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Luke 20:20 - 20:47



Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg explores Luke 20:20-47 and the topic of paying taxes to Caesar. Gregg explains how Jesus skillfully navigated the question to both acknowledge the importance of paying taxes while also making a subtle theological point. He also delves into the early church's views on government authority and the concept of resurrection. Overall, Gregg provides an insightful analysis of the text and its implications.

Transcript

We're going to pick up our study in the book of Luke where we left off in the midst of chapter 20 and this part of Luke which is taking place pretty much in the middle of the Passion Week is also paralleled in Matthew and in Mark. These encounters that Jesus has with critics which begin at the point we put in today at verse 20, a series of critics come to challenge Jesus on various points. The first critics are the Pharisees.

The second group of critics are the Sadducees who confront him on another point and then he confronts them. In Matthew's Gospel there are more confrontations and more back-and-forth between Jesus and them and he tells a few more parables in Matthew than in Luke but the basic idea here is that as his life was drawing near an end, they still didn't have much on him. Here he's only days away from when they will condemn him wrongfully because they won't really find anything legitimately on him but they're trying desperately to find something they can accuse him with, something they can nail him with so that they can get rid of him.

They don't realize that he's not going to resist arrest anyway, that he's come to Jerusalem in order to die and they needn't worry about that. They're going to get him but they still don't know how they're going to get him and so they're trying to catch him in something that will either put him in trouble with the Roman authorities or in trouble with the Jewish authorities or in trouble with the public, something that will somehow make him look foolish or wrong or illegal or something and so that's what these challenges are for. Principally, that of the Pharisees which is brought up here is the one that really stood to be the most damaging to him and the one that would make him most

vulnerable to prosecution because it says in verse 20, so they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be righteous that they might seize on his words in order to deliver him to the power and the authority of the governor.

So we're told specifically that this line of questioning that we're about to read was intended to try to get him to say something that they could turn him over to the Roman authorities, get him to say something the Romans would be upset about and arrest him and it says, they asked him saying, teacher we know that you say and teach rightly and you do not show personal favoritism but teach the way of God truly. Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not? But he perceived their craftiness and he said to them, why do you test me? Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have? They answered and said, Caesar's.

And he said to them, render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. But they could not catch him in his words in the presence of the people and they marveled at his answer and kept silent. This answer is just perfect to get himself out of what was normally would have been perceived as the horns of a dilemma.

When a person's on the horns of dilemma it means they're damned if they do and damned if they don't. If they say one thing they're in trouble, if they say the opposite thing they're in trouble. The question was brought up to him, of course they were all hypocritical, that oh master we we know that you're righteous, we know you always tell the truth and others they're trying to put him off his guard and not let them know that they are spies that are sent by his enemies to get him to say something to catch him.

So hoping that he will be off his guard and say something unguarded that they can use against him to the Romans. Now of course the particular question they asked is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar? They apparently thought he would say no. That's the only way that his words could possibly have gotten him in trouble with the governor and that's what they're hoping to do.

They must have thought his answer would be no we shouldn't pay tribute to the governor, to Caesar. Then they could go and accuse him. Interestingly enough he said the opposite.

He said give Caesar what is Caesar's, implying the coin itself that had Caesar's face on it. So he said the opposite thing of what they thought he'd say, yet when they went to Caesar, that is not Caesar, when they went to Pilate who is the Roman official there, they actually said that Jesus was teaching people not to pay tribute to Caesar. In other words it didn't matter what he said they were going to accuse him of the thing that would get him in trouble with Caesar anyway even though he said the opposite.

But here it's a very interesting thing. Jesus of course knew that they were hypocritical

when they were buttering him up and flattering him and all this and Jesus probably never said an unguarded word anyway. Get him off his guard he's still going to speak whatever his father tells him to speak he's still going to speak measured and well thought out answers.

But the question is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not had a backstory to it. Because in 6 AD there had been a man named Judas of Galilee. He's not one of the Judas's in the Bible, he's a different Judas.

He is mentioned in Acts because Gamaliel in Acts mentions there was this guy named Judas of Galilee. Well he's known from history, he's known from Josephus. He was a rebel against Rome and his position was it's unlawful for Jews that is unlawful in the sight of God for Jews to pay tribute to any Roman authority.

And his reasoning was that the Jews are God's people, God is their king. We don't acknowledge any king but God. When you pay tribute to a ruler you're acknowledging that he's your king.

And since we do not recognize anything except God we will not pay tribute to Caesar. In fact if we do so we're insulting God who is our true king. We're acting as if Caesar is our king.

So this position was the official position of Judas of Galilee who started a movement called the Zealots and you've probably heard of the Zealots. One of Jesus' disciples had been in this movement before he followed Jesus named Simon the Zealot. This was a very anti-establishment, anti-Roman movement and violently so.

Judas as far as I know did not claim to be the Messiah as many after him did and or maybe he did. I don't know that he did. But he still was kind of running what was like a messianic movement of deliverance of the Jews against the Romans.

Now he didn't raise up a total army of the Jews to just drive the Romans out but his people ran guerrilla raids against groups of Roman soldiers here and there. They'd kill a few soldiers here and there just to make themselves pests sort of like terrorists. You know they're not really, terrorists don't overthrow the country by bringing down the Twin Towers but they they make everybody insecure.

They they are an annoyance. They hope to wear down their opposition with this kind of pestering and and fear tactics. And so Simon, excuse me, Judas of Galilee, the leader of the Zealot Party, ran these kinds of raids on the Romans.

He got caught and he got killed by the Romans. But the Zealot Party continued. There were lots of people sympathetic with what he thought.

