
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What does "Render to Caesar" mean?**

Matthew 22:15-22

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.

¹⁶ And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "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.

¹⁷ Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?

¹⁹ Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius.

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

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."

²² When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

Early in 2016 Ted Cruz was running as a candidate in the Presidential Primary race. His father, Rafael Cruz, calls himself an "evangelical Christian minister." He was interviewed on the Glen Beck program and Mr. Cruz used this Bible passage to teach that Christians were obligated to vote in political elections. He said, "Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's," means Christians are obligated to vote. What he did not say, but implied is: If Christians do not vote in political elections, they are sinning.

Since that interview on the radio, I have heard several people use this very same passage to teach the very same thing. Supposedly, "Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's," means Christians are obligated to participate in civil governmental politics.

The question we are asking this week is simply this: Is this true? Does Mt 22:21 teach Christians are obligated to vote and are they obligated to become politically active? The answer to these questions is simply "**NO.**" This passage teaches no such thing. As a matter of fact, Mr. Cruz and others are greatly torturing this passage when they force it to mean something it never taught in the first place.

I have two comments I wish to share concerning this passage.

First, what does this passage teach?

Clearly and simply, this passage is teaching that Christians should pay their taxes to the government. This is taught in other passages:

- Rom 13:6-7 teaches Christians must pay their taxes.
- 1 Pet 2:13-17 teaches Christians to submit to the king.

Paying taxes is one thing. Become publically active in civil government is another thing. Historically, Christians in the first century did not become involved in civil government. They obeyed the laws of Caesar until those laws conflicted with the laws of God. When Caesar commanded one thing and God commanded the opposite, Christians chose to obey God rather than Caesar (Acts 5:29).

Second, to whom does this passage apply?

In other words, does the passage about "rendering to Caesar the things which are Caesar's" apply only to Christians in America, or does it apply to all Christians in all nations?

Clearly what the Bible teaches to American Christians it teaches to all Christians in all nations. What Jesus said applies to Christians living under the Roman Empire. It applies to Christians living in Communistic countries. It applies to Christians living under dictatorships. If Jesus was teaching American Christians to vote and elect a political candidate for office, then it teaches the same thing to Chinese Christians living under the atheistic, communistic government of China. Mr. Cruz and others like him, are inadvertently teaching Christians must vote for atheistic, communistic rulers – if indeed Mt 22:21 is teaching Christians must become politically active in voting.

But the fact of the matter is: Jesus was not teaching this. Instead, Jesus and His apostles taught Christians to view themselves as "strangers and pilgrims" on this earth (1 Pet 2:11). "Strangers and pilgrims" do not become politically active in the country they are passing thru. Instead, they obey the laws which do not conflict with God's laws and they pay the taxes imposed upon them. They do not "entangle themselves with the affairs of this life" (2 Tim 2:4).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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