

There are some folk around, who really do hate Christians, and some see it as a badge-of-honour, if they can (somehow) publicly humiliate or discredit a Disciple of Jesus.. *It's one of the reasons I avoid social media. There are so many people out there, pretending to be "genuine seekers", and asking "curly questions", that are actually designed to put a believer in a hard place.*

And one of the tricks they use, is to ask a question, and they present us with an either/or option, where no matter what answer you give, you're going to alienate yourself from a large portion of those who might be listening in on the ethersphere...

And they'll go away, rubbing their hands together with glee "I made that Christian look stupid"...

I decided a long time ago, "There's no future in engaging in that sort of discussion". It takes up so much time, and many are not genuine seekers. They are enemies of Jesus, **anonymously pretending** to be interested, but the whole time, their keyboard is loaded with God-hating and Christian-hating buckshot...

And we shouldn't be surprised by this. Jesus told us to expect the world to hate us. This is normal, because they hated Jesus first. And the tricks that people are deploying today, are the same as what they tried to pull on Jesus. They tried to put Jesus in a catch22 situation, and they thought they had Him,, But what fools they were – thinking they could out-smart the Son of God.

So, this is how it unfolds.

The Scribes and the Chief priests hated Jesus. And in this case, they actually assumed correctly, that Jesus had just told a rather unflattering parable against them. (He had.) It was the parable of “The Wicked Tenants”, where the tenants did not honour the owner of the vineyard, and they beat His servants and they killed His Son... Jesus did tell that parable about the religious leaders. And understandably, they didn’t like it.

But the problem is, they couldn’t openly take Jesus down, because at this point, the crowds loved Jesus.

And so, what they did, is they kept watch on Jesus, and they sent in some undercover agents, pretending to be sincere. But they were not.

And, the first thing they did, was they heaped on the flattery... “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God.

And let me tell ya: For a preacher and a teacher (which is what Jesus was), there is probably no greater form of flattery than that. “You’re so wonderful. You are such a good teacher. You always teach the truth. You are such a godly man. Even when it’s not popular, you always teach what’s true. Good on you.”... For a preacher and teacher, that really is flattery...

But Jesus knows better than to fall for the lines of a flatterer.

Proverbs 29:5 (ESV)

⁵ A man who flatters his neighbour
spreads a net for his feet.
(setting a trap for him)

Proverbs 26:22–28 (ESV)

²² The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.

²³ Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel
are fervent lips with an evil heart.

²⁴ Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips
and harbours deceit in his heart;

²⁵ when he speaks graciously, believe him not,
for there are seven abominations in his heart;

²⁶ though his hatred be covered with deception,
his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.

²⁷ Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
and a stone will come back on him who starts it
rolling.

²⁸ A lying tongue hates its victims,
and a flattering mouth works ruin.

Flattery, is not a tool of the Kingdom of God...

I know some Pastors who have mastered the art of flattery. Within a few minutes of meeting them, they will make you feel like you are the most wonderful person in the world. You are so wonderful, and you are so underappreciated where you are; ... I'm always very wary of those who do the pump-me-up...

One thing I've noticed: God isn't a flatterer. And the Kingdom of God, is not built on flattery. Jesus saw right through the flatterers... While they flattered Him with their words, they were setting a trap to bring Him down...

In my younger years, I trapped a lot of pigs.

- *You'd look to see the path where the pigs will travel; and*
- *you put a bit of bait out – you put some grain there. And for a few days (maybe up to a week), you put a bit of grain out each day, and let them get a taste for it.;*
- *And then you set the trap, and they're used to lapping up the grain, and they'll walk straight in, knock the stick out that's propping the gate open, and you've got them.*
- *And other pigs will follow them it. The bait's too good for them. They just push in under the gate, and then they can't get out.*

That's how you trap a pig, and that's what they did here, to try and trap Jesus.

They baited the trap with flattery. The next thing they did, was they **set** the trap, with an impossible question, “We know you **show no partiality**, but truly teach the way of God. ²² Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?”

And the trap was set...

You see, that question was designed for a simple “yes” or “no” answer. (“Yes, it is lawful.” / “No, it’s **not** lawful.”) And the **wording** of the question and the phrase “²² Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar”, was a deceptive question.

To “give”, is like giving a gift/present. But, the poll-tax (what they were talking about), is something that **non-citizens** (of Rome) were **required** to pay the Roman Emperor. It was not a gift – it was a requirement... Rome had conquered the land of Israel. They were now living, under the rule of Rome. And therefore, just as you and I have to pay tax to our Government (so the country can run), they had to pay tax to Rome. And of course, nobody liked doing that.

The very question itself, was designed to bring Jesus down...

The Poll-Tax was **very unpopular**. There were riots when it was first introduced. And you would hate paying it too, wouldn’t you? *Imagine if Australia was invaded and conquered by a major super-power (wouldn’t be hard for them to do)...* How would you feel then, if you and I had to

pay taxes to the Super-power who was now occupying and ruling Australia...

Pretty-much everyone would hate it.

And that's the situation Israel were in. So, if Jesus said, "Yes, it is lawful to give tribute to Caesar", that would alienate Him from the crowds (who were His supporters), because they hated paying the tax.

But we're told here in Luke, that the true motivation, was to catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. That way, it would be the Romans who took Jesus out, and not them...

You see, if Jesus said, "No, It's not lawful to pay the tax", that would justify a charge of insurrection, for which He could be crucified.

