

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church

**Mark 12:13-17 | A Third Option**

July 4, 2021

**WELCOME:**

- Please turn your Bibles to Mark 12:13-17
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

**REVIEW:**

This is the last week of Jesus' life—Passion Week.

—Specifically: Wed.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on Monday for Passover.

Monday is a very specific day for the Passover celebration—it's called "lamb selection day."

So, in other words, as the Jews were bringing their own lambs to be offered as a sacrifice for sin,

God was also preparing His own Son, Jesus Christ, to be the once and for all sacrifice as *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.* (John 1:29)

So, just as the Jews selected their lambs, the lambs were then tested for four days to make sure that they were perfect—

At the same time God the Father was also testing God the Son—and Jesus would be test four times.

So this physical concept of a perfect sacrifice for the Passover Jews is also a spiritual reality for Jesus as the Lamb of God.

*In other words*  
Just as the sacrificial lambs were tested for four days by the religious leaders,

Jesus will be tested four times by the religious leaders.

For the past two Sundays, we watched Jesus pass the first test.

Jesus not only passes the first test but also provided a parable and judges those religious leaders as inept and incapable of leading God's people.

### **KEYPOINT:**

*Even though God has shown outrageous patience, His patience is not unlimited.*

In other words, time has run out for the nation of Israel to repent.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Today we have the second test to see whether or not Jesus truly is ***the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world.***

This second test comes specifically from the Pharisees and the Herodians.

Now, this is really a strange partnership since they don't have anything in common—especially when it comes to politics and theology.

The Herodians irritated the Pharisees with their politics, while the Pharisees infuriated the Herodians with their religion.

But they did have one thing in common—their hatred of Jesus.

The Pharisees hated Jesus because he was destroying their man-made religion.

Not the OT, but all their man-made traditions.

The Herodians hated Jesus because he threatened their *politics and careers.*

So these two groups came together under one common and wicked motivation—to murder Jesus.

One Brother said it this way, "*They hated Jesus more than they hated each other.*"

And it's this hatred for Jesus, as the Son of Man and Son of God, that unites the Pharisees and the Herodians together as one.

Well, Jesus passed the first test last week. He is one for one.

How is Jesus going to deal with the second test as the spotless Lamb of God?

Let's find out!

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

**SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:13-17 CSB**

**Mark 12:12**—They were looking for a way to arrest him but feared the crowd because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. So they left him and went away.

**Mark 12:13**—Then they sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to Jesus to trap him in his words.

**Mark 12:14**—When they came, they said to him, "Teacher, we know you are truthful and don't care what anyone thinks, nor do you show partiality but teach the way of God truthfully. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

**Mark 12:15**—But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at."

**Mark 12:16**— They brought a coin. "Whose image and inscription is this?" he asked them. "Caesar's," they replied.

**Mark 12:17**— Jesus told them, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

**PRAY:**

Church Gathering - freedom to do so  
Govt, taxes

**EXEGESIS:**

**Mark 12:12**— They were looking for a way to arrest him but feared the crowd because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. So they left him and went away.

This is still Wednesday of Passion Week. — Jesus is still Teaching in the Temple

A little time has passed between verses twelve and thirteen but not much.

**Mark 12:13**— Then they sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to Jesus to trap him in his words.

Matthew's Gospel says that *they sent their disciples to him* (Matt. 22:16)

Luke's Gospel says, *They watched closely and sent spies who pretended to be righteous.* (Luke 20:20)

So, most likely, Jesus has never seen these men before.

They are trying to bait Jesus.

All Jesus needs to say is one minor thing wrong, and they got Him.

These guys are acting like hunters trying to catch Jesus, literally, “with a word.”

The picture is that these men have dug a pit for Jesus to fall into.

At the bottom of the pit are sharp spikes so that Jesus has no hope of survival.

The Pharisees and Herodians were not playing a religious game with Jesus.

This is as serious as serious gets.

This is an incredibly violent conversation—the consequences are life and death.

**Mark 12:14**— When they came, they said to him, “Teacher, we know you are truthful and don’t care what anyone thinks, nor do you show partiality but teach the way of God truthfully. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

These guys are laying it on thick, aren’t they?

Here’s the thing— despite their insincerity —everything they said is true.

They called Jesus a teacher, and He is.

“Teacher” is a very high compliment in the first century.

And when someone calls you a “teacher,” a second compliment is then to ask a question.

They said that’s He’s truthful— and Jesus is. He is Truth.

