

MATTHEW CH 22:15-22

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted 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 then, 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 were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

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

The Pharisees - There's one word that that would probably sum up best who the Pharisees were, they were legalists.

What is a legalist? Simply put, is someone who puts an over emphasis on the Law either for salvation or for sanctification.

Legalism spectrum

Jesus had this to say to the Pharisees about their misguided thoughts on the Law:

Matthew 23:23,25-26 (NASB) 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others...25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26 "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

Weightier - have you ever realized that there are weightier provisions of the law? There are, Jesus says there are and He even names them. They are justice, mercy and faithfulness.

Justice, mercy and faithfulness - what are these things? These are all principles. These are the heart related things that one **must settle inside them-self so as to have the conviction for why** one follows the law.

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence

Clean - Jesus says something important here, He acknowledges that they were clean but where were they clean? Externally (outside of the cup & dish). This is the adherence to the law (mint, dill and cummin). Notice what He has to say about the inside though "full of robbery and self-indulgence."

What is Jesus telling them? You're working in the wrong direction. It's not from the outside in, it's from the inside out one must be changed.

26 "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

As believers we are instructed to walk by faith and not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NASB) for we walk by faith, not by sight--

In order to walk by faith one has to put trust in things that are **unseen**. **An unfortunate side effect of legalism is an inability to walk by faith.** Legalism is so very focused on the external it makes doing that nearly impossible.

There are **two planes that exist in scripture**. Jesus Himself acknowledges this:

John 18:35-36 (NASB) 35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

The Temporal plane or realm (this world verse 36 above) and the The Eternal plane or realm ("My Kingdom" verse 36). Both are very real. Scripture acknowledges both as real. One of those planes is a shadowy plane and one of those planes is the substance:

Hebrews 8:5 (NLT) They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: "Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain."

What plane does scripture call the shadowy plane...this one, the one we are in! The plane of substance is actually the heavenly one. How many of us live that way or have even thought about it in this way?

A group of individuals who lived their lives as if The Temporal or "shadow" Plane was the plane of substance was the Pharisees and religious leaders.

Understanding this as our backdrop then, that these men lived their lives as if the Temporary plane is what is important, we can get back to our main passage:

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

The Pharisees tried an interesting tactic here. They had already had some run ins with Christ. Enough that they knew if they asked the question He would know that they were trying to trap Him. In other words they knew, that He would know that they really didn't have pure motives around their question.

They weren't looking to Him for an answer but for an opportunity to trap Him. By sending their disciples perhaps they could trick Him into answering. An answer that they hoped would allow them to destroy Him.

This is how Luke describes it:

Luke 20:20 (NASB) 20 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.

They were planning on Him saying that they shouldn't pay taxes, that the Jewish people should not be beholden to a man-made government.

Of course He doesn't say that but something much different than they had anticipated. Ironically enough they still took what He said and twisted when they presented their rationale as for why He ought to be crucified:

Luke 23:1-2 (NASB) 1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

16...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.

Notice how they begin their conversation with Him. Flattery. They call Him Teacher and say that He speaks truth and only teaches the way of God with truth. He isn't controlled by any group He is completely focused on truth.

Proverbs 26:28 (NASB) 28 A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin.

Flattery is saying complimentary or nice things to others simply to further our own agendas. We ought to always be genuine when talking with people.

What are they doing? They are setting Him up.

I. They want to Disarm Him with their flattery in the hope that He won't see that they have ulterior motives. They don't want Him to sense that they are setting Him up because He might walk away and not give an answer. As long as He answered they were convinced they had Him.

II. If Jesus answers "yes" to pay taxes to Caesar He would lose the support of the people because the Jewish people would have turned from Him. They would have felt that He was collaborating with the Roman government and they would have hated Him for it. If He says "no" then the religious leaders can turn Him over to the Roman government and have them deal with Him for encouraging people to break the law.

III. Let's analyze something a little bit closer about these men and their question. They have come up with a question that they believe *either* answer condemns you. But, here's the thing, these men have had to deal with this same question in their own lives at some point, haven't they? Do you pay taxes or not pay taxes? So, my question is what's their answer to the question? We can see by their lives their answer to the question is that you pay the taxes.

Let's look at Jesus' answer:

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 were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

Jesus has agreed that taxes ought to be paid. Here's a question:

How can two people do the same thing externally and it be sin for one person but not sin for the other?

The answer is motive. It takes us back to Jesus' teaching to this group about the mint, dill and cummin! Why are you tithing? Why are you doing what you're doing?

For these men, here's why they paid taxes: **Because their fear of the government was greater than their fear of God.**

Luke 22:2 (ESV) And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

Proverbs 29:25 (NASB) The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.

