

Jesus IOI

“Grace Thoughts”



A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

“From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers? . . . the sons are exempt.” –Matthew 17:25, 26

One of the highlights during my trip to the Holy Land was the visit to the beautiful Sea of Galilee, which Jesus and His disciples navigated so many times. There is a fish named *Chromis Simonis* in honor of Simon Peter. It has a large mouth, big enough to hold a *statër*, which is a silver coin worth four drachmas—one shekel. The background to our text today is a story about the miraculous provision of a *statër* in the mouth of a fish in order to pay the temple tax.

The story takes place in Capernaum. Tax collectors asked Peter “Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?” (Matthew 17:24). Peter answered affirmatively. The tax in question was the temple tribute, which every twenty-year-old-and-above Jewish male was expected to pay. There were some exceptions though; priests, for instance, did not have to pay it. The temple tax was based on the instructions found in the Law (see Exodus 30:11-16). It was half a shekel per person and was used to maintain the temple. Later, in the house, Jesus and Peter had a very interesting conversation that reminds us of our identity as children of God. “Jesus spoke to him first, saying, ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?’ ” (verse 25). Peter answered that the earthly rulers collect tribute from strangers, not from their own children. In this metaphoric saying, God is the king, and Jesus and His followers are the sons. In response, Jesus concluded, “then the sons are exempt” (verse 26), meaning that He and His followers were not subject to the tribute for their Father’s House. The temple and its sacrificial system would soon become obsolete when its services would find their fulfillment in the sacrifice of Jesus. Still, not to offend the Jewish authorities needlessly, Peter would encounter a divine provision by catching a fish that had a *statër* in its mouth, the equivalent of one shekel and enough to pay the temple tax for both Jesus and Peter (verse 27). We are not strangers! We are *children* of the king, and He provides everything we need.

Talbot, Elizabeth *Jesus Wins!*, p. 45.