

I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE **(Mark 12:13-17)**

Jesus' enemies sought to use the subject of allegiances to trap Him on the horns of a dilemma in order to destroy Him. Jesus' response has been considered by even secular historians as the single most influential political statement in world history. Paul's explanation of it in Romans 13 has shaped Western civilization as we know it. There are some tremendous lessons in this for us.

I. WE SHOULD HAVE A LEGITIMATE EARTHLY ALLEGIANCE TO HUMAN GOVERNMENT (vv. 13-17a)

1. The question: *Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?*
 - If Jesus said it was right to pay, He would be alienated from His Jewish people, most of whom would abandon Him as a traitor.
 - If he said it was not right, he would likely be arrested as an insurrectionist and executed.
2. Ancient coins were the property of the one whose picture or inscription was on it.
 - Jesus asked for a denarius. That was the only coin that could be used for the tax.
 - Jesus asked whose image was on it. Caesar's image meant that it belonged to Caesar, so it should be given back to him.
3. Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of many: If you are going to receive the blessings that come with government, then you must respect the authority of government.
 - Jesus acknowledged the legitimacy of the secular state and its demands.
 - Jesus declared that not only is the state valid, but it makes legitimate claims on our behavior.
4. There are at least three limits to the authority of the state where Christians must resist:
 - When we are asked to violate a command of God.
 - When we are asked to do an immoral act.
 - When we are asked to go against our Christian conscience.

II. WE MUST HAVE AN ETERNAL ALLEGIANCE TO OUR DIVINE LORD (vv. V. 17b)

1. Jesus spoke both for God and the government, thus exercising His authority over both.
 - Jesus sharply distinguished between God and Caesar regarding divinity.
 - He recognized a difference, and therefore exalted God over government.
2. Government may not claim total life control upon its citizens.
 - Duty to God surpasses duty to Caesar (government).
 - In other words, political and civil duties cannot be considered apart from our faith because God maintains a prior and ultimate claim.
3. This is revealed in the terminology.
 - The word image used in the text is the same one used in Genesis 1 concerning man's creation
 - Mankind is God's because we bear His image.
4. What do we "give back" to God?
 - An awareness of our moral being and responsibility.
 - We surrender to His work in our lives.

We bear His image, so we give our total commitment to the one who made us. We know we do not have an independent existence. He wants us! Every part of us! We are His because we bear His image.