

Title: God & Government

Text: Luke 20:19-26

Illustration:

Luke has 24 chapters. (19) are devoted to the first 33 years of Jesus life. (6) speak of the eight days leading up to his crucifixion and resurrection. And 1/2 with the 40 days between his resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Day 1: Triumphant Entry on Palm Sunday. Day 2: Monday Jesus cleared the Temple. On Tuesday and Wednesday, Jesus entered the Temple by day and spent the night on Mt Olivet. (And that's where we find ourselves in today's text.

Just a couple days earlier, Jesus experienced the highest point in his ministry. The whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Jesus should be ecstatic but he's not – instead he's brokenhearted... "And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!" (he could see the condition of their hearts...)

If we're not careful – what happened in Israel will happen to each and every one of us.

What was the problem? The problem started with the leaders -

- I. The Religious Leaders:
- II. Their Evil Plot:
- III. Jesus' Answer:
- IV. What does this have to do with us?

I. The Religious Leaders:

Brief history: This religious class of people began more than a century before Jesus was born.

Religious Hierarchy: (Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, Rulers)

Unhappy with the moral condition in Israel (Reason for the captivity) / (and so they separated themselves from the people - Example – obedience /Law) started good → Bible

Bad Theology: Oral traditions / Obedience 24 hours → Messiah

They became famous for their "righteous living" and grew to love the attention...

The people admired them / the roman government admired them / & they expected the coming Messiah to admire them.

Then Jesus came...

Everywhere Jesus went, He attracted multitudes of people, who were all hanging on his words.

He called them out: *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness."* –[Matthew 23:27](#)

Perfect storm: they loved honor from men / Jesus didn't honor them (EGO)

They had a pretty sweet gig going. Favor with the Romans – after all they helped produce good, upstanding, law-abiding citizens.

They loved their life of ease, and an uprising would cause them to lose their place.

John 11:48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

Pride → Envy → the idol of comfort → Being exposed → Deep rooted anger / want him dead

Transition: The Religious Leaders

II. Their Evil Plot:

(vs. 19-20) The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. So, they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

They want to turn him over to Pontius Pilate so he can be executed. (insurrection)

So what did they do? They bring up the subject of taxes: They say you shouldn't talk about Religion or Politics – but taxes are generally a unifying subject: No one likes them!

"It's income tax time again, Americans: time to gather up those receipts, get out those tax forms, sharpen up that pencil, and stab yourself in the aorta." — Dave Barry

However, as much as we can't stand them, it was much worse for the 1st Century Jews:

Under Roman Occupation:

Land Tax: 1/10 grain 1/5 oil & wine

Import Tax: every harbor, border & city gate (tariff on all goods)

Income Tax: 1% of wages

Poll (Census) tax: 1 denarius a year

They were impoverished by taxes & hated - their taxes were supporting an evil totalitarian regime

Judas of Gamala - tried to evade 30 years prior to this and was executed. (lived on in the peoples' minds)

If Jesus said: "Don't pay" → fast track to Pilate

If Jesus said: "Pay" → the Jews would hate him

III. Jesus' Answer

(vs. 23-24) ²³ But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ²⁴ "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's."

Jesus tells them to show him a denarius: "Roman Coin – minted by the Emperor / bore his image on one side and a description on the other.

Augustus: 17BC "Son of God"

Tiberius: "High priest of God"

"just carrying one of these coins was considered idolatrous" – and yet they had one in their pocket.

(vs. 25) ²⁵ He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

"Render" → Greek verb meaning to give back

Give back to Caesar what is his and give back to God what is his...

Big Question of the Day: What belongs to Caesar & What belongs to God?

1. What belongs to Caesar: (Nero: 54 – 68 AD) (bad in 62 / 64)

(57ad) Romans 13:1-7 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to

whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

(62-63) 1 Peter 2:13-17 ¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good... Honor the emperor.

(mid 60s) Titus 3:1-2 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

(mid 60s) 1 Tim 2:1-2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

What belongs to Caesar → our taxes, our submission, our prayers

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

What belongs to God → ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING! (Empowers image / God's image)

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.

Haggai 2:8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts.

Job 41:11 Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.

Our God changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings...

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!" — **Abraham Kuyper**

Acts 5:29 ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

(vs. 25-26) ²⁵ He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.

IV. What Does this Have to Do with Us?

His emphasis is not really taxes at all – is it? He mentions them but the emphasis is this:

"...Render to God the things that are God's."

Neither the Religious Leaders nor the crowds wanted Jesus to rule every area of their lives:

The Crowds: wanted a leader who would bring freedom from Rome.

(when Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom – they rejected him because they wanted a physical kingdom)... a better, happier, easier life.

Money: more blessed to give than to receive

Marriage:

Kids:

Jobs:

Relationships:

The Religious Leaders: They were consumed by bitterness

One Commentator: "They had the most dangerous of all angers – an "impotent rage": they were scrambling for ways to condemn Jesus and they kept running into humiliating dead ends."

That bitterness started somewhere. I'm not bitter against God, just my spouse, coworker, parents, boss, fill in the blank. "If anyone says, "I love God" and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

It's really easy to point the finger at them and say BAD. But what about you and me?

→ Feb / 1989 – "I rendered to God the things that belong to God"

→ Pick up your cross daily and follow me!

→ Eph – your doing good in so many ways but I have this against you – you have abandoned the love you had at first...

CROSS – Phil 2 / Whatever the father does the son does in like manner...