

A DAY OF QUESTIONS

– *AUGUST 30.* – *MATTHEW 22:15-22.* –

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." – Verse 21.

TODAY'S Study shows us that the wicked vine-dressers, the unready guests, were so enamored of their own methods and theories as to make them really blind to the beauty of the Divine Plan as expressed by Jesus. We are not speculating about this. St. Peter, explaining to the Pentecostal inquirers, said, "I wot that in ignorance ye did it [crucified Christ], as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17.) St. Paul declared, "For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." (1 Corinthians 2:8.) Error, fostered by self-will and by plans and schemes not of God, always has a blinding effect, so much so that the Apostle declares that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not" the true Message of God when it reaches them.

Even Christians, in proportion as they are influenced by error or selfishness and not filled with the Holy Spirit, are blinded. Some see more, and some less, of the length, the breadth, the height and the depth of the Love of God, which passeth all understanding. No wonder St. Paul prayed for us the opening of the eyes of our understanding wider and wider! – Ephesians 1:18.

Perceiving that the teachings of Jesus were influencing the masses, the worldly-wise (and spirit-blind) Scribes and Pharisees, who knew the inconsistencies of their own teachings, thought that they could show up as inconsistent the teachings of Jesus. To this end they sent amongst the multitude some of their followers, to ask questions and to seek to entrap Jesus, to show the inconsistency of the hopes which He was inspiring in the people, and thus to discredit Him with the multitude. The first of these was to seek to

entrap Him into saying something that would prove His disloyalty to the government and thus lead to His arrest as a seditious person, teaching contrary to Caesar's law of taxation. On the other hand, if He advocated Caesar's law, they thought that thus He would antagonize the public sentiment.

Jesus had a wisdom from Above. In answer to their query, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not?" He replied, "Why do ye tempt Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." No wonder they marveled at such an answer, and left Him! Truly, "Never man spake like this man!"

THE THINGS THAT ARE CAESAR'S

Nor can we say that the Master merely dodged the question shrewdly. Some very rascally men are able to dodge questions and to have a laugh at the questioner's expense. But in this case the answer was complete – the truth, and the whole truth, in every sense of the word fully in harmony with all the teachings of the Master. His followers were instructed not to be seditious, not to be quarrelsome, faultfinding, but to be thankful, holy, happy, subject to "the powers that be." They were to recognize that the powers that be of the kingdoms of the present time are ordained of God, and not merely of men.

True, indeed, earthly kingdoms are not God's kingdoms, as they sometimes claim. True, indeed, they frequently are usurped empires and powers. True, indeed, they sometimes foster sin, iniquity, unrighteousness, and are largely, from outward appearances, the result of human scheming and wickedness. Nevertheless, the people of God are to recognize that Jehovah is the great Over-Lord; and that although it is a part of His program

for the present to permit a reign of Sin and Death at the hands of sinful men, nevertheless He still exercises such a supervision – of hindering one or advancing the cause of another ruler – as justifies the statement that He ordains, authorizes or permits these kingdoms. Whatever, therefore, the Heavenly Father has authorized or permitted, not one of His obedient children should for a moment think of resisting or overturning.

The Scriptures declare that God raiseth up and God casteth down; that He has at His disposal myriads who, filled with the spirit of anger, hatred, malice, strife, are ready, whenever an opportune moment comes, to exercise their power and to advance their own selfish interests. Whenever, therefore, the Lord wishes to make a change in earth's rulership and arrangements, He needs only to remove the restraining hand of His providence, **[R5513 : page 235]** and forthwith evil influences will work the change. As for the people of God, they are all exhorted to be peacemakers, promoters of righteousness, living peaceably with all men, fully subject to "the powers that be," and recognizing them as of Divine ordination, permission.

In the case of the Roman Empire, of which Caesar was head, we note that God had prophetically foretold, centuries before, through the prophecy of Daniel, its rise to universal dominion. It was not, therefore, for Jesus or for any of His disciples to speak against representatives of that Roman power. If Rome ruled, Rome needed to be supported; and the method of support was, properly enough, through taxation. How just, then, were the words of Jesus, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's"! We remember that the Master Himself paid tribute, instructing St. Peter, when they had no money, to catch a fish, from whose mouth he obtained the coin necessary for his taxation and that of Jesus.

RENDER UNTO GOD HIS DUE

Had the questioners been intent upon rendering to God their obligations due to Him, they would have been in so different a frame of mind that, instead of seeking to entrap Jesus in His words, they would have been glad to be His disciples. What things, then, are God's? What **[R5513 : page 236]** do we owe to Him? We answer that as His creatures we are His. Every talent and power we possess ought by right of justice to be used in the service of our Creator and for His praise.

Additionally, we who recognize the fact that we were sinners by nature, and that God's mercy has provided a redemption through Christ, should gladly present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, our reasonable service. This reasonable service is accentuated when we realize the goodness of God; namely, that He purposes to bless the whole world with the privilege of restitution to all that was lost by Adam and redeemed at Calvary. When we learn that the Call of this Gospel Age is with a view to permitting the followers of Jesus to be associated with Him in His Messianic Kingdom, we should be filled with reverence, as well as with astonishment. Realizing the possibilities of such a high calling, such a change of nature and attainment of glory, honor and immortality, we should render to God our little all, and realize that it is unworthy of Divine acceptance, except as being worthy through the merit of Jesus' Sacrifice. We are accepted only in the Beloved One.

RESISTING UNTO BLOOD

In full accord with all that has been said foregoing is the thought that we must not render unto Caesar the things of God. Here lies the snare for many of God's people. They perceive that the friendship of the world can be bought only at the price of the sacrifice of Truth. Increasingly they are convinced of the truth of the words of Scripture, "Marvel not if the world hate you"; "The

darkness hateth the light"; etc. Even though they render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to every man his due – "honor to whom honor is due," etc. – nevertheless their standard is so different from that of the world, and their viewpoint of everything so different, that it breeds an antagonism, a conflict of interests.

So Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John 15:18,19.) Increasingly they have impressed upon them the force of the Apostle John's words, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." – 1 John 2:15.

All this signifies that the world's standards, customs, ambitions, views, etc., are so different from those inculcated by the Spirit of the Truth that it is impossible for these to fully harmonize the one with the other. "No man can serve two masters." Hence to serve the Lord with all our mind, soul and strength, to render Him His dues, means to put ourselves crosswise with the views and sentiments of the world. This is the real test of Christian character. Only such as stand this test of "God first," loyalty to the principles which He inculcates, can hope to be members of the Kingdom class which is now being selected.

In other words, rendering to God the things that are God's will eventually cost us every earthly interest and prospect. But to the loyal, the faithful, God provides compensation. Instead of the world's smile which they lose, they receive the smile of the Heavenly Father and the favor of their Redeemer. They have also the Master's promise of a hundredfold more in this present life in compensation for everything which they sacrifice for His Cause, the Cause of God, the Cause of Truth Divine! And with this

abundant compensation in the present life comes the assurance of everlasting life in the coming Age, under its favorable conditions.

