

Jesus' View of Taxes: Your 3 Benefits.

“Jesus was once handed an impossible question about taxes—and His answer can give you three benefits that have almost nothing to do with taxes.”

INTRO

To find your benefits, we must see what happened when Jesus was challenged over taxes.

Mark 12:12 tell us what the political-religious leaders of his day thought: “And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them.”

Now more hurt than ever, these two groups, who hated each other, decided to join forces against a mutual foe: Jesus. The Pharisees had very strict religious views about worshiping any image. The Herodians did not think religion was very important. They wanted to improve their political power & prosperity by working with the Romans.

So this hostile band took aim at Jesus. They gave him some 4 powerful, truth-filled statements, as we saw in a recent video. But their words were just flattery. Their next questions were their snare. It was an impossible question. He was certain to lose. Or, so they thought.

Here is the question: Mark 12:14 “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” If Jesus pleases the Pharisees and says “No, don’t pay.”, all the other Jewish groups will abandon him. But if he says, “Yes, Pay”, he would please the Herodians and lose everyone else. It looks like a no-win situation. But then, this is Jesus we are talking about.

He asked a question, “Why do you keep putting me to the test?” That should have been enough for the public to recognize the motive behind the question.

He asked them for a denarius. It was the common coin, the pay for 1 day’s work. He asked his challengers whose picture was on the coin. They answered correctly, without hesitation. “Caesar’s”.

Jesus gave his incredible answer. His first word was “Render”. The original Greek word means to “give back, repay, or yield up.” Jesus said, “Render to Caesar (or give back to Caesar) the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” And they marveled at him.” (Mark 12:17)

Did you see your first benefit as it went by? Benefit #1: Any conflict, even the impossible ones like the ones Jesus faced, can be resolved peacefully.

Sometimes a conflict can be resolved when the problem is reframed. Jesus was looking at a problem that wanted a simple 'Yes' or 'No'. But maybe there is another possibility. Jesus, even during this passion week, kept finding answers that were "outside the box". And they were better answers than anyone would have expected.

Benefit #2 is Stability Under Pressure. If anyone knew pressure, it was Jesus. People just kept putting more and more pressure on him hoping he would make a verbal mistake. These last few days, as we have seen in the Passion Week videos, you would have seen other people being crushed or collapsing under the relentless assaults.

But he didn't seem shaken. Instead, he asked them, "Why do you keep on putting me to the test?" His challengers kept losing their honor to this simple traveling preacher. He did it because he did not pay attention to the scoreboard. He already knew he would be winning. So why get rattled?

He could do it because he had his eyes on a different goal. He was not worried about popularity. He was looking on to Thursday night and Friday. He would go to the garden of Gethsemane. He would wrestle with his own desire to live. After 3 prayers, he would decide to follow his Father's plan. He knew the cross was in his future. He knew he had to go there so you wouldn't have to. He knew his Father would be involved in his resurrection. And he would return to heaven.

You can be Stable Under Pressure when you don't focus on the present with its "impossibilities". Just look in the same direction Jesus did. Paul told us, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Look to the cross for forgiveness. Look to the resurrection for hope. And keep your eyes glued on Jesus.

And then Benefit #3. The best one of all. You learn which priorities must be set. Jesus always knew that he would not please everyone. God allows governments and other institutions to

function by people paying taxes (see Matthew 17:24-25 and Romans 13:1-7). Jesus made the priority clear: Give back to God the things that are God's.

So what does God own? Everything is His: "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine." (Psalms 50:10-11)

That eternal part of you that was given to you when you were conceived in your momma belongs to God. Solomon wrote, "and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to god who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

Everyone should belong to God. But Christians certainly do. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

For a truly successful life, your priority must be to fear God and obey his commands. "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

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