



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 44”

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Pastor Darryl R. Curtis

Family Life Baptist Church

909 West Saginaw Street

Lansing, Michigan 48915

Phone: (517) 882-0921

Email: info@familylifebc.com

Website: <http://www.familylifebc.com>

Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



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Matthew 22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17, Luke 20:20-26

At that time the Pharisees plotted how they might be able to trap Jesus in what He said. They watched Him and sent out spies who pretended to be sincere in order to catch Him in some criminal statement so as to hand Him over to the power and authority of the governor.

So they sent to Him some of their disciples and a few Herodians to trap Him with a question. "Teacher," they said, "we know You are truthful and that You speak and teach rightly and are not partial to anyone. You pay no regard to how prominent men might be, but instead teach truthfully the way of God. So tell us: In Your opinion, is it legal for us to give tribute to Caesar or not? Should we give it or not?"

Jesus knew their hypocrisy and cunning and wickedness. He said to them, **"Why are you trying to trick Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money. Let Me see a denarius."**

So they brought Jesus the coin. **"Whose image and inscription is this?"** He asked them.

They answered, **"Caesar's."**

"Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar," Jesus said to them, **"and give to God what belongs to God."**

So they were unable to trap Him in His words in front of the people. Stunned by His answer, they became silent, then left Him and went away.

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In our last lesson, I made the point that Jesus' purpose, in this, His last week of ministry in Jerusalem, was to make it perfectly clear to His friends and opponents alike that they were in the position of making an eternal choice. The ability to make choices differentiates us from the animals; the ability to make reasoned choices is what makes us human beings, and the necessity of our making the correct eternal choice is that which gives us eternal life with God. The reasoning that we use to make choices can be based upon many things; whim, emotionality or logic, among other things.

Christianity is a matter of making choices based upon the tenets of the Bible rather any of the other things that may come before us.

The divinity of Jesus Christ did not take away His necessity to make choices while He was living as a human being. That which set Jesus Christ apart



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from the rest of us is that fact that His choices were always based upon the truth of the Bible rather than any other teaching. Listen to the association between falsehood and sin that the Bible makes in **Isaiah 59:12-15**:

12 For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; For our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them:

13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing from our God, Speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

14 Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

15 So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice.

Isaiah specifies that it is a great sin to lie against the Lord, contradicting His word to speak oppression and revolt against Him, conceiving and uttering falsehoods from our hearts.

That which we say is of utmost importance to God. God is looking for us to communicate in a straightforward manner with Him and with one another.

However, we run into a emotional problem with being straightforward when we are afraid of the reaction that we may receive when we tell the truth. Human fear of the truth started with the experience of the man and woman in the Garden, as **Genesis 3:6-8** records:

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

After sinning, the man and the women covered up and hid. Of course, it was unrealistic of them to think that they could keep God from finding out about the fact that they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil indefinitely, but the man and the woman wanted to postpone God's discovery of their sin as long as possible. They wanted to avoid the consequences of sin until they absolutely had to face them. They still hoped against hope that they could somehow avoid consequences if they could just postpone God's knowledge of their sin long enough.

So, concealment and dishonesty are sin's mates. The one from whom we wish to conceal our sin is generally an authority figure, whose displeasure we do not want to have to endure. And there are authority figures in our world besides



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God. Paul tells us, in **Ephesians 5:22-25, 6:1-9**:

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:

5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;

9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

There are biblically defined authority relationships between husbands and wives, children and parents, slaves and masters, and then there are secular authority relationships between executives and managers, managers and supervisors, supervisors and workers, between those with a higher military rank and those with a lower military rank, and between political leaders and citizens. God, having made us in His image, liberally gives us authority under His authority.

When we are in the subordinate position, we may find ourselves afraid of consequences should we displease the one in the authority position, even as the man and woman were afraid in the Garden. For example, **Deuteronomy 24:1** says:

1 “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house.

