

# QUESTIONS YOU HAVE

BUT ARE AFRAID TO ASK

Questions You Have (But Are Afraid to Ask)  
How Should Christians Engage Politics?  
Matthew 22:15–22

Series Journey

- Can a Christian lose their salvation? – John 10:27–29
- How can a good God allow suffering? – Genesis 50:20
- Is faith and science at odds with one another? – Psalm 19:1–6
- How should Christians engage the LGBTQIA+ community? – Matthew 19:3–6

Matthew 22:15–22

**15** Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. **16** And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. **17** Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” **18** But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? **19** Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. **20** And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” **21** They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” **22** When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

How should Christians engage politics?

“Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21a).

- Obediently
  - The pharisees' Political Question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:17)
    - "Pay" – literally "give"
  - Understand the political context of Jesus' day
    - Zealots – bent on armed combat with the state
    - Pharisees – independent and indifferent to state
    - Saduccees/Herodians – accommodated to the state
  - Jesus' Political Response: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21a).
    - "Render" – Literally "give back," meaning we owe a debt to the government
    - Jesus tells us to obey government
- Prayerfully
  - Obedience reminds us to pray.
  - "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way"" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
  - Do you only pray for leaders when the one you voted for is in office?
- Peacefully
  - Obedience + prayer = peace.
  - Why should we engage the state peacefully?
    - All authority is derived authority.
      - "15 By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just;16 by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly" (Proverbs 8:15-16).
    - "Government is a form of common grace instituted by God so that human rulers are appointed to execute justice, security and welfare for the peoples governed" (N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *Jesus and the Powers*, 110-111).
    - "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1; see vv. 2-7; Peter 2:13-14).
  - How should we engage politics peacefully? (Miranda Zapor Cruz, *Faithful Politics*, 198-199).
    - Be informed
    - Be engaged
    - Be conflicted





“(Render) to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21b).

- Lovingly
  - The state/government doesn’t always love all people well.
    - “It is no real option to insist that Christians be ‘a-political.’ To say that Christians should do nothing politically is a vote for the status quo of a society, and our doctrine of sin means that no society is without its injustices” (Tim Keller, “Justice in the Bible”)
  - Politics is about people and Christians are called to love people.
- Prophetically
  - Christians must be against injustice and idolatry.
    - “An unjust law is no law at all” (St. Augustine).
    - “The state becomes demonic in the measure that it asks for itself ‘the things of God,’ such as total commitment, unconditional obedience, or uncriticizing allegiance” (Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew*, vol. 2, 400).
  - “Kingdom citizens are prophetic when our speech or action reveals God’s divine will, bears witness to Jesus Christ, and discloses the implications of Christ’s lordship for our political contexts” (Miranda Cruz, *Faithful Politics*, 195).
- Hopefully
  - The kingdom of Caesar is not the kingdom of God.
  - Our world needs the church because our world needs the kingdom.
  - Put your ultimate hope in God’s kingdom.

Christians have a dual responsibility to honor the state and simultaneously remain faithful to the kingdom of God.

“In spite of my shattered dreams of the past, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and with deep moral concern serve as the channel through which our just grievances could get to the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed. I have heard



numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers say, follow this decree because integration is morally right and the Negro is your brother. In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sidelines and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, "Those are social issues which the gospel has nothing to do with," and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which made a strange distinction between bodies and souls, the sacred and the secular" (MLK, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail").