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“The Other Side of the Coin”

Matthew 22

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In Matthew 22, some religious and political leaders who were opposed to Jesus plotted to trap him in his words with a question about taxes. They assumed that the controversial topic would cause Jesus to alienate people depending on his answer. But Jesus responded with the wisdom of heaven, and he encouraged people to give *“to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”* Yes, he made the statement that it’s our civic duty to pay our taxes, but the bigger point he was making had to do with giving to God what belongs to God – our very lives. We bear his image and we were made in his likeness, and we will only find real fulfillment and purpose in life when we return to our rightful owner – Jesus.

Historical Background

1. Pastor Gary said, “[Some] of the political and religious leaders who did not believe in Jesus, who were opposed to his ministry, who were jealous of his popularity, used the topic of taxes [to the Roman authorities] as an opportunity to stir up some controversy and division [concerning] Jesus to try to dilute his popularity. These leaders were always looking for ways to malign him or to discredit him. ... This whole scene is a plot. They’ve contrived this, [and] they were trying to trap Jesus because they figured that depending upon how he [answered he would offend the Jews or the Romans]. ... The two groups... [were] on opposite sides of the tax issue. Now, again, one group [was] a political group and one group [was] a religious group. ... When two [people or groups] have a common enemy, [they] become friends...”
 - a. Pharisees
 - i. [Matthew 22:15](#) – *“Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.”*
 - ii. The Pharisees were a strict religious group of separatists, legalists, anti-Roman government, and pro-Israel.

- iii. The Pharisees were opposed to taxes of any kind.
- b. Herodians
 - i. **Matthew 22:16** - *“And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians...”*
 - ii. The Herodians were a political group loyal to King Herod, who was appointed by the Roman government.
- c. Flattery
 - i. The flattery which they spread so thickly was part of their plan to set him up!
 - 1. **Matthew 22:16** - *“... ‘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.’ ”*
- d. The Question
 - i. **Matthew 22:17** - *“Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”*
 - ii. If Jesus said it was okay to pay taxes, the Herodians would like him, and the Pharisees would hate him.
 - iii. If Jesus said it was not okay to pay taxes, the Pharisees would like him, and the Herodians would hate him.
 - iv. The followers of Jesus would be similarly divided along party lines, so to speak.
 - v. Both groups must have thought they had Jesus backed into a corner with no way out!
- e. Jesus’ Response
 - i. Jesus easily and clearly understood that they were trying to trap him.
 - 1. **Matthew 22:18** - *“But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, ‘Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?’ ”*
 - 2. **Matthew 22:18** - *“But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, ‘You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?’ ” (1984 NIV)*
 - ii. **Matthew 22:19-20** - *“ ‘Show Me the tax money’. So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ ”*
 - 1. A denarius was a silver coin issued by the Roman government, which was about the size of a dime.
 - 2. One denarius was worth one full day’s wages.
 - iii. **Matthew 22:21** - *“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.’ ”*
 - iv. Pastor Gary said, “The fact of the matter is that Jesus [was] saying [that it’s our] civic duty to pay taxes. ... I know all of us are opposed to high taxes... but taxes are our civic duty and a small price to pay for enjoying the freedoms of living in the greatest country on earth, if for nothing else then the funding of the military that keeps us safe.”

1. **Romans 13:6–7** – *“For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”*

