



The Gospel of Matthew

“Rendering to Caesar and to God”
Matthew 22:15-22



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

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.

Tell us therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to give a poll tax to Caesar, or not?”

But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, “Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?”

“Show me the coin used for the poll-tax.” And they brought Him a denarius.

And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”

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.”

And hearing this, they marveled, and leaving Him, they went away.

Matthew 22:15-22



“Render to Caesar...”

Background

1. The “poll-tax”

- a direct tax on every Jewish adult in Judea; one denarius a year
- this tax was the most hated by the Jews – a potent symbol of political subjection



“Render to Caesar...”

Background

2. The Roman “religious” state

- pious Jews viewed paying tribute (taxes) to a pagan overlord as a form of idolatry
- the denarius was seen as an “idolatrous coin”



TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVS TVS / PONTIF MAXIMO

"Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus"

Pontifex Maximus = "high priest"

"Render to Caesar..."

Implications

1. The kingdom of heaven Jesus inaugurates is not firstly political
 - Jesus did not bring political deliverance
 - it coexists with pagan/secular kingdoms

"Render to Caesar..."

Implications

2. It is possible to be subject to pagan rulers and at the same time honor God
 - dutiful subjection to civil authority is a *means* of honoring God (c.f. 1 Peter 2:13-17)
 - civil authorities are established by God as His "ministers" for good (c.f. Romans 13:1-7)

"Render to Caesar..."

Implications

3. As subjects of civil authority, we have an obligation to pay what is due
 - "render" – pay back what is owed, for the benefits received

"Render to Caesar..."

Implications

4. The authority of civil government is limited
 - what belongs uniquely and ultimately to God does not belong to Caesar
 - disobedience to civil authority is necessary when it usurps God's unique authority

"Render to Caesar..."

Implications

5. We owe supreme allegiance and worship to God
 - beware of outward religion that masks inward corruption and hypocrisy
 - this allegiance and worship is essentially in and through Jesus Christ