

# COIN IN THE FISH'S MOUTH

Date: April 3, 2020

Scripture: Matthew 17:24-27

Hey everybody, my name is Jonathan Vinke. Today we're going to look at the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth, which is found in Matthew 17:24-27. So let's read it.

<sup>24</sup> 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?" <sup>25</sup> 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?" <sup>26</sup> And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. <sup>27</sup> 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."

Matthew 17:24-27

So what happens in this miracle, it could be one of a couple of things. I mean, Jesus either miraculously causes a coin to materialize in the mouth of a fish that Peter caught. Or in His omniscience and wisdom, He knew that there was a fish in the sea, that it swallowed a coin and He knew that Peter would go and that that fish would be the fish that bit the hook that Peter would pull out of the water. I don't know which one it is, either way, it's amazing that Jesus knew this. And He uses this miraculous provision of money to satisfy the required tax.

So what's going on in the context? Well, it takes place in Capernaum. Capernaum is the place where Peter lived. He probably based his fishing business before he

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followed Jesus out of Capernaum and it was likely that Jesus stayed in Peter's home most of the time when he was in that area. And this tax was not a Roman-imposed imperial tax, but it was a local Jewish tax that was paid once a year by each adult male, basically for the upkeep of the temple. So it wasn't really out of the ordinary. It was something that would have been expected by Jesus.

Now, this miracle primarily impacts the apostle Peter. It changes things in him for a few different reasons. First, the tax collectors go to Peter. They don't go to Jesus directly. This might suggest that they assumed Peter knows what Jesus is thinking, or maybe he's Jesus's close assistant. Regardless, they ask him, is he planning to pay the tax and they ask him for a very small amount. Now, this could be out of respect for Jesus because He was a respected Rabbi that they didn't ask Him for a lot. They said, "Is he going to pay the two drachma tax?"

Peter says, "Yes," but he may have had some doubts about it because he brings these people along with him to Jesus. Maybe Peter thought Jesus could get out of paying this tax for some reason. Maybe he thought, "Well, Jesus, you're in this speaking ministry, you're doing all these wonderful works. They shouldn't be bothering you with these trivial little things," so he brings these people with him to Jesus. When they get to Jesus, He speaks to Peter first and He asks him what seems like a random question. He says, "Do the sons of kings pay taxes or do kings tax their own sons?" When Jesus asks questions like this, usually He's trying to make a point and maybe Peter knew that.

The answer is, sons don't pay taxes because their status as sons puts them above it. It excludes them from a normal tax in the kingdom. And Jesus is drawing the connection here between Himself as the Son of God and He's implying that as the

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son of the Most High King actually, He's above paying taxes. He doesn't actually have to do it. But He's going to use this situation as an opportunity to display, once again, His humility. Jesus doesn't use His place of authority as an opportunity to extort or to serve His own needs. We learned from Philippians 2 that this is the essence of Jesus's life and earthly ministry, that He was willing to humble Himself. Here, He's willing to lay down His own rights for others. He came not to be served, but to serve.

He tells Peter to go to the sea, the Sea of Galilee and to fish with a hook. Now we don't usually see Peter fishing with a hook. Usually he's fishing with a net, so it would have been a very specific and targeted mission. It took Peter a level of deliberate intentionality to go and follow through on this obedience and probably some patience. Can you imagine what was going through his head while he was waiting for that fish to bite? Just imagine Peter walking down to the water. What was going through his mind? He must have thought it was a little crazy casting a hook and thinking, "Seriously, I'm going to catch a fish and then look in its mouth and expect it to have the money that I need to pay taxes." I'm sure it sounded crazy.

The cool thing is it doesn't only give Peter the opportunity to see Jesus demonstrate miraculous power, but he gets the opportunity to play a part in the miracle. He sees an example of God's promise to always provide for His people and he sees Jesus do a miracle and has his own taxes paid at the same time, which is a free and undeserved gift of grace.

Now this points us to the ultimate miracle of resurrection in a couple of ways. In the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, He was miraculously providing the payment of a debt that we owed. And just like Peter, we are the recipients of the undeserved

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free gift of grace through the life that He offers us by His life. Further through the resurrection, we can participate in the life of the kingdom of Jesus. We partner with Jesus just like Peter. He graciously invites us to join Him in His work. And as we respond to Him in faith and obedience, we get to see Him work miracles all around us for His glory and for our joy.

Let's pray.

Father, thank You for Your gracious provision of everything we need for life and godliness in Jesus Christ. Thank You for not only providing for us, but for inviting us to share the work of the kingdom of God with You. Would You give us hearts that are willing to respond to Your commands with joyful obedience. Help us to see the beauty of Jesus who is so willing to humble Himself, to pour Himself out for others. Give us that same humility and let us become more like Him as we give ourselves away. Above all, would You be glorified in Jesus name. Amen.