

## INTRODUCTION

Tom Cruise and Cuba Gooding, Jr. starred in the 1996 movie, "Jerry McGuire." Tom Cruise played a sports agent with only one client. Cuba Gooding, Jr. played an NFL receiver who made the line, "Show me the money, Jerry! Show me the money!" famous. In our passage today, the religious leaders ask Jesus a trick question about paying taxes and He responds by saying, "Show me the money!"

We're now in a section of Matthew where Jesus is being grilled by the Jewish religious mafia. In the next two messages, we'll examine two foolish questions they asked Jesus. The purpose of these two questions was to cause Jesus to incriminate Himself, but Jesus gave wise answers to foolish questions.

Sometimes questions can be absurd, even stupid. There's a collection of funny questions lawyers have actually asked people under oath. I need to preface this by saying some of my best friends are lawyers, and I'm certain they would never ask these kinds of questions. Here are actual questions taken from court records:

1. "Now, doctor isn't it true that when a person dies in their sleep they don't know about it until the next morning?"
2. "The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?"
3. "Was it you or your younger brother who was killed in the war?"
4. "Were you present when your picture was taken?"
5. Sometimes it's a follow-up question that's funny: Question: "Can you describe the individual?" Answer: "He was about medium height and had a beard." Question: "Was this a male or a female?"
6. Sometimes it's the answer that's funny, not the question: Question: "All your answers must be verbal. Where did you go to school?" Answer: "Verbal."
7. Question: "You were shot in the fracas?" Answer: "No, I was shot between the fracas and the navel."

Now let's examine the question the Jewish religious mafia asked Jesus.

Matthew 22:15-22. "Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, 'You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax.' They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, 'Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?' 'Caesar's,' they replied. Then he said to them, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away."

What's wrong with this picture? The Pharisees and Herodians were joining forces against Jesus. These two groups were on the opposite extremes of Jewish culture. The Herodians were a secular

group who supported the Romans, and the Pharisees were a spiritual group who hated the Romans. It would be like the KKK joining forces with the NAACP. But the Pharisees and the Herodians wanted to get rid of Jesus. They demonstrated the old saying, "My enemy's enemy is my friend."

Did you notice the Jewish leaders approached Jesus under the cloak of flattery? They buttered Him up by saying that He was a man of integrity and a great teacher. Flattery isn't the same thing as a true admiration. Flattery is patting someone on the back to find the soft spot to insert the dagger. Flattery is just gossip in reverse. Gossip is saying something bad behind a person's back that you would never say to his face; flattery is saying something good to a person's face that you would never say behind his back. Flattery is mouth-to-mouth manipulation.

After softening Jesus up with a few short jabs of flattery, they slipped in their knockout question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?" As soon as this question was asked, I can almost hear the Jewish leaders giggling with glee, because they were certain Jesus was trapped with no room for escape. Don't you hate questions where the questioner restricts you to only yes or no? It's like that old question, "Are you the only idiot in your family?" They thought it was a "yes or no" question. If Jesus said "yes," all the people who expected the Messiah to liberate them from the Romans would have deserted Him. On the other hand, if Jesus said, "No," the Romans would have arrested Him on the spot for treason.

Instead, Jesus, who didn't even possess a coin, said to them, "Show me the money!" As He held up the Roman denarius, He asked His own question. He asked, "Whose image and inscription is on this coin?" The coin was a Roman denarius which had the image of Tiberius Caesar stamped on it. The inscription on the flip side says in Latin, "*Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus, high priest.*" By way, the coin itself was blasphemous to good Jews, because it bore a graven image, which violated the Second Commandment.



Roman denarius

Then Jesus gave His wise answer to a foolish question. He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's." That statement qualifies as a parable because Jesus takes one truth: Pay the government what is due. And beside it, He lays down a parallel truth: Give to God what is God's. Jesus' brilliant reply teaches us three lessons.

