



RESTORING... Our Worldview

Day 1—What Is the Intent?

The cross looms ever nearer. In conversation and through parables, Jesus has indicted the Jewish religious leaders. Irate, they are seeking an opportunity to silence Him. The Herodians (aligned with Rome) and the Pharisees (normally at odds with the Herodians) send men to lure Jesus into a verbal trap. Read Matthew 22:15-22. The question, cloaked in flattery, is actually intended to elicit an answer that will either put Jesus at odds with Rome (if He condemns the tax) or with the Jewish people (if He supports it). When we come to Jesus with questions, what is our intent? Pray your intent will be to know the truth and then to honor, serve, and obey.

Day 2—What Is the Key Issue?

The Jews of Jesus' day were under Roman rule, and it is not difficult to understand why they hated it. Taxation was just one issue that caused much angst and ire. Read Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; and Luke 20:20-26. Notice how Jesus' answer diffuses a potentially explosive situation. Is this story simply a contest of wits, with Jesus winning royally, or is there more? Is it important that there are NO legitimate grounds for Jesus being condemned to death, either by Roman or Jewish law? Is it appropriate to use this text as a stepping stone to discussion of secular and sacred or of church and state/government? Pray the Spirit will guide our study.

Day 3—Authority

Jesus' authority was often questioned. The Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and others argued with Him, each group trying to protect its views. Some guarded their political positions; others were zealous for their religious traditions and beliefs. Is this so different from today? As we consider how we vote when elections are held, it is good for each of us to consider what Scripture teaches about authority. To whom do we yield our will and offer our allegiance? Does God give authority to people and governing officials? Ponder Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 4:1-3, 13-20, 23-31; Romans 13:1, 6-8; Hebrews 13:7, 17; and 1 Peter 2:13-17. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4; pray!

Day 4—Two Kingdoms/ Realms

Sacred/secular, church/state, God/government... how are we to view these in relationship to each other? Is Jesus addressing this in Matthew 22:15-22? Jesus speaks much about the kingdom of God (*Matthew 4:17; 6:33; 13:44-45; 18:1-5; 22:2; 25:34; Luke 17:21; John 18:36*). We understand God's reign as here and now and yet to come. And although our limited understanding and imperfect expression cannot fully explain God's reign, might we justifiably ponder two realms: God's reign in the hearts/lives of those who trust Him and the secular state or government as another venue for the exercise of God's sovereignty? Use Matthew 6:9-10 to form your prayer.

Day 5—Whose Likeness Do You Bear?

Read Matthew 22:15-22. Roman coins bore the image of the emperor on one side and, on the other, his name. The coins were signs or symbols of the monarch's reign or kingship. Jesus and His audience had no trouble identifying the one whom the coin honored and whose image it reflected. The NIV Life Application Study Bible footnotes challenge us to relate this to our lives: "Our lives, which bear God's image, belong to God. Are you giving God what is rightfully His?" (*Tyndale/Zondervan, 1986, p1762*). Read 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 and pray.

Day 6—Are We Surprised: God Uses the Secular for Sacred Purposes

Does the oft quoted Romans 8:28 have relevance in your life, in history, today? Can God use even that which is not consecrated or dedicated to Him? Consider God's placement of Joseph and Moses in the Egyptian court (*Genesis, Exodus*), Daniel in Babylon, and Cyrus as God's instrument in the Persian court. Read 2 Chronicles 36:20-23; Isaiah 45:1-7; and Galatians 4:4-5. Consider that the imperial or poll tax, referenced in Matthew 22:15-22, helped finance the Roman roads on which Paul and others traveled as they lived out Acts 1:8. Bask in the wonder of God's sovereignty and ability to use governments and even us for God's purposes. Pray.

Day 7—Sacred?

In Scripture and in the world and our lives today, God works in ways we cannot always immediately see or discern to accomplish God's will and purpose. It is God's presence that can make the common extraordinary and the secular sacred. God can use even that which is not yielded to God, but how lovely it is to be able to offer—for God's purpose, pleasure, and glory—everything God has first given us. Read Psalm 33:8-11; Isaiah 43:7; 46:8-10; Romans 12:1-2; and 1 Corinthians 10:31. Pray Havergal's lyrics: "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee... Take my will and make it Thine... Take my heart—it is Thine own; it shall by Thy royal throne..."