**Jesus God of The Living**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Mark 12:13-27**

**Wednesday Evening**

**July 17, 2019**

**13 Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words.**

Saints, the Jewish leaders would not be put off because they were so intent on killing Jesus. The Pharisees were a religious group opposed to the Roman occupation of Palestine. The supporters of Herod were a political party that supported the Herods and the policies instituted by Rome.

These groups with diametrically opposed beliefs usually had nothing to do with each other. But these two groups found a common enemy in Jesus. Despite Jesus’ solemn warning to the Jewish leaders in his previous parable, they didn’t let up. More delegates arrived whose intent was to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested.

**14 When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?**

Saints, the men in this delegation, pretending to be honest men, flattered Jesus before asking him their trick question, hoping to catch him off guard. They asked, “Is it right to pay taxes to the Roman government or not?” Judea had been a Roman province since 63 B.C., but the Jews had fairly recently been forced to pay taxes or tribute to Caesar.

This was a hot topic in Palestine. The Pharisees were against these taxes on religious grounds; the Herodians supported taxation on political grounds. The Jewish people hated to pay taxes to Rome because the money supported their oppressors and symbolized their subjection.

This was a valid (and loaded) question, and the crowd around Jesus certainly waited expectantly for his answer. For Jesus, either a yes or a no could lead to trouble. If Jesus agreed that it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, the Pharisees would say he was opposed to God and the people would turn against him. If Jesus said the taxes should not be paid, the Herodians could hand him over to Herod on the charge of rebellion.

**15 Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." 16 So they brought it. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's."**

Saints, Jesus knew this was a trap. These leaders didn’t care about Jesus’ opinion; this was merely a trick question. But Jesus would answer. He asked someone to give him a Roman coin, probably a denarius, the usual day’s wage for a laborer. It was a silver coin with Caesar’s picture and title on it. The tax paid to Rome was paid in these coins.

**17 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.**

Saints, Jesus said, “Give to Caesar what belongs to him”—that is,

the coin bearing the emperor’s image should be given to the emperor. In their question, the religious leaders used the word didomi, meaning “to give.”

Jesus responded with the word apodidomi, meaning “to pay a debt.” In other words, having a coin meant being part of that country, so citizens should acknowledge the authority of Caesar and pay for the benefits accorded to them by his empire.

The Jews may not have been happy about the situation, but God had placed Caesar on the throne and Judea under his rule. The Pharisees and Herodians tried to make it appear that it was incompatible to be a Jew and pay taxes to a pagan emperor who claimed to be divine. But Jesus explained that no such incompatibility existed because God was ultimately in control.

They would lose much and gain little if they refused to pay Caesar’s taxes (see Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

**Romans 13:1-7**

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

Saints, however, paying the taxes did not have to mean submission to the divinity claimed by the emperor. The words on the coins were incorrect. Caesar had the right to claim their tax money, but he had no claim on their souls.

The Jews had a responsibility to remember that everything that belongs to God must be given to God. While they lived in the Roman world, the Jews had to face the dual reality of subjection to Rome and responsibility to God. Jesus explained that they could do both if they kept their priorities straight. The tax would be paid as long as Rome held sway over Judea, but God has rights on people’s souls.

To Jesus, this was the crucial issue. Were they giving to God their lives? Were they loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength? These Jews (and especially the self-righteous Pharisees) claimed to be God’s chosen people. But were they even “rendering” to God what truly belonged to him—themselves?

**18 Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying:**

Saints, The Sadducees were at odds theologically with the Pharisees (the other major group of Jewish leaders) because they honored only the Pentateuch—Genesis through Deuteronomy—as Scripture, and because they rejected most of the Pharisees’ traditions, rules, and regulations. The Sadducees said there is no resurrection after death because they could find no mention of it in the Pentateuch. Apparently, the Pharisees had never been able to come up with a convincing argument from the Pentateuch for the resurrection, and the Sadducees thought they had trapped Jesus for sure. But Jesus was about to show them otherwise.

**19 "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.**

Obviously, since the Sadducees recognized only the books attributed to Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy), their question came from Moses’ writings. In the law, Moses had written that when a man died without a son, his unmarried brother (or nearest male relative) should marry the widow and produce children. The first son of this marriage was considered the heir of the dead man (Deuteronomy 25:5-6).

