

Masterwork of the Messiah

Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

Tricky Questions & Timely Answers

Written By

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The Supreme Court recently ruled, and rightly so, that prayers in local council meetings do not violate the U.S. Constitution. Finally, a decision of sanity from a group of judges who have pushed laws upon Christians which defy and diminish the faith. Finally, a breath of fresh legal air in support of appealing to God to His wisdom and assistance for how we function governmentally. I'd say the current societal disintegration and moral decay calls for people to pray for and with their leaders as never before.

The father of our nation, George Washington, understood the importance of acknowledging God privately and publically for personal and public health and well-being. Speaking to the Senate and the House of Representatives on November 19, 1794, he made statements which affirm the point:

Let us unite, therefore, in imploring the Supreme Ruler of nations, to spread his holy protection over these United States: to turn the machinations of the wicked to the confirming of our constitution: to enable us at all times to root out internal sedition, and put invasion to flight: to perpetuate to our country that prosperity, which his goodness has already conferred, and to verify the anticipation of this government being a safe guard to human rights.¹

¹ Writings, Volume 34: 37.

Ol' George sounds more like a preacher here than a politician. Aren't you thankful our nation was founded by men in political office who feared and revered the Almighty? Aren't you thankful our nation was founded by men in political office who understood the importance of recognizing God and seeking His goodwill and guidance of our growing country?

Anymore, however, godly people, from all walks of life, are under constant attack by those whose goal is to expunge faith from the public square. Opposition to Christians by the American Humanist Association is what prompts cases like that entertained by the Supreme Court. People with a complete disdain for the God concept and people of faith keep hammering away at the presence of faith in our public life, seeking to cause fractures which will eventually cause it to be broken off and thrown into the proverbial ash heap. Even though the Supreme Court voted in favor of prayer in this instance, that does not mean the opposition will cease. No sooner did the High Court hand down their majority verdict than the AHA announced they will exploit the wording of the ruling to be theologically fair in their jurisdictions when it comes to prayer by devising their own invocations.

Doesn't this just make you want to ask: "Who will you be invoking?" "Who will you be speaking to?" "What will you be speaking about?" I recently listened to Robert Ray, a devout secular humanist, and lover of science and reason, give an invocation to the Oak Harbor City Council. In it he asked for the council to make the best decisions for the community, to use reason, wisdom, and empathy in their deliberations, to take into account their decisions would make both in the present and the future ... and so on and so forth.

All of this makes we want to ask some questions:

- "If we are just a product of blind, random chance, if we are just a result of the survival of the fittest, then why should there be empathy?"
- Better yet, if there is no absolute to gauge what is empathetic and what is not, how would we know what true empathy is? Can science tell us?
- Why should we, who are simply evolving creatures focused on making sure we survive in a hostile environment, care about how our actions positively or negatively impact others?
- Which, really, takes greater faith, to believe that nothing created something or that Someone created something? Which position is more reasonable? When was science ever about empathy and justice?
- How can one negatively affirm that prayer to God has no absolute ultimate value and meaning without making the self-defeating point that a godless invocation does have absolute ultimate value and meaning? Tell me, Robert, where does your absolutist mindset come from if there is absolutely no absolute reference point, viz., God?
- And since we all know that every effect has a cause, the world is an effect, and therefore, the world has a cause, who/what caused us in a world where matter is not eternal? And since no contingent being can cause himself, who or what caused us which is not a contingent being? Or put differently, since we are all dependent beings, doesn't it seem logical and reasonable to believe that there must be something independent on which all our dependency hangs?

I could go on but I'll stop. The point is clear: it is more reasonable to believe in God and to pray to Him. It is more illogical to disbelieve in Him, to disbelieve in the superiority of a highly non-

contingent being (we are all contingent beings, which, by definition calls for someone or something which is non-contingent to create and fashion us), and to appeal to absolute concepts of right and wrong when you don't believe in an ultimate reference point to gauge those concepts.

But godless people like Robert will continue to oppose not just the ruling of the Supreme Court decision by creating and crafting purely humanistic invocations, they will tirelessly work to silence the witness and testimony of Christ and Christians, all for the sake of saving society. Despite mounds of evidence for the existence of God, as detailed by Norman Geisler in his excellent book *I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist*, these folks will, with an almost religious zeal, seek to oppose the faith at every turn.

