



Tax Lessons

Did you know that Jesus had to deal with taxation just like we have to. Taxation of various sorts have been around seemingly forever. It is as much a part of life as eating and sleeping. There is no way to avoid it no matter where you live or what you do. What Jesus taught about taxation is limited, but complete. Matthew 17 contains a well known Temple tax record of his response to Peter when they arrived in Capernaum.

(Mat 17:24-27) And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

{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?

{26} Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. {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.

The rebel in us somewhat hopes for a tax reprieve, but none came with Jesus' words. No sooner than they

arrived in Capernaum did the tax men come knocking. Can you imagine how you would have responded? Here you are, having arrived at your destination city, probably tired and hungry, only to be greeted by tax collectors? Wow! That's amazing. The closest we come to that in America are toll roads. You have to keep paying to use them, but we don't tax people as soon as they enter a city.

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These guys asked Peter something very confrontational. “Doth not your master pay tribute?” This tribute was the Temple tax. The amount of this tax was always one half Shekel. The people always kept this half Shekel so that they could pay the tax. Poor Peter, caught in the middle, had to deal with this in the midst of this pressure. He said “yes,” and turned to go into the house. He went into the house to talk to Jesus about it, but Jesus started talking before Peter could say anything. Jesus “prevented him” meaning, he brought up the subject before Peter could. Jesus’ response was completely unique.

“What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?” If you don’t understand that Jesus was the son of God, and considered to be a King in his own right, you probably won’t

understand why he asked this or his answer to Peter. Children of Kings were not taxed. But, strangers were. Peter knew this. That’s why he answered, “of strangers.” That’s also why Jesus answered, “Then are the children free.” The children didn’t have to pay the taxes. ***By all rights, Jesus also should not have had to pay any taxes because he was God’s son.*** Jesus was a pretty smart cookie. He knew his rights and wasn’t afraid to stand up for them.

But, he didn’t want to offend the tax collectors. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to get into trouble. He didn’t want to offend anyone in this matter. Keep in mind that the Jews were always trying to find a way to accuse Jesus so that they could get rid of him. Jesus knew this. There’s another tax account in the Gospels where Jesus is confronted by the

Jews about taxation. He really knew what he was doing when he answered them, but that’s another Artios letter. In this situation, Jesus didn’t want to offend anyone.

Jesus wasn’t a stranger. He qualified for no taxation because he was God’s son, and should have been free from taxation, but he sent Peter to find some money to pay these guys anyway. Most people don’t understand what happened next. ***They try to deify Jesus, and elevate how the fish had money in its mouth above the primary meaning of this account.*** Jesus sent Peter fishing and he told Peter that there would be money in the mouth of the first fish that he took up. Believe it or not, it was not uncommon to find money in a fish’s mouth. You could do so depending on the circumstances.

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This kind of fish is called “Musht” fish. This fish is hard to catch. It sees the shiny things in the water and stores the objects in a pouch in its’ mouth. In a prayer, people would cast their Shekel into the water saying, “You heal my child, I’ll throw in my diamond ring, etc..” When the sun would strike the metal, the shine of it would attract the fish, which would then gobble it up. Have you ever been fishing with fishing lures? Some lures have shinny metal pieces, which do the same thing. They attract fish. Money is thrown into a pond as an offering. This is how these shiny objects get there.

Peter and Jesus both knew about this fish. So Jesus knew that God would provide this money simply and easily in the first fish that Peter caught. Isn’t that wonderful? They were able to split the one Shekel and use for both their tax payments. God

always provides, even our tax money. If God will provide our tax money, then the message is clear, we should pay our taxes. Jesus knew that God would provide this money, enough for both Peter and Jesus. He also knew that if he didn’t pay the tax that the collectors would become offended, causing a lot of unnecessary trouble.

Perhaps the greatest lesson of all from this account is to trust in God. *God will always provide you with your needs no matter what situation you find yourself in.* Yes, pay your taxes, and don’t offend others, but especially trust in God and allow Him to care for you.

Much love in Christ,

Jerry D. Brown