The Hebrew word translated “some uncleanness” is the word “ערוה”, (pronounced ĕr·wā(h)), and means indecentness, ugliness, repulsiveness, any action or condition that is not proper or morally repugnant, with a possibly focus on bodily functions. The word is found 53 times in the English-Hebrew Reverse Interlinear Old Testament, translated into some form of the word “indecent” three times and some form of the word “naked” fifty times. The translators of the New King James expanded their translation to say “some uncleanness” because of the ambiguity of the usage. There is a specific Old Testament remedy given to a man if he marries a young woman who has committed the sin of fornication, as recorded in **Deuteronomy 22:13-14, 20-21**:

13 “If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her,

14 and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, ‘I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a



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virgin,'

20 "[And] if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman,

21 then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

The translators assumed that the passage that we read in **Deuteronomy 24** is referring to a form of uncleanness other than fornication, since fornication is specifically covered in the passage that we read in **Deuteronomy 22**. Since the specific form of "uncleanness" discussed in Deuteronomy 24 is not specified, the Jews took it to mean that they could divorce their wives for anything that they did not like about them, which explains the Biblical episode recorded in **Matthew 19:3-9**:

3 The Pharisees also came to [Jesus], testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4 And [Jesus] answered and said to them, "**Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'**

5 and said, '**For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh' ?**

6 **So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."**

7 They said to [Jesus], "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

8 [Jesus] said to them, "**Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.**

9 **And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."**

We see, from Jesus' teaching in this passage of Scripture, that the reason for divorce, a consequence of which Jewish women were often afraid, as specified by **Deuteronomy 24**, is the hard-heartedness of the Hebrew men. What does "hard-hearted" mean?

That which the Lord is calling the heart is our emotions, the part of our minds from which we make decisions starting from birth. The connections, or synapses, through which electrical impulses pass from one brain cell to another that form this primal, emotional, decision making part of our minds are working at birth. The synapses that control the higher thinking functions that we call our intellect cannot be connected at birth, for if they were, our heads would be too large to move through the woman's birth canal without killing our mothers. As it is, because of the size of human brains at birth, human beings are the only species of animal that require the assistance of others to give birth.



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So, our heart is defined as the emotional part of the brain functioning when we are born, and our emotions at birth are designed to inspire love in those with whom we come in contact. Since a baby has no natural ability to care for himself, but must depend upon another person to completely take care of them, he needs to be lovable. If babies were repulsive rather than adorable, many of them would be left by the side of the road to die, as they are in some cultures, being considered more trouble than they are worth. The feelings of love that we feel for helpless, adorable creatures such as babies is known as “soft-heartedness”. By contrast, the lack of this type of love is called “hard-heartedness”. If you love someone despite the fact that they are a lot of work, that’s soft-heartedness, and if you don’t love them, that’s hard-heartedness. When a man decides to marry a woman, he is said to have a soft heart towards her, and if he then changes his mind and decides to hate and divorce her, that’s hard-heartedness. **Deuteronomy 24** was written because Jewish men became hard-hearted once they found out that their wives were a lot of work.

Hard-hearted people use their emotions to make decisions rather than their higher thinking functions, which puts them at a disadvantage. I’m not going to read you the whole story of Moses and the Pharaoh, but just give you the main point, in **Exodus 7:1-4**:

1 So the LORD said to Moses: “See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

2 You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land.

3 And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

4 But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

Throughout the entire episode of contest between the Pharaoh of Egypt and Moses, God sent plagues to destroy the land of Egypt. Pharaoh could have stopped the plagues at any point by simply allowing the Israelites to leave Egypt, which would have the most logical thing for the Pharaoh to do. However, the Pharaoh could not use logic because his hatred for Moses and the Israelites would not allow his mind to consider the most advantageous thing. The Pharaoh’s emotions kept saying to him, “After this plague, I’m going to get my hands on that Moses, and then we’ll see who gets the last laugh.”

The first four plagues sent to Egypt, the plagues of blood, frogs, lice and flies, were all reversible, meaning that when Moses prayed for Egypt, the plagues left the land. Starting with the fifth plague, however, the land began to suffer serious damage. All of the Egyptians’ cattle were diseased in the fifth plague, the Egyptians became covered with boils on their skin in the sixth plague, hail fell and destroyed the crops and killed the animals that were left outside in the



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seventh plague, locusts ate the plants that the hail did not destroy in the eighth plague, after which, **Exodus 10:16-20** records:

16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you.

