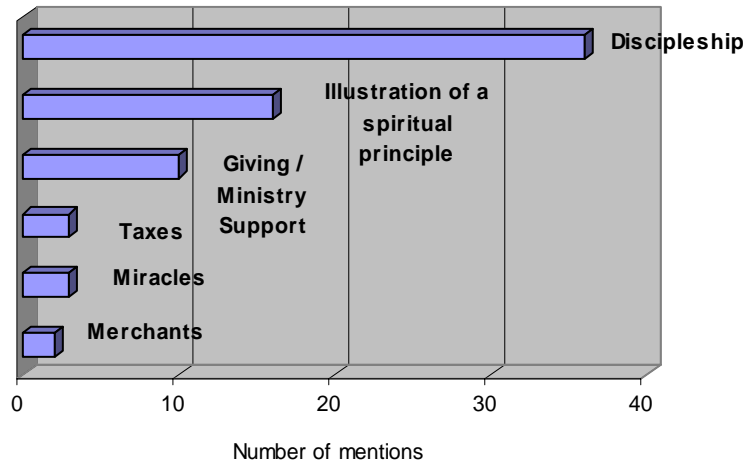


# What did Jesus say about money?

## Part IV: Taxes, Miracles and Merchants

### Jesus' References to Money



This last study concludes with what Jesus personally said and did about taxes, miracles and merchants. We've observed that Jesus mentioned money and money matters often. He identified money, our love of money and/or concerns about money, as a "go/no go" test of discipleship. He often used financial matters to illustrate spiritual truths in the parables. He had much to say about giving, especially to support those called to fulltime ministry. And finally, he touched on the sensitive topic of taxes, He performed miracles of provision, and He had a strong opinion about certain merchants doing business in the temple area.

We realize of course that the full counsel of God's Word is truth, not just the red letters in your Bible. We will be doing a more comprehensive study of many financial topics in the coming months. But certainly Jesus' emphasis on the topic during His public ministry on earth indicates its importance and relevance to Him, which means it should be important and relevant to us today, and serves as a good starting point as we seek both the heart and mind of God regarding financial management in our businesses and households.

#### Matthew 5:20, 43-48

20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your

We find ourselves starting once again in the Sermon on the Mount, the source of so much foundational truth regarding true righteousness and how we are to live.

*Read Matthew 5:20, 43-48 from the left panel and mark **tax-gatherers**.*

What is the main point Jesus is making in this passage about true righteousness?

enemy.'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies,  
and pray for those who persecute you

45 in order that you may be sons of your  
Father who is in heaven; for He causes His  
sun to rise on [the] evil and [the] good,  
and sends rain on [the] righteous and [the]  
unrighteous.

46 "For if you love those who love you,  
what reward have you? Do not even the  
tax-gatherers do the same?

47 "And if you greet your brothers only,  
what do you do more [than others]? Do not  
even the Gentiles do the same?

48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as  
your heavenly Father is perfect.

*Read the following passages from your Bibles: Matthew 5:46-47,  
9:10-12, 11:15-19, 18:15-17, 21:28-32; Luke 18:11-14.*

What do we learn about **tax-gatherers** from these passages?

Jewish **tax-gatherers** were considered traitors and they were hated for their collaboration with the Roman government, they were despised for their greed and their heavy-handed tactics, and they were considered sinners of the worst kind and therefore to be shunned.

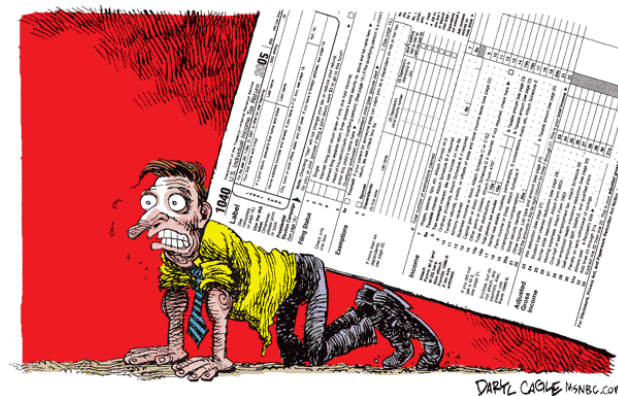
Does Jesus refute this stereotype in His only personal mention of **tax-gatherers** in Matthew 5:46?

