Research: Jesus and the tribute money

Matthew 17:24-27

24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

“*When they were come to Capernaum*— Where our Lord now dwelt. Hence the collectors of the sacred tribute did not ask him for it till he came to this the ordinary place of his residence. *They that received the tribute-money came to Peter*— Whose house was in Capernaum, and probably in his house Jesus now lodged, and therefore he was the most fit to be spoken to as being the house-keeper, and they presumed he knew his Master’s mind. *And said, Doth not your Master pay tribute?*— This was a tribute or payment of a peculiar kind, being half a shekel, (that is, about fifteen pence,) which every master of a family used to pay yearly to the service of the temple: to buy salt, and little things not otherwise provided for” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“Two drachmas was probably not a civil tax in support of Rome, but Jewish ‘tax’ levied on every male Jew between the ages of twenty and fifty in support of the temple and its services” (Exposter’s, 393).

25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

“He saith, yes—that is, "To be sure He does"; as if eager to remove even the suspicion of the contrary. If Peter knew—as surely he did—that there was at this time no money in the bag, this reply must be regarded as a great act of faith in his Master.

“*And when he was come into the house*—Peter's.

“*Jesus prevented him*—anticipated him; according to the old sense of the word "prevent."

“*saying, What thinkest thou, Simon?*—using his family name for familiarity.

“*of whom do the kings of the earth take custom*—meaning custom on goods exported or imported.

“*or tribute*—meaning the poll-tax, payable to the Romans by everyone whose name was in the census. This, therefore, it will be observed, was strictly a civil tax.

“*of their own children, or of strangers*—This cannot mean "foreigners," from whom sovereigns certainly do not raise taxes, but those who are not of their own family, that is, their subjects” Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

2 6Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

“Just as royal sons are exempt from the taxes imposed by their fathers, so too Jesus is exempt from the ‘tax’ imposed by his Father. In other words, 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)” (Epositor’s.8.394).

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

“Exempt though he is, Jesus will pay the tax so as not to offend. Thus, he sets an example later followed by Paul. . . More importantly, Jesus here implicitly frees his followers from the temple tax on the grounds that they too, will belong to the category of “sons,” (Expositors 8. 394).

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**“The Things which are Caesar’s” by John Selover, Jan 2., 1960, CSS**

Christ Jesus always put God first and with his whole heart served Him alone. But even while doing so he did not neglect the orderly requirements of constituted authority. When the tax money for the temple was due, he paid it without making a great issue of it. At Capernaum, Peter was asked ([Matt. 17:24](http://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Doth+not+your+master+pay+tribute%3F&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), "Doth not your master pay tribute?" Upon hearing of this query, Jesus asked that a line be cast into the sea. He said that the money to pay the tribute would be found in the mouth of the first fish that would be brought up.

The Master consistently subordinated the temporal to the spiritual. Had he resisted the demand for payment of the tax, he would surely not have obtained the money for its payment from the mouth of a fish. Jesus obviously knew that substance is not matter or in matter, but that it is spiritual and universal. The supply of the tax money was in direct demonstration of the truth that spiritual abundance is infinite and ever present.

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