

Sunday, February 5, 2012—Mark Dispensationally Considered—Mark 13:13-17: Should Believers Pay Taxes?

Mark 12:13-17

- **13) And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in [his] words.**
 - **14) And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?**
 - **15) Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see [it].**
 - **16) And they brought [it]. And he saith unto them, Whose [is] this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.**
 - **17) And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.**
- Mark 12:13—the first question about we need to answer about verse 13 is who are the “they,” i.e., who sent “certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words?” From the immediate context I believe it was the chief priests, scribes, and elders.
 - Mark 11:27—these were the guys who asked Christ by what authority he did the things he was doing in the temple.
 - Mark 12:1, 12—immediately following this incident Jesus begins to speak in parables and they (chief priests, scribes, and elders) perceived that he was speaking about them. Now in verse 13 “they” send certain of the Pharisees to trap Jesus in his words.
 - Luke 20:19-20—makes it clear that the “they” of Mark 12:13 was in fact they “chief priest and the scribes.” In verse 19 they want to “lay hands on him” because they perceived the Parable of the householder/vineyard was about them, but they don’t because they fear the people. So they send out spies to “feign” or impersonate regular people with the intention of trapping him in his words so they could deliver him unto the political authorities.
 - Matthew 22:15-16—the certain of the Pharisees that were sent unto Christ in Mark 12:13 were the disciples of the Pharisees, not the Pharisees themselves, thereby allowing them to “feign” or impersonate regular people. The Herodians were the supports of King Herod and his government.
 - Mark 12:14-15—after praising Christ with statements they did not believe, the spies ask what is certainly a planted question designed to trap Christ in his words, “Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?” The question of the legality of paying to tribute to Caesar is no doubt asked from the standpoint of the Mosaic Law. In words, does the law of God support paying taxes to gentile authorities?

- If Jesus answered, “No,” they could claim He was a rebel against the government.
- If Jesus answered, “Yes,” they he would have to deny his claims of being the Messiah.
- In order to understand the implications of a “yes” or “no” answer on the part of Christ it is important to grasp the nature of “tribute” in the ancient world. Tribute was more than simply paying taxes. *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* defines tribute as:
 - “An annual or stated sum of money or other valuable thing, paid by one prince or nation to another, either as an acknowledgment of submission, or as the price of peace and protection, or by virtue of some treaty. The Romans made all their conquered countries pay tribute, as do the Turks at this day; and in some countries the tribute is paid in children.”
- Since tribute is a force tax placed upon a conquered people, If Jesus simply said, “Yes, it is lawful to pay tribute,” he would be submitting to a position of weakness with regard to the Roman authorities.
- Jesus knowing their hypocrisy and devious nature does not answer “yes” or “no” but asks them to bring him a penny (Roman denarius).
- Mark 12:16-17—when the coin is brought to Christ he asks the spies, “Whose is the image and superscription?” To which they reply, “Caesar’s.” Jesus then replies with his famous statement, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” In other words, since the coin belongs to and was issued by Caesar give they should give it unto Caesar if he demanded it. Likewise they should render unto God the things that belong to God.
 - Matthew 22:17-22
 - Luke 20:22-26—Jesus answered in such a way that they were not able to trap him in his words.

Romans 13:1-7

- Should believers today in the dispensation of grace pay taxes and obey the government? What is the purpose of human government?
- Romans 13:1—Paul says that “every soul,” believer and unbelievers alike should be subject unto the higher powers. The word subject carries the following meanings:
 - The Greek word *hypotassō* carries the following meanings according to *Strong’s Concordance*: 1) to arrange under, to subordinate, 2) to subject, put in subjection, 3) to subject one's self, obey 4) to submit to one's control, 5) to yield to one's admonition or advice, 6) to obey, be subject

- The English word “subject” carries the following meanings according to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*: 1) Placed or situate under, 2) Being under the power and dominion of another; as, Jamaica is subject to Great Britain. 3) One that owes allegiance to a sovereign and is governed by his laws. The natives of Great Britain are subjects of the British government. The natives of the United States, and naturalized foreigners, are subjects of the federal government. Men in free governments, are subjects as well as citizens; as citizens, they enjoy rights and franchises; as subjects, they are bound to obey the laws.
- What does Paul mean when he says, “For there is no power but of God: the power that be are ordained of God.” There is no power in existence that did not originate with God. Therefore, the powers that be i.e., are in existence are ordained (put in order) by God. Is Paul referring to specific governments or general governmental structures?
- The Greek word translated “power/powers” in Romans 13:1 is the same word used by Paul in other passages when referring to positions of governmental authority.
 - Ephesians 1:21, 6:12
 - Colossians 1:16—at creation positions of governmental authority were created by Christ and for Christ. In other words these positions of governmental power of where ordained by God but I do not believe Paul is saying in Romans 13:1 that God is currently choosing individual governmental leaders or forms of government.
 - Titus 3:1
- Romans 13:2—those who resist the authority God has placed within these positions of government are really resisting the ordinance, i.e., arrangement of God. Therefore, those that resist can and should expect damnation/condemnation from the governmental authorities.
- Romans 13:3-4—the only Scriptural reason for human government to exist is for the protection of the population and punishment of evil doers. The government is the minister of God for good in that they provide protection for the orderly functioning of society. Only those who do evil need to fear the government according to Paul.
 - Genesis 9:5-6—when God instituted the principle of human government it was for the purpose of restraint evil and avoiding the situation on earth before the flood.
 - I Timothy 2:1-2—the reason believers are supposed to pray for their governmental leaders is so that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Paul knew that the government could be a terror to the truth of God.
- Romans 13:5—believers ought to be subject not just because the government has the authority to punish people for wrong doing but also for the sake of their own conscience before God.

- Romans 13:6-7—for the cause of conscience in verse 5 Paul instructs the saints at Rome and therefore us to pay our taxes.

Conclusion

- Philippians 3:20
- II Corinthians 5:19-20—we are the ambassadors of Christ on earth. Our political affiliation is to represent Jesus Christ and his truth here on earth. Our primary allegiance ought not to be to some temporal political party but to the truth of the Word of God rightly divided. Believers need to vote their conscience according to the truth of God's word rightly divided.