

Beholding

#0349

Study Given by W. D. Frazee July 24, 1976

Our Scripture this morning is found in Matthew 22:19–21. My mind was lead to this Scripture in an experience I had just a few weeks ago. I was up in New Hampshire visiting our new self-supporting medical missionary training program there near the little village of Harrisville. I made a small purchase down in the little village, and, in counting over my change, I noted that I had a strange looking coin. One that I was not used to.

And the clerk saw me looking at it, and she said:

“Would you like a different one?”

And when I looked at it I said:

“Well, I’ll keep this one.”

It’s a Canadian nickel. Instead of being round, it’s twelve-sided. And of course, instead of having the American eagle on it, it has Queen Elizabeth. “By the grace of God, Queen of Great Britain and the British Dominions beyond the sea.”

And so I got the thinking about this Scripture which I’m going to read this morning. You remember that Jesus, was from time to time, was met by spies and critics who asked questions designed to entrap Him. But He had heavenly wisdom to answer in the proper way.

On this occasion, they to came these spies and said, Now master, is it the right thing to pay taxes to the Roman power or is it? Shall we pay tribute to Caesar or shall we not?

Now you see, they thought they had Him either way. If He said, Sure you ought to pay your taxes, then they would condemn Him as not being loyal to the Jewish nation, for they looked upon Rome as a usurper. On the other hand, if He forbade paying tribute to Caesar, then they would condemn Him and report Him to the Roman authorities as stirring up sedition.

But instead of giving them a yes or no answer, He responded in the words of our text:

“Shew Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny” Matthew 22:19.

Now that was of greater value than our little copper pennies, but it was one of the coins that were in circulation.

“And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?” Matthew 22:20

Whose likeness is this on this coin?

“They say unto Him, Caesar’s. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” Matthew 22:19–21.

He answered their question, but in doing so, He laid down great principles.

The follower of God is loyal to the government under which he finds himself, rendering taxes or tribute as it is variously called for the support of the government, but he does not recognize the government as supreme. He recognizes God as supreme.

And so Christ clearly differentiated between the civil duties which we have for the government and the religious duties which we have overall to God.

But I’d like to look a little deeper into this text this morning. Jesus said, “Show Me this money. They brought it to Him.” He asked a question, “Whose is this image in superscription?” They said, “Caesar’s.” He said, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.”

If Caesar is the one who is providing your civil structure, if he is the one that’s issuing this money which is your medium of exchange, then the part he asks you or requires of you to return to him do it. In other words, the fact that Caesar’s image is on the coin suggests the propriety, the right of returning to him that which he requires.

But I would like to look at a coin of far greater value than the Roman penny, or this nickel stamped with the image of Queen Elizabeth. I would like to look at you and me.

The Scripture tells us in telling the story of creation. That God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he, Genesis 1:2

This was the result of a plan—a purpose brooded in the mind of God since times eternal. How happy God was that the hour had come when He could make a creature like Himself, in his image. And so, our first parents reflected the likeness of God. Not only could they talk as God talked but they could also think as God thinks. They had a mind that was capable of reason and judgment.

You know of all the creatures on this planet, man is the only one who has moral responsibility. We admire the intelligence of a good dog or horse, but there is an infinite gulf between those animals and man. Man alone bears the image of God.

Now sorry to say, much of that image was lost through sin.

When Christ alluded to this when He spoke that interesting parable of the ten pieces of silver. One was missing, you remember in Luke, He described the woman who had lost the silver piece as lighting the candle, taking the broom and sweeping the floor, searching everywhere. And finally, she found it.

That piece of silver, bearing the image and superscription of the reigning monarch, Christ took to illustrate the human soul which at creation bore the image of God. And as that piece of silver had been lost in the dirt so. Man has been lost in sin. The Christ is seeking to recover that soul, you and me. He who gave us His likeness in creation longs to restore it in redemption.

But you and I have something, my dear friend, that the piece of silver does not have. We have a choice. We can decide whether we return to the Creator that which bears His image. We can decide whether we render to Him that which is His by creation and redemption.

In other words, He gives each one of us the power to withhold ourselves from Him. This is involved in giving us the power to choose Him. To say yes if it's meaningful if there's a real choice means that we have the power to say no. And every one of us is deciding day by day either to say yes to God or to say no to Him. And remember, when we look at our lives, the Creator's image is upon us.

Let us think of it as it relates to every human being. We may see someone low in the scale, someone who has damaged his brain and polluted his body with alcohol, with tobacco, with other poisons. With degrading practices but yet, my dear friends, there are still traces of the divine image. And if that man can be brought to yield his life to God, the Creator will retrace and restore the original image. As we've born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly the apostle testifies.

In Revelation 14, we are given a wonderful picture of the redeemed of this last generation and their exaltation at the throne of God. Notice in Revelation 14:1:

“And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads” Revelation 14:1.

