

CAPERNAUM

INTRODUCTION

A. Context of Matthew 17:24-27

- Jesus was declared God's unique Son on Mount Hermon during the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8).
- He reintroduced His future death and resurrection (Matthew 17:22-23).
- Jesus and His disciples headed back to Capernaum.

B. Notes on Capernaum

- In the 1st century, there were 2,500 people living in Capernaum. They were working class people with extended families living together.
- The 1st century synagogue was built by a Roman centurion. The destroyed synagogue was rebuilt in the 4th century.



Foundation of 1st C. Synagogue



4th C. Synagogue



Church built over Peter's house

- Capernaum was the home of Peter with Jesus living in Peter's house which now has a Roman Catholic church suspended over the probable site.
- Jesus made it His ministry base where a majority of His work took place along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- Peter's home was in Capernaum where there is now a Roman Catholic church suspended over the probable site.

THE TEMPLE TAX, MATTHEW 17:24-27

- A. A pointed question to Peter (24), *When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?"*

The two-drachma tax

- Richard Trench, . . . *the payment demanded here is not tribute to Caesar, but dues to the temple . . . note Exodus 30:11-16, 38:25, 26, to be paid by every Israelite above twenty years old to the service and current expenses of the tabernacle, or, as it afterwards would be, of the temple.*
- Thomas Constable, *The two-drachma tax was a Jewish tax that every male Jew between the ages of 20 and 50 had to pay toward the maintenance of the temple and its services (Exod. 30:13).*
- R. T. France, *The half-shekel temple tax was an annual levy on adult Jewish males, and one which unlike Roman taxes (see on 22:15-22) might be expected to be paid as a patriotic duty, but the Sadducees disapproved of it as a relatively recent Pharisaic institution and the members of the Qumran community on principle paid it only once in a lifetime. This approach from the tax-collectors suggests a suspicion that Jesus also might not accept this as an obligation.*

- This may have been an opportunity for religious leaders to condemn Jesus.
- The only coin accepted for the yearly Temple tax was the 2 drachma which represented 2-days wages. It was minted from nearly pure silver from a Roman coin. It was illegal for any country controlled by Rome to mint coins except for this Temple tax coin. KP shows it was approved by the Roman government. The 4 drachma coin enabled Peter to pay for his tax as well as that of Jesus.



2 and 4 drachma coins

Peter's quick response

- Louis Barbieri, *Their question about the Lord's not paying His tax implied that He was not keeping the Law. Peter responded that the Lord would pay the tax in compliance with the Law.*
- Peter was too quick in his response but it gave Jesus another opportunity for Jesus to make Himself known to him.

- B. A time for instruction concerning Who Jesus is (25-26), **He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free.**

From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?

- Peter responded that taxes are required not from sons but from others.
- Therefore, Jesus proclaimed that the sons are free from the tax.
- William Barclay, *If any king imposed taxes on a nation, he certainly did not impose them on his own family. It was indeed for the support of his own household that the taxes were imposed. The tax in question was for the Temple, which was the house of God. Jesus was the Son of God. Did he not say when his parents sought him in Jerusalem: 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' (Luke 2:49). How could the Son be under obligation to pay the tax which was for his own Father's house?*
- Frank Gaebelin, . . . *Jesus acknowledges the temple tax to be an obligation to God; but since he is uniquely God's Son, therefore he is exempt (v. 26).*
- Warren Wiersbe, *God the Father had interrupted Peter on the mountain (Matt. 17:5), and now God the Son interrupted him in the house. If only we would let Jesus give the directions, we would see Him meet our needs for His glory.*
- Thomas Constable, *Jesus was teaching Peter the implications of His deity.*

- C. A time for instruction concerning kingdom living (27), **However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."**

However, not to give offense

- William Barclay, *In life, there may sometimes be exemptions we could claim; there may be things we could quite safely allow ourselves to do. But we must claim nothing and allow ourselves nothing which might possibly be a bad example to someone else.*
- F. F. Bruce, *It [this story] teaches the children of the kingdom not to murmur because the world does not recognize their status and dignity.*
- Louis Barbieri, *The Lord was demonstrating to Peter that not only should He as King be tax-free, but also His disciples, as sons of the kingdom, should be free from such taxes (v. 26). They too had a privileged position, and the King should provide all they needed. However, the Lord did not intend at this time to make an issue (offend them, v. 27) over such a small point. The religious leaders were looking for accusations to use against Jesus.*
- R. T. France, *But where it is his own personal privilege that is at stake, he has no problem with accommodating himself to what is expected of him, and in this way identifying himself with the traditions of his people. Is there a parallel here with his baptism, which, according to 3:14-15, was undertaken not because he personally required it, but to identify with repentant Israel and so to "fulfill all that is required of us"?*
- It might be said, Jesus had bigger fish to fry, and so do we.

Go to the sea and cast a hook

- Warren Wiersbe, *When we consider the complexity of this miracle, it amazes us. First, someone had to lose a coin in the water. Then, a fish had to take that coin in its mouth and retain it. That same fish then had to bite on Peter's hook—with an impediment in its mouth—and be caught. You cannot explain all of this in a natural way. It is too complex for an accident, and too difficult for human management . . . He exercised His kingship over nature to provide what was needed.*
- Matthew doesn't record that the miracle took place. Some believe it never happened. Peter was told by the Lord what he was to do. If he obeyed, the miracle happened. The question for us is do we obey when our Lord tells us what to do?



A short walk from Peter's house to the Sea of Galilee