

Taxes: To Pay or Not to Pay

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[0 : 00] Amen. You can take your Bibles with me now as we prepare for the preaching of the word and turn to Mark chapter 12.

! And we'll begin reading in verse 13. This is the word of the Lord. Mark 12, verse 13.

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity.

You aren't swayed by men 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 taxes to Caesar or not?

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.

[1 : 01] They brought the coin and he asked them, Whose portrait is this and whose inscription? Caesar's, they replied. Then Jesus said to them, Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

And they were amazed at him. Few things have been more troublesome in church history all these years than squabbles over the precise relationship between church and state.

The relationship between the Christian and the civil government. This issue is still very much alive and well in our own day. And the devil has used it both to distract and to divide brothers and sisters and even churches of Jesus Christ.

Almost 200 years ago, J.C. Ryle wrote, Never does the cause of Christ suffer so much as when the devil succeeds in bringing churches into collision and lawsuits with the civil power.

In such collisions, precious time is wasted. Energies are misapplied. Ministers are drawn off from their proper work.

[2 : 17] The souls of people suffer. And a church's so-called victory often proves only one degree better than a defeat. Those are some harsh words from Bishop Ryle.

And yet I think he's right on. So it's good for us that in our text this morning we have a question brought to our Lord about this very issue. And we not only have the question, we have his answer with perfect wisdom recorded to guide us in all such questions of our own day.

So the specific question brought to our Lord about this larger issue of the relationship between church and state. It was about a Roman tax.

Are we to pay or are we not to pay? Someone asked what I was preaching on today. I says, well, we're preaching about taxes, to pay or not to pay.

And he says, was it because this is tax season? And you know that's not the case. We're just working our way through Mark. But it is a providential thing for us to have Christ's mind on this matter brought to us even in the season in which we pay our taxes.

[3 : 35] Well, the confrontation between the Jewish leaders and Jesus is heating up. We're into the last week of our Lord. He came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

He cleared the temple on Monday. And now it's Tuesday. And he told that story about the stone the builders rejected.

God has made the capstone. And these Jewish leaders knew he was talking about them. So they're full of hatred.

The only thing holding them back from arresting him and killing him was the popularity that he was still enjoying with the Jewish crowd.

So verse 13 begins later, perhaps still on this Tuesday, they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. And what we will find over the next 21 verses is these various Jewish parties ganging up on our Lord Jesus like a tag team.

[4 : 42] One after another entering the ring, pounding him with questions. Questions meant to trap him. To trap him into saying something in an unguarded moment that would get him into trouble.

Either ruining his popularity with the Jewish crowd or getting him in trouble with the Roman authorities, the government that was ruling over Israel.

So this isn't a new strategy. They've been trying to trip Jesus up all along, but ever so unsuccessfully. Well, they just are now doubling down on their strategy with renewed vigor and hatred.

So the first into the ring are those sent from the Pharisees and the Herodians. Now, these two parties are strange bedfellows as they were hateful enemies of one another on many topics. But they were united in their hostility against Jesus, claiming to be the Messiah King, whom they both viewed as a threat to their own power and influence in the nation of Israel.

[5 : 51] So we're familiar with the sanctimonious religious party of the Pharisees, strict legalists. The Herodians, on the other hand, were a worldly political party in Judaism that was out to advance the political influence of the family of King Herod.

He was an immoral Jewish puppet king authorized by the Roman government to rule under them over Judea.

So a worldly Jewish man given the right to be king over Judea by the Roman government ruling over them.

And so Herodians were favorable to the Roman government. After all, they are the ones that, the Roman government is the one that authorized Herod's line to be these puppet vassal kings.

So if Jesus says anything against Rome, you can bet that these Herodians are going to turn him into the authorities. And so they come to him, both Herodians and the Pharisees.

[7 : 00] They've already been working in cahoots as far back as chapter 3 and verse 6 of Mark. And so here they are sending some men to Jesus incognito, so Jesus wouldn't suspect that these men are Pharisees or Herodians.

Luke calls them spies due to their hidden agenda as they pretended just to be honest searchers of truth.

And we're coming to you, Jesus, to get the answer. When all along, they were setting a trap like you would set for an animal, hoping to catch him and to get him in trouble for something he said.

So verse 14, they came to him and said, Teacher, we know you're a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men because you pay no attention to who they are, but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.

