

Hanging Out With Jesus: The Dual Citizenship Of A Christian

Matthew 22:15-22

Good morning, men! We have a dozen Area Directors in town this week going through *Boot Camp*. This is the last phase of their training before they are activated and actually begin working with churches. It's a very exciting time for them and us here because everything that's happening at Man in the Mirror is really an outgrowth of this Bible Study and always has been. This has been the petri dish, the laboratory where the scientists have been conducting their experiments, so these really are men that belong to you as well as the kingdom. What I'd like to do now is ask that each of the Area Directors would stand and let's give them a round of applause.

It is very exciting! These men will basically be working with churches that want to be more effective in discipling men. What we've found so far is that as many problems as we have in this country, one problem we don't have is whether or not churches want to figure out how to disciple men, they really do. So congratulations to all you Area Directors!

Let's do a shout out, this one's kind of fun! We've got a group in Gary, Indiana at the Washington Street Church of God. Robert Dotson is the leader, and they're three guys. They're meeting Thursdays at 5:30 PM using the video Bible Study. I think they're in the early stages of this so we want to encourage you men, Robert and the other two guys, so would you join me in giving a warm welcome to them to the Bible Study? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, glad to have you with us!

This series is *Hanging Out With Jesus* and today we look at a question about taxes! It's Tuesday, Jesus is going to be crucified on Friday and Tuesday is the day he is overwhelmed with all kinds of questions from religious leaders who essentially are trying to trap him.

What's Going On?

First, let's look at what's going on. Let's look at the text together. The question you'll see is about taxes, and what I'd like to suggest to you is that the bigger and perhaps more relevant question that does get addressed here is what is the duty of a Christian to his country and community? What is your duty as a Christian to your country and your community? We're going to be looking today for a principle by which

you can make secular decisions that also honor God. Is there a principle by which we can make secular decisions that also honor God? This is so relevant because of all the different ways that people go once they become a Christian.

One of the saddest things I've ever seen in my life was a university professor who was a friend of mine, he became a Christian, and his understanding of what it meant to be to be a Christian in the world was that basically the world was evil. The world in it's present form is passing away, and so his response was to withdraw. He made a determined and long term commitment to become very mediocre in his work as a professor, just sort of hanging on, and to disengage, to retire as early as possible. That's why I lost track of him, because he basically decided to retire and completely withdraw from the world, to have no impact on the world because the world in it's present form is passing away.

The title of this talk today is *The Dual Citizenship Of A Christian* and we're going to see that Jesus does have a principle by which we can make secular decisions that also honor God. Matthew 22:15:

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap Jesus 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?"

This is the back drop, what's going on here. They are laying a trap, this is a hypocrisy. These praises here are ingenuous, it's flattery. The Herodians were a secular political party and the Pharisees were a religious party. They had very different views. The Herodians embrace the occupational rule of the romans but the Pharisees appeal back to a theocratic form of government and felt this was foreign domination, they felt repressed. So basically you have republicans and democrats, you have two parties with two very different views. As the saying goes, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, so Jesus is their mutual enemy and they become friends. They decide to set a trap, and they send the disciples of the Pharisees, not the Pharisees themselves, and these Herodians. They set this trap, and the question is should you pay taxes to Caesar or not?

What's the dilemma that Jesus faces? What happens if he answers yes? If he answers yes, then he loses the support of the popular masses in Israel who do feel dominated by the Roman occupation. If he says no, he's guilty of sedition and then he becomes the enemy of the Romans. It's a lot like the questions today you've probably had. People will ask you trick questions like can God make a rock that's too heavy for him to lift? You've heard that one right? Or if God is omnipotent, shouldn't he be able to create a being more powerful than himself? Or can God make a square circle? These are the kinds of illogical questions that people come up with, and so this question in the mind of Jesus falls somewhat in that category.

Let's now look at the wisdom of Jesus in the way he answers, beginning at verse 18:

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.

So if somebody were to ask you is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not, what would you say? I know what I'd say, I'd say I don't know! What would you do if you were Solomon? You might say show me the denarius, then you would cut the denarius in two then give half to Caesar and half to God. But look at what Jesus says, whose inscription do you see on this coin? Whose image? And he says give to Caesar what belongs to him and to God what belongs to God, and they have no answer! The wisdom of Jesus.

Jesus is showing a third way. In essence, in the kingdom of God, taking care of creation, tending the culture and building the kingdom are two sides of the same coin. You can't separate them, you can't put half of a coin into a vending machine, you have to put the whole coin in. You can't separate these things in the mind of God. What Jesus is doing here is he is establishing that we have a dual citizenship, and he's also establishing that it is a good thing to be a great citizen. So let's just work with this today as the Big Idea: **Precisely because we are Christians, we must become great citizens.** We shouldn't be withdrawing from culture, trying to retire as early as we can and do as little as possible. Quite the contrary, Jesus gives us a principle here by which we can make secular decisions that honor God, and that is the principle of dual citizenship.

