

## Matthew 22:15-22 A Trick Question About Taxes

Introduction: In our text today we see men come to Jesus with a question. But the question was not for real. It was a trap.

### I. The Jewish leaders who set the trap.

- A. They knew that Jesus would come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover and planned to arrest Him as soon as He hit town. (But when Jesus came to town several thousand Jews came with Him proclaiming Him the Messiah.)
- B. On the second day they would have arrested Him, but they couldn't.
  - 1. First, Jesus went into the temple, overthrew the money tables, and drove out those who sold animals.
  - 2. Hundreds of lame and blind people came to Jesus for healing.
  - 3. The children in the temple proclaimed Him as Messiah.
  - 4. The Jewish leaders dared not touch Him.
- C. On the third day they tried to arrest Him but failed.
  - 1. They challenged His authority in the temple.
  - 2. But He turned their challenge to His favor and embarrassed them before the crowds.
  - 3. He followed with a series of parables that embarrassed them all the more before the crowds.
- D. They turned and left and called an emergency meeting to see if they could come up with a plan that would stop Jesus, verse 15.
  - 1. They had a meeting of the minds.
  - 2. They came up with a question that they felt sure would trap Jesus.

### II. The group sent to ask the trick question.

- A. They sent a group of young Pharisees, verse 16.
  - 1. They knew that if they went themselves Jesus would be on guard.
  - 2. They thought that by sending these young men Jesus would not suspect a thing.
  - 3. These were the brightest young trainees.
- B. Along with the young Pharisees, they sent a few Herodians.
  - 1. Most Jews hated the Romans and resisted them in any way that they could and get by with it.
  - 2. But the Herodians felt that it was to the Jews advantage to make friends with the people who ruled over them and they organized to promote cooperation with Herod and to seek his favors.
  - 3. They all went together as though they were all Pharisees.
- C. They pretended to respect Him as a prophet of God, verse 16.
  - 1. We think you are a truthful man and a true prophet.
  - 2. We know that you do not let men sway your thinking.
  - 3. We know that if there is anybody brave enough to stand up to the Roman authorities, it's you.
  - 4. We respect your opinion and we respect you.
- D. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? Verse 17.
  - 1. They were not talking about civil law, but God's law.
  - 2. Is it Scriptural? Is it pleasing to God?

### III. The possible answers anticipated.

- A. Tiberius Caesar was known to be a cruel, vicious, ungodly, immoral man.
  - 1. Is it pleasing to God to support such an ungodly man and help finance his ungodly conduct?
  - 2. It was almost certain that Jesus would say, "No, it is not pleasing to God to pay taxes to Caesar."
- B. This is what the Pharisees wanted Him to say.
  - 1. This would anger the Herodians and they would run right straight to Herod and tell him that Jesus committed treason.
  - 2. The Romans would then arrest Jesus and kill Him.

- C. But in case Jesus should answer “Yes” this answer would be used against Jesus to turn the masses against Him. (Then they could arrest Him.)

IV. The surprising answer which Jesus gave.

- A. These young Pharisees felt so smug and proud of themselves. (They had played their part well and they were sure that Jesus did not suspect a thing.)
- B. Can you imagine their surprise when Jesus said, “Why tempt me, ye hypocrites?” (He knew their wickedness and knew their wicked plot.) verse 18.
- C. While they stood there in shock He said, “Show me the tribute money,” verse 19.
  - 1. They brought Him a penny. (A Roman denarius; silver)
  - 2. He asked, “Whose image and whose superscription?”
  - 3. They said, “Caesar's”, verse 21.
  - 4. Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.”
- D. Thus with His answer Jesus was not in trouble with the Romans nor with the multitude.
- E. The young men marveled at Jesus.
  - 1. They just could not believe He had escaped their trap, but He did.
  - 2. They still refused to accept Him as Messiah, but they respected His mental prowess.

V. The greatest trick of all.

- A. They had been in the presence of one who loved them and would have saved their souls.
  - 1. He would keep them out of the fires of hell and take them to heaven.
  - 2. They had such a grand opportunity to seek Him and be saved but they didn't.
- B. They had let the Devil trick them and cheat them out of salvation.

VI. Tricksters of our day.

- A. There are still tricksters around today.
  - 1. They dream up all manner of questions that are designed to put Christianity in a bad light.
  - 2. They would like to silence forever the Bible and the churches.
- B. But the Devil and all his plots and schemes cannot stop Jesus.
  - 1. They cannot stop sinners from turning to Jesus.
  - 2. They cannot stop Jesus from saving the sinners who trust in Him.
  - 3. They cannot stop the voices of the people who trust in Jesus.
  - 4. They cannot stop the people who love Jesus and keep them from serving Him.

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