

**“THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD’S”**

Mark 12:13-17

**Intro:** As we continue in our study of the Gospel according to Mark, we come to another incident in the life of our Lord on earth with which every reader of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is familiar. I say that because, like so much that we find in the Gospel of Mark, we find also in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. That is why they are called *synoptics*, the Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel John in his writing followed an entirely different plan than the plan of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Taken altogether we do not have a complete record of the life of Christ on earth; instead we have a synopsis. We have the details of the life and ministry of Christ on earth that were designed by the Holy Spirit, the Author of Scripture, the details which God intended that we should have. But these three Gospel records, along with the Gospel of John, still do not give us a complete biography of the Lord Jesus Christ’s life on earth.

But a person might ask, Why do we have three books dealing with the life of Christ which are so similar? And the answer to that questions is that they were written to different groups. The Gospel of Matthew was written for the Jews. It is generally agreed by Bible scholars that the Gospel of Mark was written for Roman believers. Luke was the only Gentile writer of the Gospel records. His book is addressed to Theophilus, whose name suggests that he was Greek, and so it is thought by most who have studied the Gospels that like Mark, Luke wrote also for the Gentiles, but particularly for the Greeks.

The Apostle John wrote the Gospel which bear his name, late in the first century, and it is the only Gospel which specifically states to whom it was written. We have this in John 20:30-31. It was written for the whole world. It was written for those who do not believe, that they might believe and be saved. It is definitely evangelistic in character, but, at the same time, it provides a solid foundation for all who believe as to the Person of Christ and the saving work of Christ. It is an excellent place for non-Christians to begin reading the Bible, and yet, at the same time, it provides an enduring foundation upon which believers can be established in the faith.

The world into which the Lord Jesus Christ came had three major divisions as far as the population was concerned. There were Greeks,

Romans, and Jews. So in reading the four Gospels there is a universal appeal to the whole world which makes them timeless from generation to generation.

But I hope this information will help all of us understand why we have, not four Gospels, but four records of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly He is the most prominent and dominant of all the people who have ever lived. The Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point of all history.

But now let turn to our text for the morning.

This account of the Lord's discussion with the Pharisees and the Herodians is found also in Matthew 22:15-22 and in Luke 20:20-26. And, like previous events which we have considered, it speaks of the continuing opposition of the Jews, the religious leaders of Israel, toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark and Matthew both mention who they were. They were:

### **I. CERTAIN PHARISEES AND HERODIANS (Mark 12:13).**

Now we need to understand who these two groups were. We have seen a lot of the Pharisees in going through the Gospel of Mark. They were the main leaders of the people, the most orthodox from a doctrinal standpoint of all the Jews, but they held the traditions of the elders of equal importance and authority, and even more so, than the teaching of Moses and the OT prophets. They chafed under Roman rule. They hated the Romans.

The Herodians, on the other hand, were also Jews, but they were sympathetic with Rome, and much like the publicans, were really considered traitors to the people of Israel. But just as the Roman opposition to Christ had made friends out of Pilate and Herod, who before had been enemies, so the same thing had happened between the Pharisees and Herodians. They had become allies because of their opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I think that it is very interesting to see how Luke described these two groups. He did not mention them by name, but he told what they were really up to. I will read to you what Luke wrote about the Pharisees and the Herodians without mentioning them by name. This is what Luke said:

20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign

themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor (Luke 20:20).

They were spies. They were hypocrites. They were not interested in the truth. They were hoping that they would be able to trap Him into saying something that would enable them to turn the Lord over to the Romans and let them do away with Him. They thought that they had a plan that could not fail. They wanted, as Mark tells us, “to catch Him in His words,” and both groups would be delighted to tell the governor what He had said.

## **II. THEIR QUESTION (Mark 12:14-15a).**

In their preface to the question that they wanted to ask the Lord, they wanted to appear as though they were really seeking to get the truth from Him so that they could do the right thing. They called Him, “Master,” meaning, Teacher. They didn’t believe anything that the Lord taught, but they said that they did. And so the first words out of their mouths were a lie. And remember that Luke said that they were pretending to be “just,” or righteous, men. They said that they knew that the Lord did not care for any man, but in saying what they said they used the same word for *care* that the Apostle Peter did when he wrote, “Casting all you care upon Him, for He careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). But they implied that the Lord rode over men, absolutely unconcerned about whether people agreed with Him or not. That also was a lie. He had the deepest concern for people. And they wanted Him to think that they had become convinced that He was teaching “the way of God in truth” – which they did not believe. So all that they said was to deceive the Lord.

But then they gave Him their question: “Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?” And they thought that they had Him where they wanted Him. If He said, “Yes,” He would have offended the Pharisees. If He said, “No,” He would have offended the Herodians. But they wanted Him to say, “No,” so they could report Him to the Roman authorities so that they would arrest Him, and hopefully put Him to death for leading a rebellion against Roman.

## **III. THE LORD’S RESPONSE (Mark 12:15b-17).**

They did not deceive the Lord for a moment. He knew that they were all a bunch of hypocrites. They were not interested in the truth. They were

not righteous men. They were wicked men. They did not believe that He taught the truth. He knew their hypocrisy, and that they were trying to trap Him into saying what would get Him into serious trouble with Rome.