Now turn with me to Jeremiah 29:7. So the Israelites are in captivity in Babylon, and this is the instruction, Jeremiah 29:7, given to the exiles. He says:

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you will prosper too.

This is the idea of why we should become great citizens, because God wants you to become great citizens wherever you are! You are not in exile in the United States because you have freedom of religion. There are men who will be watching this Bible Study who live in repressed nations, where this is the case. They are a people in exile. In any event, this is the principle that stands behind our dual citizenship and why we need to become great citizens.

Now why is that so important? It's so important because Christianity is the hope of creation, it is the hope of culture, the thing that stabilizes civilizations. How do men become civilized? By becoming disciples of Jesus. How do men stay uncivilized? They don't become disciples of Jesus. It is through this idea of our witness in this world that men see something so attractive in us that they want to be part of that, and their hearts become transformed by the gospel. That won't happen if you don't lead an exemplary life of a citizen. If what it means to be a Christian means to be a slob and not take care of yourself, if what it means to be a Christian means always being late paying your bills or not paying your bills, if what it means to be a Christian is dumping your wife when you feel like you want a new model, if what it means to be a Christian is to cheat on your taxes, cut corners at work, then I don't want to be one! That's what happens, and that's why it's important for those of us who are Christians to be great citizens because this is the way that God is redeeming the world. He is sovereignly redeeming the world, and if you are a slob, if you don't pay your taxes, if you cheat on your business expenses and cut corners, that doesn't mean that he's going to allow anyone to go to hell because of you, but you won't be part of it.

The Principle Of Dual Citizenship

Let's take a look next at this principle of dual citizenship a little deeper. Turn with me to Romans 13:1. Since Jesus is dealing specifically here with taxes, I thought we should cover that part of the dual citizenship first. Jesus Christ is alive and he reveals himself through citizens of earth who are citizens of God. Romans 13:1:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God (even the evil ones. We're going to talk about those later, but even the evil authorities are established by God). Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason (that would be law enforcement, the rule of law, the ability to send you to jail for not paying taxes for example). They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer (I watched another episode of *Beyond Scared Straight* last night. I'm

telling you they do have a sword with which they can bring punishment on the wrong doer!). Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

That is the text that governs our relationship with our government. We can look to the example of Jesus to see how this works. Jesus did not come as a political agitator! Jesus did not come as a political revolutionary! Jesus did not come to overthrow culture! In fact, if anything, Jesus shows us that Christianity has lived inside cultures! He didn't come to abolish the injustices of the Roman government, but to show us how to correct the injustices inside the Roman rule. Do you think the Romans were a righteous government? There were many good things about the Roman government, but a lot of the ills found today you would have found in their government, but Jesus did not come to overthrow the government. Jesus came to install the kingdom of heaven which would prevail. The deal is that the eternal kingdom of Christ is lodged in temporary housing. The earth is temporary housing, like heaven's womb, where we are all in gestation. This is temporary housing. I've said before the whole of creation is in escrow, we're under contract, we've been purchased by the blood of Christ, the deposit has been made, and we're waiting for the closing. That doesn't mean we're inactive while we're waiting for the eternal kingdom of Christ. This temporary housing is extremely important to God. In fact, God gives us four purposes in the Bible: loving God, loving our neighbors, the great commission, and the cultural mandate, taking care of creation. So this is very much a part of that, and the reason it's so important is because of the witness it gives.

God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish but all to come to repentance. He has delayed the closing. I don't know if he has delayed it multiple times or if we simply misunderstood when the closing was to take place, but the point is that we're under a delayed closing scenario. The reason for that is because God wants to bring as many people into the deal as he can. He's doing that! And he's doing that in phenomenal ways! Do you realize that there are so many million more Christians just in our country because God was gracious enough to delay his closing? Millions and millions of people have become Christians!

So it's this principle of dual citizenship, and we have this example that Jesus set for us. There are other examples of how you live out the dual citizenship. You have Joseph, who became the prime minister of Egypt. Then you have Daniel in Babylon. He rises to be the number two man in Babylon, and the country that corresponds to ancient Babylon today is what? Iraq, Saddam Hussein's palace overlooked the ancient ruins of Babylon. Imagine today being a Christian, and the number two person in Iraq. Would that be a good thing or a bad thing? That would be a good thing! Because you see precisely because we are Christians we should become great citizens. Citizens that even he secularists want to give respect,

honor, and position to. Who else do we have? Mordecai in ancient Persia. The capital Susa of Persia is modern day what? Iran! So imagine that the number two leader in Iran today is Christian. Would that be a good thing? You bet! So you see that God is very much into this idea of having a dual citizenship so that we can take care of creation on his behalf.