Wow, does that mean Jesus shunned **tax-gatherers** too? Did **tax-gatherers** commit the unforgivable sin?

*To answer these questions, read Luke 5:27-32, Matthew 10:1-4,  
and Luke 19:2-10.*

Did Jesus shun **tax-gatherers**?

Okay, what is my point with this rabbit trail about **tax-gatherers**? My point is that the context for what Jesus said about paying taxes is very negative public opinion regarding taxes and the people hired to collect them. Have things changed much in this regard?



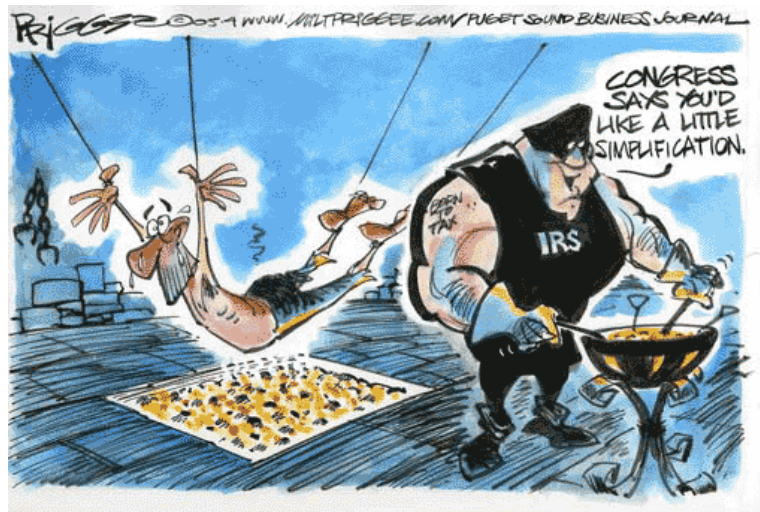
**Matthew 17:24-27**

24 And when they had come to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma [tax] came to Peter, and said, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma [tax]?"

25 He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?"

26 And upon his saying, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Consequently the sons are exempt.

27 "But, lest we give them offense, go to the sea, and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."



*Read from the left panel Matthew 17:24-27.*

This is not a Roman tax, but rather a temple tax that had its origins in Exodus 30 instructing every man 20 years and older to make a contribution for the "tent of meeting."

Was Jesus exempt from this tax? Why?

Why did He pay the tax if he didn't technically have to?

Is there a principle here for us regarding paying taxes?

How did He pay the tax?

One definition of a miracle is an event that appears inexplicable by the laws of nature and so is held to be supernatural in origin, therefore an act of God. Was this provision for taxes a miracle?

Is there any significance that the Lord performed the miracle as Peter worked at his vocation?

Jesus did many miracles during His earthly ministry as unmistakable signs that He was the Christ, the Son of God, the One the prophets spoke about. (John 2:11, 3:2; Acts 2:22) Lets look at another miracle relating to provision.

*Read Mark 6:31-52 from your Bible.*

What was the first miracle?

Why did Jesus do this miracle? There are at least two reasons.

*Read Mark 8:1-21 from your Bible.*

Why was Jesus frustrated with both the Pharisees and the disciples?

After Jesus died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven (talk about miracles!), many miracles were performed by the apostles (Acts 2:43). In addition, God appointed in the church spiritual gifts of miracles. (1 Corinthians 12:28) Is there any Biblically sound reason to believe that God no longer does miracles in and for and through His people?