*And don’t care what anyone thinks, nor do you show partiality —*

NKJV—*and care about no one*

This doesn't mean that Jesus was indifferent to people.

It does mean that He lived his life so utterly dependent on God the Father that He was indifferent to their opinions and unconcerned of their influence.

***But teach the way of God truthfully— Once again a true statement.***

Now keep in mind, these men despise Jesus.

How hard do you think it was for them to say all these wonderful things to the person they hated?

These Pharisaic spies viewed Jesus as a deceiver and a liar.

They believe that ~~this man~~ <sup>Jesus</sup> is a blasphemer and gets His power from Satan. (Mark 3:22)

And it's for these reasons—Jesus must be put to death.

There's an interesting dynamic here—everything they said was true—but they didn't believe a word of it.

They realized that Jesus was so committed to the truth that He would not change His message based on human opinion or negative consequences.

Back to...

**Mark 12:14—** *Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?"*

Why a question on taxes?

Well, taxes rubbed people the wrong way in the first century as they rub you the wrong way today.

And it didn't just rub them the wrong way; taxes were an explosive issue.

This was not a tax for land or goods... but on themselves.

This was a head tax. This tax was because you were breathing Roman air.

The tax itself consisted of one denarius per person per year.

The reason that the Jews loathed this tax was the implication of it—

It implied that they were the property of Caesar.

In asking this question, they want Jesus to settle one of the most controversial issues during this time.

Almost every Jew hated the very thought of paying any kind of tax to Caesar.

They didn't want to give any kind of tribute to Rome.

They didn't want to honor Caesar in any way.

Some of the Pharisees believed that the Jews were under a moral obligation not to pay taxes to Caesar.

And many of them did not—especially the Zealots.

So in the crowd's view, if Jesus were truly God's Son, He would not support paying taxes to Rome.

In the Pharisee's mind, there is no way that Jesus would allow this.

That's why they asked this particular question.

They were banking on Jesus saying, "no, you don't have to pay Caesar taxes." *Any more*

And then the Herodians, who followers of Herod, would run and tell the king, we have a rogue rabbi who is telling people not to pay your taxes.

Instantly, the king would send soldiers to execute Jesus.

How do we know this? Because it happened about 25 years earlier.

A Galilean named Judas, the founder of the Zealots, led a revolt because the Romans were taking a census to increase their taxes on the Jews. (Acts 5:37)

It didn't work out so well for Judas, the Zealot; the Romans crushed his minor revolt, killed him and his followers.

Here's the thing  
Even though that Jewish revolt failed, resentment towards the Romans rose over the years.

We see the resentment rise to an all-time high sixty years later with another Jewish revolt where the Romans eventually destroy the temple and city of Jerusalem—just like Jesus predicted. (John 2:19)

So, needless to say, EVERYBODY is very interested in the answer to this question.

The religious leaders know this.

You can guarantee that these men spent a tremendous amount of time discussing many different wicked scenarios to trap Jesus.

These religious leaders, by the way, are not stupid, but they are evil.

***Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?"***

Can you picture this large crowd around Jesus coming to a standstill?



Talk about hearing a pin drop.

This is great theater—Jesus is drawing everyone in.

The drama is so thick that these Pharisaic and Herodian spies can barely contain themselves! Why?

If Jesus said, “Yes” to paying taxes to Caesar, the crowd would immediately turn against Him.

But, if Jesus said, “No” to paying taxes, the Herodians would run to Rome and tell them that Jesus is starting a rebellion.

Rome would then do the religious leader's dirty work by killing Jesus.

So with either answer—yes or no—the leaders win.

So the trap is set...what's Jesus say?

**Mark 12:15**— *But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at.”*

Matthew's Gospel states that Jesus straight-up calls them “hypocrites” (22:18).

It's ironic...they try to flatter Jesus, and yet Jesus calls them hypocrites—

There is no other man like the Son of Man!

Jesus rips off their smug smiles of hypocrisy and deception.

It may have taken them some time to find a denarius because most Jews refused to carry them.

*In Jesus*  
Jesus throws these religious leaders off guard.

He slows down the momentum of this conversation and takes control of it.

→ A denarius was a silver coin minted under the authority of the Roman Emperor.

It was equal to one day's wage for a Roman soldier or Jewish day laborer (cf. Matt. 20:2).

☺ Evidently, Jesus didn't have a wallet, so He asks someone to bring him the coin.

By doing so, <sup>it</sup> raises the tension in the crowd.

The crowd starts to murmur.

I wonder how long it took for someone to fetch this coin?

There are two views on this:

The first view... The Jews considered these Roman coins to be miniature idols.

