

Matthew 17:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter (Ἐλθόντων δὲ αὐτῶν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ προσῆλθον οἱ τὰ δίδραχμα λαμβάνοντες τῷ Πέτρῳ)—Capernaum was Jesus's ministry headquarters (4:13). The τὰ δίδραχμα (didrachma, 'two drachma') refers to the half-shekel temple tax required of every Jewish male over 20 (Exodus 30:11-16). The collectors approached Peter, perhaps because he was prominent or owned a house there. **And said, Doth not your master pay tribute?** (καὶ εἶπαν, Ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν οὐ τελεῖ τὰ δίδραχμα;)—the question expects a positive answer ('Your teacher does pay, doesn't he?'), subtly challenging whether Jesus honors Jewish obligation.

This wasn't Roman taxation but temple support for sacrifices, maintenance, and priestly support. The question tests Jesus's piety and Jewish loyalty. Did He honor Torah requirements? The collectors' approach to Peter rather than Jesus may indicate reluctance to directly confront Him after His growing reputation. This incident demonstrates Jesus's engagement with practical religious/civic obligations, not merely lofty spiritual teaching.

Historical Context

The half-shekel temple tax originated in Exodus 30:11-16 as atonement money for the sanctuary. By Jesus's time, it was collected annually (Adar, before Passover) throughout the Jewish world, funding temple operations. Mishnah tractate

Shekalim details collection procedures. Jesus's compliance with this tax shows He honored legitimate religious obligations, though He would later cleanse the temple (21:12-13), showing support for proper worship while condemning corruption.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's willing compliance with legitimate religious obligations challenge both legalism and antinomianism?
2. What does the collectors' indirect approach (through Peter) teach about fear-based religious inquiry versus genuine seeking?

Interlinear Text

Ἐλθόντων	δὲ	αὐτῶν	εἰς	Καπερναούμ,	προσῆλθον	οἱ	
were come	And	when they	to	Capernaum	money came	G3588	
G2064	G1161	G846	G1519	G2584	G4334		
τὰ	δίδραχμα	λαμβάνοντες	τῷ	Πέτρῳ	καὶ	εἶπον,	Ο
G3588	tribute	they that received	G3588	to Peter	and	said	G3588
	G1323	G2983		G4074	G2532	G2036	
διδάσκαλος	ὑμῶν	οὐ	τελεῖ	τὰ	δίδραχμα		
master	your	not	Doth	G3588	tribute		
G1320	G5216	G3756	G5055		G1323		

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 30:13 (Parallel theme): This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD.

Exodus 38:26 (Parallel theme): A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men.

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