Such were the religious leaders of Christ's day. Despite mounds of evidence that He was, in fact, the God-man, they willfully chose to oppose Him, and as we see in His lengthy exchange with them on the Temple mount on the Tuesday prior to His crucifixion, as detailed in Matthew 21-22, we gain insight into this question which naturally arises from chapter 22:15-22:

How Should We Respond To Opposition Against The Faith? (Matthew 22:15-22)

In this passage, we encounter the first of four debates between Jesus and the religious leaders of Israel (Matthew 22:1-22; 23:33; 34-40; 41-46). Each one reveals how those self-righteous, evidence-rejecting men sought to undermine and ultimately destroy the person and work of Jesus. By studying Christ's response to these evil men, we can gain insight on how we should navigate the wild waters of hatred, dislike, and disdain for Christ and the Christian faith His death and resurrection has given birth to. From my study of this short section, I see three concepts we would all do well to understand and employ as we encounter the Robert Rays of this world.

Secure The Fact of Opposition (Matthew 22:15-17)

It doesn't get any clearer than this:

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said.

After seeing countless miracles on the Temple mount, after hearing Christ's other-worldly, lofty teaching, you think we'd read:

Then the Pharisees turned from their erroneous, illogical position and embraced Him based upon the viable evidences He presented to them.

Such did not happen because they hated Him, saw Him as a complete threat to their power and way of living, and made the false presupposition that there was no way He was the Messiah despite what proofs He garnered to the contrary. So what did these close-minded, arrogant, selfish men do? They plotted how they might trap Him in His words so they could easily and swiftly refute and sideline Him.

The Greek word here for plotted is *sumvoulion* (συμβούλιον) and it speaks putting together a formal meeting to discuss solutions to a given problem or issue.² The word is used with a negative connotation here because their goal was far from ethical or positive. They met for the sole purpose of trapping Him in a logical quandary so they could show His intellectual and religious inferiority, while highlighting their superiority. According to Matthew 12:14, where the same word is used, they had been at this for quite some time, regardless of all supporting evidence of Christ's deity which they personally were privy to. They will plot again when they hand him over to Pilate for crucifixion (Matthew 27:1), and they'll get together again to plot what to do with the soldiers who were guarding the tomb when the angel showed up on the morning of Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28:12). Never mind the facts. Plot to subvert the facts and keep your comfortable, cozy, carnal lifestyle.

And, please, don't think for a minute that the godless forces in our land are not plotting how to overthrown the Christian faith. The National Endowments for the Arts has, for years, allowed deliberate affronts to the moral teaching of Christianity.³ Crucifixes have been desecrated in the name of art, and sexual perversion has been the order of the day. Wheeler Williams, one of our country's greatest sculptor's has "acknowledge[ed] that the purpose of modern art 'was to destroy man's faith in his cultural heritage."⁴ Just this week a young boy's school teacher left a nasty voice message on his home phone telling him he is not permitted to read the Bible before or after class in her classroom. I'd dare say if he were reading any other religious book he wouldn't have received a personal call. Common Core education seeks to purposefully redefine and revise what is good, noble, and worthy in our culture. If you want to study the strategy of the unbelieving world, then just read Patrick Buchanan's *Death Of A Superpower*. Carefully read the second chapter *The Death Of Christian America* for in it he catalogues how people are plotting this ominous reality. David Limbaugh's *Persecution* shows in stark, statistical terms just how the purposeful plot and rot is spreading against Christ and Christianity, and we all see it, even if we aren't reading these books.

Opposition to the faith is a fact, Jack. Jesus warned:

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you (John 15:18).

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature*: συμβούλιον, ον, τό (s. three prec. entries and next; Plut., Cass. Dio et al.; ins [since II B.C.]; pap.—Dssm., NB 65 [BS 238])

①the act of consulting or conferring, *consultation, meeting* σ. ἐγένετο τῶν ἱερέων GJs 8:2; cp. 10:1.

②meeting of an official deliberative assembly, *council session, meeting* (Plut., Rom. 25 [14, 3], Luc. 509 [26, 4]; BGU 288, 14 [II A.D.]; 511 I, 20; PRyl 75, 29) συμβούλιον ἄγειν *convene a council* IPol 7:2. On the restoration [εἰς τὸ συμβούλιον ἄγεσθαι AcPl BMM verso 19f, see Sander's note p. 89].

