

22:15

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians. These Herodians: they're strange folks. These are people that are a small group of Jews loyal to the various members of Herod's family. They had made their peace with the occupying Romans and they saw taxes as an appropriate way to fulfill the responsibility as good citizens. These are offspring of Esau. These Herodians, they're Idumeans and that is the New Testament equivalent to the Edomites. They were not necessarily Jews unless they married into that ethnicity.

But here they are now and they are being sent out by the Pharisees, an absolutely opposing group. The Herodians embrace the occupiers and the Pharisees hated the occupiers. Here, both the Pharisees and the Herodians dislike Jesus a great deal. But they also disliked each other, until now.

And they came to Jesus saying, Master, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth, and You don't care for any man: for You regard not the person of men. And so, not only did they embrace the occupiers but they were absolutely wonderful flatterers. As a matter of fact, Nicodemus tried this. "We know You're a teacher come from God. No man can do these miracles except God be with Him" (John 3:1-2). Jesus said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Jesus just... "Don't need your praise. Don't need your appraisal. I already heard from the sky that I'm the Son in whom He is well pleased. I don't need you telling Me anything good about Me."

Tell us therefore, What do You think? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? Now then, what law do you think the Herodians were referencing? If you're talking about Roman law, of course it was legal. Of course it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. It was required, which made it lawful. So what law do you suppose the Pharisees were inquiring about through these friends of theirs, the Herodians? Mosaic Law. "Is it ok with Moses if we pay taxes to Caesar?" And you know Jesus couldn't win here because if He says, "No, you shouldn't pay taxes to Caesar," the Herodians would get Him. If Jesus says, "Yes, you should pay taxes to Caesar," the Pharisees would get Him. There is no winning here and that's precisely what they wanted. Whichever side He chooses, He loses.

And by the way, this is not the same tax spoken of earlier (17:24).

And Jesus perceived their wickedness. Jesus has a knack for reading peoples' minds. Consistently. Like we just read it, where Peter comes marching into the house in Capernaum and Jesus says, "So what do you think, Peter? Who should they charge tax?" You remember when the Queen of Sheba went to Jerusalem to visit with Solomon and said he told her all her questions. "I know what you're thinking. You want to know this, this, this, and this." Here's Jesus doing that very same thing. Jesus perceived their wickedness. He wasn't one of these guys that said, "You know, I'm going to give you time to think about how you feel about Me. You might not be fully on My team here but I'm going to give you time to develop."

Why are you tempting Me, you hypocrites? The opposite of hypocrite in the Greek is sincerity. It was a trade term, and it has the idea of a person who makes vessels of clay. And at times they would be mishandled and cracked, and a person would daub it and fill the cracks with wax. And the only time you could tell that the pot was a good vessel was when the heat was applied, and if the wax melted off the pot you knew that you had a hypocritical vase. You didn't have a sincere one. You didn't have one that was without wax. Jesus is here saying, "I can see right through the cracks. I can see right through you. I know what you're thinking."

Show Me the tribute money. It's been said by Craig Bloomberg in his commentary that the former emperor Tiberius had inscribed on his coin "God and High Priest." So you have a picture of someone who thinks he's God on a coin.

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Shew Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a denarius. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And superscription is typically now today a math term dealing with that exponent. Here it's "Whose picture and writing over this picture is this on the image?"

So, they said unto Him (these Herodians said), **Caesar's**. So He's holding up a coin. It says "Caesar: God and High Priest." He says, "Whose coin is this?" They said, "It's **Caesar's**."

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Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. So He didn't say, "Yeah, pay the tax." That would have gotten Him in trouble with the Pharisees. Jesus is all too wise. He's the great Solomon. And so He holds it up and, He doesn't say, "Yeah, pay taxes." He says, "This is **Caesar's**. You ought to give it to him."

and unto God the things that are God's. This would have been a good time for the Lord to fix the economy or to talk about land ownership or about the evils of the occupation. Now would have been a good time for the Lord Jesus to talk about the illegitimate Roman government in God's promised land.

Could Jesus have done that? Certainly. He could have said, "Let's talk about this form of government. It's ridiculous. Who in the world made a senate?" He could have said, "Who made him God?" He could have talked about the constitutionality of certain things. Jesus could have at this point said, "Before you give Caesar what is his, you should fix this place. You should demand to be heard." He could have said, "No, before you pay this to Caesar you make sure they're not funding abortion. Before you give this to Caesar you make sure that they're not paying for Medicaid and Medicare for homosexuals that have a high, high, high probability of dying before they're 50 years old."

The Lord is not talking about tithing here. If the Lord holds up a coin and proves that you should be paying taxes by showing you someone's image and blasphemous title on a coin, what would Jesus be holding up in His other hand if He were saying, "Give to God the things that are God's?" A coin. If He were teaching on tithing He'd be holding up a coin with the image of God engraved on it. Anyone see a problem with that? That's the second commandment (Exodus 20).

So there's a deeper truth here. He is telling those Herodians something that is very deep. This is not about tithing. This is about ownership. "The coin: it has Caesar's name on it. If you don't want to pay taxes, quit playing with his currency. But then there is something else that has the image of God on it and it belongs to God and you give it to God." So He establishes the duty to pay tribute to Caesar because Caesar's image is on the coin. Jesus then uses that same leverage of ownership and the argument to give God what belongs to Him doesn't fit if this were about money. Why? Because there is no image or likeness upon any Jewish money. It would be blasphemy. Therefore, if Jesus is arguing for Caesar's ownership of coinage based on his image upon it, He is arguing for God's ownership of the Herodians who bare the image of God.

*Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. **You can't serve God and money.***

The Herodians are facing what Jesus said you'd be facing: a struggle between two gods: money or God, and you can't serve them both. And here Jesus is exemplifying that truth when He demands of these Herodians that they make a choice between Herod and Caesar, and God.

