GIVE BACK TO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR’S

Mark 12:13-17

Key Verse 17a

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

**Introduction**



 Luke 12:48b reads, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” God blessed human beings a lot as we studied Genesis 1 and 2. Especially, thanks to Jesus Christ who shed His blood on the cross to save us, we Christians are given God’s blessings the most. So naturally we are supposed to be givers, not go getters nor busy beavers. May the Lord help us to know how to give back to God and others by repenting our wickedness. We are not born as givers due to our sins. But there is hope! Thanks to Jesus, we can be transformed to givers for God’s glory. Praise God!

1. Read verses 13-15a. Why did the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and elders send the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus? (13) How did they flatter Jesus and what was their question? (14-15a) How was this question difficult to answer?

1-1, Read verses 13-15a.

13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24688b)] to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

1-2, Why did the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and elders send the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus? (13)

***13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words.***

* Here “they” means the chief priests, the teachers of the law, elders who were embarrassed by Jesus' wisdom in regard to their inquiry of authority.
* They should have repented of their pride and rebellion at once as they listened to a parable of the tenants as the second chance. But they continue to plan to kill Jesus.
* In verse 12, “Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.”
* Now they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to catch Jesus at His words. As usual the Pharisees and Herodians did not get along.
* But all the Chief priests, the teachers of law, elders, the Pharisees and Herodians got together to catch Jesus.
* These religious people were supposed to be exemplary people whom people can be encouraged by and whom can give glory to God. But they became God’s enemies.

1-3, How did they flatter Jesus and what was their question? (14-15a)

***14 They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”***

* The Pharisees and Herodians came to Jesus speaking flattery. They called Jesus, “a man of integrity.” It was their flattery to trap Jesus in his words.
* What they said about Jesus was right. Integrity is defined as the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. Jesus was God as well as a perfect person of integrity as the Son of man.
* But their motive was not right. Humanly speaking sometimes people flatter us and we become swollen to think only about how we are truly a great person.
* According to their tax question, not paying taxes was popular with the people but could lead to trouble from the Romans. Paying taxes was unpopular, and might cause Jesus to lose his standing among the ordinary people.
* Let us think about how taxes were imposed those days. Since the year 6 A.D., the Jews were forced to pay taxes directly into the emperor’s treasury.
* Some Jewish patriots (like the Zealots) refused to pay this tax because they did not want to recognize Roman rule as legitimate.
* Most people grudgingly paid it, but everybody hated it. It wasn’t just the money, but also the principle of paying the Roman oppressor.
* Three taxes were imposed by the Romans in Judea. The **first** was the ground tax, which was 10% of all grain and 20% of all wine and fruit.
* The **second** was the income tax, which amounted to 1% of a man’s income. The **third** was the poll tax, paid by men aged 12 to 65 and women 14 to 65. This was one denarius a year, about a day’s wage for a laborer.
* The Pharisees and Herodians did not care one way or the other how Jesus answered. They only hoped that they might catch Jesus at Jesus’ words.

1-4, How was this question difficult to answer?

* Shall we pay, or shall we not pay? They seemed to put Jesus in a trap. If He agreed the tax should be paid, Jesus then seemed to deny the sovereignty of God over Israel, and He would lose popular support.
* If Jesus agreed that the tax should not be paid, He would openly declare Himself an enemy of Rome and be treated like a revolutionary.
* We can almost see the Pharisees and the Herodians smiling at that moment. They thought He was in a trap, but nobody can not put Him in a trap!
1. Read verses 15b-16. What did Jesus ask them to do? (15b-16a) Why did Jesus ask about the image on the coin? What was their reply? (16b)

2-1, Read verses 15b-16.

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

2-2, What did Jesus ask them to do? (15b-16a)

***But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”***

2-3, Why did Jesus ask about the image on the coin?