③the result reached by a deliberating group, *plan, purpose* σ. λαμβάνειν a Latinism = consilium capere (B-D-F §5, 3b, cp. a; Rob. 109.—Jos., Ant. 6, 38 βουλὰς λ.) *form a plan, decide, consult, plot* **Mt 12:14; 22:15; 27:1, 7; 28:12.** In the same sense σ. διδόναι (s. IHeikel, StKr 106, '35, 314) **Mk 3:6** (v.l. ποιεῖν); σ. ἐτοιμάζειν *reach a decision* **15:1** v.l.; συμβούλιον ποιεῖν vs. **1.**—ASherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT, '63, 44f.

④an official deliberative assembly as a body, *council* (ins, pap; 4 Macc 17:17; Jos., Ant. 14, 192; 16, 163.—Mommsen, Röm. Staatsrecht³ 1887 I 307ff; II 249; Schürer I 370 n. 80 [sources and lit.]) Φῆστος συλλαλήσας μετὰ τοῦ συμβουλίου **Ac 25:12.**—M-M.

³ Patrick Buchanan, *The Death Of The West* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2002): 179-204.

⁴ Nadia Rybarova, *Czech President Vaclav Havel: Man May Have Lost God* (Associated Press, September 4, 1997).

The godless, believe-in-everything-and-anything except for Christianity world does hate the faith and they are plotting to undermine it. We all see it.

Consider Fairfax County's proposed new ordinance designed to curtail how many people can meet or be at your home at a given time. As far as I know, there are only two types of people who have "large" numbers of people at and in their homes: Christians for Bible studies and people who love to throw parties. Sure, some parties can, and do, get out of hand, but what about when Pastor Darren hosts a Super Bowl party at his home for his traditional 50-60 people? No drinking. No drugs. No loud, ear-piercing music. Just a group of football loving Christians getting together for a great, enjoyable time. Under this proposed new "protective" law they would not be able to watch the game, or even be at Darren's house because there would be too many people. Don't think for a minute that this proposed law, supposedly designed to safeguard our communities, won't be used (and modified, and tightened, and changed) in the future to curtail home Bible studies. This will be problematic for a church our size for we have over 500 people in home Bible studies sprinkled all throughout the surrounding communities. What about the freedom of assembly? Where is a respect for the Constitution? Where is the respect and love of the Constitution?

How do those who plot the sidelining and silencing of Christ and Christianity seek to implement their strategy? Christ's situation is a case study. His opponents, who hid behind the cloak of misguided religion, attempted to craft a tricky, no-win question to trap Him, *pagiteuo* (*παγιδεύω*). The word is a *hapax legomena*, meaning it only occurs one time in the New Testament.⁵ Lexically and etymologically it was used, first and foremost, to refer to traps used to trap birds or game. In Hellenistic culture it denoted a mouse-trap, a device which would spring unexpectedly on a mouse, killing it instantly.⁶ Applied to the question of the Pharisees, it was purposefully designed to spring on Christ, leaving Him no viable options to embrace or articulate to keep from looking foolish or dangerous in the eyes of the crowd. And they didn't even have the courage to pose the question themselves. They sent their students to do their dirty work:

¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, ...

See what I mean? Talk about intellectual cowardice.

The Pharisaical students, in this instance, joined with their opponents the Herodians to oppose Jesus. Isn't it interesting how common enemies in a declining culture will unite toward

⁵ Kittel, *Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament*, Volume 5: 595 validates this point.

⁶ (*πήγνυμι*), esp. "noose," "snare," "net." In the Hell. period it can mean "mouse-trap." 1 In Anth. Pal., 6, 109 we find *νευροτενεῖς παγίδες* (snares with cords). The crafty and destructive aspect of *παγίς* is stated in Menand. Fab. Inc., 67: *κεκρυμμένη κεῖται παγίς τοῖς πλησίον*. In Anth. Pal., 9, 152 the Trojan horse which trapped and destroyed the Trojans is called a *δουρατέα* (wooden) *παγίς*. With *παγίς* we find the synonym *δίκτυον* ("fishing-net," "hunter's net," "snare").

