

**Title:** ENCOUNTER WITH BRILLIANT JESUS

**Text:** Mark 12:13-17

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**Mark 12:13-17 (ESV)**

*And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him.*

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## CONVERSATION STARTER

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- What are some ways our political system is helpful in addressing our society's problems? What are ways you see our political system falling short in addressing these issues? Discuss examples of ways Christians in America rely too much on the political system in addressing society's problems.
- Read Genesis 1:26-27. What do you think it means to be made "in the image" of God? What does this reality demand of us? How should this reality inform our ultimate allegiances?
- Read Mark 12:13-17. Why do you think the Pharisees and Herodians desire to "trap" Jesus in his words? Why do you think they specifically ask about paying taxes to Caesar? Why do you think Jesus asks whose image is on the coin?
- What does Jesus' authority over government imply about our political involvement today? How do you think our allegiance to him affects our political loyalties?
- Read the excerpt below. Do you agree with Willard's assertion that most Christians do not think of Jesus in terms of his brilliance? Why? How do you think Jesus' brilliance should affect your devotion to him?

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**EXCERPT FROM:** *The Great Omission*

**BY:** Dallas Willard

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In our culture, and among Christians as well, Jesus Christ is automatically disassociated from brilliance or intellectual capacity. Not one in a thousand will spontaneously think of him in conjunction with words such as "well informed," "brilliant," or "smart." Far too often he is regarded as hardly conscious. He is taken as a mere icon, a wraithlike semblance of a man living on the margins of the "real world" where you and I must dwell. He is perhaps fit for the role of sacrificial lamb or alienated social critic, but little more.

But can we seriously imagine that Jesus could be Lord if he were not smart? If he were divine, would he be dumb? Or uninformed? Once you stop to think about it, how could he be what Christians take him to be in other respects and not be the best informed and most intelligent person of all – the smartest person who ever lived, bringing us the best information on the most important subjects?

What lies at the heart of the astonishing disregard of Jesus found in the moment-to-moment existence of multitudes of professing Christians is a simple lack of respect for him. He is not seriously taken to be a person of great ability. But how, then, can we admire him? And what can devotion or worship mean if simple respect is not included in it?