



Kingdom Preparation

Duplicity, Authority, and Sovereignty

Matthew 22:15-22

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/obey-the-government-for-gods-sake>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/render-unto-caesar>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/render-to-Caesar.html>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 22:15-22

1. Expect the World's Duplicity. Vv. 15-18
2. Respect the Government's Authority. Vv. 19-21a
3. Accept God's Sovereignty. V. 21

Matthew 22:15-22

Tribute to Caesar

22 And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

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

16 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.

17 Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"

18 But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?

19 Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius.

20 And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"

21 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."

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 22:15-22.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. Have you ever felt like you were caught in a 'no-win' situation, where no matter what you said or did, someone was going to be upset with you? How did you navigate it?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Expect the World's Duplicity. Vv. 15-18

2. Who were the Pharisees and the Herodians, and what does their coalition tell us about how the world reacts to God's authority and truth? In what way was their question intended to trap Jesus?

3. How did the Pharisees and Herodians use flattery in their attempt to trap Jesus? How can flattery be more dangerous to a believer than outright insult, and how do we develop discernment to see through flattery and traps?

4. In what specific areas of modern life (social media, work, etc.) do you feel the pressure of "entrapment" regarding your convictions? How does knowing that Jesus expects duplicity change the way we react when we feel unfairly targeted for our faith?

II. Respect the Government's Authority. Vv. 19-21a

5. Why does Jesus ask for a coin, and what is significant about His focus on the image on the coin? In what way does Jesus both legitimize and limit "Caesar" (government) when He says, "render to Caesar what is Caesars"?

6. What are some practical ways we "render to Caesar" today that go beyond just paying taxes? How does our conduct as citizens, even under imperfect leadership, act as a witness for or against the Kingdom of God? (Romans 13:1-7)

7. Why is it often difficult for believers to respect government authority when we disagree with its policies or leaders? At what point do we disobey government (Acts 4:19, 5:29) , and how should we go about doing that?

III. Accept God's Sovereignty. V. 21

8. If the coin belongs to Caesar because it bears his image, what does it mean for us to belong to God because we bear His image? What does "render to God what is God's" mean, and why is faith in Christ necessary to do that?

9. How does "rendering to God" provide us with a sense of peace that the world cannot touch? How does a deep belief in God's absolute sovereignty help us stay calm when life and earthly politics or governments seem chaotic?

10. What are the "things that are God's" that we often accidentally (or intentionally) try to keep for ourselves? Looking at your schedule, your finances, and your worries this week, which area needs to be "rendered" back to God's sovereign control right now?

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 22:15 entangle. The Pharisees hope that Jesus will say something to incriminate himself, which they can use to bring him before the Romans for execution.

Matt. 22:16 their disciples. Probably those in training to become full members of the brotherhood of the Pharisees, and perhaps deceptively sent to appear as less of a threat than their masters. Herodians. A loosely organized group that sought to advance the political and economic influence of the Herodian family (c. 37 B.C.–A.D. 93). Although the Herodians and the Pharisees were adversaries in regard to many political and religious issues, they join forces here to combat the perceived threat to their power and status.

Matt. 22:17 Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Taxes were a volatile issue in Israel. All of Rome's subjects, including the people of Israel, labored under the empire's heavy taxation. Some Jews believed that paying any tax to pagan rulers contradicted God's lordship over his people.

Matt. 22:18 Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Jesus' questioners reasoned that if he answered that it was right to pay taxes, he would lose favor with the tax-burdened people, but if he answered that it was wrong, they could accuse him of insurrection.

Matt. 22:19 On one side of the silver denarius was a profile of Tiberius Caesar, with the Latin inscription "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus" around the coin's perimeter. On the opposite side was a picture of the Roman goddess of peace, Pax, with the Latin inscription "High Priest."

Matt. 22:21 render to Caesar . . . and to God. Jesus is not establishing a political kingdom in opposition to Caesar, so his followers should pay taxes and obey civil laws. There are matters that belong to the realm of civil government, and there are other matters that belong to God's realm. Jesus does not here specify which matters belong in which realm, but many Christian ethicists today teach that, in general, civil government should allow freedom in matters of religious doctrine, worship, and beliefs about God, and the church should not attempt to use the power of government to enforce allegiance to any specific religious viewpoint. All forms of the Christian church throughout the world today support some kind of separation between matters of church and matters of state. By contrast, totalitarian governments usually try to suppress the church and subsume everything under the realm of the state. And some extreme Islamic movements have tried to abolish independent civil government and subsume everything under the control of Islamic religious leaders. Historically, when the church and state have become too closely aligned, the result most often has been the compromise of the church.