... *Anthologia Palatina*, a collection of minor Hellenistic poetry based on ancient collections of epigrams, assembled by Konstantinos Kephales in Byzantium in the 10th century A.D., and so called because the only MS. is in Heidelberg Library, ed. H. Stadtmüller and F. Bucherer, 1906. There is a rich fig. use of the word in the LXX. To the fore is the concept of snares for birds or game. We find various figures of speech, that of the pit and net in ψ 68:22; snares, nets and traps in ψ 139:5; snares, nets and pits in Hos. 5:1 f.

the common cause of hatred of Christ and Christianity? Such still occurs today. The Pharisees hated the Romans and paying taxes to them, taxes not mandated by the Torah. The Herodians, conversely, supported the Herodian dynasty, which was empowered and supported by Rome. Based on this political predisposition they did not like the Pharisees; however, both of these groups saw Christ as a threat to their longevity, hence they teamed up here with a seemingly innocent question, a question they prefaced with words of outright flattery:

“Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.¹⁷ Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?”

They thought they had Christ cornered with this question. If He said Jews should pay taxes to Rome, then He would face the wrath of the people for siding with the occupational forces. If He said Jews shouldn't pay taxes, then they could get him on being seditious toward the current government. “Ah, now we have Him on the ropes” had to be the thought after they delivered this well-thought out sinister salvo.

Along these lines, let me counsel you. Those who oppose the faith still use this methodology. They craft provocative questions to sideline Christians as being unloving, unpatriotic, intolerant and so on and so forth. They pose complex cultural questions so they silence you through their supposedly superior moral, Statist thinking. If they want to silence a godly, well-trained, articulate shepherd, anymore all they have to do is ask, “Pastor, where do you stand on those who have immigrated to our country to better their lives, but who haven't come through the normal immigration avenues?” “Pastor, explain to me how it is loving for you to believe that your religion is the religion, while all others are not?” “Pastor, how can you condone a God in the Old Testament who sanctioned the eradication of entire people groups?” “Pastor” I'll let you fill in the blank.

The point should be well-taken: Expect to encounter questions of this nature, questions purposefully designed to leave you looking like the puritanical problem our progressive culture just can stomach anymore. Expect also to have a well-thought-out, logical, sometimes biblical, sometimes non-biblical response ... as we shall soon see.

But for now it is enough just to say, “Lord, I expect opposition and I will not be intimidated and I will not retreat from your timeless truths, truths which can save sinners and redeem nations.”

This wasn't Christ's first encounter with mean-spirited people. It had happened countless times, and, as before, He stayed calm, cool, and collected because He knew He possessed the high ground and the right answers. How did He, then, respond to such a question? He minced no words. In fact, He gives us a principle we might employ. It is called ...

State The Foundation Of The Opposition (Matthew 18)

Looking past their flattery and at their hearts, Matthew writes and Jesus speaks:

¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?

You might fool others with your so-called lofty moral, reasonable, supposedly more logical worldview, but you will never fool God. He sees and knows all, even your inner intentions and motivations. You might cause others to think your question is the question designed to get at truth, when, in reality, your question is all about attacking truth, especially Christian truth. Your own intellectual arrogance might lead you to believe your position is the position and that your question is just attempting to clear the air of problematic, inferior thinking, when, in your heart of hearts your real motivation is based on hatred: Hatred of Christ, hatred of the Bible, hatred of God's laws, hatred of God's teachings, hatred of His so-called weak-kneed people who dare believe in Him and His sacrifice for their sin. Yes, your opposition to the faith is not informational, as I have said in the past, although that is what you say, it is purely volitional. You will not believe no matter what the facts are because this belief would cost you too much, or so you think. To quote Friedrich Nietzsche, as I have done before, "If one were to prove this God of the Christians to us, we should be even less able to believe in him ... It is our preference that decides against Christianity, not arguments."⁷

In some situations, where a pugnacious person is peppering you with provocative questions, you might need to address motive. They, who are attempting to label you as a hateful person, are probably the hateful ones. They hate truth. They hate the evidences for a divine Creator. They hate the evidences for morals, which can only arise from those who embrace the God concept. They hate those who would dare stand for morals in an immoral loving world. They hate those who stand for moral, religious absolutes, even though they are absolutely opposed to you. They typically drip with hate but wrap their hate up in a cloak of moral superiority and supposedly logical intellectualism. Mark Christ's model well: *Sometimes you, based on the Spirit's leading, will need to call their menacing motive out into the open.* Sometimes, as we see from Jesus, faith is a fightin' faith. Jesus, if anything, possessed moral and spiritual certitude, and would not be intimidated by any man, and would waste no time bringing their true intentions to light so as to properly frame the provocative question at hand. Are you ready and willing to step into His sandals? Our culture awaits your courage.

