

Matthew 17:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them (ἴνα δὲ μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτούς)—the conjunction *ἴνα μή* ('lest, so that not') introduces purpose: Jesus pays to avoid *σκανδαλίζω* (causing to stumble, giving offense). Though exempt, He accommodates weak consciences. This exemplifies Paul's later teaching (Romans 14:13-21; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13): don't cause others to stumble over non-essential matters. Christian freedom serves love, not self-assertion. Jesus models humility—voluntarily limiting freedom for others' spiritual good.

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 (πορευθεὶς εἰς θάλασσαν βάλε ἄγκιστρον καὶ τὸν ἀναβάντα πρῶτον ἵχθυν ἄρον, καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ εὑρήσεις στατῆρα)—The *στατήρ* (statēr, four-drachma coin) equals two didrachmas, sufficient for two men. This miracle demonstrates

1. Christ's omniscience (knowing which fish has the coin)
2. His authority over creation (directing the fish)
3. His supernatural provision. **That take, and give unto them for me and thee**—Jesus includes Peter in His provision.

God supplies our needs through unexpected means when we trust Him.

Historical Context

Fish occasionally swallowed shiny objects. Tilapia (common in Galilee) carry eggs/small fish in mouths, making mouth-fishing possible. But Jesus's specific prediction makes this supernatural—He orchestrated this provision. The miracle demonstrated to collectors (who likely heard about it) that Jesus possessed authority over creation, yet humbly complied with human customs. The statēr likely bore Caesar's image, ironically using Caesar's coin for temple tax, foreshadowing 22:21 ('Render to Caesar...').

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's willing payment despite exemption model Christian freedom rightly used to serve others rather than self?
2. What does God's unusual method of provision (coin in fish's mouth) teach about His creativity in meeting your needs?

Interlinear Text

ἴνα δὲ μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτούς πορευθεὶς εἰς
that however not we might offend them having gone to
G2443 G1161 G3361 G4624 G846 G4198 G1519

θάλασσαν βάλε ἄγκιστρον καὶ τὸν ἀναβάντα πρῶτον
sea cast a hook and the having come up first
G2281 G906 G44 G2532 G3588 G305 G4412

ἰχθὺν ἄρον ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ εὑρήσεις
fish take having opened the mouth of it you will find
G2486 G142 G455 G3588 G4750 G846 G2147

στατῆρα ἐκεῖνον λαβὼν δὸς αὐτοῖς ἀντὶ ἐμοῦ
a four-drachma coin that having taken give to them for me
G4715 G1565 G2983 G1325 G846 G473 G1473

καὶ σοῦ
and you
G2532 G4771

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 6:3 (Parallel theme): Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

1 Corinthians 8:9 (Parallel theme): But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (Parallel theme): For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

1 Corinthians 8:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Psalms 8:8 (Parallel theme): The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

Romans 14:21 (Parallel theme): It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Jonah 1:17 (Parallel theme): Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

1 Kings 17:4 (Parallel theme): And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

Jonah 2:10 (Parallel theme): And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

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