**Caesar’s and God’s**

Luke 20:20-26

Key Verse 25

“He said to them, “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.””

**Introduction**

In today’s passage, the teachers of law sent spies to Jesus and asked him a hard question. They asked whether they should pay taxes to the Roman government or not. Jesus’ answer to them was, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” Through Jesus’ words, we can learn how to properly carry out our duties as both citizens of this world and the kingdom of God.

1. Read verse 20-22. Why did the teachers of the law send spies to Jesus? (20) How did they initially praise Jesus? (21) How might their question have trapped Jesus? (22) What could be our answer for this question?

1-1. Read verse 20-22.

Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. 21 So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. 22 Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

1-2. Why did the teachers of the law send spies to Jesus? (20)

* Maybe public opinion had kept them from laying hold of Jesus.
* Now Jesus’ enemies try to turn the tide of public opinion against Him by making Jesus appear to side with the Roman government.
* They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said and hand him over to the Roman governor. The ultimate goal was to kill Jesus through the authority of the governor.
* To set up their trap the teachers of the law had kept a close eye on Jesus, examining every word he said. They didn’t come to Jesus with the motive to know Him personally but instead to find fault with Him.
* These spies pretended to be sincere. They were wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing.
* Because of their impure motive, they couldn’t get any benefit from what Jesus said or did.
* Those who see what Jesus does and listen to what he says with a sincere heart and believing mind can find the treasure of heaven in Jesus.

1-3. How did they initially praise Jesus? (21)

***“Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.***

* They praised Jesus highly with beautiful words ; 1) you speak and teach what is right, 2) you do not show partiality, 3) you teach the way of God, 4) in accordance with the truth.
* They pretended to believe Jesus’ teachings were right and true.
* They praised Jesus in hopes that Jesus would put his guard down.

1-4. How might their question have trapped Jesus? (22)

***“Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”***

* Paying taxes to Caesar or to the Roman government was a hot issue among the people of Israel. The people hated to pay taxes to Rome.
* Since 6 A.D. the Jews were forced to pay taxes which went directly into the emperor's treasury.
* Some Jewish patriots known as “the Zealots” refused, not wanting to recognize Roman rule as legitimate.
* Paying taxes to Caesar meant surrendering to him and serving him as their master.
* It was not acceptable for the Israelites to serve a Gentile king as their master because they believed they were a chosen people who were set apart to serve God only.
* If Jesus said “Yes” to their question, people would get angry and reject His teaching. People would not listen to and follow Jesus anymore.
* If Jesus said “No”, he could be arrested for inciting people against the Roman government.
* Either way, this question was intended to get Jesus in trouble. To put Jesus in a trap, they designed this shrewd question.
* Despite their ill intentions, this question was still a serious and important one. For God’s people, it was a hard question to answer.

1-5. What could be our answer for this question?

* Personal answer required!

2. Read verses 23-24. What did Jesus see? (23). What did Jesus tell them to do and what question did he ask them? (24a) What was their answer? (24b)

2-1. Read verses 23-24.

He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 24 “Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?”“Caesar’s,” they replied.

2-2. What did Jesus see? (23).

***Jesus saw their duplicity, the dishonesty that is meant to trick someone.***

* Even though they tried to trick Jesus with their deceptive words, Jesus knew their true intentions.
* We may be able to deceive others with our words but we can’t deceive God.
* We should be honest without duplicity before God.

2-3. What did Jesus tell them to do and what question did he ask them? (24a)

***“Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?”***

* Instead of having an argument with them about the issue, Jesus helped them to find the answer for themselves very practically.
* Just as the coins we have today have images and an inscription, the coins at that time had the same.
* The images and inscriptions show whose authority and which government the coin belongs to.
* It is most likely ‘Tiberius’ coin’ based on Luke 3:1.



* The Greek word for “penny” is denarius, a Roman coin. They show Tiberius Caesar, the emperor when Christ was crucified.
* He had reigned for almost twenty years, so many denarii in circulation would have been his, and the coin they brought to Jesus probably looked exactly like this.
* Although our Lord apparently focused on the front, the back also is interesting. The seated woman may be Livia (wife of Augustus and mother of Tiberius), Justitia (goddess of justice), or Pax (goddess of peace).
* The inscription “PONTIF MAXIM” is a shortened version of “Pontifex Maximus,” the high priest of the idolatrous Roman state religion.
* By the time of Tiberius, the emperor was the high priest. “PONTIF MAXIM” on the coin claimed imperial authority over worship.
* The head is Tiberius Caesar with a laurel wreath. The Romans held a “triumph” to celebrate military victories, a parade to display the captives and spoils of war and honour the victors.
* The conquering commander would wear a laurel wreath. The coin honours Caesar’s authority as a conqueror.
* By asking, “Whose is this image?” the Lord Jesus drew their attention to this image and forced them to acknowledge it as Caesar’s.
* The inscription is “TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS,” an abbreviation of “TIBERIVS CAESAR DIVI AVGVSTI FILIVS AVGVSTVS” — “Tiberius Caesar, Son of the Divine Augustus, Augustus.”
* The inscription called Tiberius the son of a god, Augustus, and also “Augustus” himself.
* The primarily religious title “Augustus” meant “majestic.” Tiberius was a step-son and (later) an adopted son of the (so-called) divine Caesar Augustus, but this coin claimed the “divine” role / title “Augustus” had passed down to Tiberius. “Augustus was divine, and now I his son am Augustus.” Not a son genetically, he claimed to be a son in divinity.
* The worship of the emperors as gods was not as fully developed as it would be later, but the inscription claimed divinity for both Augustus and his adopted son. Jesus drew their attention to the inscription, as well as the image, before He answered their question.