In fact, in all likelihood most of the Jews were probably secretly sympathetic. They dare

not join themselves to the Zealot Party because Zealots were hunted down by the Romans and killed because they were obviously rebels against the Roman Authority and the Romans didn't brook any opposition like that without retaliation. And so this was a hot-button issue when they asked Jesus is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not? They're essentially saying are you on the side of the Zealots about this? Since the sympathies of almost the entire country of Jews was really on the side of the Zealots, even if they didn't dare to take up arms or dare to associate publicly, they really did want their liberty.

They really did want the Romans out. They really probably did secretly admire those people who went out and did bad things to the Romans just like when the Twin Towers went down here. The Arabs in Saudi Arabia were dancing in the streets celebrating.

They weren't directly involved in the bombing but they were very sympathetic with it and they were happy and rejoiced in it. I suppose most Jews when they heard that another group of Roman soldiers had been taken out by a Zealot raid, they probably inwardly were ready to dance and rejoice. And so they would expect Jesus, if he's on the same page with the general Jewish public about this, to say no it is not lawful to pay tribute to Caesar.

Now the reason they had to pretend to be friendly in asking this is because he wouldn't say something so controversial in a crowd where somebody would report it. But if he thought these were sympathizers with him, he might in a sense almost privately, between you and me, I think we shouldn't pay tribute to Caesar. And so they were hoping to get him off his guard so he'd say what he really thought and they thought that he'd say something like that so that they could deliver him over to the power of the governor.

And as I said, even though he didn't answer as they thought he would, they either didn't hear his answer and heard what they wanted to hear or just didn't care about his answer and just lied about him and said he told people they shouldn't pay tribute to Caesar. It's part of the accusation they brought against him. But clearly he said the opposite.

He said give Caesar what is his and what is Caesar's is that his face on the coin. Now Jesus, instead of answering yes or no, because if he said yes it's lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, if he just said it outright like that then he would be, you know, disliked by virtually everyone in the population of the Jews. What he's saying that we should accept this Roman dominion over us, which was something that's very unpopular to think, and if he said no, don't, the other answer is he'd get in trouble with the Romans, the very thing they hoped.

So he was on what we call the horns of a dilemma. You can't go either way without getting gored. Somehow he steered a course in this situation where he did not compromise at all, but he avoided the problem.

He said first of all show me a coin. It says a denarius here. It's interesting he didn't have one.

Some people have pointed out this shows that Jesus, you know, was in poverty. He was a poor man. He wanted to use a coin for an object lesson and he had to borrow a penny to do so.

Now Judas, however, who was with him had a bag with some money in it and there's a good chance that there were some denarii in that, but Jesus allowed his opponents to show that they carried one, and the reason this is interesting is because the denarius had an imprint of Caesar on it, just like our coins have, you know, the bust of George Washington or somebody else, Abraham Lincoln on them, so the coins that the Romans issued had Caesar's face on them. Now technically a coin with an engraved image of Caesar was a graven image, and devout Jews, many rabbis felt that it was wrong for a Jew to even carry a coin with a graven image. That's having a graven image, an image of Caesar.

So when he said show me a coin and they had one, this would show immediately that in the eyes of many Jews they already were compromising by carrying a graven image on their persons. Now Jesus might have been carrying them too. Judas might have had some of those in the bag for all we know, but that Jesus allowed his enemies to demonstrate that they had one meant that they were already doing something that many Jews thought was a wrong thing to do just by having a coin.

He said show me a denarius, they presented one, and he said well whose face is on there? Now obviously the answer was not hard to give, that's Caesar's face. Now when Jesus said render therefore to Caesar what is his, some people think it just means give him his face back. His face is on your coin, give it back to him.

It must be his, give it back to him. And by the way the word render means to give back. It's not the same word as just to give.

It's not like you're giving Caesar a gift out of your generosity. It's that it's his already, he must have given it to you. Where else would you get a coin with his face on it? It must have come from him.

Give it back to him if he wants it back. If it's his, give it back to him. The idea is you couldn't possibly have a coin with Caesar's face on it unless Caesar had minted it.

It must have come from him. If he wants it back, why would you hold it? Give it back to him. Now in a sense he is saying yes, pay tribute to Caesar, but he's saying it in a way that isn't necessarily direct.

He's saying that looks like it's Caesar's coin. He's got his own face on it. Why are you carrying something of his? It was even controversial for them to be carrying a coin like

that.

Why would you want to keep it? Why wouldn't you want to give it back to him? So he's essentially saying yes, you should pay tribute, but he's saying it differently. He's basically saying you shouldn't be holding something that isn't yours, that isn't appropriate for you to have, and if the owner wants it back, give it to him. But make sure you give God what is his.

Now this is important because Jesus made it very clear that while he was in a sense in a backhanded way saying yes, give Caesar the tribute money he wants, he is not in any way compromising himself in the eyes of the pious Jews who probably didn't want to pay tribute to Caesar, but you need to give God what is his. In other words, he puts the emphasis on being pious, on being obedient to God. The zealots thought you shouldn't pay tribute to Caesar because you have to be obedient to God.

He's your king. Jesus was implying that both are possible. You can give back Caesar what he's given you in the first place, but make sure you don't withhold from God what he's given you.

And there's even perhaps the implication underlying this that you can tell that's Caesar's coin because it has his image on it. Well, you have God's image on you. You're made in God's image.

So if you should give Caesar what has his image on it, you should give God what has his image on it, you. You should be in all respects surrendered to God. Surrender to Caesar what he owns, you surrender to God what he owns.

Therefore, he's made it clear that it is not somehow, there's no contradiction in acknowledging God's ownership of you on the one hand and also that something is owed to Caesar. Now, if you look over at Romans 13, Paul, I believe, alludes to this very passage or this very statement of Jesus because in Romans 13 7, Paul says, render, and he uses the same verb Jesus did, give back, therefore to all their due, taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor. Now, when Jesus rendered to Caesar what is his, Paul says, render to everyone what is theirs, taxes, customs, honor, tribute, whatever.

