

Daily Bible Study

“Who Do I Owe?”

Mark 12:13 - 17

January 23 – January 28, 2012

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –We now return to the Gospel of Mark after being away from it for some time. If you can remember back to the end of **chapter 11** we saw that the *chief Priests, scribes, and elders* came to Jesus and questioned His authority. They asked Jesus by what authority and who gave Him authority to do the things He was doing. In this particular context, the question surrounded His act of cleansing the Temple. They had questioned Jesus in attempt to discredit Him but their plan had failed as Jesus put them on the spot by asking them the question concerning the origin and authority of John the Baptists baptism. He silenced them in that question which validated John and the subject of John’s announcement (Jesus) as from God the Father and sanctioned by His ultimate authority. Jesus then went on in the beginning of **chapter 12** to predict and explain to these false Jewish leaders their coming destruction and the destruction of their organized, empty religious system in the parable of the wicked vinedressers. That parable ends in **Mark 12:12** with the words, “*And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.*” This leads us up to the passage in front of us now. We will see the method of attack against Jesus will change but the attacks will remain just the same. These false religious leaders will not rest until they get Jesus; remember they wanted to kill Him (**Mark 3:6** -*Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him*). So now we see they change their method in attempt to catch Jesus by what He is saying not in what He was doing or had done. **Mark 12:13-17** “*Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?” But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.” So they brought it. And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to Him, Caesar’s.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at Him.”*

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me Your Word this week. Help me to see again in this text Your matchless wisdom and grace and to remember that You always have the right answers.

TUESDAY – **Mark 12:13** “*Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words.*” We start off seeing the new strategy directly in who was coming to Jesus to approach and *catch Him in His words*. We read that *they*, most likely the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious authority (**11:27**), including Pharisees (**Matthew 22:15**) plotted how they would catch Jesus. They ended up devising the plan to send a coalition of *the Pharisees and the Herodians* to Jesus in attempt to *catch Him*. Remember, we already saw these two groups, who were not the best of friends now become allies against a common enemy; namely Jesus. Luke goes as far as to label these men “*spies*” which is true of them and their motive regardless of their occupation or position in government or organized religion. These two groups had very different ideas about God’s commandments; one very meticulous concerning the keeping of God’s law so much that they missed the point and even added their man made traditions to it and the other group not nearly as concerned with God’s commandments as they were with the political makeup and scene of their day. We see the binding, deceitful nature of sin as these sinners come together (**Proverbs 1:10**) to get Jesus. He was too critical of the self-righteous Pharisees and to spiritually minded for the politically focused Herodians. Both of these groups had “their reasons” for getting Jesus; after all, He never let the hypocrisy of the Pharisees slide and His recent entrance into Jerusalem where He was heralded as the Messiah King, would not have sat well with the Herodians who would not want the Roman power (king) to be disrupted as they were happy with the corrupt system in place. So the approach of Jesus with both barrels as it were must have been a pretty strong play in the eyes of these enemies of Christ. In this we see yet again the nature of sin and sinners who being unconverted cannot even see the kingdom of God much less accept it. Read **Matthew 18:3** and **John 3:3-5**.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for enabling me by The Holy Spirit to be able to see, understand, and enter the kingdom of God.

WEDNESDAY – **Mark 12:14** “*When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?* Now as they come to Jesus we see them begin to lay on the flattery. They go for the subtle approach as they begin to attempt to flatter God in the flesh. They called Him *Teacher*, which is correct as He was the greatest teacher of all time (**Matthew 7:28-29, John 7:46**). The following lines though meant to merely flatter in the providence of God are the very words of truth being spoken by Jesus enemies. He is *true*, and He is *The Truth*, and *the way* (**John 14:6**). The phrases, *...and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men...*are basically saying that Jesus is not partial to anyone, He doesn’t look at the individual and therefore change the message or alter the truth. He is consistent in the proclamation of truth regardless the audience in front of Him. Well, after they lay on this flattery perhaps in hopes that they might somehow get Jesus relaxed, not suspicious of them and their