### 1. As a follower of Jesus, I hold dual citizenships

I have two passports. That's because in order for me to travel to Saudi Arabia last fall, I had to request an alternate passport from the U. S. State Department. I have many Israeli stamps in my primary passport, and I would not have been able to enter Saudi with Israeli stamps, so I was issued an additional passport.

Some people hold two or more passports because they are citizens of two or more countries. In this passage of scripture Jesus reminds us that we hold dual citizenships. He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's." By that statement He indicated that all of us live in relationship to an earthly government. He also said, "Give to God what is God's." In addition to our relationship to

an earthly government, we must also consider our relationship with God. So, if you're a Christian, you live in relationship with Caesar, the government and with God. It's like holding two passports.

The Apostle Paul pointed that out. He was a Roman citizen, which was a prized status in those days. But he realized he was a citizen of heaven as well. He wrote, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:20) So what are doing here on earth? We're like ambassadors. He also wrote, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors..." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

The United States has ambassadors in most foreign countries. For instance from 1778 until 1785, Benjamin Franklin served as the first ambassador to France. His job was to represent the U.S. in France. Although he had a home in Paris, he never felt at home there, because he knew his real home was America. In the same way, we are ambassadors for Christ. We have been charged to represent the best of heaven. As we live here on planet earth, we are citizens of an earthly country, but we never feel "at home" here.

One of my favorite quotes from C.S. Lewis describes this sense of being homesick for heaven. He wrote: "If I discover within myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

So let's talk about our dual citizenship. If you are an American citizen, you have a responsibility to your government, as well as a responsibility to God. The Bible teaches that:

## **2. I must honor and obey the authorities who govern me**

The KJV version says, "Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's." The best translation is, "Give it back." Because Rome minted and distributed the coins, it's proper to give them back to Rome.

When I pull out a quarter, I could ask you the same question. Whose image is on this coin? Washington's. Although George Washington is dead, it would be proper for me to say, "Give back to Washington that which is Washington's." Because our government minted and distributed this coin, it's appropriate to give it back to them.

Here's the principle. As Americans, we should submit to the authority of our government. The Bible says, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established...This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing." (Romans 13:1, 6)

You may not like our government, but the Bible says God establishes governments. Remember who was the authority when Paul wrote this? The vicious, brutal, Christian-hating Nero was Emperor.

All power of every government comes from God. Do you remember when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate on the day He was crucified? Pilate asked Jesus all kinds of questions and Jesus just sat there quietly without giving any answers. As the scripture prophesied, He was like a lamb

silent before its shearers. Finally in exasperation Pilate says, "Hey! You'd better answer me. Don't you know I have the power to kill you or save you?" I love the answer Jesus gave. I believe He looked at Pilate with eyes like a blazing fire and said in a voice cool enough to freeze hell. He said, "You don't have any power except the power that is given to you from above." That's where government gets its power.

The question Christians usually ask is this, "Should I obey my government 100% of the time?" Here's a good principle to follow. There are only two occasions when you may choose not to obey your government. If the government commands you to do something God's Word prohibits, then you should obey God. Or if the government forbids you to do something God's Word commands, then you should obey God. This is often called civil disobedience. There are usually negative consequences to civil disobedience.

In Acts 5, the High Priest in Jerusalem commanded Peter and John not to preach about Jesus any more. But they had marching orders from Jesus to proclaim the good news to every person. In Acts 5:29 they said, "We must obey God rather than men." They continued to preach Christ. They were arrested and beaten, but after the beating the Bible says they walked away with bleeding backs, "rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." (Acts 5:41) And they kept on disobeying the authorities to preach the good news about Jesus.

We have several obligations to our government. First, we are commanded in scripture to pray for those in places of authority. That's why we pray regularly for our President, members of Congress, state, and local leaders.

Second we should submit to the government. That means to obey the laws and recognize the authority of those who maintain the law. When you look in your rearview mirror and see a police car with flashing lights, first you hope he's after someone else. But if he pulls right up behind you, you pull over because the Bible says we are to submit to government authorities.