17 Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that He may take away from me this death only.”

18 So [Moses] went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD.

19 And the LORD turned a very strong west wind, which took the locusts away and blew them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the territory of Egypt.

20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.

After the ninth plague, in which the Lord put Egypt in darkness such that the entire land was immobilized, except for the area in which the Israelites dwelt, for three days, Pharaoh once again promised to let the Israelites go, but his emotions got the better of him again. The tenth plague was the one in which all the firstborn of Egypt died, including the Pharaoh’s firstborn son. At that point, the Pharaoh’s rational mind finally overcame his emotions, and he let the Israelites leave Egypt.

God was still not finished with the Pharaoh. After the Israelites left Egypt, God told Moses, in **Exodus 14:4-9**:

4 Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue [the Israelites]; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

5 Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”

6 So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him.

7 Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them.

8 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.

9 So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.

The Israelites were encamped by the Red Sea, and as the army of the Pharaoh approached, God put a thick cloud before them so that they could not see the Israelites. God then sent a wind to blow the waters of the Red Sea apart and dry up the land beneath the water so that the Israelites could cross through the sea. When the Israelites were finished crossing, God removed the cloud so that the Egyptians could see and pursue the Israelites. Once the Egyptian army



was in the Red Sea, with the waters on both sides of them, God removed the wind and the waters fell, drowning the entire Egyptian army as the Pharaoh looked on. As hard as the Pharaoh's heart was against the Israelites, and as much as he hated them, the Pharaoh could no more overcome the power of God than the man and the woman could hide from God in the Garden.

When man becomes hard-hearted, he uses whatever means that he has to overcome God, be it lying or force, but man lacks the power to do so. In our text for the day, the Bible says, in **Matthew 22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17, Luke 20:20-26**

At that time the Pharisees plotted how they might be able to trap Jesus in what He said. They watched Him and sent out spies who pretended to be sincere in order to catch Him in some criminal statement so as to hand Him over to the power and authority of the governor.

So they sent some of their disciples and a few Herodians to trap [Jesus] with a question.

Jesus is in Jerusalem, the very seat of Judaism, and shown the Jewish power to be ceremonial at best and superficial at worst. Jesus has performed miracles displaying the true power of God in a manner that the Jewish leaders could not duplicate, and has taught effectively and logically in the Temple to contradict the ceremonial interpretation of the Law of Moses promulgated by the Jewish teachers. The Jews are looking both weak and stupid before Jesus, much like the Pharaoh did against Moses.

Since the Jewish leaders are powerless before Jesus Christ and cannot call upon God, they choose to enlist the human power of Rome. The Jewish leaders know the Roman governor will have to get involved if they can demonstrate that Jesus is preaching insurrection against Rome.

The disciples of the Pharisees are Jews that are ostensibly working for the reestablishment of the Kingdom of Israel. Actually, however, they have made a deal with the Romans and are serving as the Jews that are in charge of keeping the other Jews in line. The Herodians are a group that is actually trying to convince the Israelites that their being under the servants of Herod, the Edomite King of Israel established by the Romans, was a good thing. The two groups continue speaking to Jesus:

“Teacher,” they said, “we know You are truthful and that You speak and teach rightly and are not partial to anyone. You pay no regard to how prominent men might be, but instead teach truthfully the way of God.

Hear the flattery as the Pharisees and the Herodians try to align Jesus against the authority of Rome. They truthfully point out that Jesus is not a person who cares whether or not the Jewish authorities like what He says, in hope that Jesus feels the same way about the Roman authority.

