

# Christ's Teaching Concerning Civil Government Matthew 22:15-22

by R.A. Torrey

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*Jesus teaches that we should render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but not our loyalty or worship, and that we should render unto God the things that are God's.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 22:15

**Topics:** "Authority of Christ", "Civil Government"

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## Description

R.A. Torrey explores Christ's teachings on civil government in Matthew 22:15-22, focusing on the conspiracy of the Pharisees and Herodians against Jesus. He highlights their hypocrisy and cunning as they attempt to trap Jesus with a question about paying tribute to Caesar. Jesus skillfully navigates their trap, teaching that while we owe duties to civil authorities, we must also render to God what is rightfully His. The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing our obligations to both God and government, and the ultimate authority of Christ over all. Torrey concludes by reflecting on the folly of those who marvel at Jesus yet do not follow Him.

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## Transcript

### DISCOVERY OF THE FACTS

1. The Pharisees and Herodians Conspiring Against Christ, vv. 15-17 Who were the Pharisees? Who were the Herodians? Were they friends to one another? What had they in common? Was this the first occasion upon which these two parties conspired together against the object of their common hate? (Mark 3:6.) What does the fact of these two hostile parties plotting together show the character of their hatred to have been? What did they attempt to do? Is that ever attempted nowadays?

Is there much chance of succeeding in the attempt? Who were the ones who were "entangled" before this conversation was over? If one attempts today to make a tangle out of the words of Christ who is most likely to get entangled? When Jesus Christ had controversies with men who always came out ahead? Will it always be so? Is it best then to have any controversies with Him? What is it best to do with Him and His words? Did Jesus escape the hatred and plots of men and strife of tongues by His wisdom and goodness?

Will any amount of goodness and wisdom on our part enable us to escape the hatred and plots of men? (John 15:18-20.) Was it an occasion of any grief to Jesus that He was obliged to suffer this contradiction of

sinner against Himself? (Ps. 69:3, 4, 19, 20.) Of what was this "counsel" which they took against Jesus a partial fulfillment? (Ps. 2:2.) Which involves the greater guilt, the sin committed in haste and thoughtlessness, or that which, like this, is deliberate and planned? (Compare Micah 2:1.)

What was the plan they hit upon to carry out their nefarious purposes? Was the plot skillfully laid? How did they open their conversation? What does this show them to have been? Are such tactics employed nowadays? What shall we say of the one who employs them? (Ps. 5:9, 10.) Were they telling the truth in saying, "Thou art true"? (1 John 5:20; John 14:6.) Were they telling the truth in saying: "Thou teachest the way of God in truth"? Were they telling the truth in saying: "Thou regardest not the person of men"? (Gal. 2:6; Jas. 2:1.)

Should we regard the person of men or shape our teaching or words to please them? (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4.) If all these statements about Jesus Christ were true what was there out of the way in their making them? Is it true that "the Devil never lies so foully as when he tells the truth"? While calling Him "Master" and lauding Him so abundantly, what were they trying to prove Him and do with Him? Are there any today who speak in great praise of Jesus while in fact they are trying to prove Him an imposter and do away with His authority?

What question did these plotters put to Jesus? If Jesus answered "No" to this question, whose enmity would He incur and so bring ruin upon His own head? (Luke 23:1, 2.) If He answered "Yes," whose enmity would He incur? Did it not seem as if these wily flatterers had Jesus in a corner? Did He find any difficulty in escaping the horns of the dilemma on one of which they expected to impale Him? In whose discomfiture will every attempt to contend with Him result? Where might these Jews have found a direct answer to this question whether it was lawful to pay tribute to a king by whom they had been subjected? (Jer. 27:12, 13.)

2.

The Pharisees and Herodians Confounded by Jesus, vv. 18-22 Did Jesus see the snare? Did Jesus see anything besides the snare? (Compare Rev. 2:23; John 2:25; Mark 2:8; Luke 9:47; 20:23; Mark 12:15.) Can the hypocrite put on any mask that Jesus cannot see through? What did He call them? Was that courteous? Of what recent statement of their own did He prove the truth by this utterance? What question did He put to them? Do all hypocrites tempt Christ? Is it serious business to tempt Him? (1 Cor. 10:9.)

How did He answer the main question? What was the point of this answer? By accepting and carrying the coinage of the Roman empire what else did they accept? By accepting the Roman government what responsibility did they accept? They had asked if they should "give tribute unto Cæsar"; what verb did He use in answering them? What does "render" mean? (See Luke 4:20; 9:42, where same word is used in the Greek.) Paying tribute, then, was simply what? What did Jesus teach we are to pay back unto Cæsar?

What are the things that rightly belong to Cæsar or the civil government? (Ro. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17.) What limitation of the duty of obedience to civil rulers did Jesus state? (Compare Acts 4:19; 5:29; Dan. 3:16-18; 6:10.) What were they to render to God? Is it as important to "render unto God the things that are God's" as to render unto Cæsar or any other man the things that are his? What are the things that are rightfully God's? (Matt. 22:37; 4:10; Mal. 1:6-8; 3:8-10; John 14:1; Dan. 6:23.)

By what had Jesus proved that the tribute money rightfully belonged to Cæsar (v. 20)? Whose image is upon us? (Gen. 1:27; 9:6; Jas. 3:9.) To whom then do we rightfully belong? If then we do not pay ourselves back to God what are we doing? (Mal. 3:8.) Are you rendering unto God the things which are God's? What was the effect of Jesus' answer upon His questioners? (Compare vv. 33, 46.) What did they

do as they marveled? What would have been the proper sequel of marveling? Does marveling at Jesus even nowadays always lead to following Jesus?

Do you marvel at Him? Do you follow Him or leave Him? Are there many in whose eyes Christ is marvelous and yet not "precious"? Is it possible for us to discomfit our enemies as Jesus did His? (Luke 21:15; Acts 6:10.) Where is it said the Pharisees went? Whither did "their way" lead? (Prov. 14:12.)

#### CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHINGS

##### 1. Jesus

###### (1). What He was:

True, 16; divine, 18; compare Rev. 2:23 and 2 Chron. 6:30; an object of bitter hatred, 15-18; an object of man's cunning and unscrupulous plots, 15-18; marveled at even by His enemies, 22.

###### (2). What He did:

Taught the way of God in truth, 16; knew men's hearts, 18; penetrated men's plots, 18; exposed their wickedness and hypocrisy, 18; rebuked their wickedness in plainest and most scathing language, 18; skillfully escaped the most cunningly devised snare, 17-21; confounded His enemies, 17-21; forced His enemies to condemn themselves, 17-21.

###### (3). What He did not:

Care for any man's favor, 16; regard any man's person, 16; fall a prey to any man's cunning, 16-21.

##### 2. The Pharisees

###### (1). Their hatred of Christ:

Took counsel against Him, 15; tried to ensnare Him, 15; deliberately plotted His death, 15-17; conspired with their own enemies in order to destroy Him, 16.

###### (2). Their cunning, 17.

###### (3). Their hypocrisy:

Praised Him with their lips while plotting His ruin in their hearts, 16; asked His advice while only desiring His destruction, 17.

###### (4). Their discomfiture:

Their hypocrisy unmasked, 18; their wickedness rebuked, 18; their plot upset, 19-21; themselves convicted and confounded, 19-22.

###### (5). Their folly:

Marveled at Jesus but did not follow Him, 22.

###### (6). Their ruin:

They "went their way," 22, compare Prov. 14:12.

### 3. Man's Duty

Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, 21; render unto God the things which are God's, 21.

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