And so He said to them, “Why tempt ye me?” And then He asked them for a coin. He evidently did this because He did not have a coin on His Person, and probably the disciples did not have any money either. They produced a *denarius*. And so He asked them for a coin, and they produced one. They had plenty of money. And then He asked them a question: “Whose is this image and superscription?” By this He meant, Whose picture is on this? And they answered truthfully (for the first time), “Caesar’s.” And then Jesus gave them His answer: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Now we all know that the Lord was declaring that everybody in the Empire should be paying taxes to Caesar. This always has been, and always will be, difficult for people under any government to do. Nobody likes to pay taxes. But the Lord Jesus said that we should. People who refuse to pay taxes are violating the plan of God Who is the One Who has established us in nations. I know all of the objections, and we all feel that we are taxed more than we should be. But our leaders are those who exercise a God-given authority over us. We can in our country vote against taxes, but we cannot in good conscience refuse to pay our taxes. If we do, then we need to be prepared to take the consequences.

Most of you know that the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the church at Rome (of all places), said some very important things on this subject. Please turn with me to Romans 13, and let me read what Paul wrote in the first seven verses of that chapter. And remember as I read that the Romans government was one of the most corrupt governments that has ever existed. So corruption in government is no excuse before God for not paying our taxes. **(Read Rom. 13:1-7 with comments.)**

But now I am not through with my text. Did you notice that the Lord Jesus, in answering the question that the Pharisees and Herodians asked Him, gave them more of an answer that they asked for? He said not only, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” that is, the taxes that he requires because of who he is, but the Lord added, **“and unto God the things that are God’s.”** Now we read the Lord’s answer, and see that we need to pay our taxes, but what was the Lord trying to get across to the Pharisees and the Herodians when He added, **“And unto God the things**

**that are God's."** As I began to prepare for this message these are the words that struck me, and I will have to confess that I had never paid particular attention to them before.

The Lord was not only telling those Pharisees and Herodians, and everyone else who has ever read these words, that we all have a responsibility to our government, but He was saying that right along with that we have and even greater responsibility to God.

Now let me take the idea that the Lord mentioned of an image and superscription that was on that Roman coin. Alexander Maclaren is the only one I found who laid hold of this truth. There undoubtedly have been others, but he is the only one I found who explored the Lord's meaning of His words, "the things that are God's." And I began to ask myself, What do I have that I are God's things which I need to be giving to Him? How would you answer that part of the question.

Well, Alexander Maclaren pointed out in his comments on this passage that those words "image and superscription" have a very direct and personal meaning for every one of us.

None of us can read even the first chapter of the Bible without coming to these words where God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Those words are in Genesis 1:26. And then in the next verse we read, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

When God created Adam and Eve He placed the image and likeness of Himself upon both of them. Among other things this meant that Adam and Eve belonged to God. And every person born into the human family from that day of creation down to those babies which have been born this morning while we have been here in church, has come into this world made in the image and likeness of God, our Creator.

So the Lord Jesus took the subject of taxes to present a very, very, very important truth to those Pharisees and Herodians that day, but there is no indication that any one of them understood His words when He told them that they were not only to render what is Caesar's to Caesar, but to render to God what is God's. What is God's? I am. You are. We are His by creation. And just as we have an obligation to pay taxes to Caesar, we have an even greater obligation to give ourselves to God because He has

made us in His image and likeness. They God-less, blasphemous theory of evolution, has obscured this great truth of creation. And I am not talking about the God of the Muslim, nor the God of the Buddhist, nor any other God. There really is only One God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am speaking of the Triune God, the Father, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessed Holy Spirit. God has made us all in His image and likeness, and the primary responsibility of every human being is to give himself, or herself to God.

The Bible teaches us that sin marred that image. It is not as clear as it was in Adam and Eve before they sinned. But it has not been eradicated. It is still there in every person. But this is where the wonderful doctrine of salvation comes in. We give ourselves to God by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died to save sinners from the penalty of their sins. And that is all a work of God in our hearts. But what is the object of salvation? What is God doing in the lives of all of us who have learned about sin, and have learned about Christ Who saves sinners from the penalty of their sins and from the power of sin? God is working to restore that image of Himself in us. He does it a little bit at a time. Paul described it in 2 Corinthians 3:18 where we read:

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Apostle John expressed it this way, speaking of those who have learned of their need, and have trusted Christ as their Savior:

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1-2).

**Concl:** I hope you get the meaning of what the Lord Jesus was telling those Pharisees and Herodians on that day when they came thinking that at last they had Him trapped where He was certain to bring on His own judgment by saying the wrong thing. But He not only told those religious hypocrites that they needed to pay their taxes, but He told them that they needed to give themselves to God because they had been created in God's image and likeness and they belonged to Him, and that they could never be right with God until they gave themselves to God by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Have you done that? I have told you truth this morning that you won't learn any place else unless you read the Bible. God made us in His image and that image has been marred by sin. It can only be restored as you give to God that which He has given to you – yourself! Trust in Christ Who will make you acceptable to God through His wonderful grace. Then as Christians we walk in fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ. We worship Them. We learn to trust Them and to live day by day in obedience to the Word of God.

Yes, you and I need to pay our taxes, but we also need to render to God that which is His. “The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1). And for those who have given themselves to the Lord, the Psalmist said in Psalm 100,

3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations (Psa. 100:3-5).