

## **Week Five - Give An Answer: What Belongs to God?**

Readings: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 // Matthew 22:15-22

Series based on 1 Peter 3:15 NIV “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”

### **What is Apologetics?**

Apologetics is worshipping God with our minds as we defend the Christian faith with logic and evidence that may remove barriers to belief.

From Joshua Johnson: What Apologetics IS and is NOT

Apologetics IS: Worshipping God with our minds, defends the Christian faith with logic and evidence, removes barriers to belief (some call pre-evangelism), ...the science and art of Christian persuasion, any reason why a person believes in Jesus, equips believers to engage hard questions they will face in life, ...connecting faith with science, history, philosophy without sacrificing one or the other, bridges faith with experience, gives believers and unbelievers space to ask questions, investigate holistic discipleship.

Apologetics is NOT: saying “I’m sorry,” ...arguing or bullying people into faith, ...possessing absolute certainty in all theological beliefs, ...debating with people on a stage, ...eliminating the mysterious or the spiritual, ...about winning, ignoring the heart, the spirit, or experiences, ...a purely mental exercise, providing a bubble that prevents questions of the Christian faith, ...cookie cutter explanations.

Five Reasons We Need to be Equipped for Apologetics (from Joshua Johnson);

1. It is biblical, historical, and Jesus and John Wesley used it.
2. It is part of the holiness journey.
3. It is a multi-purpose tool.
4. It demands integrity. [Questions are not accusations; they are opportunities to respond with gentleness and respect. Both require integrity.]
5. It engages the next generation and changing world.

### **How does Jesus teach us to go about explaining the reasons for what we believe?**

Matthew 10:16 – NASB 16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so [a]be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”

The Message: 16 “Stay alert. This is hazardous work I’m assigning you. You’re going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don’t call attention to yourselves. Be as shrewd as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.”

## What's the difference between Pharisees and Herodians?

The Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders who wanted to overthrow the pagan Roman government and kick them out of Jerusalem once and for all. Herodians were a group of Jewish leaders known as Herod's guys (who benefit quite well from the Roman occupation). One Jewish group sees the negative effects of occupation and taxation and oppression and seeks to be freed from it. While the other Jewish group sees only a really cushy situation, why mess with it? Thus, Pharisees and Herodians did not get along. However, they found common ground in Jesus. Both sides agreed that Jesus had to go.

## Why did Jesus ask for a coin? Couldn't he have made his point without one?

I think if Jesus had a coin, he would have said, "whose image (icon) is on this coin that I have." But you know who *does* have a coin? Pharisees who teach publicly that the Roman currency is appalling to God, yet reveal they are carrying the currency on them when they reach into their pocket without thinking. "Oops. We're in public! In the courts of the temple, even!" Yikes. They have just exposed their hypocrisy to all in the crowd, every Pharisee that pulled out a coin. That may be why Jesus asked for a coin.

Jesus asks "who is on this coin? Whose picture is it, whose "icon" is on it? Whose name?" Everybody knows it's the image of the emperor, Caesar. What does any of this have to do with the original question about paying taxes? Jesus' reply, the literal translation, is "Pay back to Caesar what belongs to him, and pay back God what belongs to God."

**Today's takeaway:** What belongs to God? If we're going by the coin Jesus asked for, then we would focus on WHO belongs to God? Those created in God's image. What aspects would be included? Everything. What we do. Who we are. What we think. What we say. It all belongs to God and in our doing, being, thinking and saying, we are to be giving to God what is due him.

Meditations for the Week:

1. In the context of the time Jesus lived in, Caesar represented the Roman government that harshly ruled Israel. The phrase applies to us in this way: every person on earth lives under the authority of a government, and Jesus instructs us to honor that government to the extent that we can.
2. Chaos in government is not under God. But it is under someone. Romans 13:1 *The Message* *Be a good citizen. All governments are under God. Insofar as there is peace and order, it's God's order.*
3. Jesus responds to their question by doing what Jesus always did: he forced those around him to look at things from a heavenly perspective and not a worldly one.
4. When we "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," we more importantly "render unto God the things that are God's." Do not be swept up into political anger, nor the idea that the world is doomed if your candidate doesn't win.