

Paying Tribute to Caesar

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.

Mark 12:13-17

¹³ Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in *His* words.

¹⁴ When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth.

Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?

¹⁵ Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?”

But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “**Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.**” ¹⁶ So they brought *it*.

And He said to them, “**Whose image and inscription is this?**” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”

¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said to them, “**Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.**”

And they marveled at Him.

Luke 20:20-26

²⁰ So they watched *Him*, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor.

²¹ Then they asked Him, saying, “Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth:

²² Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

²³ But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, “**Why do you test Me?** ²⁴ **Show Me a denarius.**

Whose image and inscription does it have?”

They answered and said, “Caesar’s.”

²⁵ And He said to them, “**Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.**”

²⁶ But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent.

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Discussion Questions: Paying Tribute to Caesar

After conducting some research, we have discovered that three Synoptic Gospels refer to the act of Paying Tribute to Caesar. Specifically, these Gospels are Matthew 22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17, and Luke 20:20-26. Upon examining the verses, it is evident that Matthew, Mark, and Luke have all included a retelling of the same event.

1. The plot. (Read the verse outlined in blue: Matthew 22:15, Mark 12:13, and Luke 20:20) **Based on the three similar verses, who were the spies mentioned in Luke's verse?** The Herodians.
2. **Based on these three verses what is the plot the Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus with?** The Pharisees devised a cunning plan to trap Jesus by asking him a tricky question regarding the support of Jews in a potential revolt against the Romans. They hoped that Jesus would provide a response that would incriminate him and give them a reason to turn him over to the Roman authorities for execution. Moreover, the Pharisees had a backup plan in case their first attempt failed. They intended to get Jesus to say something disloyal to the Jewish people, which they could use to denounce him publicly. The ultimate goal of the Pharisees was to use Jesus' words against him and discredit him in the eyes of the people.
3. **Who were the Herodians?** A sect of Jews known as the Herodians became recognized for their favorable view of the Herod dynasty. This group believed that Roman rule, with its Greek influence, would bring benefits to their way of living. The Herodians and Pharisees, had opposing political beliefs, but they found a common stance in their mutual dislike of Jesus. Due to their alignment with Roman culture, the Pharisees frequently referred to the Herodians as the "lost sheep of Israel." The Herodians hoped to trick Jesus into uttering something that would indicate his rebelliousness against Roman rule, so they could deliver him to the governor for trial.
4. **Who was the governor or Tetrarch at the time of Jesus in Galilee?** Herod Antipas.
5. The set up. (Read the verse outlined in red: Matthew 22:16, Mark 12:14a, and Luke 20:21) **Before they ask Jesus their question, what are the Pharisees and Herodians attempting to do in these verses?** The Pharisees and Herodians, teamed up to try and trap Jesus in his own words. They sent their disciples to him with a common purpose and began by flatteringly complimenting Jesus on his intelligence and his knowledge of God's word. They pretended to be genuinely interested in his teachings, but their true goal was to deceive him.
6. The trap. (Read the verse outlined in black: Matthew 22:17, Mark 12:14b-15a, and Luke 20:22) **Why is this question a trap?** They were hoping to trap him by asking him a question about whether it was lawful to pay Caesar taxes. If he said yes, the Pharisees would leverage this against Jesus, and say he is a traitor to the Jews, and if he said no, the Herodians would say Jesus would be seen as a revolutionary.

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Discussion Questions: Paying Tribute to Caesar

