



## DIVE DEEPER

## READ Mark 12:13-17 (NIV)

13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

17 Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

And they were amazed at him.

## A TRAP IS SET:

› (V. 13) **They sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words.** The Pharisees and Herodians did not get along and clashed theologically, but their hatred of Jesus brought them together in a shared mission to silence him.

› (V. 14) **We know you are a man of integrity.** All of the words of verse 14 are not words of admiration, but to “butter” Jesus up and in an attempt to get Jesus to say what he really felt, without fear of their opposition.

› (V. 14,15) **Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?** A question about paying taxes to Caesar was predictable in Jerusalem, and particularly in the temple, for in Judea money and goods went directly into Roman coffers, whereas in Galilee the same were funneled to Rome through Herod Antipas. The tax referred to is an imperial poll tax, first instituted in a.d. 6. The amount required to satisfy the poll tax was a denarius (v. 15, another Latin loanword), which was the average daily wage in Palestine (Matt 20:2, 9). [Edwards, J. R. (2002). The Gospel according to Mark (p. 363)]

¿ Who are the people asking the question?

## JESUS’ RESPONSE:

› (V. 15,16) **Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.** A denarius was a Roman silver coin bearing the semi-divine bust of Tiberius Caesar (a.d. 14–37) with an abbreviated Latin inscription, Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus (“Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus”). The reverse side bore an image of Tiberius’s mother Livia and the inscription, Pontifex Maximus (“High Priest”). [Edwards, J. R. (2002). The Gospel according to Mark (p. 363)]

› (V. 16) **They brought the coin.** There was most likely a growing laughter amongst the crowd as realization dawned on them that Jesus had just trapped the trappers. A righteous Jew, according to them, was not supposed to touch a denarius because it would cause ceremonial uncleanness. By having at least one in their possession revealed their

YES • NO • MAYBE

1. I pay too much for taxes.
2. I feel like I pay more taxes than the value of services that I get in return.
3. Less than 50% of the people in my life are hypocrites.
4. I become suspicious when people overly compliment me.
5. Paying tithes and offerings are like paying taxes to God.



## DIVE DEEPER (CONTINUED...)

hypocrisy and “secret sins.”

¿ What does it say about the character of God that Jesus did not shy away from touching the unclean coin?

› (V. 17) **Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's** - The coin that was minted by the emperor and had his image stamped on it was considered to be his personal property even while it was in circulation. Therefore it was proper for Jews and (later) Christians to return it to him. By so saying, Jesus acknowledged that God's people have an obligation to the state, although he did not define that obligation. In fact, the word translated “give” means to pay what is owed. [Brooks, J. A. (1991). Mark (Vol. 23, p. 193)]

¿ What does it say about Jesus that he encourages respect even for tyrant leaders?

› (V. 17) **...And to God what is God's** - [This] is a broad statement that invites the Pharisees and Herodians to reassess what they were giving to God. ...If Caesar's image symbolizes the things that belong to Caesar, what image denotes the things that belong to God? That is the image of God that every human being bears. Neither the Pharisees nor the Herodians nor anyone else in Jerusalem, however, gave God the things that properly belong to God—people without regard to race, culture or gender...Jesus announced a decidedly inclusive principle: whatever bears God's image belongs to God. This would have been a particularly troublesome idea for the Pharisees, who were obsessed with keeping the Promised Land holy. The basic meaning of holiness is belonging to God, and their passion for it was evident in the countless things they did to keep themselves, their temple and their land pure and undefiled. [Kernaghan, R. J. (2007). Mark (pp. 230–231).]

### READ Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

*Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

*27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

¿ Like a coin, we have been stamped with the image of God. About the denarius, Jesus asked, “Who's image is this? And whose inscription? Which brings up the questions:

- How are we stamped with the image of God?

- If Jesus was saying we are God's “coins,” then what do you think He wants us to do?

NOTES

©2025 THEBIBLELAB.COM

## MY PRAYER

1. In what areas of my life am I not giving to God what is God's?
2. What image of God am I presenting as I circulate as His “coin”?
3. What new thing does God need me to know about His character this week?