In fact, when he says honor to whom honor, there may be a hint there that, of course, honor, God is worthy of honor. So, like Jesus said, you give Caesar what is owed to him, you give God what's owed to him. You give Caesar the tax money, you give God the respect and the honor that he deserves.

It's possible that Paul is even, in a sense, paraphrasing Jesus, but not very much of a paraphrase because the word render here is used in both places, which doesn't just mean give. He could have said pay. He could say pay Caesar, pay taxes, but instead he

said give back, using the word Jesus used and implying that what we have received from the government, they have the right to ask for it back, at least some of it.

Now, when he says render to all their due, that's also what Jesus was saying. What is due to them? Give Caesar what is legitimately his and give God what is legitimately his. Well, what is legitimately Caesar's? In the context of Jesus' statement, presumably his face.

His face is his own face. It's on his coins. You Jews, of course, presumably could do your business with some other kind of currency.

After all, for centuries people had done business in the marketplace simply by weighing out quantities and weights of silver and so forth. They didn't have to have coined money, but the Jews had chosen to go ahead and use these coins that were provided by the Romans with Caesar's face. Well, you got it from him, give it back.

It's apparently his due. And Paul says give people what is their due. That is, don't withhold something that is owed.

Well, what is owed to Caesar besides his face on the coin? What is it that Paul thinks is owed? He says you should give back to people what you owe them, but what do you owe them? He said taxes to whom taxes are due. Okay, what taxes are due? Just any that the government decides to impose arbitrarily. If the government says, you know, I want you to pay 50% of your income to the government or 90.

Well, just because they ask for it, is it due them? Do they deserve it? Is that really legitimate? Obviously, Paul's indicating there is something owed and you should pay what is owed. You should give back what is owed, but not certainly, I mean, what is owed must be some kind of definable quantity. If I hire you to mow my lawn and I say I'm gonna give you 20 bucks for it, then when you mow the lawn, I owe you 20 bucks.

You don't come and say, I mowed your lawn, give me a hundred bucks. Well, that's not owed. You didn't do a hundred dollars worth of work by our agreement.

You did \$20 worth. In other words, if you owe the government something, you must owe them something specific. There must be something you're repaying them for, some services rendered or something.

And that's exactly what Paul is saying. The government does render service and we should support the government financially for that. And that's what the verses before verse 7 say.

Verse 7 of Romans 13 is a summary of what Paul has been saying before that. And in Romans 13, it said, let every soul be subject, verse 1, to the governing authorities. For there's no authority except from God.

And the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Now, some people think that that means that anything the authorities in government ask for, that's God telling you to do it. That's only one way to understand it.

That certainly isn't the way the Bible would generally understand this, because the apostles themselves resisted authority on many occasions. And so did godly people in the Old Testament. The midwives who defied Pharaoh when Pharaoh said, kill the Jewish babies if they're males.

They didn't do it. And God blessed the midwives for not doing it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were told by the king, bow down to the idols.

They wouldn't do it. And God blessed them. Daniel was told he couldn't pray to anyone except Darius for 30 days.

And Daniel ignored those orders and did the right thing anyway. And God blessed him. In other words, godly people have always resisted authority.

In the days of the Maccabees, Antiochus Epiphanes forbade all the Jews to circumcise their children, to keep Sabbath, to possess copies of the Torah. The godly Jews ignored that order and did the right thing and even died for it. To die for doing what's right at the hands of authorities that you're disobeying is a godly thing.

We call it civil disobedience. But of course, it has to be a conscientious objection. It has to be something we don't give the government because we believe it's morally wrong to do it.

Because we must, although we must give Caesar what is Caesar's, we don't give him what is God's. Caesar has something coming, but he doesn't have everything coming. He's not God.

God deserves everything. Caesar deserves some things. And we should give Caesar what he rightfully deserves, but never at the expense of giving God what he deserves, which is our full obedience.

In many cases, we can obey Caesar without disobeying God. Most laws, after all, follow some kind of a moral code that has some resemblance to God's moral code. There are laws against murder, for example, and a theft and, you know, violent attack against other people.

Well, we can keep those laws and should, but in doing so, we're obeying God too. But if the government tells us to go out and round up the Jews and put them in concentration camps and put them in ovens, we can't do that. And there were German Christians in the time of Hitler who were conflicted about that because their government authority was telling them to do that.

The soldiers who were Christians, and there were Christian soldiers in Germany's army, they weren't sure, you know, what to do. Some of them, I'm sure, were conscientious objectors and put their own necks on the line. Others just did what they were told because they were rendering to Caesar, in this case, they were rendering to Caesar what was God's.

They were obeying Caesar instead of God. And it's often necessary for the government to be defied in the name of God. It was the government authorities in Israel, the Sanhedrin, that told Peter and John, don't preach anymore in the name of Jesus.

And Peter said, well, if it's better for us to obey you instead of God, you're gonna have to judge that, but we're gonna obey God. And when they got arrested the next day for doing the same thing and were told, we told you not to preach anymore in this name and you keep doing it, they said, we have to obey God rather than man. Certainly we don't give Caesar that which belongs to God.

We don't obey Caesar at the expense of obeying God. We must obey God rather than men. But where we can obey Caesar without disobeying God, we're supposed to do that.

And the government authorities are ordained by God or appointed by God. Now in saying that, Paul doesn't mean that the government authorities have as much authority as God. In fact, the opposite is true.

What he's saying is they are subject to God. The government authorities see themselves as self-appointed, self-validated. Just by being in office, they think that they deserve for everyone to obey them.

Not so. They are appointees by a higher power, God. God appointed them for a particular task.

