

It's A Trap!

Description

Matthew 22:15-22.

The Pharisees (Jewish sect) and the Herodians (Hellenistic Jewish sect) came together to trip up Jesus. Both groups wanted political freedom from the Romans, but the Pharisees wanted the kingdom of David restored, and the Herodians wanted a member of the Herodian dynasty on the throne. Turning the public against Jesus was their aim.

Despite the talk of taxes, today's scripture passage focuses on righteousness. Civil righteousness is earned by what we do in society: pay taxes, obey the law, vote in elections, and so on.

Spiritual righteousness, however, cannot be earned. Our relationship with God is determined not by what we do—behave, fly a flag, look a certain way—but by God's love in Christ. These differences extend to our citizenship on earth and heaven; there are different obligations.

Jesus points out that we owe the state what is demanded of us as citizens of our communities (e.g., taxes). Jesus also points out that we are to give to God what is God's as citizens of the kingdom of God.

Sometimes these two intersect beautifully. Sometimes they do not. We must lean into Christ to continually learn how to interact with earthly authorities while maintaining who we are as Christians.

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