And if they carried them, they would be violating the second commandment, which prohibits any form of idolatry. (Ex. 20:4).

The Jews considered these coins as idolatrous because Caesar's face was stamped on it with the inscription "*Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus.*"

On the other side, it had another inscription that read "*High Priest.*"

There were other Roman coins as well that had similar inscriptions.

The point is this; the Roman Emperor was not only the supreme political ruler of the Roman Empire, but he was considered the supreme religious leader as well.

He was viewed as a god.

That's why the Jews didn't carry these coins.

The second view says that The denarius was probably the most common coin among the Jews.

Because most people in Israel were day laborers.

However, keep in mind, Jesus is teaching in the temple at the time of Passover.

*And the temple had their own set of taxes*

~~And there was a temple tax that the Jews had to pay, but you couldn't pay the temple tax with a Roman denarius.~~

In other words, because the coin had the image of Caesar, they could not use it to pay the temple tax anyway.

According to their own law, they could only give a denarius back to Rome.

They had to pay the temple tax with a Jewish shekel.

Regardless, Jesus didn't have the coin.

Do you wanna take a guess who most likely had this coin? Herodians.

*not religious but politicians*

**Mark 12:16**— They brought a coin. "Whose image and inscription is this?" he asked them. "Caesar's," they replied.

Someone finally brings Jesus a coin, and He holds it up to the crowd and then to the religious leaders...

Can't you just hear the tension in the temple?

The silence is deafening!

Everything goes into slow motion!

***"Whose image and inscription is this?" he asked them.***

The spies, without a beat, say...

***"Caesar's," they replied.*** - *they think they got Jesus*

**+** **Mark 12:17**— Jesus told them, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

It's like Jesus drops the mic and walks off stage. Bam.

Nobody was expecting that!

Wait, Jesus, that wasn't one of the choices.

There were only two answers to choose from on this test—yes or no.

So the religious spies thought.

Jesus gave them a third option.

Such a simple yet divinely profound answer.

Jesus says, "Yeah, this coin has Caesar's picture on it. So give it back to him—you don't need it."

**+** **KEYPOINT 1:**

*Paying taxes is an obligation for everyone.*

Even Jesus paid taxes! See Matthew 17:24.

Your translation may have the word "Render—to Caesar."

The idea in verse 17 is that you are paying something that is owed.

In other words, you have a debt to your government—pay your taxes.

And you say what? I don't like that. Don't shoot the messenger.

Am I taking this passage out of context?

What else does Scripture say about taxes and government?

**cf. Romans 13:1**—Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God.

**cf. Romans 13:2**—So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves.

**cf. Romans 13:3**—For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval.

**cf. Romans 13:4**—For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong.

**cf. Romans 13:5**—Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience.

**cf. Romans 13:6**—And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks.

**cf. Romans 13:7**—Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.

All that to say this, Scripture clearly teaches that government is an institution of God.

The only time that we as Christians can disobey the government is

1. When the government commands us to do something contrary to the Word of God.
2. When the government forbids something that the Word of God commands.

Now, you may agree or disagree with our current presidential administration, but here's the difference between the Jews in the first century and Americans in the 21st—

Our administration is not demanding that we worship our president as a god.

That's what it was like in first-century Israel.

More importantly, let's look at the second half of Jesus' statement.

**Mark 12:17**—~~Jesus told them,~~ "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Jesus puts these religious spies in an interesting situation.

They thought it was commendable and righteous to balk at giving Caesar what was Caesar's,

But what is far worse— is not giving God what is God's.

The denarius belonged to Caesar because it had his image stamped on it.

Question—Whose image do you bear?

Every one of us has been stamped with God's image.

**cf. Genesis 1:27**—So God created man in his own image;  
he created him in the image of God;  
he created them male and female.

— You bear the very image of Almighty God Himself!

**KEYPOINT #2:**

Caesar owned the denarius, but he did not own the people.

The same thing holds true today.

Our government does not own us— God does—if you are a Christian.

How do you become a Christian?

It's not by praying a prayer and asking Jesus into your heart—

**cf. Romas 10:9**— If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

That's how you become a Christian.

① Confession and belief are how you are made right with a holy God.

**cf. Romas 10:10**— One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.

And then, for the rest of your life, you'll learn about repentance.

You will turn from your old life of sin and walk in the ways of what is right.

Jesus is saying, "Let Caesar have his silly little coin!" So what!

**KEYPOINT 3:**

*Honoring God does not mean that you have to dishonor the government.*

It's in this text, where Jesus clearly teaches that you can do both.