Their task legitimately is only what he appointed them to do, nothing more. Since they are appointed by God, they stand to be judged by God if they aren't doing the right thing. In other words, it speaks here of the limitations of their power under God.

The Roman authorities did not see themselves as limited in their authority by some dictates from God. They were gods themselves as far as they were concerned. They had unlimited authority.

They could be tyrants if they wanted. Paul says not so. They don't have some self-inherent, self-appointed authority that is as absolute.

They stand as people who are subject to the one who appointed them, God. These people were appointed by God and when God makes an appointment of some person to a task, he defines the task. And when they operate within the perimeters of the defined task, they are operating as servants of God.

But when they're outside those perimeters, they're not serving God and they're not authoritative. They have no authority of their own that God hasn't given them. And he hasn't given them authority except within the sphere that he defines.

Now Paul says in verse 2, therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God. That is, if they have genuine authority from God to do what they're doing, you can't resist them without resisting God at the same time, of course. And those who resist will bring judgment on themselves, for rulers are not a terror to good works but to evil.

Well, this is generally true. Paul knew very well there were exceptions to this. But in general, government officials were there to keep the peace, to punish criminals and so forth.

And that's what they often, perhaps usually do. And the world is better off because they're there. Now, rulers can become beasts like the beast in Revelation who actually are not God's servants but Satan's servants.

They can turn around and do the opposite of what God appointed them to do, in which case they have to be defied. Paul is speaking in general, most governments at least, do enforce some form of justice in society and punish criminals. And therefore they are not, you know, a terror to those who are behaving themselves.

They're a terror to those who disobey. He said, do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same. Now what Paul is saying is essentially you do what's right and you won't get in trouble with the law.

That's usually true. Of course, Paul is very much aware of exceptions and so is Peter who actually gives the same instructions but with a caveat. In 1 Peter 3.13, Peter says, and who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? A rhetorical question.

The impression is no one will hurt you. Why would anyone want to hurt you if you're doing the right thing? But then he says, but even if you should suffer for righteousness sake. In other words, in cases where there is an exception to this general rule and you actually do the right thing and suffer for it, you're blessed.

Okay, Jesus said, blessed are you when men persecute you for righteousness sake. Peter said, yeah, you're blessed if you suffer for righteousness sake. But he said, generally that's not what happens.

Generally, if you're a good citizen, you're not hurting anybody, you're not breaking, you know, any laws, you're not being a criminal, you're kind of beyond the reach of the law because they don't find any fault with you. And who is he who would fault you if you do what's right? Now, the rhetorical question implies nobody or virtually nobody, but he acknowledged there are exceptions. Sometimes it may happen that there's such an evil

ruler that he punishes the righteous instead of the wicked.

Now, that would be an exception that Peter acknowledges and Paul doesn't state the exception, but he would recognize it certainly. He's talking about in general, governments are there to keep the peace and maintain justice, that's a good work, stay on their good side by being obedient to the law. He says about the government official in verse 4, Romans 13, 4, Paul says, for he, that is the government official, is God's minister to you for good.

The word minister means servant. These government officials are in the employment of God. They're his servants.

They may not know it and they might even object to the suggestion that they were serving God, but Paul said they've been appointed by God. They've been appointed to serve a purpose he wants them to do. And he says, but if you do evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is God's servant and avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

Now this makes it very clear what the government official is appointed by God to do, to punish evil. He is God's minister of wrath against evildoers. Now obviously a person can appoint a servant to do a good work like this, to punish evildoers, but when the servant is not obedient to the master, he may beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunkards.

Jesus said that some of his own servants may do that and they'll have to suffer for it. Government officials do that too. They're appointed by God to do the right thing, but that doesn't mean they will do the right thing.

Peter also agrees that God has appointed government officials to do this kind of a thing. In 1st Peter chapter 2, verses 13 and 14. Verse 13, Peter said, therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme or to governors as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.

So the government officials are sent, their job description is to punish criminals and encourage and praise good behavior. Whenever government's laws are doing that, they are to be submitted to because they are performing a service that God has appointed them to do. They are protectors of those who can't protect themselves.

If there weren't government officials, if there weren't police and an ordinary homeowner was attacked by a group of thugs, all it would take is one more thug than the inhabitants of the house to overpower and rob the house, kill the people, rape the women. I mean, any number of thugs gathered together might overpower an innocent citizen in any situation if there was no recourse to law. Of course, the fact that the police force is

bigger than any band of thugs or the National Guard is or the FBI.

I mean, the fact that there are government law enforcement agencies keeps thugs from just doing that without, with impunity. I mean, certainly there are crimes like that still committed, but they don't get away with it if they get caught in a just society. Now, obviously, societies are sometimes unjust, in which case the servant that God appointed, the government official, is not doing his job.

He's doing the opposite. He's decided he's not appointed by God. He's self-appointed.

He doesn't answer to God. He's not anyone's servant. He's the king.

He's the ruler. He does what he wants to do, and that is perhaps the opposite of what God wants to do. He wants to elevate his wicked friends and promote their behavior and persecute righteous people.

Many a government official has done that, and even when Paul wrote Romans 13, Nero was the emperor at that time, and Nero later killed Paul. Nero was probably the emperor in view in Revelation described as the beast, but Nero had a long reign, and though he was a wicked man to the core, he wasn't always a wicked ruler. That is to say, a wicked man might still be a very efficient ruler as long as he's not being tyrannical or persecuting the righteous, and Nero didn't always persecute the righteous.

He began persecuting Christians after he allegedly burned Rome down and needed a scapegoat, and he blamed them, and so once he turned on the Christians, he became a beast. He killed Paul. He killed Peter, both of whom, living during his reign, told people to obey the laws of the land, the king, and so forth.