When you step up and out, what should you do beyond talking about motives? We find our direction in the last movement of Christ's debate with the small-minded, blood-thirsty Pharisees:

Sharpen The Focus of The Opposition (Matthew 22:19-22)

With one timely and simple illustration Jesus decimated the plot of the Pharisees by decisively dismantling their provocative conundrum:

¹⁹ "Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰ And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." ²² And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

Pow. End of debate. Support Rome and, more importantly, support God. What a reply. It left the opposition with nothing to say.

⁷ Os Guiness, *Time For Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000): 114.

All government is established by God. This is easily validated by numerous passages in the Scriptures. The powerful Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar thought he was all that, but Daniel foretold how God would humble him ...

¹³ I was looking in the visions lin my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. ¹⁴ He shouted out and spoke as follows: Chop down the tree (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar) and cut off its branches, strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field; and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him. ¹⁷ This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men (Daniel 4)

And humble him He did.

Based on this providential, divine reality, Jesus rightfully said we should support earthly governments. Put differently, Jesus said it was legal and lawful to support the Roman Empire through taxes they leveled like the poll, or census tax. The state has the divine right to collect taxes in order to operate effectively, and the citizens have the divine obligation and moral calling to support the state through those taxes.

Honoring and obeying the state, as presented by Christ, is developed further by Paul in Romans 13.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Sounds like Christ's teaching, doesn't it? And to think at the time Paul wrote these words Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, also called Nero, was the supreme ruler. History clearly shows he how wicked and ruthless he was as a leader, perhaps one of the worst in the Roman

system of governance.⁸ Yet, Paul wrote these profound, practical words during the reign this sinister sovereign. Peter will echo the same spiritual sentiments in his first letter (1 Peter 2:13-

⁸*Nero Biography*. Accessed on May 8, 2014. <http://www.biography.com/people/nero-9421713#early-life-and-ascent-to-the-throne&awesm=-oE3so3es6xqItd>

Nero's Reign

Until the year 59, Nero was described as a generous and reasonable leader. He eliminated capital punishment, lowered taxes and allowed slaves to bring complaints against their masters. He supported the arts and athletics above gladiator entertainment and gave aid to other cities in crisis. Although he was known for his nighttime frolicking, his actions were good-natured, if irresponsible and self-indulgent.

But after Agrippina's murder, Nero descended into a hedonic lifestyle that was marked not just by lavish self-indulgence but tyranny. He spent exorbitant amounts of money on artistic pursuits and around 59 A.D., began to give public performances as a poet and lyre player, a significant breach of etiquette for a member of the ruling class.

When Burrus died and Seneca retired in the year 62, Nero divorced Octavia and had her killed, then married Poppaea. Around this time accusations of treason against Nero and the Senate began to surface, and Nero began to react harshly to any form of perceived disloyalty or criticism. One army commander was executed for badmouthing him at a party; another politician was exiled for writing a book that made negative remarks about the Senate. Other rivals were executed in the ensuing years, allowing Nero to reduce opposition and consolidate his power.

The Great Fire

By 64, the scandalous nature of Nero's artistic antics may have begun to cause controversy, but the public's attention was diverted by the Great Fire. The fire began in stores at the southeastern end of the Circus Maximus and ravaged Rome for 10 days, decimating 75 percent of the city. Although accidental fires were common at the time, many Romans believed Nero started the fire to make room for his planned villa, the Domus Aurea. Whether or not Nero started the fire, he determined that a guilty party must be found, and he pointed the finger at the Christians, still a new and underground religion. With this accusation, persecution and torture of the Christians began in Rome.

Political Demise and Death

After the Great Fire, Nero resumed plans for the Domus Aurea. In order to finance this project, Nero needed money and set about to get it however he pleased. He sold positions in public office to the highest bidder, increased taxes and took money from the temples. He devalued currency and reinstated policies to confiscate property in cases of suspected treason.

These new policies resulted in the Pisonian conspiracy, a plot formed in 65 by Gaius Calpurnius Piso, an aristocrat, along with knights, senators, poets and Nero's former mentor, Seneca. They planned to assassinate Nero and crown Piso the ruler of Rome. The plan was discovered, however, and the leading conspirators, as well as many other wealthy Romans, were executed.