As it turns out, Jesus didn't give them the ammunition they needed, but even so, that didn't stop them. When Jesus **was** finally brought before Governor Pilate, they **falsely** accused Him of it anyway. ^{Luke 23:2} And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar...."

He did no such thing. They **tried** to trick Him into saying it, but He did **not**.

You see, the false flatterers were actually correct in what they said of Jesus.

Jesus:

- **does** speak truth;
- **does** teach rightly;
- does **not** show any partiality.
He **doesn't** tell people what they want to hear. And
- **always** truthfully teaches the way of God.

And because of that, many **Christians** may be offended by what Jesus teaches us here. They're offended, because they don't want to pay taxes (especially to a Government they don't like, or that they see as ungodly)... But wow, what an answer Jesus gave, and what truth there is, **in** His answer.

²⁴ "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." ²⁵ He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

A Denarius, is a Roman Coin, and on it, is the image of Caesar. It was a currency that they freely used, to carry on trade. They lived in a land, where the state-headship was the Emperor of Rome. The fact that they used his currency for everyday transactions, was a recognition of Caesar's position of authority...

And so, there is an obligation: We are obliged, to pay what we owe, to the one who is in authority. **render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's**

The secret agents trying to catch Jesus out, used the word “give”. Jesus changed it to the word “render”. And the Greek word that we translate as “render”, means to “give what is owed”. Pay what is due – pay the debt that is due – A civic debt must be paid to the civil authorities.

You see, what Jesus is telling us, is we are citizens, not **only** of the Kingdom of God, but we are also citizens **in** this world.... While we live in this world, we are ruled over by the authorities whom God has appointed... And we mightn't like the authorities that God has appointed, but that doesn't remove the obligation, for us to obey.

And this fits perfectly with what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome.

Romans 13:5-7 (ESV)

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, honour to whom honour is owed.

And some Christians will jump up straight away, and say, “Yes, Yes, but our authorities are not Godly”... Seriously???

The Emperors thought they were God. Some of them used to kill Christians for fun... Our government ain’t doing that yet...

The authorities are appointed by God to attend to civic service (running the country if you like) and to administer justice. And so it is Godly for you and I, to pay tax. It is Godly to obey... Unless of course, they order you to **directly disobey** God...

You see, it’s all about whose image is on what...

Caesar’s image is on the coin. He is responsible for civic service and therefore we are obliged to obey, and to pay tax...

But Jesus didn’t leave it there. He said: **render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**

What **does** belong to God? We do...

Whose image and likeness, is on you?

Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the **image** of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Just as the image of Queen Elizabeth II is on our coins, and now the image of King Charles, is on our coins, God's image is on you and me.

Render to our government, the things that belong to our government... But they do not own you.

The image of **God**, is on you.

You and I: We belong to God. We owe our very selves to God...

To render **to God the things that are God's**, means, to give Him Your whole life... Submit to Him totally. And part of this submission to God, is submitting to the Government. **But** if the Government ever commands us to disobey God, then give to God what belongs to Him by obeying God, no matter what the cost...

e.g.

If the Government ever tells you to worship a man, or to worship another God, don't ever do that. Be like Shadrach Meshach Abednego. They refused to dishonour God, and were thrown in the fire for their obedience.

Daniel was told not to pray to God, and he did. And he was thrown into the lion's den ...

And many Christians were told to worship the Roman Emperor, and they would not. And they were slaughtered for entertainment in the Coliseum.

By the law of our land now, the Government tells me to lie, and I will not. The Law says that if a man wants to be called a woman, or if a woman wants to be called a man, then I have to say that they are. That is a lie. It is a lie of the devil...

And I cannot lie.

If the Government ever tells us to disobey a clear commandment of God, we cannot do it...

You see, there's two important principles here:

1. Firstly:

Give to the civic authorities, what is owed to the civic authorities – honour; respect; obedience; taxes...

2. Secondly:

Give to God what belongs to God – our very selves...

This is a debt we owe to God...

I was talking to a young fella during the week (not a Christian), and I asked him what I could pray for, for him. And he put a big smile on (I'm pretty sure it was a fake smile), and he said, "I've got everything I need, brother..." ... And I said, "Have you got Jesus?" And he said, "Each to his own...." ...

What he was saying, is "I make my own choices. I don't got no time for God"....

But the thing is, The Almighty God has put His image upon every man, woman and child. He created us, in His own image... We owe everything to God.

And even while we were rejecting God, He loved us so much, He sent His only Son, to die on the cross. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only way that anyone can be saved... It's not "each to his own".... "Each to his own", is the way to death... We owe everything to God... He is the only way to life...

And because we owe everything to God, we live in this world, as good, Godly citizens. Citizens of the Kingdom of God, are also good, Godly citizens, in the land where God has placed us.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father,
we want to thank You, for Your wisdom.

You have told us,

Luke 12:¹¹ And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

And we saw an example of this today,
where Jesus was put in a trap,
And after He had spoken the word,
they marvelled at His answer,
and had nothing to say.

And Lord,
we pray for when **we** are put on the spot
- for when those who hate you,
try to catch us in a trap.
Give us wisdom to know when to engage,
and when to walk away...

And Lord,
we offer ourselves to You.
You have created us in Your image;
We belong to you.

Give us wisdom,
and a resolve to be a witness for you,
by being good citizens;
and Godly citizens,
Living by the way of Your Kingdom,
even as we live in this world.

May we give You all glory, praise and Honour,

Amen.

Sentence: Rendering to God what belongs to Him.

Scripture: Luke 20:19-26

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Bush Disciples