I mean, Peter and Paul were law-abiding citizens. They were not criminals. They promoted obedience to the king, but when the king became a monster, then he did the wrong things, but Nero, before he persecuted the righteous, was more or less like any other ruler trying to a peaceful society, punishing criminals and so forth.

That was no doubt the case when Paul wrote Romans and very possibly when Peter wrote 1 Peter, but that changed. So a government official is the servant of God, but he can be a very wicked and disobedient servant, and when that happens, he becomes more of an agent of Satan than of God. When a servant of God is doing what God authorized him to do, all servants of God should recognize his service and honor it.

When a government official is doing the right thing that God appointed, we should say, amen. We support you in that. You're the servant of God.

You're doing what God appointed you to do. When a servant of God turns around and does the opposite of what God said to do, the people of God cannot authorize that because the government official in that case is acting as if he isn't under God, and we

know he is. In those cases, Caesar begins to ask us to render to him what is God's, not what is Caesar's.

Not everything Caesar demands is necessarily legitimately his. Now, Paul says in Romans 13, as we're looking at, that God has ordained the government officials to be an avenger of righteousness against evildoers, and he says in Romans 13, therefore you must be subject not only because of wrath, but also for conscience sake. He says, because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's servants attending continually to this very thing.

That is, when the government is giving its time to protect society, protect innocent victims from criminals, they are serving God in the very thing he's appointed to do, and we should pay them because they're full-time. They have to get paid, just like a full-time minister should be supported by those who are ministered to, so full-time ministers of justice that God has appointed, when they're doing it, should be supported. So for this reason we pay taxes for their support.

But you see, this has already, in this very passage, defined what taxes are legitimate and what service is legitimate. When a government official is protecting people from violent criminals, well, we should pay them. We should pay the police.

We should pay the military. We might, as Christians, choose not to fight in the military, and this was the position of the early Christians for the first 300 years. They wouldn't fight in the military, but they believed that the military was a legitimate function of government.

They just believed that Christians had a separate and higher function. They believed that Christians served the nation more like a priesthood, conducting a spiritual warfare on behalf of the welfare of the nation, promoting righteousness so that God might bless the nation is much more valuable to the nation than to have armies going out defending a wicked nation. And so early Christian church fathers all took the same position, that Christians should not fight in war, but they should not disapprove of there being armies, because those who are not Christians, not part of the kingdom of God, they have no higher loyalty than to the king that they serve and to the citizenry of their country.

And this may or may not be exact correct thinking, but it is nonetheless the view of the whole church until essentially the fourth century. And it seems to be agreeable because they recognize that while Jesus told his disciples to turn the other cheek, he did say that God has ordained the government to punish people. I won't punish them, but God will.

In fact, notice in Romans 13, how it is preceded by the end of chapter 12. At the end of Romans 12, in verse 16, he said, Be of the same mind toward one another and do not set your mind on high things. Verse 17, Repay no one evil for evil.

Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it's possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves.

Leave that to God, he said. Now, the Christian does not avenge himself, but he leaves it to God. And what does God do? God appoints the state to avenge you.

The state is God's minister of wrath to avenge. You don't avenge yourself. God has appointed a servant, the ruler of the land, to avenge wrongs done to you.

Now, of course, sometimes the state doesn't do that. In which case, still, vengeance is mine, says the Lord, I will repay. He'll avenge in his own way, in his own time.

But the normal way is through the government. God appointed the government to be the agent of vengeance, not the church. And this is why the early Christians thought, we don't go out and fight in wars, but we don't disapprove of the state justly defending its citizens from injustice and from criminal acts.

That was the early church's view, and I think it's a pretty balanced position. And, although we don't go out and do those acts of vengeance, we recognize those as God's servants who do them, and therefore we pay them, just like we pay our ministers. That is, we support our ministers, but we also support the ministers of God who are doing this work of criminal justice.

So Paul says, for that reason, we pay taxes, because they do this full time. They're doing this continually, and so they need the support. He says, therefore, render to all their due.

Well, what is due then? What is due is payment for this service that God has ordained them to do. But what if they decide to do some other services without God's permission? What if the government decides to get involved in health care and education and all kinds of things that have nothing to do with protecting citizens from criminals? Well, that might seem like a nice thing for the government to do. The problem is, they're not authorized by God to do that specific thing.

Therefore, they don't have the right just to say, I'm going to do this for you and jack up the taxes so you can support us in doing this. Well, what if I don't want those services? God insists that I support them to protect me from criminals. That's on command to do, because God authorized them for that.

But he didn't authorize them to be a nanny state that takes care of me from the cradle to the grave, and I have to just hand over all my money so that they'll take care of me. Christians have God to take care of them. They don't need the government for that.

For some people, the government is God, is a God surrogate, a God substitute for them. They don't have God, so they want the government to do everything for them. Christians say, no, we have God.

We'd rather have our liberty to follow our conscience, to use the money that God's given us to invest in the kingdom of God, helping poor people that we think are worthy poor, not people that the government decides should have money just because they don't want to work. In other words, when the government says, we're going to add these additional programs that have nothing to do with criminal justice or national defense, and we're going to send you the bill, the taxpayer, the bill, that's illegitimate. It's as if, like I said, I hired you to mow my lawn, and I said I'll pay you 20 bucks.

And when I came home, you'd painted my house also without my permission and said, now you owe me 2,000 bucks. Well, wait a minute, I didn't want that done, and you weren't authorized to do that. Well, I just needed the money, and I felt like doing this job.

Well, you might feel like doing your job and charging me for it, but you can't charge me for something I didn't authorize you to do and no one authorized you to do. The government, when it begins to add service upon service that are not part of what God ordained them to do, they're just writing their own job description and sending the tab to the taxpayer. That's not just.