This is a true story. I have a pastor friend in Alabama named Bill who was driving to speak at a church in another county and he was running late. He was driving about 20 miles over the speed limit, when suddenly he remembered he had a Christian bumper sticker on his car. Suddenly, Bill's conscience started giving him fits, saying, "What do these people think about you when you whip past them doing 20 miles over the speed limit?" So he faced this moral dilemma, and knew what he had to do. He pulled off the road, ripped off bumper sticker, jumped back in and kept speeding. By the way, you may have noticed I don't have a Christian bumper sticker on my car!

When I talk about submitting to the government, I'm not talking about politics here, I'm talking about the government. I don't like politics. As you may know the word "politics" comes from two words. *Poly* meaning "many" and *tics*, meaning "blood-sucking varminths."

We must recognize good Christians may hold varying political positions. I've heard statements like, "How can you call yourself a Christian and support President Obama?" I've heard others say, "How can you call yourself a Christian and NOT support our President?" I've heard people

say, "How can you call yourself a Christian and not support the war in Afghanistan?" I've heard others say, "How can you call yourself a Christian and support any war?" We need to recognize that there are different political positions held by Christians and we need to respect the rights of others to disagree with us. Not only should we respect other Christians who don't share our positions, we should love them and pray that God will change their minds. No, I'm just kidding. We should respect them and love them period.

With April 15 looming, let me remind you we should not only pray for our government and submit to them, we should support our government. Romans 13:6 says we pay taxes because those who govern over us are God's servants who work full time to governing us. Nobody likes paying taxes and most of us believe we pay too many taxes. There are two classes of Americans who complain about taxes: Men and Women.

Humorist Dave Barry has a couple of good quotes about paying taxes: "It's income tax time again, Americans. Time to gather up those receipts, get out those tax forms, sharpen up your pencil, and stab yourself in the aorta." He also said, "Remember that even though income taxes can seem like a pain in the neck, the folks at the IRS are regular people just like you, except that they can destroy your life."

So our responsibility to our government can be summarized in three words: Pray, Obey, and Pay.

The problem with this passage of scripture is that often focus so much on what Jesus said about rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's that we miss the impact of the MAIN thing Jesus was teaching when He said, "And give back to God what is God's." He meant:

### **3. I can freely choose to honor and obey the God who made me**

Jesus wasn't mainly talking about our relationship with our government; He was talking about our responsibility toward our Creator. We give back to God that which is God's. What is God's? If we don't pay our taxes or obey the laws of the land, we can be arrested. We have no choice in the matter, but we have a choice on offering God what is His.

When people looked at a Roman coin they saw the image of Caesar because his image was stamped upon it. Where do we find God's image? To answer that question, you must go all the way back to when God created the world. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in His own image...male and female he created them." What do we owe God? We owe Him whatever has His image stamped upon it. That's us. We are to give Him our lives. When God created us in His image it doesn't mean we look like God, it means that as God is a tri-unity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are created as tri-unity: Body, soul, and spirit. None of us may look very "godly" but we are made in His image! Because His image is stamped on us, we are to give Him something greater than our money—we give Him ourselves.

We don't have to give the government all of our money, though it sometimes seems that's what they want. When it comes to giving ourselves to God, there is only one amount that is accepted—ALL. With God, it's all or nothing. He doesn't want you to give Him one or two hours a week for worship. He wants you to give Him your allegiance 168 hours a week. He

doesn't want 10% of your money, He wants you to admit that it ALL belongs to Him, and He lets you manage it. He doesn't want you to give Him your religious life. He wants you to give Him your family life, your work life, your leisure life, your ALL.

There's an ancient fable about a farmer who was taking a sack full of corn to sell in town. On the way there, he saw the king ride by in a golden chariot. The farmer fell to his knees to bow before the king. He said, "Your majesty, I am your humble servant. What can I give you to honor you?" The king said, "Will you give me all of your corn?" The farmer said, "I'm sorry sire. I can't do that. I need to sell it in town to get money to feed my family. However, I will give you five kernels of corn."