Aren't they full of compliments? It's called flattery. Children, flattery is insincere praise. It's when you butter someone up with all kinds of praises and say good things about them when you don't mean them at all.

[8 : 13] And you say, why would anyone do that? Well, it's usually to get something, isn't it? Mom and Dad, you're the best parents in the world. Can I have 20 bucks and stay out late tonight with my friends?

You're wanting something, and so you say things that you may not really think. Well, so it was with these. They're wanting something. They're wanting to catch him in something that he might say in an unguarded hour.

And so here's their trick question, verse 15. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we? Now, this is a very explosive issue among the Jews.

Paying taxes to Rome was highly unpopular among the Jews for several reasons. For the first reason we all can imagine. It was economic reasons. No one likes giving up your hard-earned money.

And Rome's heavy taxation was draining them financially. But there were also political reasons. Taxes are bad enough, but when you're paying them to your enemies, Oh, that makes them more detestable.

[9 : 28] And so the Jews hated the Romans ruling over them. And that's why they hated the tax collectors who collected the tax from them and gave it to the Romans. Political as well as economic reasons.

But then there were also religious reasons with many. God was their king. And no other ruler was to be acknowledged but Jehovah.

Therefore, to pay taxes to a pagan ruler was considered by some to be a denial of God's authority as being their only sovereign and ruler.

Such were the views of one Judas the Galilean who's mentioned in our Bibles in Acts chapter 5 and verse 37. Just 20 years earlier from when Jesus is speaking, he had raised a protest movement to revolt against the Roman government and to not pay their taxes.

Since that would be high treason to our God, we must be faithful to God. And so the Romans didn't have any patience for these revolts and insurrections. And so Judas the Galilean was killed and his followers were scattered.

[10 : 40] But he did receive strong popular support among the Jews. Like I said, no one loved paying taxes. And here's a man to stir up a revolt. And so many after him did the same.

He stirred up a militant nationalism among them, often referred to as the zealots. One of which became a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Well, for all the above reasons, then paying taxes to Caesar and his pagan Roman government was highly unpopular with the Jews.

So these enemies of Jesus are thinking that they've lured Jesus in to a trap. We've got him now on the horns of a dilemma, just like he had us when he said John's baptism.

Was it from God or from man? Now we've got him backed into a corner. And they've asked the question such that there were only two possible answers in their mind. To pay or not to pay?

This was their gotcha moment. Because if Jesus says, yes, you should pay your taxes to Caesar, well, he runs the risk of losing the favor of the multitudes that right now were pro-Jesus, most of whom cringed at having to pay this tax.

[11 : 58] This could sink him in the opinion polls. If he says, yes, pay your taxes. But if on the other hand, Jesus says, no, you should not pay the tax to Caesar, oh, well, then he runs the risk of being seen as just another revolutionary, stirring up sedition and revolt against the Roman government.

And if they can portray Jesus as just another Jewish rebel, well, Rome will kill him for them. So either way, Jesus answers, they think they've got him in their trap.

But their trap quickly evaporates as Jesus, with perfect wisdom, gives his reply. Verse 15, but Jesus knew their hypocrisy and asked, why are you trying to trap me?

Well, they didn't say they were trying to trap him. In fact, they acted as if they were doing anything but trying to trap him. But Jesus knew they were trying to trap him.

They couldn't pull the wool over Jesus' eyes, and neither can you or me. He knows every thought that passes through our minds, every motivation, every desire.

[13 : 16] It's like our hearts had a window on each side, and he just looks right in and sees them. And he knows all about these men and calls them out for their hypocrisy, sounding like friendly students of his to learn when, in fact, they're hostile enemies trying to trap him.

Well, this was no dilemma for Jesus. And watch as he turns the tables on them. He says, bring me a denarius, and let me look at it. This was the only coinage allowed by Rome to pay this tax.

It had a portrait of Tiberius Caesar with the inscription honoring him as the son of a god. That was further cause for the strict Jews objecting to the tax itself.

Verse 16 says, well, they brought the coin, and he asked them, whose portrait is this, and whose inscription? Caesar's, they replied. And then Jesus said to them, give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's.

You see, the spies from the Herodians and the Pharisees had made this an either-or situation.

[14 : 41] As if they had to make a choice to either honor God or to honor Caesar. And Jesus says, you're wrong. It's not an either-or situation.