We do give the government their just due, but we are not necessarily required to give them their unjust due. Now, you might think I'm going to now start advocating tax revolt and saying, well, the government doesn't deserve all these taxes they charge us. Well, they don't.

They don't deserve it, but I don't recommend tax revolt. When there are people who do withhold such taxes, I don't necessarily say they're doing the wrong thing, but I say they're doing something that is not something I want to do because I don't want to pick a fight with the IRS. Let's face it.

Call me a coward. I'm not a coward. I just like to be at liberty to do the will of God, and if the government says pay me money, well, Jesus said give to everyone who asks you, so, you know, I'll give it to them.

Leave me alone. I'll give you the money. It's only money after all.

I prefer my freedom. I don't want to go to jail for my money. And so, I mean, that's, to me, that's not cowardly.

That is simply saying, you don't, I don't owe you this money, but I'm going to give it to you so I can continue to be at liberty and not go to jail and I can still serve God here. It's like giving to the poor. You don't owe them that either.

But if you give it, you know, there may be reasons you'd give money to people that don't have it owed to them. But technically, just so that we might understand what the government is supposed to do and not and what just taxation is and what isn't, after all, we live in a society where we actually have something to say about some of our policies

and our government actions, so it's good for Christians to have some information on the matter. Paul indicates and Peter indicates that God has ordained the government to protect citizens from criminal action and invasion.

And we are supposed to be willing to support that with part of our finances. We should pay those taxes without complaining. We should give to Caesar what is legitimately Caesar.

But this does not mean that Caesar has carte blanche to say, I'm going to add these additional services just because I want to and I'm going to charge you for them just because I want your money. Well, Christians shouldn't be too clingy to their money, all right? We shouldn't be saying, I want that money, I don't want to give it to the government. But we should be thinking, I'd like to use that money for the kingdom of God.

I'd really like to give this money to some missionaries I know or some poor people that are really genuinely poor and legitimately need my help. I'd rather have the stewardship of my own money rather than have the government steward it for me because I don't trust the government to make wise decisions about that kind of thing. So that's simply a position that a Christian often will hold.

Some people object to high taxes just because they want the money to spend on themselves selfishly and they don't want to have to get rid of it to anybody, including the government. So they hide their money and so forth from the government. But, I mean, a Christian should not be opposed to surrendering money, but we should prefer, certainly, any taxation policy that leaves more money in our hands to steward for the kingdom of God instead of for government programs that are not even necessarily moral in some cases.

You know, I've known Christians who say, I don't take tax deductions. I give to the church and I could deduct it, but I don't want the money back. This is a gift to God.

I'm giving it to God. Why should I deduct that? Well, you deduct it because that means the government takes less of your money and you can give more of it to the church. It's not that the government doesn't give you back the money you gave to the church.

It just doesn't take more money out of that. It doesn't tax you on that money as well as the rest. So it's not immoral for Christians to take a tax deduction.

It's entirely moral to try to free up as much of God's resources as you can for God's work and to give as little as you need to to the government for the government's work, especially if the government has defined its work in ways that God doesn't define it. Okay, so much for my little political rant. Jesus made a political statement.

We need to understand what he meant. He did say that the government has a legitimate

function and has a legitimate claim on some of our money in the form of taxation. Paul agreed with that.

However, the government often doesn't know the boundaries and it doesn't have a legitimate claim on everything it may choose to claim. After all, in a communist state, they choose to claim all the wages of everybody. They own all the property.

No one has anything. Well, I mean, if you lived under such a state, I wouldn't recommend revolt. I would recommend suffering under that kind of oppressive system.

But we would have to say it is an unjust system. It's not what Jesus authorized, necessarily. And the state that does that will have to answer to God for its seizure of other people's money.

After all, there is still a commandment that should go to governments as well. Thou shalt not steal. Stealing is wrong even if you're a government official.

Now, if you're providing a legitimate service and you ask for your paycheck from the taxpayer, that's legitimate. That's not stealing. If you say to the taxpayer, I'm taking your money, I'm going to do some things I want to do with it, and the taxpayer says, I'm not interested in that service, I don't owe you that money, but you're going to take it at gunpoint from me, that's stealing.

That's confiscatory. That's immoral government. Again, there's nothing wrong with becoming the victim of immorality, but certainly there's something wrong with doing immoral things.

And sometimes people say, well, Christians should just go along, and they should to a certain extent. We should accept oppression if that's what we have to have. But we happen to have a different kind of society than they had then where we actually can voice an opinion without getting fed to the lions at this point.

We actually can vote. We actually can have some say in whether our government is going to do just things or unjust things. And that could be regarded and is regarded by many Christians as a stewardship that we have that they didn't have back then.

We do need to understand what justice is, what a government is justly supposed to do. What is owed to government and what is owed by government? After all, the government owes something to God. The government is His servant.

So Jesus puts a perfect balance on this. You give everyone what they have coming to them. Give Caesar back what's his.

Give God back what's his. And in saying this, Jesus said nothing that could reasonably be offensive to the Romans and shouldn't be offensive to the pious Jews either. He's put

God's interest higher, I believe.

In other words, he's making a concession. Sure, give Caesar what's his, but, and I think by placing this secondary, it's more by emphasis, but more importantly, make sure you don't neglect to give God what is God's. That's the teaching of Jesus, I believe, as I understand it in this passage.

Okay, next pericope. Verse 27, This is the law of leverite marriage. The word leverite is actually Latin for brother-in-law.

And the law of Moses said that if a man dies without any male offspring, or I should say just without offspring because a daughter could be an heir also. If a man leaves no heir when he dies, he dies prematurely or even as an older man, he's never had children. It's a tragedy in Israel for a man to have no family to leave his estate to.