God's name is—His nature, His character. And here, the redeemed from earth's last generation are pictured as standing there with Jesus with the Father's name written in their foreheads. They are like Him. They reflect His image fully. Isn't that a beautiful picture? You remember that statement in *Early Writings*, page 71.

“Those who...are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully” *Early Writings*, page 71.

John puts it this way in 1 John 3:2:

“...we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” 1 John 3:2.

Friends, I’m so glad that God has made it possible for us to be like Him. What do you say?

But somebody says, “But Brother Frazee, I think that is discouraging. I know I can never be like Jesus.”

Ah, but the promise is,

“...we know that we shall be like Him” 1 John 3:2.

We are to bear His image fully, completely. Now let me give you something to suggest another thought to go with this, *Testimonies of the Church*, Volume 2, page 170. Listen to these interesting words:

“Our Lord and Saviour laid aside His dominion, His riches and glory, and sought after us, that He might save us from misery and make us like Himself. He humbled Himself and took our nature that we might be able to learn of Him and, imitating His life of benevolence and self-denial, follow Him step by step to heaven. You cannot equal the copy; but you can resemble it and, according to your ability, do *likewise*. ‘thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind’”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 2, page 170.

Now let’s see what we can put together from these. We were made in His image. We lost it in sin. Through the plan of salvation, God is restoring that image, making us like Himself. And before Christ comes, that image is to be fully restored. We are to reflect the image of Jesus fully. But this says you cannot equal it. How do we put that together?

Well, I was thinking about this coin. Would you think that this little coin is as big as Queen Elizabeth? No. It bears the image of the Queen, but it isn’t as big as she is. We might think of several other differences. And so we may say that this coin is in her image, and yet admit that it doesn’t equal her. Do you see my friends?

You and I are little copies of the great God. But oh, there are vast differences. Through eternal ages, we shall be more and more approaching and understanding of His character, more and more entering into His purposes. But we will never be as big as God. We will never be as wise as God. We will never be infinite, and He *is* infinite. We will always be finite. You see?

So let us not be discouraged with the thought that we cannot be duplicates of Christ. We are in His image, in His likeness, and we are to reflect that according to our capacity.

You notice He says, in that first great commandment Jesus says, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart." Well, my heart isn't as big as his. Think of it. He loves each one on this planet as though that one were the only one in all the universe.

I can't do that. I don't have that capacity. Do you? Why no, but thank God I can love God with all I have, friends. Now a little heart can be fully given to Him. And that's all He asks.

Take another illustration, what do we mean by the full moon? Once a month, we look over in the east about the time the sun comes down, and coming over the mountain is that beautiful orb, that great globe of the moon. And we say it is a full moon tonight.

Where does its light come from? From the sun. Does it reflect the light of the sun? Every bit of light it has comes from the sun.

Would you say it is as bright as the sun? Oh, no. It is only a tiny bit of the light of the sun.

Why do we call it a full moon then? Because it has reached the point where its total surface, which is visible from this planet, is reflecting the light. It isn't a one-fourth or a one-half or three-fourths. It's full. It's a full moon.

And this helps me to understand what Jesus expects of me. He is the Son of Righteousness. I will never be able to be as bright as He is. But thank God, if I look at Him, behold him, my little life can reflect His glorious life fully. Do you see? To the extent of my capacity to the extent of my ability, my life can reveal His life.

That's all He asks. Thank God, I can choose that this morning. What do you say? Oh, what a wonderful Savior we have.

Now turn to 2 Corinthians 3:18, and I want you to see how our capacity can increase to go back to our original illustration. How our ability to reflect His image can increase. How our likeness to our Sovereign Lord can be restored.

Whose image was on the coin? The reigning monarch. Whose image was on man when he was made? God, the Creator of the universe. Sin marred it. Now God is restoring it. Let us notice how:

"...But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Notice that it is the Spirit that is changing us and making us like Him. It is the Spirit that is restoring that image. But He does it as we do what? As we behold.

How many of you have ever taken a picture with a camera, Kodak? What happened? A bit of photographic film stored in that box or container is exposed for a

brief moment to a picture you want to retain. And as that is developed, there is that picture, or your loved one or some beautiful scene. How did it happen? Oh, the photographic film was changed as you let the light shine upon it. And so thank God the likeness of Jesus is being impressed upon our minds and hearts as we behold. As we expose these brain cells, day by day, we are becoming more and more like what we look at.

Sometimes I say to boys and girls, be sure that what you spend your time looking at is something you want to be like. That a good rule? Oh, yes. Be sure that what you spend your time looking at something you want to be like.

And so today, when so many in the world are filling their minds with TV and radio and newspapers and movies, and all sorts of things. Very little of which is like Jesus. Most of it is either definitely wicked or else trivial—it doesn't mean anything. When so many are going that road.

The people of God who are looking for His coming, who are expecting Him soon, are looking upward. Day by day, they are studying the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy day by day, they're looking for the face of Jesus reflected in nature and in His written Word, knowing that as they behold, they are being changed into that same image.

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