

Stage V. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee
C. Jesus End His Withdrawal With Discipleship Training

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #135

2. Miracle #26: Jesus Pays the Temple Tax With a Miraculous Catch
MT 17.24-27 (No Parallel Texts:)

24 After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher make a practice of paying the temple tax?"

25 "Yes, he does," he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. *"What do you think, Simon?"* he asked. *"From whom do the kings of the earth receive duty and taxes--from their own sons, or from others?"*

26 "From others," Peter answered.

"Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him.

27 "But so that we may not cause any offense, I command you to go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them... for my tax, and in your behalf."

=====

NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are in red italics*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	Capernaum
Timeline	September (Month 33)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage V: Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee
	C. Jesus End His Withdrawal With Discipleship Training
Title	2. Jesus Pays the Temple Tax With a Miraculous Catch of Fish

COMMENT:

Matthew was the sole gospel writer to chronicle Jesus' second discipleship teaching in Capernaum at the conclusion of his Galilean ministry. Not surprisingly, the former tax collector included this incident of Jesus paying the Temple tax for himself, and Peter. Multiple lessons about Jesus' love stand out in this narrative.

We see Peter's impulsive personality at work here. When questioned about whether Jesus made a practice of paying the annual Temple tax or not, he spoke out and committed his Lord to a course of action without first consulting with Jesus. It is interesting that when Peter returned, Jesus took the initiative by asking him a question regarding what has happened, before Peter could bring it up. Rather than rebuking Peter, Jesus worked cooperatively with him in spite of his disciple's impulsive behavior.

Furthermore, Jesus paid the tax for Peter, too. He loved Peter by graciously working with him and providing for him, even when Peter could have created a problem for Jesus.

Stage V. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee

C. Jesus End His Withdrawal With Discipleship Training

We also see here how Jesus lived by faith. He did not have the money to pay the tax. He sent Peter, a fisherman by trade, to use his working skills and expertise to catch a fish. Then, he multiplied the value of Peter's labor by sovereignly guiding him to a fish that had a coin stuck in its mouth, of just enough value to pay the tax for both Peter and Jesus. God usually provides for us by guiding and blessing us in our daily work, just as he did here.

The final lesson in this narrative is probably the most important. Jesus pointed out that as the Son of God, he was under no moral obligation to pay the Temple tax. He was free. However, Jesus' love caused him to consider the impact of his freedom on other people. He would never use his freedom to cause other people to stumble. He did not want to offend his Jewish brothers who did not understand that he was the Son of God, and therefore exempt from the tax.

By paying the tax when he was not obligated to do so, Jesus demonstrated that love limits its own actions and freedom, when that action might cause another person to be offended. Love serves the interests of others, not self.

Matthew included this wonderful description of Jesus' humble and loving kind of leadership in his narrative immediately before showing us a scene in which the apostles exhibited the opposite attitude (tomorrow's reading). The rest of the discipleship teaching of Jesus in Galilee, found in Matt. 18, will address the issue of "True Greatness in the Kingdom of God." Jesus will show his disciples that greatness is found in loving, humble service toward others.

That attitude was demonstrated beautifully in the way Jesus graciously served Peter, and his Jewish countrymen by paying the tax he did not owe. Jesus would ultimately reveal the character of that love by paying for all of OUR sins on the cross...another debt he did not owe, and had no obligation to pay. Love does that.

APPLICATION:

Jesus loved the Father, and other people in everything he said and did. This example in the gospels is beautiful, and powerful. He calls each of us to follow him in loving others as he has first loved us.

The kind of love that is willing to restrict its own freedom in order not to harm others is sorely needed every day.

We must constantly refrain from speaking words, taking actions, and expressing attitudes that are not wrong in themselves, but will injure others anyway. Paul said it like this: *"If your brother is distressed because of what you eat (substitute "say or do" for "eat"), you are no longer acting in love. Do not destroy the brother for whom Christ died by your eating."* Rom. 14.15.

In what way do you need to restrict what you say and do today, in order not to injure others? Are you prepared to do that?

Ask Jesus to fill you with himself, and live his kind of love through you in those specific ways.