

## Jesus Answered the Herodians

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the parable of the Marriage Supper so that they are equipped to answer questions about the future from the Word of God. In this topic, we will see that the Pharisees and Herodians tried to deceive Jesus in their efforts to trap Him by what He said to them.

Matthew 22:15-17 says, “Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in *His* talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’” We see that the purpose of this question was not to learn from Jesus. Instead, the purpose of this question was to entangle Jesus in His talk. The word “entangled” means *to snare or trap birds*. The Pharisees and Herodians worked together as they came with their question, so that they could try and trap Jesus by the words that He spoke.

The Herodians supported the family of Herod, as they saw this as a way to gain political power. In fact, many of the Herodians were also Sadducees. In contrast, the Pharisees were a religious party and hated the Romans and their control. However, we see that the two groups were now working together in their efforts to destroy Jesus. This had been their attitude since early in the public ministry of Jesus. Mark 3:6 says, “Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.” In order to try and trick Jesus, these men made four true statements about Jesus before asking their question. First, they said, “Teacher, we know that You are true.” The word “true” means *to speak the truth or to be truthful*. These men said that Jesus spoke the truth, but then they refused to believe Him.

Second, these men said “Teacher you, ‘Teach the way of God in truth.’” That was a true statement because Jesus said in John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” These men then showed that they did not accept Jesus as the One who taught the way of God in truth, so this was just a part of their plot to try and destroy Jesus. John 18:37-38 says, “Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, ‘I find no fault in Him at all.’” Even Pilate had to admit that Jesus was truth and without fault because He taught the way of God in truth.

Third, these men recognized that “nor do you care about anyone.” By this phrase, these men meant that Jesus treated all people with respect. Jesus showed the same respect and love for Judas that He showed to the other disciples. At the very moment when Judas had just given Jesus the kiss of betrayal, Jesus said, in Matthew 26:50, “‘Friend, why have you come?’ Then they came and laid

hands on Jesus and took Him.” Even at this moment, Jesus showed love and respect. Fourth, these men said that Jesus did not “regard the person of men.” This phrase means to show favor to one person over another. James 2:8-9 says, “If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” Jesus loved every person with a perfect love and that is why He died for the sins of every person, even though He knew that many would choose to reject the offer of forgiveness from sins through His blood.

After these men said they knew that Jesus demonstrated each of these four things by His godly character, they then asked the question that they hoped they would be able to use to trap Jesus and condemn Him. Their question is given in verse 17 where we read that they said, “Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” These men thought that they had the perfect trap to catch Jesus in His words. If Jesus said it was wrong to pay taxes to Caesar, the Herodians would have told Pilate that Jesus was trying to start a tax revolt against the Romans. If Jesus said it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, the Pharisees would have condemned Jesus for being unfaithful to Judaism. With either answer, these men expected to condemn Jesus by His words.

We see the answer of Jesus, in Matthew 22:18-20 where we read, “But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, ‘Why do you test Me, *you* hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.’ So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription *is* this?’” Here, we see that Jesus showed that He is God because He knew the thoughts of their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “‘The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?’” Jesus knew that these men had asked this question because of their desire to test Him and trap Him in His words. As a result, Jesus used the word that described their character when He asked the question, “Why do you test Me, *you* hypocrites?” The word translated “hypocrites” means *an actor or stage player that wore different masks to show that the words in a play or drama were the words of different people*. These men had just made four statements about Jesus that they personally refused to accept. As a result, Jesus said that they were like actors who tried to cover their real character by their words.

Then, Jesus told the men to show Him the tax money. The men then brought Jesus a denarius. The “denarius” was a silver Roman coin worth one day’s wages. These coins were made by the authority of the Roman emperor, Tiberius. One side of the coin showed the face of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. The other side of the coin had a picture of an engraving of Tiberius sitting on his throne with the robes of a priest. The two sides of the coin taken together showed that Tiberius thought of himself as both the Roman emperor and also as the god of the Roman Empire. For the Jews, this coin was a clear violation of the Ten Commandments. Both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 give us the Ten Commandments. Deuteronomy 5:8 says, “‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth.’” The engraving of Tiberius sitting with the robes of a priest was viewed by the Jews as a direct violation of the Second Commandment. In addition, this was a Roman coin for a Roman tax and so the Jews viewed this coin for taxes as a way that the Roman emperor was saying that he owned them.

The reason these men quickly brought a denarius to Jesus was because they thought that their question was going to be the perfect trap to catch Jesus. The Herodians supported the Roman government and the Pharisees strongly supported the Ten Commandments, even though they continually broke those commandments. Jesus took the coin and then asked the question, “Whose image and inscription *is* this?” Matthew 22:21-22 says, “They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ When they had heard *these words*, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.” Here, we see that Jesus pointed out that human government is needed and is allowed by God. Romans 13:1-2 says, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.” God allows even the very evil governments to last for a time, but He will judge the evil rulers in His time.

At the same time, Jesus made it clear to the Herodians and Pharisees that they were to give to God the things that belong to God. Money is made in the image of earthly rulers. In contrast, man is made in the image of God. Genesis 1:26-27 says, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Later that same day, a Pharisee again questioned Jesus and asked Him what is the great commandment in the law. Jesus answered that question in Matthew 22:37-40, which says, “Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second is like it: “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’” Earthly rulers may have their image on the coins, but God wants His image on our hearts (the inner person). That is why Romans 10:9-10 says, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” God created us in His image and He stamps His image on our hearts.

The Herodians and Pharisees were amazed at the answer of Jesus and left Him. They had just been caught in their own trap because they were made in the image of God but they did not believe in God from their hearts. As a result, they suddenly had to confront their own unbelief. They were not giving to God what belonged to God. Jesus had exposed that fact. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to lead people to focus on the condition of their hearts and their need to come to God by repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.