 *How does being a good heavenly citizen make you a better earthly citizen?*

Q4 *What would your community look like if you tried to be the best citizens of heaven and earth for Christ’s glory?*

Intro. I recently sent my passport to be renewed and counted 33 stamps. Almost all of the countries that I’ve visited have been specifically to serve Christ. As followers of Christ, we are dual citizens. We are subject to a heavenly Sovereign and an earthly sovereign. What is your responsibility to God and government?

Subject: Jesus’ instructions about responsibility to God and government

Object: Be a good citizen (of the kingdom of God and man)

Context: Jesus had entered Jerusalem four days before the Passover (and the Cross). Jesus came to the temple courtyard and turned over the tables of those who sold doves and exchanged currency who were extorting worshipers. Jesus was asserting authority to declare what was acceptable worship and faith. Through a series of parables (The Two Sons, The Vineyard Workers, and the Wedding Feast) Jesus has made clear that only those who receive Christ and are submitted to God’s authority are truly citizens of God’s kingdom.

I. Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is owed to Him [15-22]:

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in *His* talk. ¹⁶ And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. ¹⁷ Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “Why do you test Me, *you* hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show Me the tax money.” So they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰ And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription *is* this? ²¹ They

said to Him, “Caesar’s.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²² When they had heard *these words*, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

Jesus’ declaration of authority was contested by the religious leaders as they try to trap Him with a question about taxes. They hope to alienate Jesus from the people or have a charge to bring against him with Rome [15]. The Pharisees sought to separate from sin and were very pious and tended towards legalism. The Herodians were wealthy and tried to get along with Rome and tended towards liberalism [16]. The two generally oppose each other, but came together to oppose Jesus. The religious leaders flatter Jesus saying that He was sincere, faithful to truth, and not a man pleaser [16], but they are not submitted to His authority.

Their question relates to whether it is right with God to pay taxes to Rome [17]. Their argument is, if we pay taxes to Rome then we are recognizing Rome’s authority and that is an insult to our Sovereign God. Rome’s taxes included: one-tenth of all grain, one-fifth of all oil and wine, plus an income and poll tax. Jesus perceived the malice of their attempt to trap Him and calls them hypocrites [18]. Jesus asks for a coin and is given a denarius. A denarius was the daily salary for a soldier or laborer, and was the amount of the poll tax. Every earthly sovereign mint coin to show authority in the world. The image [20-21] was of Caesar Tiberius and the inscription was, “Tiberius Caesar, August Son of the Divine Augustus.” The Jewish leaders expressed concern about insulting God by paying taxes, but they apparently had no problem owning the coins that claimed that Caesar was divine. To “render” [21] translated “give” means to give back or pay what is owed (i.e. settle a debt). The wisdom of Jesus’ response was marvelous so they left (realizing they could not trap Him that way) [22].

A. Jesus’ followers are citizens of a heavenly and earthly kingdom [Ph. 3:20]

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”

1. As dual citizens, there is a responsibility to God and earthly government: you need to realize that there is a duty to both God and an earthly government. The two realms are interconnected, and the proper discharge of your responsibilities advances God’s kingdom. God’s kingdom is distinct from this world but we are called to be good citizens of both.

2. The proper discharge of our duty to government flows from yielding to God: The religious leaders were not submitted to God, and therefore struggled to discern and do what was right in regard to their responsibility as citizens in Israel under Roman authority. All earthly authority is imperfect, and tends to be abused. This makes yielding to authority challenging. Each of us has areas where we struggle to yield to authority. This is a result of our sin nature that cause us to rebel, our past experiences, and by abuses of authority.

Nevertheless, being submitted to earthly authority generally, and government specifically flows from submission to Christ. A sense of patriotism, or a desire to avoid punishment by the government produces a skewed sense of responsibility.

B. A biblical perspective on being a good citizen of an earthly kingdom:

1. All earthly authority is appointed by God and subject to His sovereignty [Rom. 13:1]

Our duty does not depend on whether the people in authority are the ones that we want.

2. Obey the laws of the land because you obey God [Rom. 13:1-3]

a. The exception is laws contrary to the gospel or proclamation of the gospel [Ac. 5:29]

3. Pay taxes [Mt. 22:21, Rom.13:6-7]

4. Pray for leaders and your community [1Tim. 2:1-3, Jer. 29:7]

5. Respect leaders [Rom.13:7, 1Pet.2:17] We are to honor or respect the office of government leaders even if the leader is not respectable in his or her behavior.

What might be some additional characteristics of a good citizen of an earthly kingdom?

C. What is your responsibility to God?

1. You belong to God [Matt. 22:20-21, Gen. 1:26-27] The denarius has the image of Caesar and therefore belongs to Caesar. People have been uniquely created in the image of God [Gen.1:26-27]. Thus, you have been “pressed” with God’s image and belong to Him. Accordingly, you don’t belong to the government (regardless of the form of government), or even to yourself.

2. Yield of your life to God in gratitude of His grace [Rom. 12:1-2] **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

In light of God’s grace towards you (the gospel) it is only reasonable for you to yield your life to God. Your yielding is a response to grace and a result of grace.

3. Love God supremely + love your neighbor as yourself [Matt. 22:37-39; Rom. 12:9-21]

The greatest heavenly kingdom responsibility is to love God as the master passion of your life. The second greatest responsibility is to love your neighbor as yourself. Since the gospel is the greatest expression of love, ultimately sharing the gospel with neighbors is a display of love.

Just as Romans 13:1-7 helps us to understand our responsibility to earthly government, Romans 12:9-21 helps us to understand the responsibility as citizens of heaven:

a. Be kind and put others before yourself [Rom. 12:10]

b. Serve God passionately [Rom. 12:11]

c. Persevere in prayer [Rom. 12:12]

d. Provide for the benevolence needs of other believers [Rom. 12:13]

e. Be hospitable [Rom. 12:13]

f. Be humble and united [Rom. 12:16,18]

g. Overcome enemies and evil with good Rom. 12:17,19-21]