The king said, "As you wish. I will accept the five kernels as a gift from you." He directed a servant to remove five kernels from the farmer's sack. When the farmer got into town he opened his sack of corn and discovered that the King's servant had replaced the five kernels of corn with five small nuggets of gold. When he saw the gold, the farmer wept and said, "If I had only given more to the King, I would have received so much more." He was ashamed that He had not honored the King's request to give all he had.

I've served the Lord for over 40 years and I've talked to a lot of Christians who were nearing their death. I've never had a single person tell me, "Pastor, I wish I hadn't given so much of my time, my money, and my service to the Lord. I gave Him too much." Nope. Never heard that one single time. But you know what I have heard? I've heard people say, "If I had only known the joy and peace that comes from total surrender, I would have given Jesus my all sooner!"

## CONCLUSION

There is so much dissatisfaction in our culture today. People have bought into the idea that wealth brings happiness and contentment. Last year Fidelity Investments surveyed 1,012 millionaires. The results revealed that 46% of the participants said they do not feel wealthy and are worried about their financial future. The average net worth of these millionaires is \$3.5 million. The survey asked what number they would have to attain before they felt wealthy, and the average answer was \$7.5 million.

The biblical writer of Ecclesiastes realized this centuries ago. He wrote, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless." (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

Tom Brady is the MVP quarterback for the New England Patriots. He has the looks and the style that once made him America's most eligible bachelor. He was *Sports Illustrated* Sportsman of the Year. He is married to a Brazilian supermodel, and he has three Super Bowl rings. He makes gazillions of dollars to throw a football. You would think if anyone were happy living large, it would be Tom Brady. But when he was interviewed in an episode of "60 Minutes," he admitted that all of his accomplishments haven't really satisfied him. He said, "Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what is. I reached my goal, my dream, my life.' Me, I think: 'God, it's gotta be more than this. I mean this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean I've

done it all. And what else is there for me? I wish I knew. I wish I knew."

Tom, you almost got it, when you said, "God, it's gotta be more." There really is a God who made you and loves you and wants to have a relationship with you.

Now you may not be a dissatisfied millionaire, or a dissatisfied pro quarterback. You might be a dissatisfied high school drop out with no job. Dissatisfaction is no respecter of persons. But when I look in the Bible I find the antidote for dissatisfaction. It's a short seven-word formula found in 1 Timothy 6:6. It says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." I like the Message paraphrase: "It's the rich simplicity of being yourself before God." Godliness just means living for God. Godliness happens when you give to God what is God's—your life. And when you do that, you can find true contentment.

I heard about a cello player who was sitting on the sidewalk playing for tips. He was only playing one note, and he played that same note over and over again. A passer-by asked him, "Why don't you play other notes?" He smiled and said, "Everyone else is looking for the right note, and I've found it." All around us, people are searching for satisfaction, and when you give your life to God, you've found it!

## OUTLINE

### 1. As a follower of Jesus, I hold dual citizenships

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."  
*Philippians 3:20*

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors..." *2 Corinthians 5:20*

### 2. I must honor and obey the authorities who govern me

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established...This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing." *Romans 13:1, 6*

### 3. I can freely choose to honor and obey the God who made me

"So God created man in His own image...male and female he created them." *Genesis 1:27*



— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations and/or use material that is not under copyright. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material stimulate your own Spirit-driven preparation—*it is never intended as a substitute for your own study of Scripture.*

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, it is good scholarship (not to mention the right thing to do) to cite the source. If you are teaching, you may simply preface your remarks by saying something like: **“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”** This simple citation also applies to any work you may publish, too, as I routinely publish my material in books that are protected by copyright.

This careful effort on your part may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you. I trust you will find that additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners.

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



---

*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas*