

THE CAMBRIAN PESHER

THE VOICE OF THE DESPOSYNI TO THE AMERICAN DISPERSION



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Jesus & Monetary Reform

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

- Matthew 21:12-13

Here, we have the familiar story of Jesus casting out the moneychangers from the temple. It is a story found in all four Gospels, although the Fourth Gospel has it out of chronological order, and varies in that it adds the element of Messianic prophecy. The Fourth Gospel tells us that Jesus drove them from the

temple with an improvised whip and that the disciples recalled the prophecy in Psalm 69:9 as they witnessed the event: “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”

In any case, the familiarity of the story has perhaps dulled our sense of significance. Most commentators surmise that Jesus was upset that the temple had been turned into a marketplace. They suppose that the moral lesson to be learned here is that places of worship should not be used for commercial purposes: no bake sales, no auctions, no bingo games, etc. That may be a possibility, but as is often the case with Bible commentators, it is not what they say that is wrong; rather, it was what they *don't* say that leads us down useless rabbit trails.

The first thing that ought to be considered is the sheer audacity of what Jesus did in this incident. The very notion that He could have walked into the temple and committed an act of violence – and get away with it – is an enormous oddity that demands further explanation. The temple was not like our modern churches where people can come and go as they please. The temple was protected with armed guards (called “porters” in the KJV) who were commissioned with the tasks of excluding non-Jews from its precincts and of keeping order. They had the authority to arrest people and should the level of danger warrant it, to kill them.

When others would have been quickly dispatched, Jesus succeeded in violently attacking these merchants, driving them from the temple and destroying their property: no fear of arrest, no fear of lawsuits, no fear of reprisal.

Did the mere surprise of the act immobilize the porters? Not likely, they were trained men. Did Jesus miraculously suspend their free wills? Perhaps, but not likely, either. The texts do not suggest that this was a miracle.

The enormity of what Jesus did here is heightened when we consider its implications. **He attacked the moneychangers, the temple bankers.** These were powerful people. Of course, the men who were running these booths were simply clerks. They were not the actual owners of the banking establishments. Jesus drove out the hirelings, but in doing so, he attacked a very profitable enterprise for these powerful people: *the making of legal tender.*¹

The Jews were under the rule of Rome, but by treaty, they retained one place of sovereignty, and that was the temple precincts. There the Romans could not enter; there the Jews remained free.

The issuing of money is an imprimatur of state sovereignty. All rulers issue their own currency for the purposes of commerce for their subjects. Their coins usually are imprinted with the ruler's name or with his image as a way of authenticating the value of the coin. Rome was no exception in this practice.

For the Jews, they were forbidden to allow images and statuary in their culture. Because Roman coins had the images of Roman rulers embossed on them, they were considered unclean. But because the Jews were a captive people, they were required to use Roman coins for commerce and to pay their taxes. In the temple, however, Roman coins were not allowed. That was why there were moneychangers.

Most people could not carry their sacrifices on the arduous journey to Jerusalem, so they opted for the convenience of purchasing a suitable sacrifice at the temple itself. That was why there were various sacrificial animals living in the temple vicinity: they were there for purchase by traveling worshippers who could not afford the journey otherwise.

Of course, there was price gouging. And if people tried to bring their own sacrifices, corrupt priests would find a blemish, scar, or cut somewhere and decertify them. The worshipper would be compelled to purchase a worthy sacrifice from one of the "licensed" merchants near the temple. But before he could purchase it, he had to exchange his defiled, Roman money for legal tender: holy money that was acceptable to the "licensed" merchant who provided the worthy sacrifice. It was a scam involving unbelievable transfer of wealth because, at that time, Jerusalem was the only place a good Jew could find absolution for his sins. Wealthy worshippers came from all over the known world and agreed to any price demanded by the temple authorities.

There was a side industry to the sacrificial system: the sale of kosher meat for consumption by the public. Because the sacrifice at the temple was a guaranteed product, a Jew could be certain that temple meat was kosher. No single worshipper could eat a whole cow in one sacrifice. So, the remainder went to the priests, and they in turn, sold it in the street markets.