Christ has completely **dismantled** the group's plan. The reason He was able to dismantle their plan was because:

- 1. His understanding of the Eternal and Temporal Planes.**
- 2. Because of His grasp of these planes His motives were accurate.**

Let's review a passage that will help us see this:

Matthew 17:24-27 (ESV) 24 When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" 26 And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. 27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

Two-drachma tax - this was a tax that every Jewish person was required to pay in order to assist with the temple and it's upkeep.

24..."Does your teacher not pay the tax?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him *first*, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?"

First notice an important point that Jesus says. **"From whom do *kings of the earth*..."**

Who is Christ?

Hebrews 1:3-5,8-13 (NASB) 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"? And again, "I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"...8 But of the Son He says, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.

Going back to our thought Christ says to Peter who do Kings of the earth take toll or tax?

Kings of the earth? This seems like a rather insignificant group of people when we now consider who it is that is asking the question. Christ is the King of The Universe. Two-drachma temple tax? He didn't need to pay it. As a matter of fact, **He was why the temple was built in the first place.**

"What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" 26 And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free.

So much meaning here!!!

Christ is pointing out that Kings don't tax their family. "The sons are free". Therefore as the Son of God He certainly didn't need to pay this tax which is why He says the next sentence:

27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

Offense - skandalizō (skän-dä-lē'-zō)

1. to cause a person to begin to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey
 - a. to cause to fall away
 - b. to be offended in one, i.e. to see in another what I disapprove of and what hinders me from acknowledging his authority.
 - c. to cause one to judge unfavorably or unjustly of another

2 Corinthians 6:3 (NLT) We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry.

1 Corinthians 10:32-33 (NLT) 32 Don't give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God. 33 I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved.

Christ doesn't want to cause these people to have a memory of Him that is anything other than the fact that He and His followers are blameless.

27...go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel.

Go to the sea and cast a hook - Interesting request. Jesus and the apostles had a money bag. Surely, they had the money in it to pay this temple tax. But Jesus used it as an opportunity.

What was He teaching Peter?

Luke 1:37 (NASB) 37 "For nothing will be impossible with God."

The Creator of the entire universe, the one who holds all things together, who spoke light into existence can certainly get a two-drachma temple tax taken care of in whatever way He chooses. He chooses to have a fish bring it to Him through Peter.

27...Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

I love this. Jesus saying to Peter, "Peter, I am going to pay for you too". This is a foreshadowing of what He was going to do on the cross.

Now there is more meaning inside of this as well. Peter falls under the provision of who didn't

have to pay.

Remember who Christ said was free?

26 And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free.

Christ is telling Peter something that right now, at this point he would not completely understand. What is Peter because of His belief in Christ...what are we?

Galatians 3:26 (NASB) 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 1:5 (NASB) 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

"Then the sons are free.

Then the sons are free. It's hard to say that too many times. If you belong to Jesus Christ then you free. The **King of the Universe has set you free** and declares you free.

John 8:36 (NASB) 36 "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

Christ is also **letting Peter know**...these **earthly temporal** things, they are just that...temporal. Christ is going to take care of us.

He miraculously had a fish bring Peter a coin!!

Christ wants us to stay fixed on Him and He'll be sure we are provided for.

Matthew 6:25-26 (NASB) 25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

Now understanding this, let's transition all the way back to our main verse. Christ tells these men:

**"Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."
22 And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.**

Jesus is telling them, go ahead and give Caesar his temporal, earthly things...but give God the things that are His.

"Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's - As far as the earthly temporal plane is concerned Christ is telling this group that there is a responsibility to give established earthly governments their due. This is the render to Caesar portion of His comment.

This was something that Peter would write about later:

1 Peter 2:13-17 (NASB) 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 people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

and to God the things that are God's." -

Remember Jesus said ***"Whose image is on this coin?"***

Genesis 1:27 (NASB) 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Give Caesar his currency I desire a different kind of currency:

Luke 12:33-34 (NASB) 33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. 34 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Seek Him and His kingdom first, He will take care of the shadow that is the earthly kings realms.

So whom is it that these guys are speaking to about taxes and paying Caesar? They are speaking to the King of the Universe. The Creator of the universe. They are speaking to the Being who breathed the very breath into the lungs that they are using to ask Him these questions. He could simply decide that the atoms and particles holding them together ought to just stop holding together and they would disintegrate.

They are blind and they have completely and utterly **missed the point.** They are focused on the wrong kingdom.

How about us? Which kingdom are we focused on?

Remember, "then the sons are free" why? Because The King has set us free. Because the King has paid for us already!

John 8:36 (NASB) 36 "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.