

Paying taxes to Caesar

Background

The tribute to be paid to Caesar was a poll tax of one *denarius* (a day's wage for an agricultural labourer) to be paid once a year by everyone aged 14 to 65.

It was levied in Judea from AD 6 when Archelaus was deposed and it became a Roman province under a procurator. It was very unpopular and led to the rebellion of Judas the Galilean (see Acts 5:37) which was quickly suppressed.

Some Jews held that it was wrong to pay tribute to anyone other than God.

Word list

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|----|---|---|
| 21 | <i>partiality</i> | take sides, influenced by others |
| 22 | <i>Is it right?</i>

<i>taxes</i> | <i>or</i> is it lawful <i>ie</i> in accord with law of God?

Greek word for tribute <i>ie</i> not taxes like custom duties. |
| 23 | <i>duplicity</i> | <i>or</i> craftiness. The Greek word used has overtones of unscrupulousness., 'ready to do anything'. |
| 24 | <i>denarius</i> | Roman silver coin with effigy of Emperor Tiberias stamped on it. |
| 25 | <i>render</i> | nb not 'giving' but 'owing' (cf surrender) |
| 26 | <i>likeness</i> | cf image (Gen 1:26,27) |

Bible Connections

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|------------------------|---|
| <i>See also</i> | Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17 |
| 24 | <i>denarius</i>

<i>see</i> Matthew 20:2; John 12:5 |
| 25 | Attitude to authorities

<i>see</i> John 19:10-11; Romans 13:1-6; 1 Tim 2:1-4; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 19 *Why did the elders not try and lay hands on Him?*
Which 'very hour'?
What did 'lay hands on' mean
How did they perceive this parable was told against them. +
Why did they fear the people?
- 20 *What is the authority and the jurisdiction*
Who was the governor? +
- 21 *What did they mean 'teacher'?*
What did they mean 'rightly'?
What did they mean – show no partiality? +
What did they mean by 'the way to God'?
- 22 *What did they mean 'lawful'?*
What was 'tribute to Caesar'?
- 25 *What are God's 'things'?* +
Why did they marvel at his answer?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 19 *Did they understand His claim in the parable to be the beloved son of God?*

2) The Context

surrounding passage,

- 19 *the people (18:43; 19:47ff)*

individual book,

- 19 *very hour (2:38; 12:12; 13:31; {Acts 16:18; 22:13})*
Jesus' claim to be the Son of God (22:70)
Feared the people (22:2)
- 20 *Jurisdiction of Herod (23:7)*
- 22/25 *this man – forbad us to give a tribute to Caesar' (23:2)*
- 26 *marvelling = ve in Luke (6:43; 24:12; 24:21) (nb very unusual word)*

whole Bible,

- 20 *delivered to authority of Rome cf (John 8:6)*
- 21 *Jesus is the way **TO** God (Jn 14:6)*
- 24 *we are made in the likeness of God (Gen 1:27)*
- 25 *Do you not know that I have authority – you would have not. Unless it had been given to you from above.*
God requires that you do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8)

- Caesar's call - dutiful service (Rmns 13:1-7)*
God's call – total surrender (Rmns 6:1ff; Gal 2:20)
26 *No one ever spoke like this man (Jn 7:46)*

Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

- 19 *Elders, secular leaders, not so threatened by Him (?)*
The same 'hour' / time that he had told the parable?
'lay hands on' meant arrest.
They knew as a) he had just been speaking to them b) they recognised the parable from Isaiah – disobedience of Israel and the judgement of God
They feared the people because of the vast number that came for Passover festival.
- 20 *the authority i.e. representing the Roman Law, and the jurisdiction i.e. the means of enforcing it.*
Pilate was the governor (Matt 27:2,11)?
- 21 *'teacher' was a functional title e.g. lecturer i.e. it implied no respect?*
'rightly' meant according to the Law.
no partiality meant that in applying the Law he only had concern for what God said and was not swayed by human consideration
'the way of God' meant exercising God's will
- 22 *'lawful' meant in accordance with God's will / His Law*
'tribute to Caesar' was a poll tax 1 denarius per tax.
- 25 *God's 'things' are our absolute devotion and obedience*
they marvelled at his answer because it was so clever

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

They understood that they were the vineyard tenants and that Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God (22:70)

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Feeling 'got at' in the parable, the religious leaders were stopped from arresting Jesus by the fear of the people (19). So, they tried surreptitiously, to trap him under Roman Law (20).

They asked whether it was right to give tribute to Caesar or not. Taking a denarius with Caesar's inscription, he tells them to pay him what he is due and to pay God what he is due (21-25) That silenced them!

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Be a compliant citizen, but give God the supreme place – your worship

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

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

(25)

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

21 God is accessible

25 God has 'things' that he requires of us

God effortlessly swats aside our challenges

b) His grace?

25 Jesus engages with those who are hostile to Him

c) Jesus and His salvation?

21 Jesus teaches the way of God because He is the way TO God.

Jesus DOES speak and teach rightly and show no partiality

Jesus sees right through us.

2) What should I do?

20 Do not waste your time trying to catch God out

21 Don't pretend sincerity with God

22 Ask questions of the Word of God – sincerely.

26 Marvel at Jesus and be silent before Him