The vegetarianism of James, the brother of Jesus, was later misunderstood by church leaders because they were too far removed from the circumstances Jewish worshippers faced in the 1st Century when the temple was still standing. James refused to eat the temple meat. To him, it was non-kosher, being the product of a defiled priesthood and a defiled sanctuary. He knew that the temple had become a banker's racket and boycotted it. Losing all sense of the historical context, later historians would suppose that James was just another

ascetic who had moral scruples about eating animals. But that simply cannot be. His ruling in Acts 15 clearly embraces a non-vegetarian stance in that the only restrictions of meat were those “offered to idols” and those derived from “strangled” animals. James certainly believed in eating “kosher” meat. His refusal to eat the meat from the temple was his judgment upon the temple and its priesthood. It was a position that eventually led to his death.

Challenging the moneychangers also led to the death of Jesus. Commentators forget that cleansing the temple was the first official act Jesus did after his triumphal entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, a fact which explains why He got away with it. The procession and the cries of “Hosanna to the son of David” did not end at the city gates. They continued right up the temple stairs and it alarmed the temple authorities (Matthew 21:15-16). The city and the temple were being invaded by the followers of Jesus and effectively shut down the sacrificial system during the week prior to his crucifixion (Mark 11:16) in that he returned to the temple every day to teach (Luke 19:47). I hardly think he would have allowed the moneychangers and merchants to resume business as usual while He was there. In sequestering the temple precincts for Himself and His disciples, he denied the moneychangers and traditional worshipers access during the busiest period of Jewish worship: the week of Passover. No wonder the temple authorities conspired to have Him killed (Mark 11:18)!

It was a revolutionary act and it was one which only the Messiah could do. While Jesus did not stand on the temple stairs and declare himself the Messiah (a proclamation which had to be preceded by the anointing from the High Priest), the authorities certainly now had their opportunity to embrace Jesus. But Jesus knew that He would be “rejected by the chief priests” as He had told His disciples. The situation during the week prior to the Crucifixion was as intense in Jerusalem as if, in our day, terrorists were to seize the White House. The Romans didn’t care who had control of the temple. They were indifferent to the various Jewish factions. But it was of concern to Herod and to the Sadducees who controlled the priesthood at the time. Jesus was confronting them and now they had to choose.

Legal Tender

It is important to remember what Jesus called the moneychangers: “a den of thieves.” We naturally suppose that these people were cheating the people and that was why He called them thieves. But that was not the case. They had the legal right to set their fees to any amount.

While we might be tempted to view Jesus as a populist leader in the peasant's cause, we must remember what He actually said: "my Father's house shall be a house of prayer," meaning that the temple bankers had committed sacrilege. The word "sacrilege" means "the robbing of temples." Jesus charged the moneychangers with robbing God that which belonged to Him: undefiled worship. Because only the rich could afford to worship at the temple, God was denied the worship of the common person who usually gave up coming to the temple except for the rare occasions when he had no choice. It was too expensive, even bankrupting. *The temple bankers robbed God of worshipers.* Religion became a rich man's luxury.

Yes, the moneychangers had corrupted temple worship by their merchandising, but they also had corrupted it by seizing the right to issue legal tender, a right which belonged only to the Messiah.

The meaning of the term "legal tender" is simply the right of a person to pay a debt with lawful money in lieu of anything which might be specified in a contract. If I contract to deliver widgets to your business and find that I cannot do so, I may pay you money instead and the obligation will be discharged.

In the case of temple worship, legal tender was the shekel, not Roman money. The shekel was issued by the temple authorities and was a limited retention of national sovereignty for the Jews. Outside the temple, the shekel was not legal tender, as Jesus pointed out in his clever response to the question on Roman taxation:

Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.