2-4. What was their answer? (24b)

***They replied, “Caesar”***

* Caesar’s image and inscription were on the coins that the Israel people were using at that time.
* It clearly shows that the Roman government issued these coins and that people used money under the Roman currency system.
* Israel’s people were living under the Roman government’s ruling and her system.
* The coin shows this reality and truth obviously.

3. Read verses 25-26. What did Jesus tell them to do? (25). What is Caesar’s and what is God’s? What was their response to what Jesus said? (26) How should we manage what is Caesar’s and what is God’s?

3-1. Read verses 25-26.

He said to them, “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” 26 They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

3-2. What did Jesus tell them to do? (25).

***“Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”***

* Had the Jews rendered God His due, they would have never had to render Caesar anything.
* The fact that they were under Roman domination was due to their own departure from the Lord.
* The blessings and curses of the Mosaic Law said that an obedient Israel would be a free Israel.

Deuteronomy 28 reads,

The Lord will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in obedience to him. **10** Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will fear you. **11** The Lord will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you. **12** The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. **13** The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. **14** Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.

All these curses will come on you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed,because you did not obey the Lord your God and observe the commands and decrees he gave you.**46** They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. **47** Because you did not serve the Lord your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, **48** therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the Lord sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you. **49** The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagles wooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand,

* Jesus’ answer was also very clear. To him, paying taxes was not a complicated matter.
* Paying taxes and serving God did not conflict with each other as the people thought.
* The only thing they needed to do was to figure out what belonged to Caesar and what belonged to Caesar and give back to each accordingly.
* It is OK to give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s. This was even their basic duty.

3-3. What is Caesar’s and what is God’s?

* Caesar’s is the authority and the government system that God established or allowed for the order of human society.
* Caesar’s are the duties that we have to carry out to maintain the social system that we are living in such as paying taxes and observing the laws.
* The authority of leadership, social law, government system are established by God.

Romans 13:1-7 reads,

**Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.**

* We should carry out our duties as citizens of this world for we respect God’s will. Ignoring this duty is not right before God.
* “God’s” refers to the things that belong to God and that we are supposed to give Him.
* Just as the denarius bears the image of Caesar, every human being is created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:26-27 reads,

“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26a)] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”



* If we pay taxes to Caesar, how much more should we give offering to God! Not only so, but our very lives belong to him, and should be yielded to his purpose.
* This is because it is not only Caesar’s, but this world is God’s world, and he has entrusted it to us as stewards.
* As the coin belonged to Caesar because his image was stamped on it, we should give ourselves to God because His image is stamped on us.
* Giving ourselves is to give your life to God. Jesus' answer may also tell us that Caesar does not have all authority.
* There are things that should be rendered to God alone, for he is the very owner of our lives.
* In the same way, there were instructions to offer a peace offering in Leviticus 3 with required all the fat (the best portion) and blood (our lives).
* When the State steps on this holy ground that belongs to God only, we are suppose to obey God before the State.
* Instead of focusing on getting from Him, we better trust in Him and His Sovereign rule and obey him.
* We should give honor, glory, love, submission, offering, sacrifice, service and prayer to him.

Revelation 4:11 reads,

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

* We have to carry out our duty by giving these things to God faithfully.
* As citizens of kingdom of God, we are supposed to give whatever belongs to God back to God.
* We are supposed to carry out all duties to our Lord God.

3-4. What was their response to what Jesus said? (26)

***They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.***

* They couldn’t say anything against the truthful words spoken by Jesus.
* Their evil intentions were crushed by the truthful word of God.
* All evil intention that is against God will be exposed and destroyed by the truthful word of God and all will become silent.

3-5. How should we manage what is Caesar’s and what is God’s?

* We should be responsible for both our duties as citizens of this world and also the kingdom of God.
* By being faithful to our duties, we can glorify God and please him.

**Conclusion**

We have double citizenships as the citizens of this world and the kingdom of God. Likewise, we have duties to fulfill based on our dual citizenship. We have to carry out the duties of the both citizenships faithfully. Neglecting any of them is not right with God. This passage also reminds us of Apostle Paul’s example in Philippians 3:17-20. “Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. **18** For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. **19** Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. **20** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

**One word: God’s and Caesar’s**