

Political and Spiritual Responsibilities

Jesus said: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's”

Matthew 22:15-22

“Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius,²⁰ and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?”

²¹ “Caesar's,” they replied. Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.”²² When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.”

The religious leaders asked Jesus *“Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”*

Israel was under the authority of the Colonial Roman Empire with the dictatorship of Caesar. Many thought that it was wrong to pay taxes to a foreign power. They considered themselves to be God's people and that God had given the land to Israel so how could they pay taxes to any other power, king, god or person? If Jesus would say they should pay then they may charge Him with disloyalty to Israel. If He said no, they could denounce Him to the Romans.

But Jesus Christ recognized the distinction between political and spiritual responsibilities. Caesar should be given taxes and all rightful political obedience. God should be given worship, obedience, service and the dedication of one's whole life.

First of all Jesus teaches us to give to Caesar what is Caesar's.

What belongs to the political power? What do we owe to the authorities?
What do we have to pay to the government?

The Government has established laws and regulations and we are told by Jesus to obey these rules.

There are rules about all sorts of taxes, income tax, property tax, sales tax, travel tax, inheritance tax, registration taxes, and building permits. Instead of complaining we must pay what belongs to the government.

We must respect the government. In Romans 13 we have specific teaching from God about our relationship to government.

¹ “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. ⁶ This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷ Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”

There is one exception and that is when there is conflict between what the Governments tells us to do and what God says in His Word. We have the incident in Acts 4:18 when Peter and John were commanded by the Court not to speak or teach in the Name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, *“Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”*

Daniel was told by the king of Babylon to stop praying to the living God. If he disobeyed the king's decree he would be thrown into the Lion's den.

Daniel 6:10, “Now when *Daniel* learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

Daniel disobeyed his king and this resulted in Daniel being thrown into the Lion’s den to be killed by the lions. But God shut the mouths of the lions and they did Daniel no harm.

Daniel testified in Daniel 6:21 *"O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."*

God is higher than any government and we must obey God above all kings, presidents and government officials. When we do so than God will protect us.

But if there is no conflict with God’s Word than we must obey the government because according to Romans 13 *"The authorities that exist have been established by God"*. **The Government is God’s servant.**

Secondly Jesus also teaches us that we must give to God what is God’s.

God requires our worship. Exodus 23:24 *"Do not bow down before their gods or *worship* them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. ²⁵ *Worship* the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, ²⁶ and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span."*

God requires our obedience. Jeremiah 7:23 *"but I gave them this command: *Obey* me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you."*

Obedience as it relates to giving

Obedience as i relates to going and sharing Christ

1 John 3:21, *"Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we *obey* his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he*

commanded us. ²⁴ Those who **obey** his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”

God requires our love.

Luke 10:27, “He answered: “**Love the Lord** your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ ; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

1 Corinthians 16:22, “ If anyone does not **love the Lord**--a curse be on him.”

God requires our trust

Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

God requires our service

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

“What does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to **serve the LORD** your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?”

Summary of what God requires of us:

Worship Him alone

Obedience to His Word

Fear the Lord

Trust Him

Walk in all His ways

Love Him

Serve Him with all your heart and with your soul

Observe the Lord’s commands and decrees