7. Jesus calls them out! (Read the verse outlined in green: Matthew 22:18-19, Mark 12:15b-16a, and Luke 20:23-24a) Jesus was aware of their malicious intent. **Why does Jesus ask, "Why do you test Me?"** Jesus does this to expose their true, envious motives. Read Matthew 27:17-18. Pilate understood Jesus was being handed over to him by the Jews out of envy. Similarly, the Pharisees were motivated by jealousy towards Jesus' widespread acceptance and popularity.
8. Jesus calls them hypocrites. **Why are they hypocrites?** The Pharisees and Herodians posed a question to Jesus, not with a genuine desire to gain knowledge or seek wisdom from him, but with the sinister motive of trapping him in his own words and causing him to falter. Their intent was to manipulate Jesus into making a statement that would undermine his authority and give them leverage over him. This was a common tactic used by those who opposed Jesus and sought to discredit his teachings.
9. Jesus sets up his contradiction. Jesus asks for a denarius. **What is a denarius?** A denarius is approximately the amount of one day's wage for a common working man.
10. Jesus uses the Roman coin (Read the verse outlined in purple: Matthew 22:20-21a, Mark 12:16b, and Luke 20:24b). **Whose image is on the coin?** The image on the denarius coin during the time of Jesus' ministry was Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor who reigned from 14 AD to 37 AD? And that the coin was made of approximately 3.4 grams of silver?
11. **What does the inscription "TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS," on the coin say?** It is worth noting that in the gospels, the answer given to the question of whether or not to pay taxes was simply "Caesar," with no mention of the inscription on the coin itself. The denarius in question bears an inscription that reads "TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS." Which means, "Tiberius Caesar, Son of the Divine Augustus. This essentially claims divinity for Tiberius Caesar's stepfather, Augustus, who is referred to as the "Divine Augustus." This attribution of godhood is then passed down to Tiberius Caesar, who is referred to as "Son of the Divine Augustus" and "Augustus," or "majestic." Thus, this coin essentially confers Augustus' authority as a god to Tiberius Caesar. Moreover, the other side of the coin states "PONTIF MAXIM," which means "highest priest" and implies imperial authority over worship.
12. Jesus' avoids entrapment and does not entangle his words. (Read the verse outlined in grey: Matthew 22:21b, Mark 12:17a, and Luke 20:25). **Why is Jesus' response not a trap?** By responding, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and "Render to God the things that are God's," Jesus made it abundantly clear that he believed in the importance of both following earthly laws and recognizing the ultimate authority of God. This demonstrates Jesus's incredible wisdom and His ability to navigate complex situations with grace and intelligence. It shows that even in the most

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challenging circumstances, one can use careful thought and consideration to arrive at a wise and thoughtful response.

13. Open ended questions. **What are the things that are Caesar's?** While Jesus never gave a clear-cut answer to this question, many scholars believe that Caesar's things refer to the authority that governments or individuals hold over others. For instance, coins bearing Caesar's image were created by the government and therefore belong to them. However, in John 19:11, Jesus reminds Pilate that his authority is only given to him by God, which implies that God's authority is higher than that of man. Even Paul instructs the church to submit to governing authorities in Romans 13:1, but the submission to man is limited. Therefore, it appears that while Jesus acknowledges the legitimacy of human government, he also reminds us that ultimately, God's authority reigns supreme.
14. **What are the things that are God's?** It is widely accepted that everything in existence belongs to Him, and this is indeed accurate. According to Genesis 1:27, anything that bears the likeness of God is undeniably His. As His beloved creations, we are entrusted with the responsibility of returning to Him what is rightfully His. This is further emphasized in Acts 5:29 and Ephesians 5:20-24, where we are called to submit to one another as we do to God. It is essential to understand that the level of submission we offer to God is the same level we should extend to each other.
15. They marveled at Jesus. (Read the verse outlined in orange: Matthew 22:22, Mark 12:17b, and Luke 20:26) **Why were the Pharisees and Herodians marveled?** The Pharisees and Herodians were left speechless by Jesus' response to their question, causing them to marvel. They had attempted to entangle him in his words by posing a trap question, but Jesus' wise and profound answer impressed them instead.

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Discussion Questions: Paying Tribute to Caesar

1. The plot. (Read the verses outlined in blue: Matthew 22:15, Mark 12:13, and Luke 20:20) **Based on the three similar versus, who were the spies mentioned in Luke's verse?** _____

2. **Based on these three verse what is the plot the Pharisees are trying trap Jesus with?** _____

3. **Who were the Herodians?** _____

4. **Who was the governor or Tetrarch at the time of Jesus in Galilee?** _____

5. The set up. (Read the verses outlined in red: Matthew 22:16, Mark 12:14a, and Luke 20:21) **Before they ask Jesus their question, what are the Pharisees and Herodians attempting to do in these verses?** _____

6. The trap. (Read the verses outlined in black: Matthew 22:17, Mark 12:14b-15a, and Luke 20:22) **Why is this question a trap?** _____

7. Jesus calls them out! (Read the verses outlined in green: Matthew 22:18-19, Mark 12:15b-16a, and Luke 20:23-24a) Jesus was aware of their malicious intent. **Why does Jesus ask, "Why do you test Me?"** _____

8. Jesus calls them hypocrites. **Why are they hypocrites?** _____

9. Jesus sets up his contradiction. Jesus asks for a denarius. **What is a denarius?** _____

10. Jesus uses the Roman coin (Read the verses outlined in purple: Matthew 22:20-21a, Mark 12:16b, and Luke 20:24b). **Whose image is on the coin?** _____

11. **What does the inscription "TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS," on the coin say?**
The other side of the coin states "PONTIF MAXIM," _____

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Discussion Questions: Paying Tribute to Caesar