Just three years later, in March 68, the governor Gaius Julius Vindex rebelled against Nero's tax policies. He recruited another governor, Servius Sulpicius Galba, to join him and to declare himself emperor. While these forces were defeated and Galba was declared a public enemy, support for him increased, despite his categorization as a public enemy. Even Nero's own bodyguards defected in support of Galba. Fearing that his demise was imminent, Nero fled. He planned to head east, where many provinces were still loyal to him, but had to abandon the plan after his officers refused to obey him. He returned to his palace, but his guards and friends had left. He

17). Makes you stop and ask yourself: Do I willfully and joyously support my government, with all of its spots and wrinkles? Am I verbally positive about what they ask of me, or am I verbally negative? As believers, we are to lead the way with honoring the government, regardless of who is in charge.

At the same time, we, as believers in the living God, are under divine obligation to support Him and His work, to give Him His due. True, we should engage in civil disobedience when we are commanded by the government to do things contrary to the faith and teachings of the Word. This is what Peter and the apostles did when they were commanded not to teach about Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 5:17ff). When hauled before the religious leaders Peter exclaimed with great boldness, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Underline that word *must*. Believe me, I feel the same, and God wants us to all be in the same page. Support the government at all times; however, we must not let obedience to God and His teachings be trumped by the mandates of the government.⁹ In this instance, we are responsible to the higher power, God. This is giving God His due, but it is more than this.

What is God due from you and from me? He is due our love, our prayers, our Bible Study, our private worship, our corporate worship, our commitment to caring for the less fortunate, our willingness to share the gospel when given the opportunity, our moral rectitude in an immoral culture, our willingness to stand up for moral causes to protect the innocent, our prayers of confession for personal and national sin, our willingness to fulfill all of the “one another” commands of the New Testament, our willingness to serve.

Remember Christ’s words after He washed the dirty, dusty feet of the disciples:

For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is the one who is sent greater than the one who sent him (John 13:15-16).

ultimately received word that the Senate had condemned him to death by beating and so he decided to commit suicide. Unable to carry out the deed by himself, however, his secretary, Epaphroditos, assisted him. As he died, Nero was said to have exclaimed, ‘What an artist dies in me!’ He was the last of the Julio-Claudian emperors.

⁹ “When Is Civil Disobedience Allowed For A Christian?” Gotquestions.org, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.gotquestions.org/civil-disobedience.html>. The guidelines for a Christian’s civil disobedience can be summed as follows:

- Christians should resist a government that *commands* or *compels* evil and should work nonviolently within the laws of the land to change a government that permits evil.
- Civil disobedience is permitted when the government’s laws or commands are in direct violation of God’s laws and commands.
- If a Christian disobeys an evil government, unless he can flee from the government, he should accept that government’s punishment for his actions.
- Christians are certainly permitted to work to install new government leaders within the laws that have been established.

Lastly, Christians are commanded to pray for their leaders and for God to intervene in His time to change any ungodly path that they are pursuing: “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

How can you read those never-to-be-forgotten words and not ask yourself, “Where am I serving Christ?” In case you are looking to get obedient in this crucial area, our local church is in need of more people who get the picture. With all the military moves this year, we are losing more people and more leaders than ever before. This means we need more workers in all areas than ever before. For instance, just in our children’s Sunday School program we need twenty-six workers to stay functional, and this is not to mention all the folks needed for VBS. Will you render to God the things which are God’s in this area?

Since Christ spoke of money in relation to the poll tax, how can we not think of our obligations to bring our tithes and offerings before Him on a consistent basis? Do you? Will you? And while you are thinking about your answer to those questions, zero in on the words of Paul to the Corinthians:

On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come (1 Corinthians 16).

Let’s make a couple of notes about this statement.

- One, “each one” or “everyone, every believer,” is called to give to support God’s work.
- Two, giving is to be proportionate in relation to how God has blessed us individually. Ostensibly, this means there is no 10% hard and fast rule with giving to God. No, it can and should fluctuate. My monetary support of God’s work might, at times, be 10%, but based on His blessing it may shoot up, and should, much higher. Are you giving proportionally, or are you taking for yourself first and giving to God second? Jesus is clear: Give God His due. Do you? Will you?

Who could have argued with this reasoning? No one. That’s why the argument ended with this statement.

What all of this teaches us is an important truth where apologetics is concerned: To those who pose perplexing questions to you to sideline you and silence your faith, to make you look foolish, intolerant, unloving, unkind and so forth, you need to sit down and think of smart, helpful replies designed to show them the untenable nature of their questions and to ultimately point them to the Savior, Jesus Christ. Remember, Jesus always had a ready, reasoned reply to those who sought to oppose the faith. We can, and should, do the same so that some opponents to the faith become its most ardent proponents.