

Religious Freedom and The Gospel

Sunday, November 2, 2014

Matthew 22:15-22

I. Introduction

How should we as Christians respond during these times? Does the Bible address some of these issues? How far is too far for the government?

II. Jesus and His Enemies

Jesus enemies are trying to trick him into making him look bad. To say 'yes' to the Roman taxes ran the risk of appearing to support the hated Roman government. To say 'no' to Romans taxes would make Jesus look like a dangerous revolutionary against Rome.

"And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 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."

This is an amazing statement because Jesus shows that there are to be two different spheres of influence, one for the government and one for the religious life of the people of God.

But Jesus statement about God and Cesar now broadens the scope of responsibility. In this new scope Jesus communicates that things like taxes belong to civil government and this implies that the church should not try to control these things. And this also implies that the 'things that are God's' are not to be under the control of the government.

Luke 9:52-55 – Even Jesus did not compel or force people to follow him!

The disciples saw it differently, they wanted fire from heaven to come and burn the people and town down. "Fire from heaven" to come down!

III. Freedom of Religion

Every nation should allow freedom of religion; by which every person is free to follow whatever religion he or she chooses.

First Amendment of the US Constitution says, *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."*

"Freedom of religion does not release people from the obligation to obey the ordinary and morally good laws that are required of all members of society." W. Grudem

The problem arises when people disagree over whether something belongs to the realm of the church or to the realm of the state!

Jesus doesn't specifically say what things belong to God, but it must include decisions and actions regarding worship and doctrinal beliefs.

"This means that people's religious convictions and religious activities should clearly be an area in which government gives citizens complete freedom." W. Grudem

IV. Moral Revolution vs Moral Shift

Three things must happen for a moral revolution:

- 1) What was condemned is now celebrated
- 2) What was celebrated is now condemned
- 3) Those who refused to be celebrated are now condemned

Even in the midst of a moral revolution our message – the gospel of Jesus Christ – must never change, but always must be center!

V. What is our Response

- 1) Pray for wisdom
- 2) Pray for our elected officials
- 3) Be aware of your freedoms and rights
- 4) Get involved civically
- 5) VOTE! (if you don't vote, don't complain!)
- 6) Trust in God's sovereign purpose for our nation

VI. Conclusion