

## **Render Unto Caesar (Luke 20:20-26)**

The scene unfolds revealing the Lord Jesus being questioned by some men about paying taxes to Caesar (the Roman government). It comes after the religious leaders questioned Jesus about His authority to clear out the Temple and preach against their doctrine. Jesus' answer was given in the form of a few parables which spoke against their hatred of Him. In retaliation, these leaders sent spies to try to catch the Lord in His words; giving them an excuse to arrest and kill Him.

### **I. What Is Caesar's?**

The question these men asked was one sensitive to the culture of the day and one they thought the Messiah would certainly reject. Israel was occupied by the Roman Empire and they wanted nothing more than to have their freedom back. These men thought that the Messiah, the King of the Jews, would certainly be an ultra-patriot; rejecting anything to do with Rome.

They asked Jesus a question that is even asked today amidst religious circles: ***"Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?"*** To give tribute means *to pay personal, property, and all other kinds of taxes*. In reply to this question, Jesus asked them to show Him a penny, which was a common coin of the day. He asked them whose image and superscription was on the coin. Each Roman coin bore the image of the current Caesar, while the inscription around the image was often Caesar's name. The men had no choice but to answer likewise.

In response to their answer, Jesus told them to, ***"Render to Caesar the things which be Caesar's..."*** To render means *to pay what is due to someone*. In this case, Jesus is telling the people to pay their taxes. Even today, this is not what some people want to hear, but it is God's Word!

We live in a day that cherishes rebellion and opposition to authority. If we truly believe the Bible, then we will accept that God gives us authority figures for a reason. He places the husband in charge of the home (***Ephesians 5; I Peter 3***), He places Jesus Christ in charge of His Church (***Colossians 1:18***), and He places governments in charge of nations (***Romans 13:1-7***).

Again, this is not a popular truth, but it is Truth. In today's corrupt society we find that ladies like to rule the homes and men allow them to do so. We also find that men run churches, instead of submitting to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. We further find that citizens resist the government that God has put them under. When we do these things, God tells us that we are resisting Him and will be judged by Him for our disobedience! So, when it comes down to it, we must ask ourselves, "Do I want God's blessing upon my life or will I go my own way?" What is Caesar's? It is whatever the government demands of us. We are to comply and leave our survival up to the Lord God that put the government in place.

### **II. What is God's?**

Jesus continues and gives the spies a lesson they did not ask for. This is a good lesson for us. If we choose to try and subvert God, He may give us much more than we expect to teach us a lesson. Jesus not only tells these spies to pay the government whatever is due to them, but also to do the same to God! He is literally telling them to pay their taxes to the government and then pay their taxes to God!

Again, this is not a popular truth, but it is Truth! The taxes Jesus spoke of was easily understood by the Jews. Just as there was a certain standard for paying taxes to the government, God had given the Jews a certain standard for supporting His work; this is called the tithe.

Paying the tithe to God means *to bring ten percent of what we make to God*. First, we must understand that everything we have belongs to God. He created us, owns all things, and allows us to have what we have on Earth; and He can take it all away (**Job 1-2**).

Tithing is God's way of supporting His work on Earth. It predates the Law of Moses (**Genesis 14:18-20**), was incorporated into the Jewish Law, and is confirmed here by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews were used to giving tithes and offerings. They knew where they were to give and why they did it (**Malachi 3:8-12**). They understood that God did not need their money, but that He wanted to use them for His glory on Earth.

The standard for tithing is the same for the church. We see here that Jesus is teaching, not just the spies, but His disciples. These men would later become the leaders of the early church; instituting the things Jesus taught them. They knew that the church was to do Jesus' work on Earth and needed a means of support: tithes and offerings (**I Corinthians 16:1-2**).

Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God? When God says to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved (**Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-13**), do you believe it or are you going your own way? When He says to submit yourself to the government He put you under (**I Peter 2:13-16**), do you do it? When He says to support His work on Earth by paying the tithe to a local assembly of believers, do you obey it? We cannot cherry-pick the Bible. We either believe all of it or none of it! May God help us to render to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to Him that which is His.

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