

Matters that Pertain to the State

(Matthew 22:15-22)

Introduction:

1. In Matthew 22:15-22 we read about an occasion when Jesus was asked a question that was designed to entrap Him.
 - a. (vs.15) The Pharisees were the instigators.
 - b. (vs.16) The Pharisees sent their disciples [representing the religious law] and the Herodians [representing the civil law] to Jesus.
 - c. (vs.17) Jesus was asked about the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar.
 - d. (vs.18-21) Jesus requires His followers to fulfill our civil responsibilities to the government as well as our spiritual responsibilities to God.
2. In our lesson we are addressing several "matters that pertain to the state."
3. The passages we are studying reveal our responsibilities to the state as well as the responsibilities that God has given to the state.

Discussion:

I. ROMANS 13:1-7

- A. (vs.1a) All Christians are to be subject to "*the higher powers*" [civil authorities].
 1. A similar admonition is given in Titus 3:1.
 2. According to these verses, Christians are to obey the laws of the land.
 3. However, if a civil law violates a law of God, we must obey God (Acts 5:29).
- B. (vs.1b-5) Three reasons why Christians must obey the law are given.
 1. Reason #1: Civil laws must be obeyed because God has ordained government's power to rule (vs.1b-2).
 - a. Jesus touched on this principle before Pilate (John 19:10-11).
 - b. Those who resist the power of government are guilty of resisting something God has ordained, and He will hold such people accountable.
 - c. This does not mean that God approves of all governments; however, He has instituted government as a means of ruling and protecting citizens and punishing evildoers.
 2. Reason #2: Civil laws must be obeyed so fear can be avoided (vs.3-4).
 - a. One function of the state is to protect its citizens -- law-abiding citizens have no reason to be afraid.
 - b. Another function of the state is to punish evildoers -- they should be afraid [a serious warning is given in this regard in Ecclesiastes 8:11].
 - c. God has authorized the state to take the lives of those guilty of capital crimes (vs.4; Genesis 9:5-6).

3. Reason #3: Civil laws must be obeyed for the sake of conscience (vs.5).
 4. In addition to obeying civil laws, . . .
- C. (vs.6-7) Taxes are to be paid to support the government, and respect is to be shown to those in positions of authority.
- II. 1 PETER 2:13-17
- A. These instructions are similar to those given in Romans 13.
1. Civil laws are to be obeyed.
 2. Respect is to be shown to rulers.
- B. The state is responsible for protecting law-abiding citizens and punishing lawbreakers.
- III. 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4
- A. Prayer is to be offered on behalf of civil leaders.
- B. Christians are to pray for leaders so we can live in conditions favorable to spreading the Gospel.
- C. This pleases God -- He wants everyone to be saved.

Conclusion:

1. A number of events that have occurred lately indicate that our country needs to take heed to the matters we have studied.
2. In closing let us consider the warning and the blessing given in:
 - a. Psalm 9:17
 - b. Psalm 33:12.