

THE UNASKED QUESTION

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Text: Matthew 22:15-22 NIV

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. **16** They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. **17** Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" **18** But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? **19** Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, **20** and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" **21** "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." **22** When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

INTRODUCTION

A man on vacation was strolling along outside his hotel in Acapulco, enjoying the sunny Mexican weather. Suddenly, he was attracted by the screams of a woman kneeling in front of a child.

The man knew enough Spanish to determine that the child had swallowed a coin. Seizing the child by the heels, the man held him up, gave him a few shakes, and an American quarter dropped to the sidewalk.

"Oh, thank you sir!" cried the woman. "You seemed to know just how to get it out of him. Are you a doctor?"

"No, ma'am," replied the man. "I'm with the United States Internal Revenue Service." -*Bits & Pieces*, March 31, 1994, p. 5.

Taxes are not new, and have never been, a popular topic. They may be necessary, but they are still controversial. They are annoying. They are draining. One thing they are not ... is appreciated.

But this passage is about much more than taxes. It is about what belongs to the powers of this world and what belongs to God. Note the following *mistakes* in the Pharisees' disciples thinking:

I. THE PHARISEES MAY HAVE BEEN TRYING TO TRAP JESUS, BUT THEY TRAPPED THEMSELVES.

A. THEIR MOTIVES WERE CLEAR TO JESUS. THEY DID NOT CARE ABOUT WHAT PLEASED GOD.

B. THEIR MOTIVES WERE CLEAR BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY *DID NOT* WANT TO KNOW.

II. THE PHARISEES DISCIPLES CAME TO TEST JESUS, BUT THEY EXPOSED THEIR OWN WORLDLY HEART.

A. THEY LEFT JESUS WHEN THEY HEARD WHAT BELONGED TO CAESAR.

B. THEY NEVER ASKED WHAT IT WAS THAT BELONGED TO GOD.

1. They thought they knew all about God. They knew the legalities, the percentages, the offerings, the Holy days, etc...
2. *They never considered that wherever God's image was, that belonged to God. That was the question never asked: "What belongs to God?"*

CONCLUSION

On a wall near the main entrance to the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, is a portrait with the following inscription: "James Butler Bonham--no picture of him exists. This portrait is of his nephew, Major James Bonham, deceased, who greatly resembled his uncle. It is placed here by the family that people may know the appearance of the man who died for freedom." No literal portrait of Jesus exists either. But the likeness of the Son who makes us free can be seen in the lives of His true followers. -Bill Morgan.

God has placed us here to reflect His image. If Christ's image is on our heart, we belong to Him. If we belong to Him, it is worth asking the question, "What should that mean for our lives?"