

Study Sheet: Mark 12:13-17 – Politics & The Way of Jesus

Let's acknowledge at the beginning of our group that political conversations have the potential to become divisive and emotionally charged extremely quickly in our current context. As a result, please take a few moments to surrender your conversation and study to the Lord in prayer. Consider praying in the following ways:

- That God would speak to everyone regarding their current political perspectives and the way of Jesus
- That God would give everyone grace, patience, wisdom, and understanding
- That God would help everyone see areas where they may be tempted to put their political preferences ahead of His kingdom
- That God would be glorified, and His Kingdom would reign amidst our failures and shortcomings in politics

This week's passage is undoubtedly one of Jesus' strongest statements/teachings regarding the nature of faith in God and the influence that has over politics. Like the situation we find ourselves in today, there were many different perspectives on politics during Jesus' life and ministry. In 6 A.D., the Roman government implemented a tax for all Jewish people that felt oppressive to many. The Jewish Zealots refused to pay taxes, suggesting it wrongfully acknowledged Caesar's dominion over God's people. The Pharisees resented the tax for moral/religious purposes, but generally justified its payment. While the Herodians principally supported the tax for its political/nationalistic ramifications.

As a result, when Jesus was approached and asked about whether paying taxes (which were often viewed as oppressive) to Caesar was lawful (according to God's law), His response was just as politically charged and had just as much potential to be divisive as a similar conversation would be today. And yet, Jesus didn't avoid the question. Nor did His response suggest that those who put their faith in Jesus should also put their hope in government of politics.

There is much we can learn from this brief passage, and when considering Jesus' ministry and Biblical teaching in its entirety, we must acknowledge that EVERYTHING in our lives should be shaped by the gospel and the kingdom of God – including our political perspectives. May you be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit in such a way that your hope rests solely on God, your allegiance is to Him alone, and your conversations filled with grace even in the political sphere.

Discussion Questions:

1. What similarities exist between the motivations of the Pharisees & Herodians in their conversation with Jesus and in our political conversations today? What lessons or strategies might we learn from Jesus' response?
2. Explain the political tension and struggle that exists for Christ followers living in a system dominated by two political parties – neither of which fully represent the values of God's kingdom. What influences does this have on you personally?
3. What Biblical principles are most applicable to the realm of political perspectives and decisions? Support your claims with Scripture.
4. What practical tips might you have for someone who desires to put their hope FULLY in the Lord while simultaneously living out his/her God-given responsibility related to society and politics?
5. In your opinion, what shifts or changes does the church need to make in order to engage in the political sphere in a way that is honoring to the Lord?