**Deuteronomy 25:5-7**

5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

Saints, the main purpose of the instruction was to produce an heir and guarantee that the family would not lose their land. The book of Ruth gives us an example of this law in operation.

Saints, this law, called levirate marriage, protected the widow (in that culture widows usually had no means to support themselves) and allowed the family line to continue.

**20 Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. 21 And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. 22 So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. 23 Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife."**

Saints, the Sadducees took their hypothetical situation to a rather ridiculous length as they tried to show the absurdity of believing in the resurrection. The book of Tobit (an apocryphal book not accepted by Protestants as part of the Old Testament canon but highly regarded by Jewish scholars at that time) includes the story of a woman who was married to seven men successively without ever having children. In Tobit the men are not brothers.

The woman in the situation they described had been married seven times to seven different men, all according to the law. The Sadducees reasoned that since this was in the law, there could not be a resurrection. When all eight of them were resurrected (the seven brothers and the woman), “Whose wife will she be?”

The Sadducees erroneously assumed that if people were resurrected, it would be back to a continuation of life on earth—and that would be too confusing to be possible. They were incapable of understanding that God could both raise the dead and make new lives for his people, lives that would be different than what they had known on earth. The Sadducees had brought God down to their level.

Because they could not conceive of a resurrection life, they decided that God couldn’t raise the dead. And Moses hadn’t written about it, so they considered the “case closed.”

**24 Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?**

Saints, Jesus wasted no time trying to deal with their hypothetical situation, but went directly to their underlying assumption that resurrection of the dead was impossible. Jesus clearly stated that they were wrong about the resurrection for two reasons:

**1. They didn’t know the Scriptures**

if they did, they would believe in the resurrection because it is taught in Scripture), and

**2. They didn’t know the power of God**

if they did, they would believe in the resurrection because God’s power makes it possible, even necessary). Ignorance on these two counts was inexcusable for these religious leaders.

**25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.**

Saints, furthermore, Jesus said, when the dead rise (not “if” but when), they will not rise to an extension of their earthly lives. Instead, life in heaven will be different. Believers will be like the angels in heaven regarding marriage.

Believers do not become angels, for angels were created by God for a special purpose. Angels do not marry or propagate; neither will glorified human beings. On earth where death reigns, marriage and childbearing are important, but bearing children will not be necessary in the resurrection life because people will be raised up to glorify God forever—there will be no more death.

Those in heaven will no longer be governed by physical laws but will be “like the angels”; that is, believers will share the immortal nature of angels. Jesus’ statement did not mean that people will not recognize their partners in heaven. Jesus was not dissolving the eternal aspect of marriage, doing away with sexual differences, or teaching that we will be asexual beings after death.

We cannot tell very much about sex and marriage in heaven from this one statement by Jesus. He simply meant that we must not think of heaven as an extension of life as we now know it. Our relationships in this life are limited by time, death, and sin. We don’t know everything about our resurrection life, but Jesus affirmed that relationships will be different from what we are used to here and now. The same physical and natural rules won’t apply.

**26 But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."**

Saints, because the Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch as God’s divine word, Jesus answered them from the book of Exodus (3:6). God would not have said,

“I am the God of your ancestors” if he thought of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as dead (he would have said, “I was their God”).

Thus, from God’s perspective, they are alive. This evidence would have been acceptable in any rabbinic debate because it applied a grammatical argument: God’s use of the present tense in speaking of his relationship to the great patriarchs who had been long dead by the time God spoke these words to Moses. God had a continuing relationship with these men because of the truth of the resurrection. Therefore, the Sadducees had made a serious error in their assumption about the resurrection.

Matthew hints at the background tension (Matthew 22:34).

**Matthew 22:31-35**

31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." 33 And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. 34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

Matthew provides a brief account of this exchange between Jesus and the teacher. He reported only the original question and Jesus’ response. Mark’s version fills in the picture and adds a positive note to the conflict.

Jesus’ responses did not always antagonize his opponents. Often they expressed amazement and even agreement. Jesus was looking for greater commitment from people, not that they merely knew the right answers. Jesus told this teacher that he had the truth but had not yet expressed his trust. Knowing God’s requirement of wholehearted faith and surrendering ourselves to him are separate steps of entering into the Kingdom.

**In Closing:**

**2 Peter 3:14-18**

14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

**2 Timothy 2:19-26**

19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.

21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.

24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**