

The Gospel of Mark: “I Pledge Allegiance... but to Whom?”

Mark 12:13-17

Hearing God’s Word about Government

- The Pharisees and the Herodians were enemies, but now they have a common enemy.
 - They are right about Jesus’ integrity, but they aren’t sincere about it.
 - They are seeking to trap Jesus:
 - If Jesus affirms the duty of paying taxes to Caesar, then He is a traitor to Israel.
 - If Jesus denies the duty of paying taxes to Caesar, then Jesus is a rebel to Rome.
- But Jesus will not be trapped—He affirms Rome’s authority *and* God’s (higher) authority.

In short, He bids the proud Pharisee not to refuse his dues to Caesar, and the worldly Herodian not to refuse his dues to God. (J.C. Ryle)

Applying God’s Word about Government

- Government (ordinarily) has legitimate authority.
 - There are *exceptions* where governments are not legitimate or where they overstep.

But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. (Exodus 1:17)

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. (Hebrews 11:31)

But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. (Daniel 3:18)

But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things.” (Acts 5:29-32)

National law is inferior to natural law. (Mark Dever)

- Ordinarily, even bad governments often do what governments are ordained by God to do:
 - To restrain evil. (Romans 13:2-3a)
 - To reward good. (Romans 13:3b-4)

When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ⁴ he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. (2 Samuel 23:2-4)

- So...

- We should pay our taxes.
- We should not be troublemakers.

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. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

- We should be law keepers, not lawbreakers.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (1 Peter 2:13-14)

- We should honor our leaders.

Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. (1 Pet 2:17)

- We should pray for kings and all those in authority. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

- God alone has unlimited authority.

- Christians should acknowledge but not deify the state—honor the emperor but *fear* God.
- The image of Caesar may be on the coin, but the image of God is upon your soul.
- We were made by God and for God; we owe ourselves entirely to God.

There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine!' (Abraham Kuyper)

- So...

- Pledge appropriate allegiance to the state.
- Pledge all allegiance to Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev 5:9-10)

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:32-33)

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)