

Jesus and the Temple Tax

Matthew 17:24-27 (page 978 in the pew Bible) When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" 26 And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. 27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

1. This is not a passage primarily about whether or not you should pay your taxes. But you should pay your taxes!

Matthew 22:17-22 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. 20 And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

Romans 13:6-7 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

2. This tax was a "voluntary temple tax." Would you be inclined to pay it?

Exodus 30:11-16 The Lord said to Moses, 12 "When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the Lord when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them. 13 Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary ... 16 You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the Lord, so as to make atonement for your lives."

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

3. How do you respond when people pose a question in order to put Jesus and the gospel in a bad light?

a. Sometimes people ask questions in order to attack or embarrass disciples of Jesus.

Luke 23:9-11 So Herod questioned Jesus at some length, but he made no answer. 10 The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. 11 And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.

b. So when and how should you respond? Acknowledge and believe that Jesus is the King of Kings and the Son of God.

Matthew 17:25 – 27 And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?” 26 And when he said, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free. 27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

c. Jesus does not want to offend.

i. The cross is offensive. We do offend with the cross.

1 Peter 2:7-8 but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.”

1 Timothy 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

ii. Let the cross be offensive, but don't you be a jerk. Instead, follow the example of Jesus and Peter. And always give reason for the hope that is within you to anyone who asks!

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

1 Peter 3:15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

1 Corinthians 10:25-27 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 26 For “the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.” 27 If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In preparation for this message Pastor John is grateful for the insights of Dan Doriani, James Boice, Paul LaBoutillier and the ESV study Bible

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