It's a both-and situation. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's. So according to Jesus, there are two sets of debts that are owed.

What belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God. And you are to give to each their due. So what do you owe to Caesar?

Well, I notice you're using his money. And thereby acknowledging that the Roman government is over you. And you're using not only Roman money, but I notice that you use the Roman roads. And that you are enjoying the Pax Romana, this peace of Rome, that Rome had established a peace with her military, and there was law and order.

[15 : 49] And I notice you're enjoying that as well. So since you're under the government of Rome and profiting from their services, you should not refuse to pay the tax to them.

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. The word there for give could also be translated render, and it was a word that was used for the payment of a debt, to pay back what is owed.

And so Jesus is essentially saying, the tax is something you owe. You owe it to the government for its services and rule.

So yes, pay Caesar his tax. It's clearly his due. Now the Apostle Paul says the same thing in Romans chapter 13, 1 to 17.

He deals there with a broader issue of just obeying the governing authorities, but he'll get to the taxes. He says in Romans 13, 1, everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

[16:51] The authorities that exist have been established by God. He's not talking about just some hypothetical government, that God established governments.

That's true. But he's talking about the very governments that do exist. God is the one who has put them there. And Nero was the Caesar in Rome when Paul's writing this.

So since these existing government authorities have been established by God in his providence, verse 2 of Romans 13 says, consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted.

And those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from the fear of the one in authority?

Then do what is right, and he will commend you. For he is God's servant, God's minister to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid. For he does not bear the sword for nothing.

[17:58] He's God's servant. Again, God's minister, an agent of wrath, that is God's wrath, to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

Therefore, it's necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment, but also because of conscience. Because of your conscience before God, who has established these authorities in your life, you ought to obey out of conscience to him.

And then verses six and seven. This is also why you pay taxes. For the authorities are God's servants, ministers, who give their full time to governing.

It's the same reason you pay your pastors, who give full time to governing the church and ministry of the word and prayer. Same reason. So, give everyone what you owe him.

Do you hear the echo of Jesus in that? Jesus says, give to Caesar. What is it? Give everyone what you owe him. If you owe taxes, pay taxes.

[19:09] If revenue, then revenue. If respect, then respect. If honor, then honor. Let no debt remain unpaid. Pay your debts and pay them on time.

Well, these Jews and Herodians, in their question, were acting like you can't honor God if you pay taxes to pagan Caesar.

And Jesus is saying, you can't honor God unless you do pay your taxes because he's the one who has established that authority over you.

So, there's nothing contradictory about honoring God and paying your taxes. You can give God what you owe him and also give Caesar what you owe him. These are not mutually exclusive duties.

So, you see how Jesus gets out from under this potential charge. No legitimate charge could be leveled against Jesus for leading a revolt against the Roman government.

[20:13] Though these Jews will lie to the Roman governor Pilate and say Jesus is teaching men to not pay their taxes. That's an out-and-out lie.

We're reading what he said. He told them to give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Well, they will use that against him when they go to Pilate asking for his crucifixion and try to portray him as a rebel stirring up sedition against the government.

But then Hendrickson, the commentator, gives a helpful insight into Jesus' answer. He says, Jesus is qualifying his yes.

Yes, pay the tax. The emperor should be given his due, but only his due, not God's due. So, if the emperor claims what is due to God alone, then you're not to give it to him.

And indeed, Caesar would later require people to honor him as divine by burning incense to him, an act of worship, and to make the testimony, Caesar is Lord.

[21:30] Many Christians would go to their death because they refused to give to Caesar what didn't belong to him, that is, the honor of worship that is to only be given to God.

So, no one could legitimately charge Jesus with failing to honor God by saying you ought to pay your taxes to a pagan government since he reserved worship to God alone.

That's due him. So, give to Caesar what you owe him and give to God what you owe him. Well, they had only asked about the first matter, whether it's right to pay or not to pay taxes to Caesar. And Jesus, in essence, says, well, you're to pay whatever you owe to anybody, not just Caesar. Yes, Caesar, but also God. Think about what you owe to God.

Have you thought about that? Here you are all riled up about paying taxes to Caesar. Have you thought what you owe God? They hadn't bargained for that.

[22 : 49] And when you think about it, what God has given us is far more than any human government has given us. Life, breath, everything else, we owe him big time.

We owe him our exclusive worship. Are you giving it to him? We owe him our unrivaled lordship to set him apart as Lord in our hearts.