- Matthew 22:21

The issuing of legal tender or money is an essential feature of sovereignty. It grows from the right of a ruler to tax his subjects. A ruler issues the currency to the people from which they pay their taxes. In fact, taxes can be said to be the rent for using a medium of exchange. Rulers might say that they need the taxes for their armies, but the purpose of armies is to protect an economy – and the economy consists in the monetary exchanges which occur at the marketplace.

This explains why the Romans did not take the Jewish revolt of 66AD seriously until the Jews refused to recognize Roman money as legal tender. When the Jews began to issue the shekel into general circulation, it was then that the Romans sent their armies.

Make no mistake about it, money is the essence of state sovereignty. It is a part of the taxing process.

Jesus on Taxation

Modern tax collectors are fond of quoting Jesus' statement on taxes as reported above. They don't want you to quarrel with them.

However, Jesus did not directly support the notion of taxation. He simply told the people that if they were going to use Caesar's money, then they should pay rent for it. It is the price of the service.

But, on the other hand, if they use God's money, then they should pay rent for using it, instead.

Did Jesus support taxation? Only if the taxing authority practiced the Jubilee. Consider this story which is conveniently overlooked by commentators and our modern tax collectors. It should complete our understanding of how Jesus felt about taxation:

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

- Matthew 17:24-27

(The word for "money" here is actually the word "shekel" in the original language. Herod's priests had established a world-wide tax on Jews of a half-shekel. This was the temple tax and a full shekel would have paid the tribute for both Jesus and Peter.)

This is an important text in understanding Jesus' views on taxes and the role of government. Clearly, as a Jew, He did not believe He was obligated to pay the

temple tax, much less Roman taxes. He had Peter pay the tribute “lest we offend them.” This suggests that He paid it out of courtesy rather than of obligation. The biblical use of the word “stranger” refers to foreigners, and in this case, non-Jews. Jesus believed that Jews did not owe the temple tax because they were “the children” of the sovereign (“kings of the earth”) of Israel: Yahweh.

What would create the distinguishing feature, here, between those who were subject to the tribute (“strangers”) and those who were not (“the children”)?

The children of kings have dominion; they are viceroys. “Strangers” do not have dominion. They do not have any claim or right to sovereignty or rulership.

In the case of Israel, they were given the land of Canaan according to their family estates for perpetuity. The land could not be alienated but had to be returned to the original owners every Jubilee (50 years):

And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

- Leviticus 25:10

And it was the Jubilee that Jesus declared at the outset of His ministry in Luke 4:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it is written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Jesus read from Isaiah 61 which delineates the role of the Messiah as one who proclaims “the acceptable year of the Lord,” which in biblical law was the Jubilee. By saying to the people that “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,” He was declaring Himself the Messiah. So it was understood by the listeners who couldn’t believe it and attempted to kill Him for committing blasphemy.

The relevance of the Jubilee to the issue of taxation has to do with the question of sovereignty. Yahweh had declared Himself the king of Israel and stipulated that the land should always be retained by the descendants of Israel. There were laws of redemption that were established and the Jubilee was the most prominent. The ownership of land was the essence of freedom and even though the Israelites were God’s servants and His tenants on the land, they were answerable to no man. They were His adopted children.

As a consequence, in announcing the Jubilee, Jesus was releasing Israelites of their debts, including their tax obligations. **The messianic mission of Jesus was inherently a revolt against debt, usury, and taxes.** Circle and underline that statement.

The half shekel tax that the temple authorities were collecting could only be assessed when Israel went to war according to biblical law (Exodus 30:12). It was atonement money taken at the census when the hosts were mustered for battle. In the time of Moses, he called the census at Yahweh’s command, but after the monarchy was established, it could only be called by Israel’s messiah (anointed king). The collection of atonement money was an obligation the King David-Christ once neglected that resulted in devastating consequences (2 Samuel 24).

Thus, the half shekel tax that Jesus was expected to pay was for an undeclared and perpetual war instituted by Herod and his temple cronies in the name of Yahweh *against Israel!*

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Herod was a Hellenizing Jew who collaborated with Rome and sought to undermine the Mosaic Law at every opportunity. The Dead Sea Scrolls are replete with coded language of condemnation of the Herodian priesthood and the “seekers after smooth things.” John the Baptist, Jesus, and His brother, James the Just, were central figures in this historical confrontation.