Now there are exceptions. The Hebrew midwives. When the Pharaoh told the Hebrew midwives to kill all the boys as they are born, what did they do? They disobeyed! They disobeyed the government. Why did they do that? Because the taking of life, the aborting of these children was completely immoral. So precisely because we are Christians we must become great citizens, and there's another side to this to, and that is so that we will not condone nor participate when governments do evil. Of course this abortion issue is a big deal even today. In Acts 4, Peter and John are arrested and brought before the ruling council. They are told to no longer speak and preach in the name of Jesus. What did they say? We can't do that, we must obey God, not man. So today, Judeo-Christian values are being ground out. Many places do not allow for you to pray in the name of Jesus, but you should do it anyway. Be respectful, don't be combative nor a political agitator.

I'll give you an example. I got invited in 2008 to do the invocation for the Orange County commission. I gave a two minute civil prayer, and at the end I closed the prayer with respect to men and women of all faiths and religions, I make this prayer in the name of my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. So I was faithful, I was trying to be a great citizen, not a religious agitator.

Another exception I thought of earlier, the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. King Nebuchadnezzar built this giant statue of himself and demanded that everybody bow down and worship this statue of him, but they wouldn't do it. This is so much fun, turn to Daniel 3! I want you to read it for yourself. The king says if you don't worship this statue, you're going to be thrown into a blazing furnace, and then what god will be able to rescue you from that? Then in verse 16:

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

Then that made him so mad he turned up the heat, but they were rescued by God as you know from the story. So with regard to the nation going in a certain direction, with abortion for example, you have a precedent for civil disobedience. If you are told you cannot say the name of Jesus, you have a precedent. If you are told you must worship another God, you have a precedent. Now, for an American, this last one is not necessarily a big deal, but it is a big deal in certain foreign countries.

The Big Idea today is **precisely because we are Christians, we must become great citizens.** You know why I didn't declare bankruptcy when I went through my business crisis in the 80's? I'll tell you why I didn't, because I understood the principle of dual citizenship. I was a real estate developer, all of my peers who were real estate developers did go through bankruptcy. Bankruptcy is a disgrace at one level, but it's one from which you can recover, and the laws are there for a reason, to give people relief. But I had been such an out loud Christian in this town that I sensed God had been calling me to do everything humanly possible to not go bankrupt. I never had any sense that he would deliver me. For seven years, I woke up every day not knowing if that was the day that someone was going to force me into bankruptcy, but every day I woke up and I sensed that God was giving me strength to try to be a great citizen, to try to set an example. It took seven years to work through all those problems, but with God's help and grace I was able to do it. The thing that kept me going was my understanding of this principle of dual citizenship, that I'm not just a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, sitting here, or treading water waiting for the rapture. He wants me to engage, he wants me to be a witness, he wants you to be a witness.

Now What?

Lastly, now what? Now what for me, now what for you? First of all, give to God what belongs to God. Isn't that what the text says? Give to Caesar what is belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God. What belongs to God? Give him your soul, your heart, your love, your trust. Give him your obedience, your spiritual worship of service, give the things to God that God is due. Then, what do you give to Caesar. Think about it. First of all, you should submit to the laws of your country. We've seen today that you should pay taxes. Because you are Christian and because you are a dual citizen, you should pay your bills on time, and you should pay them in full and do your work with excellence. You should pay honest wages if you happen to be the employer. If you're good enough to be a CEO, be a great CEO. If you're good enough to be an outstanding auto mechanic, be a fantastic one. If you're good enough to be whatever, be excellent at it, and do it for the glory of God because of this dual citizenship. **Precisely because we are Christians, we must become great citizens.**

We had a man come here once and speak. He was from Africa. He told us a story that he moved with his family to a small village, they felt called to be there. Here the yards were unkempt, there was trash in the streets, a terrible kind of place. He told his family because we are Christians, we must have a beautiful home. So they planted grass and flowers in the yard, they painted and refurbished the home, and they picked up the trash in the streets around them. One by one, the neighbors came and said why are you doing this? He said we are doing this because it is our duty to Christ, and that gave him an opportunity to witness. Then after a while, another neighbor, seeing the example they set, fixed up their house. Then another and another until the entire community was transformed, because he understood **precisely because we are Christians, we must become great citizens.** Let us pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest father, Lord, certainly my prayer has been nobody needed this message, and yet common sense says that somebody needed this message. Lord, only you and they know who and hopefully they are aware. Father, just help each of us to figure it out because there is no single, one way to do this, but the way that we are to do this is we really are to engage. We are not to withdraw, we are not to try, nor to assimilate. We are to engage this culture, so show each of us how we should respond. In Jesus' name, and everybody said amen!