

Truth

Being Truthful

Foundation

Bible passage : Matthew 22.15-22

The Pharisees came to Jesus with a question and flattered Him by saying “we know you are true and teach the way of God truthfully” (v16). But they were not telling the truth themselves because, they were really plotting against Jesus and trying to “entangle him in his words”. So, the Pharisees set a trap by asking the question that they did.

“we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully”

The Pharisees asked “Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” In asking Jesus the question they gave Him two answers to choose from. Which would Jesus choose?

Option 1: Jesus could have said that they should pay the taxes. But the Pharisees knew that this would make Him very unpopular with the crowds. The people of Israel to which Jesus, his disciples and the Pharisees belonged, were being ruled by the Romans. Most of the people did not like this and they resented having to pay Roman taxes. (Indeed, as we see elsewhere, people who helped by collecting taxes for the Romans were hated by many others.) The Pharisees thought that this would make the crowd turn against Jesus.

Option 2: Jesus could have told people not to pay. There probably weren't any Romans



A Silver Denarius or “Tribute Penny” from the reign of Tiberius Caesar (AD 14-37).

listening to Jesus, but we can be sure that the Pharisees would report what Jesus had said to the Romans. The Romans did not take kindly to people refusing to pay their taxes and at the very least Jesus would have been arrested and possibly beaten or killed.

However, as is well known, Jesus did not answer the question as the Pharisees expected. He got the Pharisees to acknowledge that the coin used to pay taxes belonged to Caesar and then in His now famous words said ““Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” This is a very important saying for Christians in their attitude to the State today, even in countries like ancient Rome, where there is much injustice and cruelty.

Here is an example of people who are **not being truthful** to achieve their own ends rather than honouring God. They were even using Jesus’ reputation for **speaking the truth** as part of the way to trap Him. Jesus’ did not avoid the question as some modern politicians might, but in effect told people to pay taxes and yet also to honour God, thus disarming the trap.



It is important to tell the truth. The Pharisees talked about truth but were not truthful, whereas Jesus had a reputation for speaking the truth.