He is king. I do what he commands. We owe him our implicit obedience, whatever he says, just because he says it.

We owe him our exclusive trust. Trusting in him and his mercy alone in Christ to redeem us. We owe him our unchallenged priority to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

Are you giving God what you owe him? No one can honor the father who does not honor the son. Jesus said in John 5, 23, whoever does not honor the son does not honor the father who sent him.

[24 : 00] So think of it. Here are these Jewish critics of Jesus claiming to honor God while they're looking for a way to entrap and kill his own beloved son. They're not giving to God what is God's.

And our Lord is calling them out for it. Well, our text ends in verse 17 saying, and they were amazed at him. They were staggered.

They marveled at him. Luke says they were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public and astonished by his answer, they became silent.

Matthew says they left him and went away. They retreated. Thoroughly bested. Entirely defeated. Completely undone.

A total failure in their attempts to trap him. And instead they go away baffled and ashamed with nothing to say. Silenced.

[25 : 06] Yet again. That's the wisdom of our Savior. Now let me seek to apply these words in three ways. First of all, when you pay your taxes, do it as unto the Lord because it pleases Him.

Now I confess it's not easy to pay our taxes when we're seeing some of the things that they've used our tax money for. And that makes it all the harder to obey our Lord.

But obey Him we must. I don't suppose Caesar Nero used all of his tax monies in upright and honest ways either. And if that's all we consider is the abuses of our tax dollars, well then it's impossible to pay our tax with anything but vexation of spirit.

But if we focus on the fact that Jesus says we are to pay the tax, well then we can do it eagerly and joyfully because He says so and because it's pleasing to Him and because He says we owe it to them and we're to leave no debt unpaid.

And if that's true, and it is, then I can pay my taxes joyfully. Now I needed this tax as much as anybody else here this morning.

[26 : 36] But I mean, why do we live? Why do we get up in the morning? Why have we come? Why are we taking breath? Why do we exist if it's not to please the Lord?

And I'm to make it my goal to please Him. And that's what 2 Corinthians 5, 9 says. And that means I need to find out what pleases the Lord.

And that's what Ephesians 5 and verse 10 says. And so I want to know what pleases the Lord so I can make that my aim. And I'm not left just to guess, well what do I think?

Like some secret lover, what might they want from me? What might please them? No, I've got it here in a book. You've got it as well in your lap.

A whole book of what pleases the Lord. And we've seen this morning from the lips of Jesus and the pen of His apostle Paul that paying our taxes is pleasing to Him.

[27 : 35] Okay, then I'm going to do it and do it joyfully. Parents, how do you teach your children to obey? In our house, it was do it now, do it all, and do it with the right heart attitude.

Not grouching, not complaining, not grumbling, but joyfully. Well, that's the same thing our Lord expects from us.

To do it now, not procrastinating. Do it all and to do it with joy. Enough said then. Let's rejoice then. Let's rejoice that we have such a way to please God.

I want to please Him. Here's a way to do it. Pay your taxes. And let's rejoice that we have such a country to live in. Give what you owe. You can write your congressman.

You can ask for His, ask Him to make sure that our monies are spent more wisely. Yes, all of that. But let's rejoice in obeying God's commands just because it is the very thing that pleases Him.

[28 : 46] And His commandments are not grievous. They're not burdensome. They're holy, righteous, and good. Romans 7, verse 12.

And when you do something unto the Lord, because He says so, out of conscience to Him, you will not lose your reward. Whether you're getting something back from the government, you will get something back from the Lord.

You'll not lose your reward. And one of the greatest rewards is just knowing that what I did was pleasing to Him. So that's the first. When you pay your taxes, do it as unto Him because it pleases Him.

Secondly, Jesus does not want His people known as troublemaking citizens. Now, the Jews had a long history of being troublemakers, stirring up sedition, because they spent so much time under the governments of other nations.

Whether it was Egypt and Assyria, Babylon, Persians, the Greeks, and now the Romans, they've been chafing at the yoke of these nations for many, many centuries.

[29 : 55] And that's the way they were doing in the first century when our Lord was on the earth.

They were known to be a troublesome people, fomenting revolt, not paying taxes, and it eventually led to several Jewish-Roman wars began in 66 to 70 AD when the Romans finally just put their heel on them and crushed them, destroying their temple, their capital city, and their nation, killing hundreds of thousands and scattering many more out of Palestine.