The Desposyni and Monetary Reform

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. . . Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabbaoth [hosts].

- James 5:1,4

The first Herod had destroyed the temple records which contained the royal and priestly genealogies. This was done to make it impossible for anyone of the house of David to contest his usurpation. The family of Jesus preserved their private records, but it was impossible to corroborate their claims because certification had to come from the temple authorities and they were under the control of Herod. Thus, it was impossible for the house of David to reassert its legal claims to the throne. It could only come by destroying the temple and eliminating the spurious source of authority.

The temple, of course, was destroyed in 70 AD and in the following generation leading up to the Bar Kochba rebellion (134AD), the Desposyni – the descendants of King David – began to reassert themselves in Palestine. James was killed in 64 AD by the temple authorities; a fact which Josephus believed was the ultimate cause of its demise. But he was succeeded by other members of the family of Jesus.

Early Church historians, such as Hegesippus, claim that all of the churches (synagogues) which followed Jesus were ruled by the Desposyni. It is not entirely clear whether Bar Kochba was himself a relative of Jesus, or a spurious claimant to the Davidic throne. But in any case, it was a revolt in which the early Christians were a part. It was a pivotal moment in world history because the rivalry between Rome and Parthia had reached a critical stage. As noted in earlier studies, the Gentile churches declined to participate and that fact may explain why the rebellion failed, and why, ultimately, the Parthian Israelites were unable to destroy the evil empire. The kind of Christianity which

survived was no longer Desposynic, but was one which was pacifist, escapist and one which increasingly sought reconciliation with Rome.

In any event, the singular characteristic of Desposynic government is the demand for the Jubilee: tax relief, monetary reform, and debt release. The restoration of the family to family estates (abbeys) is a central part of the messianic mission which dates from the earliest records of Israelite history. It was a mission which characterized the ministry of Jesus and His family, and it is one by which this illustrious lineage can be identified. It's in their blood.

By persuading Charlemagne to abolish usury, the Celtic monk, Alcuin, established the Christian millennium and identified his own roots in the sacred line. His gift to the world was incalculable in that had he not done so, Europe could not have survived the middle ages. It was an age of devastating invasions, crashing comets, plagues, and climate change. Yet, when left alone, the common man and the small villages of the countryside prospered. Abundance was so great, at times, that laborers needed only to work a few months a year to gather their supplies. There were no great cities or complex connections which comprise empires. And in our age which measures the status of civilizations by the imperial trappings of statecraft, monuments, and decadence, the simple and happy times of the medieval period seems primitive, even surreal. (The high age of the imperial church with its persecutions and inquisitions did not begin until the 13th Century). In legalizing usury, we can say that Protestantism, especially Calvinist Protestantism, has become a radical reversal and a departure from Christendom. In abolishing the Jubilee and embracing modern statism, it has revealed its anti-family position.

The Root of all Evil

The sacred writings do not teach us in vain that “the love of money is the root of all evil.” The heart of man is deceitfully wicked in that it can convince the mind that its wickedness is a virtue. In our case, modern society has built its commerce upon the principle of compounded interest and perpetual debt. It is considered moral and responsible for our citizens to deposit their money tokens in repositories called “banks” and collect compounding interest forever. Never mind that biblical law limited the lending cycle to seven years:

Usury is the quintessential form of greed and larceny: the getting of something for nothing. How is it possible that money can multiply itself without the application of human labor?