coming to Him and maybe even lure Him to be overconfident (proud), they then drop the question on Him; *Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?* Here is where a bit more context of the times helps us understand where this question is coming from and why they chose such a question. We all remember from “the Christmas story”, **Luke 2:1-3** that when Jesus was about to be born ... *in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.* This is a sample of how we see the taxation being set up on the people. There were various taxes that were in place on the people at this time and there were obviously those who were repulsed that they should be taxed and history records that some raised violent opposition and were dealt with by the Roman authorities. A man by the name Judas of Galilee was such a fellow (**Acts 5:37**). Josephus records him saying, “Taxation is no better than downright slavery.” Well, this type of message would also go far today and Jesus is now being set up to alienate the “patriotic” segment of the Jewish population, which was about all of them. Again as previously, the questioners believe they have got Him in a no win situation because someone will be offended (the Jews or Rome) by His answer.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for being the King of Kings, above all earthly powers that are actually set up by You, and under Your control as the Sovereign God.

THURSDAY – Mark 12:15 “*Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?*” But He, knowing their *hypocrisy*, said to them, “*Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.*” This question of *Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?* and the one that precedes it, *Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?* is one that most all of us would like to see addressed in our own governments. It seems that Jesus is in a bit of a dilemma from human reasoning as this is a question loaded with emotion and one that would cause problems for a lesser man than our Lord. As Jesus begins to answer He addresses their *hypocrisy*. Notice He addresses it because He *knows* it. He knows their **hypocrisy**, their “acting like a player on the stage”. They pretended to be something they were not. Matthew records that *Jesus perceived their wickedness*, and said, *why do you test me you hypocrites?* (**Matthew 22:18**) while Luke speaks of their *craftiness* (**Luke 20:23**). *Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?* The image on the coin was that of Caesar and it represented all the benefit received from the Roman Empire. Furthermore, using the coins implied acceptance of these benefits. Their question sounded legitimate, like a request for direction in a difficult ethical matter, but their real intention was to destroy and discredit Jesus and this is why He responds as He does. *Bring Me a denarius* Jesus continues. This silver coin which we have just mentioned was the only way set by the law, that the tax could be paid. It was equal to a laborer’s average wages for one day’s work and as mentioned it was a constant reminder of Rome’s control due to its inscription. As a side note, it is noted by many scholars that Jesus had to ask for a coin implying He had none of His own (**Matthew 8:20**). He then commands them to

bring Him a coin and He will proceed to teach the truth concerning the answer to their question. Read **Proverbs 21:2, Daniel 2:21, Romans 13:1-7.**

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank you for giving us earthly rulers and for being the One who is fully and finally in control over all the decisions they make; both good and bad.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Mark 12:16-17 “So they brought it. And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to Him, Caesar’s.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at Him.” We see that Jesus is brought a coin and then He asks then *whose image and inscription* are on it. The image at that time would have been that of Tiberius, the reigning emperor and all the emperors were called Caesar. Around the coin would be the title which declared that this was the coin ‘of Tiberius Caesar, the divine Augustus, son of Augustus’, and on the other side would be ‘pontifex maximus’, translated ‘the greatest pontiff or supreme pontiff’. In these days the coin was a sign of power and where the coin was used with the head of the emperor, there his power was ruling. Jesus also asserts His authority with the demand for a coin, and the question about the inscription to which He received answers. In Christ’s response we find a neat detail. He changes the word used to describe the tax. They used a word meaning ‘give’, didomi “to give of one’s own accord”. This suggests there is a choice on the part of the giver. Jesus on the other hand uses the word apodidomi which means “to pay off, to discharge what is due”. This word stresses the responsibility and carries the idea of an obligation for services received. The image of Caesar on the coin represented all the benefits that the people received from the Roman Empire, and their use of the coins acknowledges this and Jesus is saying in short they are to pay for the services rendered to them by their rulers. We understand from Scripture that the government is ordained by God (**Romans 13:1-7**). Without their laws and enforcement of them there would be chaos. Also we see the principle one can’t accept all the benefits which the state gives and then opt out of all the responsibilities of citizenship. But there is an end to the government’s authority. The coin had Caesar’s *image* upon it, and therefore belonged to Caesar. We human beings have God’s *image* upon us (**Genesis 1:26-27**) and therefore belong to God (**Psalms 24:1**). We do need to fulfill our responsibilities to the state but never forget our greatest of responsibilities, to *Render to God the things that are God’s*. 1 Read **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thanks for making me in Your image; help me give You what I owe.