

Bi132 The Gospels I

Lesson Bi132-44 Jesus and Money

Money can be a problem. If you have a lot, you worry about thieves. If you have a small amount, you may want more. If you have none, you obviously need some for getting basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Jesus actually had a lot to say about money and giving. Money is necessary and, if used rightly, it can be a blessing. But the Bible teaches that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1Tim 6:10). It is possible for someone to decide to follow Jesus, only to be diverted by money and its empty promises of peace and power. In this lesson Jesus instructs believers, in a number of settings, about money and its place in their lives.

The hypocritical Pharisees and teachers of the law often criticized Jesus. In their self-righteous pride, they kept the letter of the law but not the spirit of the law. Jesus said to them, “Woe to you Pharisees. You give God a tenth or a tithe of your mint, rue, and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone” (Luke 11:42).

Jesus here encouraged faithful people to give a tenth of their money to God. This would become the pattern of the new church. The Pharisees, to whom these words were given, believed their perfect tithing of everything gave them a special privileged place before God. Jesus said they were wrong, because they failed to practice justice towards all people and to truly love God.

While Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem, using many parables, the Pharisees laid plans to trap Jesus in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians, “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?”

But Jesus knowing their evil intent said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription is on the coin?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away (Matt 22:15-22).

The Pharisees were opposed to Roman rule, while the Herodians supported the Roman rule of the Herods. Normally enemies, the Pharisees had enlisted the help of the Herodians here to discredit Jesus before the people. In their statements setting Jesus up for the real question and their trap, they treated him like one of themselves. They used flattery to appeal to his pride and position as an unbiased scholar. Then they sprang their question.

They believed they could trap Jesus by leaving him only two possible responses. If he said, “Yes, pay the tax,” the Pharisees would denounce him to the people as disloyal to the Jewish nation. If he said, “No, don’t pay,” the Herodians would report him to the Roman governor and he could be arrested and executed for treason. Jews in Judea were required to pay tribute money to the emperor. The tax was highly unpopular and some Jews refused to pay it, believing that payment was admitting Roman right to rule. On hearing their question Jesus pointed out their evil thoughts and purposes.

Instead of answering their question, he asked them to show him the silver coin used for paying the tax—equal to about one day’s wages. On one side of the coin was the portrait of Emperor Tiberius and on the other the inscription in Latin, “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus.” The coin was issued by Caesar. Jesus instructed them to give Caesar his money; it had his name and picture on the coin. And give to God what is God’s. In distinguishing clearly between Caesar and God, Jesus also protested against the false and idolatrous claims made on the coins. But there are obligations to the state that do not infringe on our obligations to God.

So what is the eternal truth here? What are we to give to God? We are to give ourselves to God, for we bear his name and image. We are sons and daughters, made in his image. Jesus’ answer conveyed a great spiritual truth about loving God and honoring rulers. After hearing his response, the critics were speechless, amazed at his words. So they left him and went away.

A little later Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:41-43).

In the court of women, also called the outer court, were 13 trumpet-shaped receptacles where both men and women could place their offerings. Women could proceed no farther into the temple buildings. As Jesus watched, a widow gave two of the smallest coins in circulation in Palestine. The fact that she was a widow meant she had no regular source of income. By giving away all she had to live on, she demonstrated her total faith in God to provide for her needs. The words of Jesus indicate she gave the most, because she gave all, which is what God desires from everyone. The Apostle Paul reminds us, “If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have” (1Cor 8:12).

Jesus’ teaching on money may be summarized when he said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matt 6:19-21, 24). And he added,

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt 6:33).

This **lesson is important** because it shows the attitude of Jesus towards money and its rightful place in the lives of his people.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that the God provides what we need when we seek him first and trust him alone for the true riches of eternity.

Let's review this lesson—

1. What did Jesus say when the Pharisees tried to trick him with a coin bearing Caesar's name and picture?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you answered, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give back to God what is God's," you are correct.
2. Who did Jesus say put more into the temple offering box than anyone else?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you answered that a poor widow put more into the offering than all the others, because she gave all she had, you are correct.
3. Where did Jesus say we should store our treasures?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you answered that Jesus said to store up treasures in heaven, you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to learn the story of, 'Paying Taxes to Caesar' so you can tell it to someone else. After telling the story, ask this question, “What is the real message that Jesus wants us to hear? What is the most important thing we can give to God, of all the things we possess? We must give ourselves!