**Matthew 17:24-27 - Jesus Pays the Temple Tax**

This brief 3 verses is a trivial exchange but it has enormous implications

Jesus is teaching by example

One Jewish Shekel = 4 Greek Drachmas = 1 Greek Stater = 1 Roman Denarii = 2 Days Wages

A Didrachma was the amount a Jewish male paid each year for the upkeep of the Temple.

The Temple Tax

* Based on Exodus 30:11-16 when each man paid ½ shekel for the Tabernacle maintenance
* Jews outside of Israel paid the ½ shekel or 2 drachma each year when they came to Passover
* Jews living inside Israel would have the ½ shekel collected from them a month before Passover
* Priest did not pay the Temple tax because they were exempt
* Woman and minors did not need to pay the Temple tax
* Gentiles and Samaritans were not allowed to pay the Temple tax
* Sadducees refused to pay the Temple tax because they thought it was a rule of the Pharisee party
* Members of the Qumran community only paid it once in their lifetime
* What would Jesus, the Son of God do concerning paying the Temple Tax

**17:24**

The Greek wording concerning the question of the Tax Collector is such that they expected a positive answer. It was a gentle reminder to Jesus through Peter to pay the Temple tax. They expected Peter to say “Yes.”

If Peter refused the Tax Collectors would simply move the refusal to pay, or the request for exemption, up the ladder to higher authorities.

**17:25**

Before Peter can ask Jesus, Jesus himself asks Peter.

Kings indeed plundered the conquered people but this is referring to “sons” or the “royal family” paying

taxes along with the common citizens.

Jesus tells Peter that the “sons” or the “royal family” doesn’t pay taxes. Herod’s family did not pay taxes.

Ceasar’s household did not pay taxes.

The point is that Jesus is not the common citizen of Israel. Jesus is the Son of God.

It would not be appropriate for Jesus to pay the tax, nor would it be appropriate for the tax collectors to

expect Jesus to pay.

**17:27**

Jesus pays the tax but:

1. Does not use his money or the gifts given to him to meet their basic needs
2. Does ues money not designated for any purpose of belonging to any man

Peter uses a hook an dline to catch a fish. This is the only place in scripture that a fishing hook and line is used to catch a fish:

1. It is easy to do, not work, not labor and often considered recreation
2. It was the first fish so it required minimum time input
3. It was the only fish so it required the minimum amount of work

The fish was a catfish which scavenges near the shoreline. It has no scales, so it is unclean and not to be

eaten. The catfish could easily be up to four feet long. It had a large mouth and would have been attracted to a shiny Greek Stater coin on the bottom of the lake and picked it up in its mouth.

A found coin belongs to no man. This coin was not Jesus money, Peter did minimum work for it and the

Tax collectors where satisfied.

**The problems that Jesus had to navigate through without erring**:

1. Paying the tax would say that Jesus was not the Son of God. This would be the wrong message and the wrong type or shadow. Jesus willingly testified that he was the Son of God: Matthew 26:62-65; 27:11-12
2. NOT paying the tax would appear to be rejecting the Temple and the authorities. Both of which were following the Law of Moses as noble and righteous institutions established by God. Jesus could not rejected them without rejecting the Temple and their authority. He would appear to be siding with the Sadducees or the Qumran community. Submit to authorities as in 1 Peter 2:13
3. If Jesus refused to pay the tax the Tax Collectors would not understand his motive. They could be offended (scandalized) and caused to sin. The stronger, more mature man must consider the weaker man: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 is an example where food sacrificed to an idol is considered. Do not cause people to stumble concerning things they do not understand.
4. Jesus’ rejection of the Temple Tax may result in the Tax Collector’s rejection of Jesus for a wrong reason. Peter tells us we should live such good lives that the world sees us and has no excuse not to listen to us (1 Peter 2:11-12). Wives are said to live good lives to win their husbands (1 Peter 3:1-2)
5. Do not make Non-Issues into Major-Issues. Keep the peace, seek unity. Circumcision was wrong in Galatia (Galatians 5:2), yet Paul circumcised Timothy to keep the peace. Giving in 2 Cor. 9:6-8 is based on what the person wants not guilt or compulsion.