

openly in front of a window. Daniel would not render to the state that which belonged to God. He continued to bow to his Creator alone.

In conclusion, many preachers have already bowed to Caesar in the area of politics, for their voices have been silent in their pulpits. In the future they will also be silenced on the subjects of hell, abortion, sodomy, etc. Christians in the early church rejected Caesar's authority and would not submit in matters of worship and spiritual freedom. The Scriptures are clear that we are to have no other gods before the Lord (**Exodus 20:1-3**). When we place the state above God, it is a violation of this commandment. It is idolatrous to put government in the place of the living God. May God give us the courage to stand in these last days, Amen.

"If princes exceed their bounds, madam, it is no doubt that they may be resisted even by power." (John Knox, as he was questioned by Queen Mary concerning subjects resisting their princes.)

"For earthly princes lay aside their power when they rise up against God, and are unworthy to be reckoned among the number of mankind. We ought, rather, to spit upon their heads than to obey them."

John Calvin
Commentary on Daniel

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."

Acts 5:29



Victory Baptist Church
Pastor Robert W. Reed
14473 Bellingrath Road
P.O. Box 257
Coden, Alabama 36523
(251) 873-4422

**" Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
Acts 16:31**

The Riches OF GRACE

"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

Robert W. Reed
February 2004

God and Caesar

*"... Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are
Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."*

Matthew 22:21

+ SACRED AND SECULAR +

Throughout the centuries there has been the question of who is sovereign, God or Caesar. These two kingdoms seem to clash on occasions, especially in our time. The Christian is a citizen of both kingdoms (heavenly and earthly). But, the problem arises when Caesar plays God and government usurps the Lord's right to rule in the affairs of men. **Caesar is not God.** If his commands interfere with God, we must obey God rather than man.

*"Jesus is the master of legions today, while the
Caesars have passed away! ... His cause is not
to be crushed, it is forever rising."*

Charles Spurgeon
(Sermon given April 9, 1882)

This article will discuss what is to be rendered to Caesar and what is to be rendered to God. The context of **Matthew twenty-two** is very interesting. In **Matthew 22:15-22**, along with **Luke 20:19-26** and **Mark 12:13-17**, we see the Pharisees desiring to deliver Jesus over to the authorities, but at the same time they feared the people because he was considered to be a prophet. The Pharisees and the Herodians set out to trap Jesus in His words by asking Him this question, *“Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?”* This strange coalition who disliked one another, joined together in their hatred for the Messiah. Politics do make strange bedfellows. The question in **Matthew 22:17** seems to imply that there is a higher standard by which to judge Caesar and that standard is God’s law. The Lord, knowing their hypocrisy, asked in **Matthew 22:18-19** to see the tribute money. Even though Jesus spoke of the requirements of tribute to Caesar, He also spoke of things which do not belong to Caesar and are beyond His control and jurisdiction. Most recognize the authority of the state in **Matthew 22:21**, but fail to see its limitation, *“They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”* Actually, **Matthew 22:21** is a rebuke to Caesar, **for he is not God**, even though he made such claims. The Lord Jesus condemns giving honor or anything that belongs to God to another. Emperor and state worship was prevalent at this time. Caesar was worshiped at this time and his word was law. Other religions received a certain measure of tolerance as long as Caesar was supreme, that is, number one. If the Christians had only proclaimed Jesus Christ as another god (a lesser god than Caesar), they would not have been persecuted by the Roman government. The Bible is clear in **Exodus 20:3**, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* Caesar has limited power and kings are to be subject to the King of Kings. That which belongs to God is not to be usurped by government. God’s authority is higher than rulers, for they have a limited sphere of authority.

What are the things of Caesar? The truth is, we render many thing to Caesar that are not his. For example, the church is not Caesar’s according to **Matthew 16:18**, *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Because of the 501c3 status of most churches in America, they have become slaves to the government and are burdened with many restrictions. My hard earned wealth is not

Caesar’s but we continue to render a large portion of our paychecks to him for many ungodly purposes (abortion, unjust wars, public schools, arts, etc.). If God’s kingdom can operate on 10%, Caesar’s kingdom should be able to do the same, otherwise we give more honor to Caesar than to God. My children are not Caesars, even though Caesar thinks they are his. When you put your children in public schools, you are giving them to Caesar to train. My freedom and liberty is not Caesar’s but are given to me by a Higher Power and Authority.

Government is ordained by God according to **Romans 13:1-7**. Rulers are to punish evildoers and promote good. God established government to minister justice. According to the Scriptures, we are to obey civil government; but, when rulers step out of their sphere of authority, we are not obligated to obey them. The apostle Paul wrote the book of **Romans** and yet he was in prison for defying the government. Several of his epistles were written from prison. There are limits to our obedience to government. For example, the pastor is to rule in the congregation and the people are to obey him according to **Hebrews 13:17**, *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”* But if a pastor told his people to do something contrary to the Scriptures, they do not have to render obedience to him. The same principle would be true for a husband’s authority over his wife and children, or an officer over a soldier. Both the individual and government have a responsibility to each other. No one is commanded to follow a tyrant, especially when it is unscriptural. Most Caesars of our day are under the judgment of God and deserve not our obedience.

It is our duty to disobey Caesar when God’s law is violated; our first obligation is always to God. In the first century when the apostles were told by the officials to stop preaching the Word of God, they simply said, *“We ought to obey God rather than man,”* **Acts 5:29**. The context of **Acts chapter four and five** show that even though they were placed in prison, they would not bow to Caesar. There are at least twenty-five examples in the Bible (but due to lack of space I am not able to elaborate on them) where believers disobeyed rulers and God blessed. In **Daniel 6:6-13**, Daniel deliberately defied a ban on prayer by the high court of Darius. Even though Daniel himself was a government official, he believed in a Higher Power. He would not postpone his conviction for thirty days. Daniel continued as he always did to pray