Jesus reveals that we have a twofold responsibility, just like a coin has two sides.

**KEYPOINT 4:**

*Submission to your government is part of your submission to God.*

Dear friends, we do have a responsibility to our government by paying taxes.

Many of us think I have more responsibility than I want! It is what it is. 😊

We turn on the news and see all the corruption taking place, and we don't want to pay.

So you have several options at this point.

If you want to do something about the corruption, then run for office.

But sitting back in your lazy-boy recliner and complaining doesn't leave you of your responsibility to pay your taxes.

As we see here from the mouth of Jesus, not paying taxes is a sin—this is a command from Jesus.

*And they were utterly amazed at him.*

That's an understatement!



Why were they amazed? Two reasons:

- 1) They were amazed that Jesus did not fall into their trap.
- 2) Jesus had revealed the answer to the real problem.

And the real problem is that they were not giving to God what is rightly His.

### PREACH:

What is rightly God's?

If you are a born-again Believer, Jesus is talking about your life.

Many times, especially in the trials of our lives, we have to consider a third option—God's option.

Rarely is it one way or another. *in the trials of this life*

We tend to believe in our self-centered, sin-stained world, that there are only two options to a particular problem.

We often have to recognize that we could be wrong—on an issue we think we've been right on our entire lives.

This is why waiting on God is so important.

Pastor Brian said something very interesting during one of our conversations.

He said, "*It's one thing to wait on God, it's another thing when you have to.*"

Dear friends, God always has a third option for the situation that you're in.

Whether you like it or not.

*this third option*

Maybe you've been waiting for years or decades.

And you're tired, and you want to give up.

Maybe you've turned into a religious Pharisee coming to Jesus demanding answers that you think you know the answer to.

My prayer for you today is that you would apply what Jesus is teaching today.

It's not just a lesson on paying your taxes.

Jesus is showing us how to live in two kingdoms at the same time.

- ① There is a worldly kingdom of sin and death.

And we see this kingdom every day.

- ② There is also a spiritual kingdom of salvation and life that we can't see.

That's God's Kingdom.

And we long for God's Kingdom.

Paraphrase for effect—The Apostle Paul said, "*to live (in this worldly kingdom) is Christ, but to die (for God's Kingdom) is gain.*" (Philippians 1:21)

But many times we get the two Kingdoms mixed up.

*Address*  
To my Brothers and Sisters:

What are you giving to world that is not yours to give?

What are you withholding from God that is rightly His?

Are you allowing God to transform your mind? (Rom. 12:1)

Are you presenting your body as a living sacrifice? (Rom. 12:1)

Do you truly believe that God is sovereign and that He has you in the palm of His nail scared hand?

That God knows the number of hairs on your head?

That He loves you more than you can fathom?

And no matter what physical pain, or emotional trials you go through—that God lives in you—and that He hasn't left you here on this Earth as an orphan?

Do you believe that? —Do you know that?

Then dear friend, share it.

Share it with the Verde Valley.

I double-dog dare you to go brag on what God has done in your life to one person this week—just one person—and you watch what God does with your obedience to the Great Commission.

You can live in this world and not be a slave to it.

You can be a witness to the world and not let it stain you.

You can be salt and light.

You can fulfill God's purpose on Earth.

But you have to choose these things.

And dear friend, if you have no desire to do any of this—you need to check your salvation with fear and trembling.

If you have no desire to stop living the way you've always lived, you most likely are not saved.

Don't kid yourself.

It's been said that, Hell is too hot and too long for you to be wrong.

Wake up and repent for the Kingdom of God is near.

*To my unsaved friends:*

What are you waiting for?

To be made right with God?

To experience the peace of God?

To be reconciled to God?

Why would you wait one minute longer to confess that Jesus is Lord and to believe in your heart that He walked out of His grave—to pay for your sin?

It's been said many times that there are two truths that no one can get away from—death and taxes.

Dear friends, you're paying taxes today and death is around the corner tomorrow.

*But* Today, you have a choice—life or death.

Life is found in the Kingdom of God is where Jesus experienced God's wrath for your sin—

Death is found in the Kingdom of Self—where you will experience God's wrath for your sin for eternity.

When it comes to salvation, there is no third option.

There is only two options for eternal life:

- 1) Jesus paying for your sins.
- 2) You paying for your sins.

Keypoint 5

What Jesus is saying here is this - pay your tax but let me pay your sin debt.

**PRAYER ROOM:**

**PRAYER:**

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