

The Question about Paying Taxes

(St Matthew 22:15–22)

The Pharisees went off and made a plan to trap Jesus with questions. Then they sent to him some of their disciples and some members of Herod's party.

“Teacher,” they said, “we know that you tell the truth. You teach the truth about God's will for people, without worrying about what others think, because you pay no attention to anyone's status. Tell us, then, what do you think? Is it against our Law to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor, or not?”

Jesus, however, was aware of their evil plan, and so he said, “You hypocrites! Why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin for paying the tax!” They brought him the coin, and he asked them, “Whose face and name are these?”

“The Emperor's,” they answered.

So Jesus said to them, “Well, then, pay to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay to God what belongs to God.”

When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.



Understanding the Story

Have you ever heard your parents or other adults complaining about having to pay taxes? You probably have. Even though taxes are important—they help pay for roads, hospitals, the fire department, and many other services that we rely on—most people are not too fond of having to pay taxes.

Have you ever paid taxes? Well, it might surprise you to learn that kids pay taxes, too!

Do you get an allowance from your parents? Have you ever received some money as a birthday gift from your grandparents? Have you ever bought anything with your very own money?

If you answered, “Yes” to any of these questions, you have probably paid some taxes. Did you know that every time you buy something, you pay a sales tax? I wonder what Jesus would say if we asked Him whether kids should pay taxes? That is a tough question. If He answered, “Yes,” all the kids would probably get mad at Him! If he answered, “No,” the politicians who make our laws would probably get mad at Him because our city, our province, and our country need that money to operate. It seems that someone would get mad at Him no matter which way He answered! It looks like a no-win situation, doesn't it?

That is more or less what happened in today's Gospel reading from St Matthew's Gospel. In Jesus' day, the people were required to pay a tax to the Roman Emperor (Caesar). It was not a very popular tax with the people. One day some religious leaders came to Jesus and asked Him if he thought the people should pay the tax. They were actually trying to trick Jesus, because they knew if he said, “Yes,” the people would be angry. But if he said, “No,” he would get into trouble with the authorities.

In order to prove His point, what did Jesus ask the Pharisees to show Him?

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He asked them, “Whose face and name are these?” And they answered:

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Who's face and name is on the Canadian Dollar?

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Jesus said “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's” in other words, “pay to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay to God what belongs to God.” If Jesus lived in Canada today He would say, “pay to the Queen what belongs to the Queen” to prove His point.

But what about God? Jesus also said “Give to God what belongs to God.” The Bible says that we were created by God and that we were created in the image of God. If we are created by God, and we were created in His image, we must belong to Him. That means we must give ourselves to Him!



