Lesson 17

Sabbath, October 26, 2013

Give to Caesar That Which Belongs to Him

“Christ’s reply was no evasion, but a candid answer to the question. Holding in His hand the Roman coin, upon which were stamped the name and image of Caesar, He declared that since they were living under the protection of the Roman power, they should render to that power the support it claimed, so long as this did not conflict with a higher duty. But while peaceably subject to the laws of the land, they should at all times give their first allegiance to God.” –The Desire of Ages, p. 602.

A TRAP

1. What plan did the Pharisees devise to trap the Lord and condemn His teachings? What did their agents do?

Matthew 22:15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

Luke 20:20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

“The priests and rulers had listened in silence to Christ’s pointed rebukes. They could not refute His charges. But they were only the more determined to entrap Him, and with this object they sent to Him spies, ‘which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor.’” –The Desire of Ages, p. 601.

2. Whom did they send as spies? With what flattery did they approach the Master?

Mark 12:13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

Matthew 22:16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

Luke 20:21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly.
“They did ... send ... young men, who were ardent and zealous, and whom, they thought, Christ did not know. These were accompanied by certain of the Herodians, who were to hear Christ’s words, that they might testify against Him at His trial. The Pharisees and Herodians had been bitter enemies, but they were now one in enmity to Christ....

“The words, ‘We know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly,’ had they been sincere, would have been a wonderful admission. But they were spoken to deceive; nevertheless their testimony was true. The Pharisees did know that Christ said and taught rightly, and by their own testimony will they be judged.” –The Desire of Ages, pp. 601, 602.

TRIBUTE PAID TO HEATHEN AUTHORITIES

3. What crafty question did they ask Him? Had the Pharisees been in agreement on this issue?

Matthew 22:17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

Luke 20:22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?

“Those who put the question to Jesus thought that they had sufficiently disguised their purpose; but Jesus read their hearts as an open book, and sounded their hypocrisy....

“The Pharisees had ever chafed under the exaction of tribute by the Romans. The payment of tribute they held to be contrary to the law of God. Now they saw opportunity to lay a snare for Jesus. The spies came to Him, and with apparent sincerity, as though desiring to know their duty, said, ‘Master, we know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?’ ” –The Desire of Ages, pp. 602, 601.

4. Knowing that they were deliberately setting a trap for Him, what did He ask them?

Luke 20:23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

Mark 12:15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.
Matthew 22:18,19 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

“The spies had expected Jesus to answer their question directly, in one way or the other. If He should say, It is unlawful to give tribute to Caesar, He would be reported to the Roman authorities and arrested for inciting rebellion. But in case He should pronounce it lawful to pay the tribute, they designed to accuse Him to the people as opposing the law of God. Now they felt themselves baffled and defeated. Their plans were disarranged. The summary manner in which their question had been settled left them nothing further to say.” —The Desire of Ages, p. 602.

THE INSPIRED PRINCIPLE

5. What did He ask them after He received the coin? What did they have to admit?

Matthew 22:20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

Mark 12:16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar’s.

Luke 20:24 Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar’s.

Thought question: What will be our attitude if we wish to receive answers from the Lord?

“Do not wait to feel special emotions before you think the Lord answers. Do not Mark out some particular way that the Lord must work for you before you believe you receive the things you ask of Him; but trust His word, and leave the whole matter in the hands of the Lord, with full faith that your prayer will be honored, and the answer will come at the very time and in the very way your heavenly Father sees is for your good; and then live out your prayers. Walk humbly and keep moving forward.” —God’s Amazing Grace, p. 289.
6. What wonderfully balanced, inspired explanation did the Lord give? Is tax evasion acceptable for God’s children?

**Luke 20:25** And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s.

**Thought question:** What principle is still valid today?

“Pointing to the inscription on the coin, Jesus said, ‘Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s’....

“The Saviour’s words, ‘Render ... unto God the things that are God’s,’ were a severe rebuke to the intriguing Jews. Had they faithfully fulfilled their obligations to God, they would not have become a broken nation, subject to a foreign power. No Roman ensign would have waved over Jerusalem, no Roman sentinel would have stood at her gates, no Roman governor would have ruled within her walls. The Jewish nation was then paying the penalty of its apostasy from God.” –The Desire of Ages, p. 602.

7. What did they do after hearing such a definitive answer? How clearly do we see what belongs to the Lord and must never be given to Caesar?

**Matthew 22:22** When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

**Thought question:** What other examples show the difference between sacred and common things?

“When the Pharisees heard Christ’s answer, ‘they marveled, and left Him, and went their way.’ He had rebuked their hypocrisy and presumption, and in doing this He had stated a great principle, a principle that clearly defines the limits of man’s duty to the civil government and his duty to God. In many minds a vexed question had been settled. Ever after they held to the right principle. And although many went away dissatisfied, they saw that the principle underlying the question had been clearly set forth, and they marveled at Christ’s far-seeing discernment.” –The Desire of Ages, pp. 602, 603.
“It should not surprise us when evil conjectures are greedily seized upon as undoubted facts by those who have an appetite for falsehood. The opposers of Christ were again and again confounded and put to silence by the wisdom of His words; yet they still eagerly listened to every rumor, and found some pretext to ply Him again with opposing questions. They were determined not to abandon their purpose. They well knew that if Jesus should continue His work, many would believe on Him, and the scribes and Pharisees would lose their power with the people. Hence they were ready to stoop to any base or contemptible measure to accomplish their malicious intentions against Him. They hated the Herodians, yet they joined these inveterate enemies in order to invent some plan to rid the earth of Christ.” –Selected Messages, book 1, p. 71.