Give To God The Things That Are God’s

2. Pastor Gary said, “[This] is either often overlooked or often misinterpreted. [This isn’t about paying taxes or giving your tithes and offerings to the church.] ... Don’t get me wrong, I’m a pastor, and I believe in the principle of tithing, not as a mandate of the law but as a motivation of the heart. But that is not what Jesus meant in this passage. It’s about money, but it’s not about money. If Jesus [looked] at the image on the coin and [said], ‘Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s’ because the image of Caesar was on the coin, then the parallel has to match. And if the first part means give to Caesar the thing that bears the image of Caesar, then the second part means give to God the thing that bears the image of God. And, who or what bears the image of God? ... Mankind was the crowning jewel of God’s creation. Only man was created in the image and likeness of God, not the plant kingdom, not the animal kingdom, not angels, only mankind. And being created in the image and likeness of God is what separates us and distinguishes us from all of the rest of creation. ... [The] animal kingdom is a step above the plant kingdom. ... The Bible says that [God] created them as living creatures. ... [God] created them with a soul which allows the animal kingdom to think and to feel and to reason. ... Your dog has the ability to think and reason and feel, to have emotion. ... Your dog has an intellect. Your dog can learn things. Your dog can do tricks. Your dog can think; that’s because your dog has a soul. ... Your dog has emotion. ... Plants have a physical matter. Animals have a body and a soul. But you have a body, soul, and spirit, and that’s how you have been created in the image and likeness of God. ... What is God’s essential nature? It is Spirit. Your essential nature is spirit; it’s not physical because your spirit will outlive your body. Your essential nature is spiritual. ... The pattern of God is one singular God revealed in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are one individual, but you have body, soul, and spirit. You have the same pattern as God. ... We were created as spiritual beings housed in physical bodies with the capacity to think, [reason, and feel], and more than that, to have fellowship and relationship with our Creator.”
 - a. **Genesis 1:26–27** – *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.’”¹*
 - i. This Scripture speaks of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - b. **Genesis 2:7** – *“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground*

¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/nkjv/gen/1/26/t_conc_1026

*[body], and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [spirit]; and man became a living being [soul].”*²

- i. The human body is made up of the same seventeen chemical elements as dirt: hydrogen, oxygen, and fifteen other trace elements.

3. Give Your Life To God

- a. Pastor Gary said, “Even though man was created in the image and likeness of God, even though you bear the imprint of your creator, by virtue of man’s sin we have become estranged from God. We have wandered [away] from God. We have tried to do life on our own apart from God. ... The idea is that [we] need to be reconciled to [God], ... The one whose image [we] bear. ... When man sinned and rebelled against God... [what Adam and Eve and each successive generation has been saying is,] ‘God, I got this, I don’t need you.’ ... [God reconciles] us through the cross [of Jesus Christ]. ... Christ is the path of reconciliation. ... Because of sin we have become estranged and alienated from God. We don’t have fellowship, [friendship, or relationship] with him. ... God implemented a plan to reconcile man to himself through Christ that if we believe in what Jesus did by dying on a cross for our sins, we don’t have to be estranged from God any longer. We can return to our rightful owner.
 - i. **Colossians 1:21-22** – *“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation...”* (1984 NIV)
 - ii. **Ephesians 2:13** – *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”*
- b. Since we bear the image of God, we will only find our fulfillment and purpose in God through a relationship with God.
- c. God created us, loves us, and he redeemed us through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.
- d. We need to choose to give our life to God because he is our rightful owner.
- e. We need to make a decision to accept Jesus now in order to enjoy eternity later because that decision will determine where we spend eternity.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 2:9** – *“... eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Matthew 22:15-22** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.

² https://www.blueletterbible.org/nkjv/gen/2/7/t_conc_2007

2. Provide a brief understanding about who the Pharisees and the Herodians were, and the forming of an alliance for the purpose of trying to trap Jesus. (See #1a and #1b above)
3. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had when flattery caught them off-guard. (See #1c above)
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about Jesus' response to their scheme. (See #1d and #1e above)
5. You may want to focus the majority of your Bible study time reading and talking about Pastor Gary's comments about giving to God the things that are God's. (See #2 above)
6. Read and discuss [Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7](#). (See #2a and #2b above)
7. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments concerning what it means to give your life to God. (See #3 above)
8. Read and discuss [Colossians 1:21-22](#) and [Ephesians 2:13](#).
9. Read and discuss [1 Corinthians 2:9](#).
10. Discuss examples of the things the Lord has done in the lives of the people in your group that demonstrate the remarkable ways the Lord wants to bless Believers in this life and in eternity.
11. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)