* “But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. ‘Why are you trying to trap me?’ he asked. ‘Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.’
* They brought the coin, and he asked them, ‘Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?’ Jesus wasn’t interested in playing politics. Jesus focused on the real issue at hand.
* They asked him about paying taxes to Caesar. So Jesus requested that they bring him a denarius and let him look at it. They brought him one.
* Then Jesus asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” The money in circulation in Judea in Jesus’ time was the denarius, which was issued by the Roman government, and bore the portrait and inscription of Caesar.
* Caesar had issued the money. Caesar had set its value. And Caesar declared its value, exchanging it for an equal amount of goods.
* The money was in circulation to be used by anyone. But it was ultimately Caesar’s money, and the use of his money symbolized the fact that they were living under his authority.
* Caesar’s portrait and inscription on the denarius signified that Caesar owned and regulated the economic system of Judea. Israel was in that system.
* In the same way, human life has natural value. We have all been made by God’s command from nothing, and we all live in a body which God formed and to which God gave the breath of life.
* What is more, God has set a value on human life by giving us His image, not the image of some other creature, and a mission to rule over and subdue this world.
* More than that, the Jews had been given special value in God as his chosen people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
* We all have a value in God. But that value is not for us to decide. It has been set by God and for God’s purpose.
* Because we have value in God, our lives have meaning. Because we have value, our lives are precious to God. Because we have value, we never have to despair.
* As the Jews had a special value in God as his chosen people, so all people have value in God. That value is God’s gracious gift to us.
* As much as Caesar was sovereign over the monetary value and the economic system of Judea, so the Lord God Almighty is sovereign over the value of our life and the purpose for which that value was given. Therefore, Jesus took the coin, noted Caesar’s portrait and inscription.

2-4, What was their reply? (16b)

***“Caesar’s,” they replied.***

* On the denarius they showed to Jesus, there was a head of Tiberius, the reigning Roman Emperor. Around his head was written the abbreviation for “Tiberius Caesar, the Divine Augustus.”
* On the back was the title “Pontifex Maximus,” declaring that Caesar was the high priest of the Roman Empire.
* As Jesus held the coin, He must have known the government of Caesar would soon pierce His hand and crucify Him.
1. Read verse 17. What did Jesus say to them? What is Caesar’s and what is God’s? What can we learn from this passage in regard to giving back?

3-1, Read verse 17.

17 Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” And they were amazed at him.

3-2, What did Jesus say to them?

***17 Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”***

***And they were amazed at him.***

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

* Jesus found the principle by which he could do what was right both in the eyes of men and of God. The principle was based on ownership.
* Caesar had been given authority by God to rule over the economic system of the world at that time.
* Therefore, no Jew could use the excuse that he should not pay taxes to Caesar. By paying taxes to Caesar, he was submitting to Caesar’s God-given authority.
* Jesus’ answer was perfect because he had integrity and held onto the word of God first. When he held onto the word of God he could make a clear decision and see the situation entirely.

3-4, What can we learn from this passage in regard to giving back?

* Giving back is very important. Jesus was not so concerned that people were not paying taxes to Caesar.
* What he focused on instead was that the religious leaders had become an excuse not to acknowledge God’s stamp of ownership on their lives.
* They used their hard lives in the world as an excuse not to seek God or acknowledge God’s authority over their lives and the purpose of their lives.
* They used their identity in God as an excuse not to submit to human authorities such as Caesar. They claimed that they didn’t owe anything to anybody.
* They wanted to be their own man. They wanted to be free to assign supreme value to their own lives, and not so much to the lives of others.
* They rejected God’s value system in favor of their own. But their worldly value system only promoted selfishness, irresponsibility and cynicism, since it depended on their feelings and their situation.
* When our value system is not based on God’s standard, our world becomes chaotic. “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” It is the principle by which Jesus lived, and which enabled Jesus to be a man of integrity.
* He acknowledged his responsibilities as a man to his fellow man. He treated each person with compassion and mercy.
* He also acknowledged his responsibilities before his Father God. He was a faithful messenger of God’s word of truth, and obedient to God’s will and purpose for his life.
* By faith Jesus saw others as valuable in God. He saw his own value and worth in life through his mission to die on the cross, and did not rebel against it, but accepted it as God’s sovereignty.

**Conclusion**

 It must have been difficult for Jesus to maintain his integrity to the end, though evil men conspired against him. But Jesus kept his integrity to the end, so that his life might keep the value which God had assigned it. It is the value of a ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world. It is the value of world salvation. Likewise, we must struggle in Jesus to keep our integrity as one of God’s chosen people so that our life might have eternal value in God’s world salvation work. May God bless us to be men and women of real integrity in this corrupt generation! May God bless us to give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.

**One Word: Give!**