

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Mark: Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God

Part III: The Perfect Sacrifice Of Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God, Mark 11:1-15:47

F. Learning To Be Loyal Both To The State And To God

(Mark 12:13-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Mark's Gospel was written by John Mark who was rebounding from having abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13) due to Mark's lapse in following Christ over some difficulty.
- B. A key difficulty to Mark's readers, Christians living in Rome, was understanding how they were to live in a "dissolute and often hostile environment" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 101). A big challenge they faced was being charged with insurrection for holding Jesus to be their King as if they were disloyal to Caesar, a slander that was a flashpoint to the Romans (Acts 17:5-8) and led to the persecution of the Church, 1 Peter 3:16.
- C. Jesus' response to the Pharisees and Herodians who tried to entrap Him to discredit Him on a similar conflict served not only Mark's readers well, but directs Christians in all eras of loyalty both to the state and to God:

II. Learning To Be Loyal Both To The State And To God, Mark 12:13-17.

- A. Israel's religious leaders, infuriated at Jesus for His Mark 12:1-12 parable against them (Mark 12:12), sent the Pharisees and Herodians to Him to "catch" Him in His words, and the word "catch" (*argeusosin*) is used only in Mark 12:13 in the New Testament that elsewhere "described catching wild animals in a trap," *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- B. Thus, armed with very hostile intent, the leaders sent two widely differing parties, the Pharisees who extolled religious priorities and the Herodians who extolled political loyalty to Rome to try to trap Jesus into getting into a self-discrediting position between these two very opposing parties, Mark 12:13-15a; *Ibid.*, p. 161-162:
 1. First, these notoriously differing parties approached Jesus using "carefully chosen remarks designed to hide their true motives and to prevent Jesus from evading their difficult question," *Ibid.*, p. 161. They thus addressed Him as "Teacher" and admitted He was "honest and impartial, courting no one's favor," but that He taught the way of God in accord with the truth, Mark 12:13-14a NIV.
 2. Second, they asked if it was lawful to "give tribute to Caesar, or not," Mark 12:14b-15a KJV. The word "tribute" ("taxes" NIV) "was a Latin loanword meaning "census," an annual head tax required by the Roman emperor from every Jew at the time, *Ibid.*
 3. This question in view of the heated debate of the day between the Pharisees and the Herodians aimed to corner Jesus into either discrediting Him as God's Messenger or getting Him into trouble with Rome:
 - a. The Pharisees "objected to the tax, but expediently justified its payment," so if Jesus taught one should pay it, the Pharisees hoped it would "antagonize the people and discredit Him as God's Spokesman" because "no messianic claimant could sanction willing submission to pagan rulers," *Ibid.*, p. 161-162.
 - b. Conversely, if Jesus opposed paying the tax, the Herodians who sided with Roman rule would report Him to the Roman authorities for insurrection, getting Jesus into trouble with them, *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- C. Jesus knew of their hypocrisy, so He asked for "a denarius," the "only coin acceptable for imperial tax payments," Mark 12:15b; *Ibid.* It then likely bore the "image" (*eikon*) of Tiberius Caesar with the inscription, "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus" while the reverse side carried the inscription, "Chief Priest," referring to the original "imperial cult of emperor worship and was a claim to divinity, which was particularly repulsive to Jews," *Ibid.* Jesus' questioners thus produced the coin, Mark 12:16a.
- D. He then asked them whose image and inscription was on it, and they replied, "Caesar's," Mark 12:16b,c.
- E. Christ then said, "give back" (*apodote*) to Caesar what was Caesar's, and [give back] to God what was God's, Mark 12:17a,b; *Ibid.* Caesar had minted the coin, placing his image and inscription on it, so Israel was to give it back to him. However, God had placed His image on man at creation (Genesis 1:27), so Jesus taught that men should give themselves back to God, and this answer left the questioners astounded, Mark 12:17c; *Ibid.*
- F. Thus, Jesus [with the rest of Scripture] taught that men should not be disloyal to the secular state [if at all possible, Acts 5:29], but to heed both the state and God as God's calling for their lives, cf. 1 Peter 2:13-17.

Lesson: Jesus taught that God's followers should seek to heed BOTH the secular state AND God, giving to the state what is rightfully the state's possessions and giving to God what is rightfully God's possessions.

Application: (1) May we seek to obey both the secular government and Scripture's God. (2) However, if there is a conflict between the requirements these two parties make of us, we must heed God over the government, Acts 5:29.