It might be argued that monetary capital represents stored labor units being rented to help someone else. That sounds so noble. But rented at compounded interest, it is only slavery. How happy would any laborer be to find that he can demand an exponential increase in wages from day-to-day! No employer would agree to such terms. It would soon make the laborer the master of the enterprise and the employer the slave. How can it be argued that capital is any different? Money as stored labor units is not any more valuable than current labor units. They should not be treated any differently. The notion of our Protestant capitalists that wealth can be created this way is a religion, and Jesus has named its god: "Mammon." "Mammon" was the name of the god of money in the ancient world, and Jesus drew the line in the sand in a test of loyalty:

Ye cannot serve God and mammon. . . (Matthew 5)

Thus, it cannot be doubted that monetary reform is a moral issue and our current monetary system is immoral. All the high-sounding rhetoric of "moral" conservatives rings hollow when the issue of money is left out of political discourse. In not offering an alternative monetary system, they prove themselves to be frauds and in many cases, the perpetrators of this immoral system.

The Jubilee and the American Experience

Early American documents, including the Constitution, are careful to avoid the word "sovereignty" in reference to the powers of government. This is because "sovereignty" is a term that refers to a king, and in the United States, we have no king.

The unique feature of a king is that he alone has the "right to property." All property rights flow from him as dispensations. Of course, in the Western tradition, the king has had an institutional rival in the church. The Church represents the sovereignty of God. Historically, few kings have dared to challenge the Church's claims. Not until the King of England also became the head of the Church of England did any monarch have the courage to seize church properties.

In terms of land, the ownership of property by a king is called "allodium in droit, droit." The ownership of property by all others is in "fee simple." When the American colonists threw off the monarchy, they expected allodial land

titles. And for many, such became the case. Many Americans purchased the new lands from Congress and received land patents. In a very real sense, these Americans were like monarchs on their own land.

When they won their independence, they also expected the Jubilee. Many men who fought in the Revolution were bankrupts who expected debt relief when the war was over. That was why the Liberty Bell was inscribed with the words from Leviticus 25:10 quoted above: “Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.” The Colonists fought to be relieved of their debt burden.

Although history books will not tell you these things, the Founding Fathers reneged on their promise. There was a rebellion known as “Shay’s Rebellion.” History books may tell you that Shay’s Rebellion was caused by other reasons, but the real reason was debt relief. That was why the Founding Fathers made sure there was a bankruptcy clause in the Constitution and that debtor’s prisons were banned. It was their compromise to settle the discontent between the disappointed citizenry and the financiers who expected profits from their loans to the Colonists. Bankrupts were expected to surrender their homes and lands to the debt collectors, and then start a new life on the western frontier where land was cheap. The empty land was our nation’s safety valve. The day of reckoning, however, cannot be put off any longer.

The American Economic Crisis

The Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas told us this summer that the United States owes 99 trillion dollars in unfunded liabilities. Others have said it is \$54 trillion. In any event, that is a lot of dollars.

The derivatives market, the mother of all scams in fractional reserve banking, stands at well over \$200 trillion, we think. No one really knows.

As this Peshier is being written, Congress is being asked to fund a \$700 billion bail-out of Wall Street financiers. In the fine print of the bill, this \$700 billion is the first installment of a process with no end in sight. The age of the American Empire is clearly over – or so we think.

Julius Caesar was a bankrupt too big to fail. He persuaded his financiers to fund one last gamble: raise an army to conquer Gaul. He succeeded and the rest is history. He massacred, enslaved, and looted a peaceful country to the delight of his lenders . . . and ended the Roman Republic. Unless the United States finds an economic solution to its debt crisis, we must expect the

militarization of the country. We will follow the same path of Caesar because we are a bankrupt too big to fail. We will lose our free society and become the subjects of a regime as cruel as any before us.

Is there a way out? Of course there is. It's called the Jubilee. We need a world jubilee.

Yes, it will wipe-out the tiny, but powerful, elite who think they own everything. It will require a new and very different monetary system than the one to which we have grown accustomed. But it can be done and it must be done. If the blessings of Christ's Millennium are to become a reality in the world, we must have the faith to obey His holy word. Now is a better time than later.

A servant of Jesus,

James

Prayer for the Day:

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ⁱ If you look on a dollar bill, you will see the words, "This note is legal tender for all debts, public and private." That is what makes money the legal currency of circulation.

ⁱⁱ See Mark 3:6 and 8:15 for evidence of the collaboration between the Pharisees and the Herodians.