So now, here's this little church now in Jerusalem. This is before now, before 70 AD, where this is after our Lord died and rose again and went to heaven, and the apostles began to preach, and people began to believe on it.

There's a little church. And in the beginning, the New Testament of the New Testament church, it was regarded as just one of the religious parties within Israel.

Indeed, in its inception, it was made up of Jews. And so, Rome often lumped Christians together with all the other parties in Judaism.

And so, Christians came under the same policies as the Jews. So, for instance, when in 49 AD, Emperor Claudius ordered all Jews to leave Rome, the Christian church fell under the same expulsion.

[31 : 30] You can read about that in Acts chapter 18, verse 2, Aquila and Priscilla had to leave Rome. They had to leave their home. Why? Because they were Christians, and the Romans viewed anything under this big umbrella of Jews as one and the same.

And so, they suffered the same reputation, whether rightly or wrongly. And they inherited this bad reputation of being troublemakers, rebelling against the government, stirring up revolt.

And our Lord made clear to Pilate that his kingdom was no threat to Caesar's kingdom. If my kingdom was of this world, he told him, my servants would fight. They would fight if it was of this. But my kingdom is not of this world. It can exist within whatever other kingdoms and government structures it finds itself in. And 2,000 years of history, world history, have proven that.

The church of Jesus Christ, flourishing sometimes in the most anti-Christ nations of the world. But Jesus is the one who instituted the civil governments that exist.

[32 : 43] They're serving his purposes, many of which are not known. And he wants his people to submit to their laws, to be the very best citizens of whatever government they're under.

The only time there's to be conflict is when the civil government commands them to sin against God. Well, then we must give to God what we owe God, our obedience.

And then and only then are we to refuse whatever is being commanded us by the civil government that breaks God's law. So Jesus did not want his people to be aligned with this tax revolt of Judas the Galilean, with this party of zealots stirring up trouble.

And we see this concern of Christ not only in his own words and actions, but also in his apostles whom he commissioned to speak for him later. We've already read the words of the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 13, echoing our Lord's instruction to give to civil government whatever we owe

them, taxes, revenue, honor, respect.

Paul will write to Titus on the island of Crete and say to them in chapter 3, 1 and 2, remind the people to be subject, that is submissive, to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable, not disturbers of the peace, peaceable, and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

[34 : 17] That's the heart and mind of our King Jesus. And then we see it all as well in the apostle Peter. Peter's words about our behavior towards civil government are bookended on either side by this concern to not have a reputation as being troublemakers, but rather as good citizens.

So 1 Peter 2, 12, live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, which they did, they accused Christians as being troublemakers, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Well, like what good deeds? So he continues, verse 13, submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the king as the supreme authority or to governors who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

So Peter has the same message as Paul, the same message of Jesus who authorized both Peter and Paul concerning the government and what they owe them. So why is this important, Peter?

Verse 15 through 17, for it is God's will that by doing good, you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Silence those guys that are saying Christians are troublemakers to the government.

[35 : 48] Silence it. How? By doing good. By obeying, submitting. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil.

Live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. It's not an either-or.

Either honor God or honor the king. As if you've got to make up your mind who you're going to serve, God or man. No, no, that doesn't work here.

It's in the same breath. Fear God. Honor the king. Just a comma in our translation between the two of them. So if you fear God, you will be known as those who honor the king.

Christianity was not meant to interfere with man's obedience to civil government, J.C. Ryle says.

John Calvin says those who destroy political order are rebellious against God.

[36 : 53] And I would add they bring great dishonor to his name. So that's the second thing. Pay your taxes. It's unto the Lord to please him.

Secondly, realize Jesus doesn't want Christians to be known as troublemakers. Be the best citizen. And then thirdly, marvel at the wisdom of our Savior.

Every time his enemies tried to match wits with him, they end up being the ones silenced. They go away with their heads between hanging down, their tail between, dragging between their legs.

in all their accusations and questions to trap him. We've already seen many, many. We're not done. We're just right in the middle of the wrestling match.

There's going to be another tag team tagging in here in a second called the Sadducees. We'll see them next time. And each time they leave speechless and even amazed.

[38 : 03] Do you realize that's what it's going to be like in the final judgment? When every human being that has ever lived stands before their maker and must give an account for what they did in their life, their deeds, every single human being.

