February 15

Scriptures: Read Matthew 22

Key Verse: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21)

Overview

Here we have one of the most famous stories about Jesus, when He comments on giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. What is fascinating about the story is that the Pharisees and the Herodians got together in attempting to trap Jesus in His words. These two groups had very little to do with one another, and in fact represented totally different political points of view. The Pharisees would be against paying tribute to Caesar, but the Herodians would be for it. Yet here they were, working together. Both the religious and the political establishments saw Jesus as a threat.

Jesus' response to the question is anger, "you hypocrites, why are you trying to trap Me?", and then tremendous cleverness, "show Me the coin used for paying the tax." (I think it is interesting Jesus didn't have a denarius to His name.) The next question is simple, "whose portrait is this? whose inscription?" "Caesar's, they replied, then followed the famous answer.

Jesus refused to align Himself and His message with any kind of zealous nationalism. Though He claimed to be Israel's leader, He denied any kind of kingship which was focused only on temporal and political power. The kingdom that Jesus represented was one in which everything id God's. This meant that even though one rendered unto Caesar that which was Caesar's, all of those monies and political infrastructures would ultimately fall under God's dominion.

It's a good point. Especially for those of us who associate Christianity with capitalism and the west. God is working powerfully in communist countries in the east. He's not subject to our political ideologies and divisions, for He is Lord of all.

Prayer

Thank You Lord, for Your infinite wisdom. As Solomon of old prayer for wisdom, so do we, that we might communicate Your truth in tough situations, as Jesus did with a hostile crowd.