



MESSAGE 3:

GIVE BACK TO GOD WHAT BELONGS TO GOD

PASSAGE: MATTHEW 22: 15-21 NIV

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. 16 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. 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?”

18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? 19 Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, 20 and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

21 “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.”

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message is to emphasize the importance of worshiping God alone, emphasizing that we are created in God’s image and designed for a unique relationship with God. It also serves as a warning against idolatry, demonstrating that worshiping anything other than the true God leads to spiritual emptiness and loss of purpose. Ultimately, the goal is to emphasize that our worship and devotion belongs to God alone, and anything that we give to other things should be given out of obedience to God’s words, only.

INTRODUCTION

All of us have been created in the image of God. Our design is unique among all of God’s creations, setting us apart from the animal world, and qualifying us to have dominion over animals and all the earth. Being made in the image of God, the imago dei, means we have been made to resemble

God. We have been made in the image of God. We have been made to be image-bearers of the most High God.

However, humanity has taken its creative abilities and used them in ways that go against God's command, resulting in a world filled with idols—false images of God. We have created these false images from the resources that the true God has provided. Instead of using these resources to honor and worship God, we have used them to create objects that divert our worship from God and toward God's creation. We have taken ourselves, other people, money, and valuable possessions, elevated them to a status that belongs to God alone, and transformed them into objects of worship. When we elevate people, money, and possessions to the level of God, these false idols compete with God for our worship.

But the word that John the Apostle gave to believers around A.D 90 is relevant and applicable to us today, and that word is: "Little Children, keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21).

See, you were made in the image of God, but ultimately you will resemble what you worship because you become what you

worship. If you truly worship God, you will be conformed into the image of God. But if you worship idols, you will become like idols.

Listen to these verses from a song about those who worship idols:

Psalm 115: 3-8 says:

Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.

- 4 Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
- 5 They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
- 6 They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
- 7 They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
and they do not make a sound in their throat.
- 8 Those who make them become like them;
so do all who trust in them.

Re-read verse 8:

"Those who make them become like them;
so do all who trust in them."

Here it is: You become what you worship!
You become what you trust!
See, God's design is for God to be
worshiped alone, and through worshipping

God, you will be conformed into the image of God, but when you go against God's command to worship God alone and you turn to worship idols, God's judgment is that you will become what you worship. You will become what you trust in.

Read what God said to God's people through the prophet Isaiah when they worshiped idols instead of God:

He told Isaiah as recorded in Isaiah 6:9-10, "Go and tell the people: keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull. And their ears heavy and blind their eyes."

Friend, if you trust in and worship idols, you will become just like them. You will have eyes but won't truly see.

You will have ears but won't truly hear. Your hands will lose their sense of touch. Your legs won't carry you with purpose; every step will be without direction or meaning.

Worshipping idols will drain you of life and vitality. You'll merely exist without truly living. The more you follow idols, whether they are people, money, or some other false god, the more you will become empty and

lifeless. By worshipping them, you risk conforming to their hollow image. But if you worship God, you will be transformed into God's image. You will gain true vision, hearing, touch, and a sense of purpose with every step you take. Worshipping God brings life and vitality, restoring meaning and value to your existence.

10 times out of 10, the ongoing feeling of numbness, the inability to truly see and/or hear, and the lack of purpose comes from idolatry. Your identity, purpose, and vitality is discovered in true worship unto God.

Friend, Give back to God what belongs to God.

You have been made in the image of God, and when God created you in His image, God created us to worship Him. And Jesus teaches us that since we as human beings bear God's image, we belong to God and owe God our lives as an offering of worship.

Beloved, give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God.

**GIVE BACK TO GOD WHAT
BELONGS TO GOD**

The denarius was a coin that had Caesar's image on it. When the Pharisees asked Jesus whether they should pay taxes, Jesus, in classic fashion, answered with a question. He asked them whose image and inscription were on the coin used for Caesar's tax. His question was both revealing and instructive because the denarius clearly bore Caesar's image and inscription, indicating that, theoretically, it belonged to Caesar. Jesus's point was simple: They should pay their taxes because the coins had Caesar's image on them, signifying that they belong to him. However, the coin also had a divine inscription, as many people referred to Caesar as a living god. This is where Jesus made a crucial distinction. He encouraged the people to give Caesar's coins back to him, but don't give your lives to Caesar because unlike the coin, your life does not have Caesar image on it, but your life has God's image on. Coins might bear Caesar's image, but people do not. We are made in God's image, indicating that we belong to God, and while Caesar is owed taxes because his image is on the coin, he is not owed our worship because his image is not on our lives. You belong to God and since you belong to God, you owe God your worship!

Beloved, give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.

Now this is how you worship God with your life, without also worshiping Caesar! Here it is: The only thing you give to Caesar, is what God told you to give to Caesar! So, if God told you to give to Caesar, then you give to Caesar. If God told you to give to Caesar, then to give to Caesar what God told you to give to Caesar is not idolatrous because God told you to do it. But when you give yourself, and/or give of yourself to something or someone that God did not tell you to give yourself to, you have committed the sin of idolatry because you gave yourself or you gave of yourself something that belongs to God, and you have no right to give yourself or of yourself to something that God told you not to, because ultimately you belong to God and you are not yours to give!

Beloved, give back to God what belongs to God!

Get this:

To give to God what belongs to God means to offer you life to God in worship by obeying the words of God! Therefore, our worship should be rooted in the words of God!

Now interestingly enough, Jesus the Christ is the word made flesh, John 1:14, and this is how it all the dots connect: Colossians 1:15 says that Jesus the Christ is the image of the invisible God! 2 Corinthians 4:4 says Jesus is the image of God! When your life is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, you will be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ, Romans 8:29; You will be transformed into the image of Jesus, 2 Corinthians 3:18, because ultimately you become what you worship! So just as true worship unto God should be rooted in the word of God, when your life is rooted in Jesus Christ, who is the word of God, you will become what you worship by being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ!

You will talk like Jesus!
You will walk like Jesus!
You will love like Jesus!
You will give like Jesus!
You will serve like Jesus!
You will forgive like Jesus!
You will think like Jesus!
You will grieve like Jesus!

You will suffer like Jesus!
You will reign like Jesus!

Beloved, Give back to God your life that belongs to God that you may be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ, who is the word made flesh, who is the image of God, who is the imago dei!

Give back to God what belongs to God!