And how will it go for those who despised and rejected the Lord Jesus in that day? who saw no need of him and so they neglected him. They ignored him as the greatest irrelevance in life. I don't need him.

Don't want him. Oh, but they've got all their excuses, you see, that make it sound plausible. I'm doing fine without him.

And yes, he's got a place, I suppose, in society. It's just not for me. And underneath all of that is the dirty, rotten secret that they don't want this man to rule over them as their king.

But in the day of judgment, they'll be found without excuse is the Bible's word. Romans 3.20, every mouth will be stopped. Oh, how they run at the mouth.

[39 : 16] Now, they will be stopped and the whole world found guilty before God. Have you noticed how on a positive post on Facebook, something positive about God, often if you follow the thread down below, you'll find it stirs up the hostility of an atheist.

And I've seen it more than once. They'll say something like, well, if God does exist, he has a whole lot to answer to. And when I see him, he's going to have to give an answer.

No, no, no. He is not the one being tried in that day.

In fact, the Bible says he does as he pleases in the armies of heaven, the inhabitants of the earth, and no one can say to him, no one can stop him or say to him, what are you doing? He's answerable to none.

Just to himself. He is the definition of what's just and right and fair. And this blasphemous talk about when I see him, he'll have a lot to answer for.

[40 : 29] Oh, no, no, you'll be found ashamed, guilty, with nothing to say for yourself. All your excuses will evaporate. At the bottom of it, it will be seen it was your hatred for God.

The mind of a sinful man is enmity against God. How does it show itself? Maybe not a fist in his face, maybe not a Facebook post, maybe just that they refuse to submit to his laws.

They just say to this book, thank you, but no thank you. I will do what I want and not what you say. So you see these Jewish leaders stepping into the ring with confidence and leaving beaten and publicly shamed.

so it will be for everyone outside of Christ in that day. Without excuse, their mouth stopped. In fact, their own conscience will scream, you are guilty and you know it.

Now is the time to repent. Now is the time to seek mercy. For the Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger. You know how slow to anger he is? He's still got the door.

[41 : 42] He's still got the door open. He still has his arms out wide to a rebellious and stiff necked people. Today, come to him. Ask for mercy. He is plenteous in mercy.

Three days after these humiliating defeats of the Jewish religious groups, the Lord Jesus will be drugged before them yet once more. The Jewish Sanhedrin will meet and they will try Jesus.

Governor Pilate, representing the Roman government, will have a trial of this same Jesus. And even King Herod will have a trial of this same Jesus.

And there will be many slanderous accusations in that day. I told you, they will say, you can't be a friend of Caesar and acknowledge Jesus as king. He doesn't want his people paying taxes and so on.

If Jesus wanted to, he could have easily silenced those same critics when he stood before them before his crucifixion. He could have done then what he did here this morning in this text.

[42 : 53] What he did every time they came to him. What he will do for the rest of this chapter that we will see. If he wanted to, he could have sent them away ashamed and silenced.

But instead, he was silent. Isaiah 53, 7. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and like a sheep before its shears is silent, so he opened not his mouth. That was prophesied about him 700 years before he was born.

And then Matthew shows us the fulfillment of that very prophecy. Matthew 27, 12 and following, when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer.

And Pilate said to him, do you not hear how many things they testify against you? He gave him no answer, not to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

[43 : 59] Men on trial for their lives usually have plenty to say in their defense, but not Jesus. Why not then?

Why not? If you did hear Jesus, why not now? Because it's not now his aim to silence his accusers. to save his life. It was now time to lay down his life for his sheep who were rebels and going their own way and to do it out of love.

That's why he'd come. And this is another powerful evidence to us that Jesus goes to the cross willingly. No one takes his life from him against his will.

He lays it down willingly. Just as he could have called 10,000 angels to destroy this world and set him free, so he could have, with his superior wisdom, once again silenced his critics in shame, but instead he's silent and he lets the false accusations stand.

[45 : 12] And he goes willingly to the cross where he not only bears the wrath of men, but that he bore the wrath of God and cried, my God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

It was for sinners. It was for all those who take refuge in him. What a Savior. So great his love. And that should amaze us more than it amazed Pilate.

It amazed Pilate that he did not answer. But should it not amaze us more that our Savior, when he could have answered, didn't answer, that he might bear God's wrath in my place.