Among the Jews, there was a political party known as the Zealots. One of Jesus' disciples, Simon Zelotes, may have been a member of this party. The



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Zealots were a “fourth sect” of Judaism, along with the Pharisees, the Sadducces and the Essenes, and was founded in the year 6AD as a protest against Quirinius’ tax reform. The Zealots agreed with the Pharisaic notions; but had a zealous attachment to the independence of the Jewish state, declaring that “God is to be their only Ruler and Lord.” We can see the language of the Zealot party in the question from the Pharisees and Herodians. Having attempted to intellectually position Jesus as a zealot that aligns Himself with God with no deference to the Roman authority, the Pharisees and Herodians spring their trap. The text continues:

So tell us: In Your opinion, is it legal for us to give tribute to Caesar or not? Should we give it or not?”

Jesus, however, is not a Zealot. The Zealots are ruled by their emotional attachment to the Nation of Israel, but Jesus is aligned with the Word of God. Jesus’ mission is described in the twenty-second Psalm, in which David prophesies of Jesus’ crucifixion, in **Psalm 22:14-18**:

14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

But then, David goes on to prophecy of Jesus, in **Psalm 22:27-28**:

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations shall worship before You.

28 For the kingdom is the LORD’s, And He rules over the nations.

As far back as the Psalms, God prophesies His sovereignty over all the nations through Jesus Christ, and lets Israel know that although they are His chosen, they are not His only. Jesus Himself says, in **John 10:14-16**:

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Jesus’ focus is not the Nation of Israel, but the Church of God. The Pharisees and Herodians are so tied up in their parochial squabbles with Rome and with one another that they cannot see that there is a larger perspective. They can only see the two opposing sides to the question as they have posed it, and



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are certain that they have trapped Jesus into picking either Israel or Rome. But Jesus has another perspective. The text says

Jesus knew their hypocrisy and cunning and wickedness. He said to them, “Why are you trying to trick Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money. Let Me see a denarius.”

So they brought Jesus the coin. “Whose image and inscription is this?” He asked them.

They answered, “Caesar’s.”

Now, it is important to recognize that there are few problems for which the two opposing solutions generally presented are the only ones available, and often the correct resolution to the problem is to take the positive aspect of each of the opposing solutions into account to develop a third solution that gives each opposing side some satisfaction. This is known as trying to find the happy medium. The problem arises that people on opposite sides of a question often become emotional about the correctness of their position and stop thinking about the possibility of a mutually desirable resolution. Finding the happy medium requires an intellectual solution rather than an emotional one, and Jesus has His thinking cap, rather than His emotional cap, on. Listen to Jesus’ simple, dispassionate solution. The text says:

“Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar,” Jesus said to them, “and give to God what belongs to God.”

The Pharisees and Herodians never considered that the Romans are in control of the Palestine because of the will of God. They don’t like Rome being in charge, and it never dawns on them that that God would have a plan which they really don’t like. But God lets us know, in **Isaiah 55:8-11**:

8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.

9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

10 “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater,

11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

To disobey God or His ordained authority is futile. To do so is an emotional reaction, and God is intellect. God’s intellect is far superior to our emotional reactions, and His plan will come to pass in spite of whether or not we chose to disobey Him to indulge our feelings.

When Jesus was faced with the Cross of Calvary, He did not want to endure the pain and agony, even to accomplish the great Plan of God for us. But Jesus did not give in to His feelings, but gave the most intellectually acceptable



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answer possible for any of us. In **Matthew 26:39**:

39 [Jesus] went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;

The cup is the Cross, and Jesus, not wanting to go to the Cross, asked God to take the necessity from Him. Recognizing the ultimate authority of the plan of God, Jesus finished his prayer by saying:

39 nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

If we preface all of our prayers and proposed solutions to problems with this statement, **nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will, Lord**, we can rest assured that our solutions will not only be intellectually correct, but according to the will of God. Paul reinforces this concept, in **Ephesians 4:11-24**:

11 And [the Lord] Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But you have not so learned Christ,

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.



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1 Corinthians 13:11 tells us:

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

So, let us understand the example that Jesus gives us here. Let us not indulge our childish emotionality, let us always look for the happy medium when faced with that which appears to be a two-sided situation, and let us be renewed in our minds so that we can develop the Godly perspective to solve problems intellectually, in the way that will satisfy God.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church