So, although the dead man doesn't know it, it still is regarded as a tragedy. And so, the next of kin to the dead brother, in that case, if he has a brother, ideally, if he doesn't have a brother, then someone else who's close kin, supposed to take his wife, the widow, and have at least one child with her, if possible. Now, if the widow happens to be barren, and that's why the guy died without children, then she's not going to have any kids even by the brother or anyone else.

But the idea is the brother at least gives an additional chance for someone who's not literally the offspring of the man but comes from his wife and from a close relative. It's as close as possible to an offspring of that man, sort of half a child and half a nephew. But the point is this was how a child could be raised up to the dead man's estate.

A strange custom to our mind. It means, of course, that in some cases a man would have to have two wives because the brother might already be married, but he has to take his brother's wife and have a child by her too. It's just a very strange custom we would not do, but it comes from a set of presuppositions that we don't share.

And that is that it's a great, great tragedy for an estate to pass from the family that it was originally in. And the idea is that an estate should stay in the same family. And there are reasons for that we don't have time to explore right now, but that is what lies behind it.

Now, they're reminding Jesus of this law, which he was well aware of, but then they pose this story, which is almost certainly a fiction. But it's a fiction to show a dilemma again, once more a dilemma of sorts. Now, there were seven brothers, they say to Jesus, and the first took a wife and died without children.

So, of course, the second brother had to take her as his wife, but he also died childless. Then the third took her, and in like manner all seven, they all had no children and died. Now, this is a realistic scenario.

It could happen. Not very likely, but it could. Well, especially if the woman was barren, then none of the brothers would be able to father a child with her, and so she'd go through all the whole family.

All seven brothers, in turn, would have had her as a wife, a legitimate wife under the law, required by law, in fact, and yet no children would be born. Eventually, of course, last of all, the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as a wife.

Now, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, so this was a story intended to show that the resurrection is not true. How so? Well, the Sadducees were told, Josephus tells us, the Sadducees didn't accept all of what we call the Old Testament. They accepted the Torah, the first five books only.

And you don't find much in the first five books of the Old Testament about resurrection, so they had the luxury of denying that there is any resurrection. But the law, which is in the first five books, sets up a scenario which would make resurrection crazy. Like, here's a situation that could not be avoided under the law.

There would be situations where more than one man in a lifetime had the same woman. Now, the same thing could be true in a case of divorce and remarriage, or any case of widowhood and remarriage, but the thing is, the law didn't require a divorced or widowed woman to be remarried, unless there was this particular situation where she had no child and the brother had to marry her. In this case, the woman having two husbands or more in her lifetime was something she couldn't avoid.

The law required it. A woman who's simply widowed might remarry or might not if she had children. Therefore, it doesn't make as good a case.

But where the law itself has set up a situation where she has no choice but to have multiple husbands in her lifetime, we've got a situation where all these people are raised from the dead, if the resurrection is true, and there's one woman and there's seven men who've been her husband. Legitimately, how is this going to work out? Now, what's interesting, of course, under the Jewish idea, it's not really that crazy for a man to have seven wives, but for a wife to have seven husbands is unthinkable. And we might think, well, they had a double standard.

Well, they did. They did have a double standard. But there was some method to the madness because a man with seven wives might have multiple children and no one would doubt who the parents are because a man can impregnate more than one woman at a time.

And if they're all in the family, all the kids of all the women would have no question about their parentage. If a woman had seven husbands, no one would know whose kid it

was. No one would know who their father was.

She's been with seven men legitimately. One of them is the father, but who knows which one? You see, there are reasons to have that double standard in Israel, but nonetheless, they see it as an absurdity that a woman would have seven living husbands at the same time, and therefore the resurrection, since it would put some women in that position, must be a false doctrine. That's what they're saying.

We know the law is true, and it requires this situation to happen. Therefore, the resurrection must not be true because it would set up such a bizarre and unthinkable circumstance in the resurrection this woman have seven husbands. The Pharisees, by the way, believed in the resurrection.

The Sadducees didn't, and there's a real big bone of contention between them. In fact, in Acts, Paul was able to bring the house down once when he was on trial because he saw that the court that was trying him were part Sadducee and part Pharisee, and he publicly said, I'm a Pharisee. I believe in the resurrection of the dead.

And the Pharisees, because that was such a bone of contention between the Pharisees and Sadducees, a big argument ensued in the Sanhedrin within itself between the Sadducees and Pharisees over the resurrection, and the court had to be called. Paul got out of there without any decision being made against him. This was a big thing, and I dare say that this particular scenario, which is a very excellent one to make their point, seemingly, must have been used by the Sadducees in their debates with Pharisees on the matter.

My guess is that since this is such a good argument, they would never have failed to use it in their debates with the Pharisees over the subject of the resurrection. And it must necessarily be the Pharisees had never been able to give a good answer. If they had, there'd be no reason to keep giving the argument.

If a good answer had been given previously, the argument would be of no value. I'm guessing that this argument had been presented to the Pharisees many times to great effect by the Sadducees. I think they probably had the Pharisees stumped with this.

And they brought out their best argument to try to stump this rabbi too, Jesus. They knew he believed in the resurrection, so they were going to stump him with this same question that I'm sure they had stumped the Pharisees on many times. Now, what's interesting is Jesus answered it adequately, which means they couldn't use this argument ever again, even with the Pharisees.

Oops, we brought out our big guns, we risked everything, and we lost all. That's what happened. Because Jesus answered them and said, The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage.

That's in this age, that's before the resurrection. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age and the resurrection from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage. That is, after the resurrection, they don't.

Certainly, there are married people who attain to the resurrection, but after the resurrection, they don't marry and are not given in marriage, which means she won't be the wife of any of those seven men. If such a situation were to arise, it's not a problem. They're all single.

No one's married in the resurrection. Now, of course, no one could have known that except Jesus, because there's no biblical information about whether people marry in the resurrection. This is a revelation that Jesus has given that only he would really know.

