

Render to Caesar and to God

Key Verse: “*And Jesus answered and said to them, Render 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, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Mark 12:13-17

We too marvel at Jesus’ wisdom and teachings. Our Key Verse has become part of the vernacular in various Christian countries. Two millennia after Jesus spoke these words they still resonate as a great truth.

In the context of the Key Verse, we find the Pharisees and Herodians, who disliked each other, uniting to entrap our Lord. Their words were disingenuous. “And they sent to

him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” (Mark 12:13,14, *English Standard Version*) Their words oozed hypocrisy, being deeply rooted in their hearts. They did not for one moment believe that Jesus did “truly teach the way of God.” Perceiving their wicked motives, Jesus responded, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money. So

they brought Him a denarius.” (Matt. 22:18,19, *NKJV*) The fact that the Pharisees and Herodians brought him a denarius was further evidence of their deceit.

The Jewish shekel was the coin of tribute for the temple service. The denarius was a Roman coin. The Roman tax was paid in denarii. Jesus’s detractors, having that coin in their purse, and offering it instead of the shekel, showed that they themselves believed it was lawful to pay Caesar tribute. Their pretensions, therefore, were false.

Taking the coin in His hands, Jesus held it out for all to see. He asked, “Whose image and inscription is this? They said to Him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answered and said to them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marveled at Him.” (Mark 12:16,17, *NKJV*) Matthew’s Gospel adds that they then “left Him and went their way.” (Matt. 22:22, *NKJV*) They had fallen into their own trap; their plot failed and is recorded as an object lesson for the ages.

As Christians in today’s mixed up world, we face polarizing questions regarding the practice of our faith. Opposing philosophies attempt to use Scripture to bolster their position. When pulled in many different directions, Christ and his teachings remain our anchor. Let us first serve God our Creator. Let us follow Jesus’s simple teachings of love for God and love for neighbors. Let us even love our enemies! Jesus said, “I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.”—Luke 6:27-29, *NKJV*

The Golden Rule shines its brilliant light upon the path of our daily walk. “Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” (vs. 31, *NKJV*) Let us render to “Caesar” the things due by law, and render to God our all. ■