12. Jesus' avoids entrapment and does not entangle his words. (Read the verses outlined in grey: Matthew 22:21b, Mark 12:17a, and Luke 20:25). **Why is Jesus' response not a trap?** _____

13. Open ended questions. **What are the things that are Caesar's?**

14. **What are the things that are God's?** _____

15. They marveled at Jesus. (Read the verses outlined in orange: Matthew 22:22, Mark 12:17b, and Luke 20:26) **Why were the Pharisees and Herodians marveled?**

Paying Tribute to Caesar Quiz Questions

1. Who were the spies who pretended to be righteous?
 - a. The Sadducees
 - b. The Romans
 - c. The Pharisees
 - d. The Herodians
2. What type of coin did they show Jesus that was used to pay for Roman taxes?
 - a. Denarii
 - b. Drachma
 - c. Denarius
 - d. Dinar
3. Who were the Herodians?
 - a. They were Herod worshipers.
 - b. They were a group that believe Roman rule with Greek influence would bring them benefits.
 - c. They were a group that believed Jewish rule with Roman influence would bring them benefits.
 - d. They were a group that believed Roman rule with Jewish influence would bring the benefits.
4. What were the Pharisees and Herodians trying to accomplish when they came to Jesus?
 - a. They wanted to see if he was the true son of God.
 - b. They wanted to see if Jesus would be willing to join them in prayer.
 - c. They pretended to be genuinely interested in his teachings, but their true goal was to deceive him.
 - d. They were looking to join with his disciples on His ministry.
5. Whose image was on the coin?
 - a. Jesus
 - b. August Caesar
 - c. Herod Antipas
 - d. Tiberius Augustus

6. What was the question the Pharisees and Herodians asked Jesus to try and trap him?
 - a. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?
 - b. Is it unlawful to work on the Sabbath?
 - c. Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?
 - d. What shall we do to inherit eternal life?
7. What answer did Jesus provide so he would not be caught in the Pharisees' trap question?
 - a. Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.
 - b. Render to God the things that are God's.
 - c. Either A or B
 - d. Both A and B
8. What does the inscription said on the coin?
 - a. In God we trust
 - b. Tiberius Caesar, Son of the Divine Augustus
 - c. Caesar is God
 - d. Caesar is the one true God.
9. What are things that are Caesar's?
 - a. The enslaved Jewish nation
 - b. Everything they conquered.
 - c. Coins bearing Caesar's image.
 - d. The people's trust and loyalty.
10. What are things that are God's?
 - a. Act of giving to the needy with trumpets.
 - b. Prayer in the streets and synagogues to be honored by others.
 - c. Practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.
 - d. Anything that bears the likeness of God.
11. How did the Pharisees and Herodians feel after Jesus' responded their question?
 - a. Disappointed
 - b. Marveled
 - c. Happy
 - d. Confused

Paying Tribute to Caesar Quiz Answers

1. Who were the spies who pretended to be righteous?
 - a. The Sadducees
 - b. The Romans
 - c. The Pharisees
 - d. The Herodians Matthew 22:15, Mark 12:13, Luke 20:20**
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 - a. They were Herod worshipers.
 - b. They were a group that believe Roman rule with Greek influence would bring them benefits. Question 3 in student guide.**
 - c. They were a group that believed Jewish rule with Roman influence would bring them benefits.
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 - a. They wanted to see if he was the true son of God.
 - b. They wanted to see if Jesus would be willing to join them in prayer.
 - c. They pretended to be genuinely interested in his teachings, but their true goal was to deceive him. Matthew 22:16, Mark 12:14, Luke 20:21**
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 - a. Jesus
 - b. August Caesar Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:16, Luke 20:23**
 - c. Herod Antipas
 - d. Tiberius Augustus

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- Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Matthew 22:17, Mark 12:14-15, Luke 20:22**
 - Is it unlawful to work on the Sabbath?
 - Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?
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 - Tiberius Caesar, Son of the Divine Augustus Question 11 in student guide.**
 - Caesar is God
 - Caesar is the one true God.
9. What are things that are Caesar's?
- The enslaved Jewish nation
 - Everything they conquered.
 - Coins bearing Caesar's image. Question 13 Student guide.**
 - The people's trust and loyalty.
10. What are things that are God's?
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 - Prayer in the streets and synagogues to be honored by others.
 - Practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.
 - Anything that bears the likeness of God. Question 14 Student guide.**
11. How did the Pharisees and Herodians feel after Jesus' responded their question?
- Disappointed
 - Marveled Matthew 22:22, Mark 12:17, Luke 20:26**
 - Happy
 - Confused