But once he gave it, it answers the dilemma. He said, There are some who are called full preterists, who believe that all the references to the resurrection are figurative. They're talking about something spiritual, that there is no physical resurrection in the future.

And not only that, the resurrection of which the Bible speaks already occurred in the past, as far as they're concerned. They believe it occurred in 70 AD, and that some spiritual transaction took place, which is what was referred to in the earlier scriptures as the coming resurrection. They point out that Ezekiel described dry bones coming back to life, and it was symbolic.

It wasn't really talking about the resurrection, though the imagery of resurrection was used. Many times, the imagery of resurrection is used of something spiritual. Paul said we were dead in trespasses and sins, but God made us alive.

So they say whenever you read in the Bible of the resurrection, of the future resurrection that Paul and Peter and those guys anticipated, it's really talking about not a physical resurrection at the end of the world, but something spiritual. And it so happens that that spiritual thing happened in 70 AD. Of course, no one could verify it because it was invisible and spiritual, but they can make the claim if they want to.

And frankly, it is very hard in many cases to disprove that claim about most of the references to the resurrection. I debated a full preterist on this very point last year, I guess it was, maybe longer ago than that, and he made a lot of good points, hard to refute. But he didn't answer this one very well, in my opinion.

I felt like he was ready for it. He had an answer, but it didn't make any sense to me. This passage makes it very clear that if the resurrection occurs, people won't be getting married anymore, and they won't die anymore either.

Now that hasn't happened because people still do get married. Even the man I was debating was married. And Jesus said in the resurrection, they don't marry.

Now if the resurrection happened in 70 AD, then no one would be marrying after that. Furthermore, no one would die after that because Jesus said, neither will they die anymore because they're equal to the angels. They're like angels in that respect.

They don't die. So this statement about the resurrection, more than any other in the whole Bible, I think, proves that the resurrection is something that has not yet happened, and that is going to make a total change in the order of life. Marriage will no longer be relevant in the resurrection.

What will be, I'm not sure. We're not told very much, but we know that it'll be that different than this life. And there won't be dying anymore.

We'll be raised in immortal bodies. Paul confirmed that in 1 Corinthians 15. Now read quickly, verse 37, even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living. For all live to him. Then some of the scribes answered and said, Teacher, you have spoken well.

These were Pharisees. They liked what he said. But after that, no one dared ask him any more questions.

He was too good at answering them. No more challenges were presented to him, but he presented one to them after this. Now I just want to say this, that he says in the law, since the Sadducees recognized the law, the Torah, let's use a passage from that.

When God met Moses at the burning bush, he said to Moses, I'm the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Well, wait a minute. God's not the God of dead people.

He's not worshiped by dead people. He's only worshiped by living people. Doesn't that mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were living? When God said that, that's what Jesus argues.

If God was at that moment, which was long after the death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when he met Moses at the burning bush, if God was at that point still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they must still have an existence somewhere. They must have an after, there must be an afterlife. The Sadducees denied that too.

The point is there must be a future for these people because he can't be the God of dead people. How can anyone worship if they're dead? They must not be dead. He said all people live to him.

This seems to speak of a continuing existence after death, post-mortem consciousness, because he said all live to God, even those who have died. But more than that, the Jews

didn't believe in a Greek idea of just being disembodied for all eternity. If there's an ongoing life afterwards, there must be some point at which God puts them back together in a material universe, in a body.

Jesus is assuming certain things about the Jewish prejudice against disembodied states and saying, well, if these people are still alive, there must be a future for them physically. It's an argument we might not have a hard time following, but it's a good argument for him to make, and they saw that it was a good argument. The Pharisee scribe standing by said, yeah, you're right, that's a good argument, Jesus.

I'm glad you solved that for us because the Sadducees have been bugging us with that for a long time. Now, verse 41, and he said to them, how can they say that the Christ is David's son? Now here he puts a challenge to them. In Matthew, he actually asks them, who do you say the Messiah is, whose son? And they answered, David's son.

Here it just has Jesus challenging that point. Now David himself said in the book of Psalms, this is Psalm 110, verse 1, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. David therefore calls him Lord.

How is he then his son? The Lord, Yahweh, said to my Lord, my Master, David called the Messiah his Master. How could a man call his own son my Master? This is unthinkable. Therefore, what's by implication is that he's not just David's son.

Now Jesus is not denying that the Messiah would be the son of David, of course he was. He's just saying he's not only the son of David, there must be something more to him than that. You're thinking of him only as a human being, but David saw him as his own superior, not merely his own descendant.

So there must be another aspect, and certainly there is. In addition to being the son of David, he's the son of God. And that's what is implied in Jesus' challenge here.

The Messiah is not just David's son, he's also God's son. Now finally, Then in the hearing of all the people, he said to his disciples, Beware of the scribes who desire to walk in long robes. They love greetings in the marketplace, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places of the feasts.

They devour widows' houses, and for a pretense they make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation. Because they pretend to be righteous when they're doing unjust things, their condemnation is greater than if they weren't faking it, if they weren't pretending to be righteous.

They fool more people, and lure more people into their trap by acting like they're righteous, and therefore they're more guilty. Teachers, after all, do receive a greater condemnation if they are compromised than the average person. Now, these lines are found in Matthew 23, and Matthew adds more.

Matthew 23 has almost a whole chapter of him saying woe to the scribes and Pharisees, where he makes criticisms like these, including these ones. And that is followed by Jesus walking out of the temple. And then the Olivet Discourse is given in Matthew 24.

Luke also has the Olivet Discourse next. That comes up in chapter 21, which, of course, we will take in our next session. But, you know, everything that we've seen in chapter 20 really has its parallels in Matthew and in Mark.

So, we need say nothing more about them at this time. Thank you.