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The Miracles of Jesus Christ: Finding the Tax Money in a Fish

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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST

MIRACLE TWENTY-SIX: Finding the Tax Money in a Fish (Mt. 17:24-27)

SURVEY

Simon Peter promises a tax collector that Jesus would pay the imposed temple tax. The following dialogue then occurs:

Jesus: *"Peter, from whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes? from their own sons or from others?"*

Peter: *"From others."*

Jesus: *"Then the sons are exempt. But so that we might not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch, open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."*

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the only miracle involving a brute creature.
- It is the only miracle resulting in a money coin.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- This temple tax, owed by all Jews from age twenty upward, was two drachma, approximately two days' wages. It was to be used for the temple upkeep and repair. There were three specific occasions recorded in the Old Testament when this tax was collected.

1. During the time of Moses (Ex. 30:13, 38:26)

2. During the time of Joash—This Judean king actually had a special chest built and placed outside by the temple gate to receive the tax (2 Chron. 24:9-14).

3. During the time of Nehemiah (Neh. 10:32)

- Note Peter's thoughtless response to the tax collector's demand:

They ask: *"Doth not your master pay tribute?"*

He answered: *"Yes."*

Here Peter committed a serious blunder. He committed Jesus to do something without first asking Him. Nathan the prophet once did the same thing when advising King David.

It also had to do with the temple. Upon hearing David's desire to construct a temple, Nathan responded:

"Then Nathan said to David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee" (1 Chron. 17:2).

But then God stepped in:

"And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in" (1 Chron. 17:3-4).

The conclusion of the matter was that God had already determined that Solomon (David's son) would build the temple.

- Jesus told Peter why he should not have to pay the tax:

1. He owned the temple (Mal. 3:1).
2. He had previously cleansed the temple (Jn. 2:16).
3. He was the eternal Son of God (Mt. 16:16).

- He then told Peter why he should pay the tax:

1. To maintain a good testimony:

"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them."

Here the Savior gave a beautiful example of properly using our Christian liberty, as later echoed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 8-10:

"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor. 8:9, 12; 9:22)

2. To increase Peter's faith

3. To illustrate His work as the second Adam:

When correctly understood, this amazing miracle serves to illustrate not only the deity of Christ, but even more, His perfect humanity. What was He doing here? In essence, Jesus was fulfilling the very first command in the Bible given to Adam concerning the world of nature:

"And God ...said ... subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

Our Lord thus, in some mysterious manner (lost to us after Adam's sin), was able to communicate and exercise control over a fish swimming in the waters of Galilee.

- It should be noted here that this fish *obeyed* its Creator!

1. As did the ravens near a brook

"And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and

turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.” (1 Kings 17:1-6)

2. As did the lions in a den

”Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God” (Dan. 6:21-23).

Tragically, the only two creatures able to *disobey* their Creator are *angels* and *human beings*!