**Matthew 22:15-22**

15 Then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap Him in what He said.

16 And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.

17 "Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"

18 But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?

19 "Show Me the coin [used] for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius.

20 And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"

21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."

22 And hearing [this,] they marveled, and leaving Him, they went away.

There are two extremes regarding miracles. We are not to attach to miracles an exaggerated value or importance. They are not the highest evidence of truth, the Word of God is the highest and most reliable evidence of truth. Many who witnessed the divine works of the Lord refused to believe in Him. And Jesus declared faith that was founded upon His words to be of higher value than that which was based upon His miracles. (John 4:48, 14:11, 20:29) On the other hand, we are not at liberty to underrate their importance. They are not only tests of character and sources of great encouragement to believers, but also divine means for awakening attention and reverent reflection, and then leading those who are receptive to recognition and acceptance of the truth.<sup>1</sup>

*Read Matthew 24:23-25 from your Bible.* What does this passage add to our understanding of miracles?

How can we reconcile the truth that God is more than capable of providing for His people, by miracles if necessary, and He promises to do so (Philippians 4:19), yet we acknowledge that Christians have suffered, and are suffering now, even to the point of death, for lack of provisions? (Hebrews 11:35-39)

*Jesus just told the parable of the talents and the parable of the wedding banquet, the point being in both that the Pharisees were rejecting God's Messiah when they rejected Jesus. This infuriated them of course, and they plotted how they might silence Him. Read Matthew 22:15-22 from the left panel.*



The "poll tax" was tribute paid to the Roman emperor, a tax demanded of a subjugated nation, and a reminder of their shameful subjugation.

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from The New Unger's Bible Dictionary.

**John 2:13-17**

13 And the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

14 And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated.

15 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove [them] all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables;

16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise."

17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Thy house will consume me."

Why did the Pharisees think they had Jesus trapped this time for sure?

What is Jesus saying about paying taxes?

*Read Romans 13:1-7 and compare Paul's instructions to the church regarding civil government with what Jesus said about paying taxes.*

What is the principle we can draw from these passages about paying taxes?

How do you think the Lord regards our various tax avoidance strategies and outright cheating on taxes? Does He commend us for our good stewardship or rebuke us for giving offense and not rendering what is due?

Okay, the last category of Jesus' mentions of money is what He had to say about **merchants**.

*Read John 2:13-17 from the left panel.*

There is a similar account in the other three gospels and Bible scholars have debated over the centuries whether there were two cleansings or just one. We're not going to tackle that question, because we want to focus on this rather startling event.

This incident portrays a very different Jesus, at least so it seems to me. How do we account for the unexpected ferocity of His actions, the physical intimidation He displayed, the mayhem and disorder He caused, His zeal?

How did the disciples account for it? Read Psalm 69:5-12.

The Greek word translated **zeal** literally means **hot, fervent**. What was Jesus **zealous** for?

What are we **zealous** for?

What principles, if any, can we draw from this incident and the heart of God about doing business?



## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES DISCOVERED

We discovered the following principles from our study of what Jesus said and did about taxes, miracles and merchants during His earthly ministry.

- Pay your taxes lest you give offense to men and to God.
- Do not withhold your taxes out of fear of loss or privation. God will provide, sometimes via miracles.
- Do not make God's house a house of merchandise. Do not profit inappropriately from people seeking to worship God.

## BUSINESS APPLICATION

1. Do you willfully cheat on your taxes? If your 2007 taxes were audited by the IRS and their findings made known publicly, would this damage or enhance your testimony?
2. Pull out a bill from your wallet. Whose image is on it and what does the image represent? Do you render to the United States government what belongs to the United States government, and do you render to God what belongs to God?
3. Are you doing business anywhere you shouldn't be doing it? Have you made God's house a house of merchandise in any way? Does your business prey upon people who are trying to serve God?

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## Prayer Requests

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