You see, there's a lot of people playing both sides. A lot of people are playing both sides.

And the Lord is stressing to the Herodians, "You go ahead and give God what's His. Right now you're not doing a good job of that." It's not that they weren't good taxpayers, it's that they were horrible at giving God what was His. In all three cases (verses 21, 23, and 34) the Lord is answering with two answers the one question of the Herodians. "Do we pay tribute?" And the Lord says, "Yes, in a way," and then He goes a step further and says, "Give yourselves to God." To the Herodians, to the Pharisees, to the

Sadducees, they ask one question; they get their answer and then they get the answer they need from the Lord.

In the parable before these three passages, everyone wanted to know, "How do I get to the feast? How do I get to the feast?" Jesus answers that question and then says, "Not only do you need to be at the feast, you need to be wearing the right clothes."

So, in four consecutive passages the Lord says, "Not only to the feast, you need to be in the right clothes." He says, "Not only do you need to pay tribute to Caesar, you need to pay tribute to God. Not only do you need to know that the marriage problem is taken care of at the resurrection, but there actually is a resurrection and you should see the need to be ready. Not only do you need to know that your first commandment is with God and you can feel good about that, but that will bleed over into the second area of your life, your life with your neighbor." And that is what Jesus does. He answers the questions that we have and then answers the questions we need to be answered.

This is the third time that I can find that Genesis is referenced in the book of Matthew. Here we are talking about Genesis 1:26 and 27, and the reader should see my commentary on Mark where I deal with what it means to be "made in His image" (appendix on Genesis).

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Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. If you want to know whether or not you're giving to God the things that are God's, here's your checklist right here. Now Paul used a trichotomy (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Moses used a dichotomy (Gen 2:7). Mark, the sister passage to this, records a four-way division from the mouth of Jesus ("heart, soul, mind, and strength"). So what's the point? Are we supposed to be able to say, "All right! Here are the parts of a human being." No, I think this is God's way of saying, "All of you." But He gives us three in this passage.

all thy heart The seat of the emotions belongs to Him. When my emotions and core run deeply into self-interest and so called "self-actualization," I quickly choose to corral my emotions and bend them within His stillness. Why? Because my emotions are His. His image. This is the God that wept at Lazarus' tomb. This is the God that was sorry He made man, Genesis 6. This is the God that said He could be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). So since His image is stamped on my emotions I cannot haphazardly say, "I'm making a decision to love my husband more." No. It is the initial decision. I cannot say, "I am making a decision to love my wife more. To love my president, my son, my daughter, my mom, my dad." No, no, no. It's not haphazard. It is an initial decision and the continual awareness of the necessity to love more. Because love, although it is an act of the **mind**, it is also an act of the **mind** that enables the emotions.

all thy mind. I do not allow myself to be amused. I give my **mind** to God for His use. If I find myself dwelling on the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes, wandering aimlessly from one temptation to the next, I must employ my mind because it is God's **mind**, not mine. His image is stamped on me. "Give to God the things that are God's." When I find that I am laying in bed and cannot sleep, and I move from one bill that needs to be paid to the next, it is not a meandering worry. I have to spend that time in focused, conscious decision to pray intelligently about each concern. Why? Because my brain, my **mind**, is God's. I do not spend time wafting into worlds of fantasy. No. My **mind** is God's and I give it to Him. Those moments are God's and I am not authorized to treat them like they are mine. I must commit my **mind** to being aware of sin and as Ephesians 5:14 says, I need to awake to righteousness. I must quickly depart all amusement or malmusement; all, no thinking or bad thinking, because it all leads to sin. I'm in a battle and so never in neutral. I have His image on me and I must therefore give to God what is God's. My **mind** and my thoughts are God's. And so I give to Caesar what is his and I give to God my **mind**, because the very intellect of God is reflected in my own **mind**. And that is why, if I desire through the power of Christ to do so, I can love the Lord my God with my whole **mind**.

All thy soul The **soul** is different than the conscious, cognitive thinking. In other words, we have our **mind** that does the thinking. Well then what is the **soul**? That is that thing that appears to be impulsive decision-making or judgment. The soul is that part of you that you can't help but let out when the times comes. This is the part of me that not necessarily thinking, the part of me that is not necessarily feeling, the part of me that I will absolutely come out with when the pressure is on: the **soul**. I will not be a flippant, independent decision-maker. I will not allow flippant independence of my judgment to occur and then blame it on the fact that I really just don't have the gift of leadership. I'm not going to be flippant in my judgments and then say, "I just don't have that special endowment of discernment." No, if I was busy giving to God what belonged to Him eventually every thought would be captive (2 Corinthians 10:5, and every impulse would be captive.

I can't anymore afford to blame the way that I react on my personality and neither can you. No, I will give this to the Lord. I will allow Him to actively lead me through the abandonment of unnecessary prejudices and innate fears that drive me to assume someone intends to harm me. I will consciously decide that God cares more about His church than I do. I will consciously decide that and I will train my soul, I will train my subconscious to know that God cares more about your sanctification than I do; your faithfulness to church than I do; your desire to be a godly spouse than I do, your desire to find the right spouse...He cares about those more than I do and I'm going to trust Him with that so that when I decide to act like an idiot on the road I won't have the freedom to say, "Sorry! I just have a temper. I'm sorry, that's just my personality." I'm going to decide to care about my wife more, my children more, but I'm going to realize that God cares about them more than I do; and I'm going to quit calling my innate, knee-jerk reactive sort of protection: I'm going to quit calling that just a sense of responsibility, and I'm going to realize that a lot of what I do as an impulse is based on fear and a lack of faith in God.