

Matthew 17:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him (λέγει, Ναί. καὶ ὅτε εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν, προέφθασεν αὐτὸν ὁ Ἰησοῦς)—Peter's immediate 'Yes' (Ναί) affirms Jesus's practice of paying the tax. The verb προφθάνω (prophthānō, 'to anticipate, to come before, to prevent' in older English meaning 'precede') shows Jesus initiated conversation before Peter could speak. This demonstrates Jesus's omniscience—He knew the encounter Peter just had. His supernatural knowledge validates His subsequent teaching.

What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? (Τί σοι δοκεῖ, Σίμων; οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς ἀπὸ τίνων λαμβάνουσιν τέλη ἢ κῆνσον;)—Jesus uses Socratic questioning. The terms τέλος (indirect tax, custom) and κῆνσος (direct tax, tribute) cover all taxation. **Of their own children, or of strangers?** (ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν αὐτῶν ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων;)—the contrast is between υἱοί (sons, heirs, royal family) and ἀλλότριοι (strangers, aliens, foreigners). Jesus establishes the principle that kings tax subjects, not their own family.

Historical Context

Roman taxation in first-century Judea was extensive and resented. The temple tax, however, was Jewish self-taxation for worship, not foreign oppression. Jesus's analogy assumes understanding of Near Eastern monarchies where royal families enjoyed tax exemption—they controlled the treasury, making self-taxation absurd. Persian, Greek, and Roman practice all exempted rulers' families from taxes levied on subjects. Jesus applies this earthly principle to heavenly reality.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's omniscience (knowing Peter's conversation) encourage you that He knows your circumstances before you pray?
2. What does Jesus's Socratic teaching method reveal about effective discipleship—asking questions rather than merely lecturing?

Interlinear Text

λέγων,	Ναί	καὶ	ὅτε	εἰσῆλθεν	εἰς	τὴν	οἰκίαν
He saith	Yes	And	when	he was come	into	the house	
G3004	G3483	G2532	G3753	G1525	G1519	G3588 G3614	
προέφθασεν	αὐτῶν	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	λέγων,	τίνων	σοι	δοκεῖ
prevented	him		Jesus	He saith	What	thou	thinkest
G4399	G846	G3588	G2424	G3004	G5101	G4671	G1380
Σίμων	οἱ	βασιλεῖς	τῆς	γῆς	ἀπὸ	τίνων	
Simon		the kings		of the earth	of	What	
G4613	G3588	G935	G3588	G1093	G575	G5101	
λαμβάνουσιν	τέλη	ἢ	κῆνσον	ἀπὸ	τῶν	υἱῶν	αὐτῶν
do	custom	or	tribute	of		children	him
G2983	G5056	G2228	G2778	G575	G3588	G5207	G846
ἢ	ἀπὸ	τῶν	ἀλλοτρίων				
or	of		strangers				
G2228	G575	G3588	G245				

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 22:21 (Parallel theme): They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Matthew 22:19 (Parallel theme): Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

Matthew 22:17 (Parallel theme): Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

1 Samuel 17:25 (Kingdom): And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

