



Bible Heroes

The Question about Taxes

Teachers Story notes

Essential Teachers notes:

This passage shows two groups become unlikely allies. The Herodians are a bit of an unknown factor, we know they wished to restore a member of the Herodian dynasty to the throne in Judea and they fought for political independence but little else. As long as Rome let them fully rule themselves they probably would have been happy. The Pharisees would have found these terms totally offensive, nothing but an offspring of David should rule as king over the land and the only higher authority for their king would have been divine. Bringing the Herodians along for a political question concerning Rome was a clever play, they would have no problem getting Jesus arrested for not paying taxes.

Tell this story or a similar one of your choice from a favourite bible translation or story book. This version is supplied for inspiration, feel free to omit or embellish to give it your personal voice.

Main Passage : Matthew 22

“We need to trap him” said one of the crowd of men. They were all Pharisees and for days Jesus had been making them look like fools every time they went near.

“Don’t you think we’ve tried that” came an older voice. “He’s smart, too smart”

The group fell silent, miserable faces all around, it was then they heard the voices of another group of men - one by one they looked up at people they liked almost as much as Jesus - the Herodians.

“Perhaps” said the old man, a smile growing on his face, “Perhaps we can use one enemy to trap another?”

As they walked everyone turned in shock. Two enemies side by side. The Pharisees who fought for independence from the Emperor and the Herodians who supported the emperor. It was an amazing sight. It didn’t surprise anyone that they were going to see Jesus.

“Teacher,” said the oldest Pharisee “we know that you teach the way of God, that you teach what is true, that you don’t take sides in an argument. So please tell us: Is it right to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?”

The crowd gasped. That’s why the Herodians were there, because the they had no problems giving money to the emperor, they were happy to be part of the empire but with a king of their own. The Pharisees, like the people, hated the emperor taking the money from them, they hated everything about the empire. How could Jesus answer this?

“Why, oh why are you testing me?” muttered Jesus in frustration.

“Show me a coin!” he shouted, “Not a temple coin but a coin you use to pay the taxes”

A coin was given to Jesus and the crowd moved in to see what he would do with it. Jesus held it up and turned it over. Then he walked up to the oldest Pharisee.

“Please, would you tell me whose head this is on this coin?” Jesus asked him

“That’s the emperors head, Caesar ” replied the man

“Then pay to Caesar what is his and pay to God what is his” replied Jesus.

The Pharisees faces fell. They had hoped Jesus would anger the crowd, or break the law about paying taxes but he’d done neither.

Today’s heroes are the Herodians because they shows us the gift of a coin.

