

¹³ Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. ¹⁴ They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.

In creation, God placed his image on humankind. The twofold meaning is that man was to be the icon of God's claim on and presence in the world, as well as the indication that humankind belongs to God. We were made to be vice-regents for God in this world. As vice-regents we were to represent God and do the work of God in the world. In the agricultural terms employed, we were to be the agents for establishing God's order in the chaos of the world. Being in perfect relationship with God, this meant that we were authorized icons of the will and power of God. When we rebelled we marred, all but destroyed, that image. C.S. Lewis' wonderful description of evil in his Space Trilogy is that the original image was "bent" (*Out of the Silent Planet*, p.121). The Bible is the story of God re-establishing his presence and ownership of the world. The call, redemption and establishment of a people is God's manner of achieving this goal. According to God's story the owner of the vineyard has not gone away. He is here and present in his servants. It follows then that when his servants are disobedient we obscure his presence but we cannot eliminate it.

Again in C.S. Lewis' description, we are bent, not broken. That which is bent has the hope of being straightened out, while that which is broken is only suitable for destruction. The history of Israel and the Church is one of God hammering his bent images straight.

The fullest manifestation of God redeeming man in his image is seen in the Incarnation of the Son of God as the man, Jesus. In the Incarnation, the image and the presence of God are graphically combined in that One; the Christ. In the Christ, the perfect image of God on earth is restored. Through faith in Christ we come to bear that image. That is a story of costly redemption and repair. Being made in his image and then after being bent, being restored to his image at great sacrifice, we are twice owned by God.

Dear Lord, before the awesome truth of your love I can only know my unworthiness. Make me thankful that you have not only called me to be your child, but have recalled me; you not only placed your seal upon me, but when I became bent, you restored me and replaced your seal. Keep me ever mindful of how much it has cost you to maintain your steadfast love for me. Give me the faith to express my gratitude for your great love and mercy through the giving of myself wholly to you. Amen.