

Principles of Faith and Taxes

📖 Matthew 17:14-27

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In our study of Matthew, we are in the fourth discourse. I failed to notify you of this in Matt 16:13. So the narrative is Matt 13:53-16:12 and beginning in 16:13 we come out of the narrative that sets the context and into the discourse. The narrative is covering the withdrawal of the King. In the light of the informal rejection it showed that when the King faced opposition from the leadership He withdrew with His disciples to train them for the interadvent age and whenever He did a miracle the opposition would rise again and the cycle would begin again. This pattern was repeated two times and then He abandoned the leadership of Israel. So in the wake of that abandonment we are now in the discourse and here the King reveals for the first time the Church and His betrayal, death and resurrection as well as various principles they will need to live during the interadvent age. So this is a period of training. He's on His way to Jerusalem getting ready to die and be raised and ascend to send the Spirit to start the Church. After that He will come in His kingdom.

Last time in 16:28-17:13 we studied the Transfiguration, which is a preview of Him coming in His kingdom. 16:28 is His prediction of the Transfiguration. In the context this would serve as an encouragement for His committed disciples to endure the difficulties associated with identifying with Christ. Life is not easy if you identify with Christ because the world is antagonistic to Christ. But if you endure the hostility it will pay off in the end. Suffering is the path to reigning in great glory with Him in the kingdom. In 17:1, six days later His prediction was fulfilled. Jesus took Peter and James and John up on nearby Mt Hermon. Luke says they went to pray but the disciples fell asleep and while they were asleep the transfiguration began. At some point they fully awoke. In 17:2-3 they saw Jesus in His blinding brilliance of glory having a discussion with Moses and Elijah in the kingdom. In 17:4, Peter, not knowing what he was saying, requested to build three tabernacles, one for each of them in order to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles as fulfillment of the kingdom. However, this suggestion in 17:5 was denied by the Father because that generation had not repented. He enveloped the entire situation in the brilliant cloud covering of the Shekinah Glory. Within the cloud they heard the voice of the Father commending His Son above Moses and Elijah. The Father said "This is My beloved Son!" The Son is the heir. "With whom I am well-pleased!" That Son is the Servant who satisfied the Father. "Listen to Him!" He is the prophet like unto Moses. He is everything. Moses and Elijah cannot compare with Him. In 17:6, the disciples fell to the ground

in terror. That is the universal response when people have that kind of contact with the blinding brilliance of the holiness of God. In 17:7, Jesus, with compassion touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid. In 17:8, when they lifted their eyes the transfiguration was over and only Jesus was there. It was the one and only preview of the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. In 17:9 Jesus said, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." And while this vision was great, Peter in his epistle points out that it was just a subjective experience and that the word of God is more sure (2 Pet 1:19), to which you would do well to pay attention and not put any stock in anyone who says they have a dream or vision. Dreams and visions are nothing compared to the word of God. And today no one is receiving dreams and visions as the canon is complete and strict warning is given at the end of Revelation 22 not to add anything to this book and which Ps 138:2 says His word is even above His name. So the authority is Scripture. In 17:10, having seen Elijah in vision they asked, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" In other words, they supposed the kingdom was coming soon and they understood that Elijah must come first. Jesus answered in 17:11-12 that it is true that Elijah must come first, and adds, but Elijah already came. He was referring to John the Baptist, but that generation did not recognize John and allowed him to go to death. Therefore, while John would have been Elijah if they had accepted it, he was not, Christ would die and Elijah is still to come. So at this point the full picture is starting to come into focus. Jesus is going to suffer, die, be raised, ascend to the right hand of the Father until Elijah comes and restores the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers and at that time the nation Israel will receive Him and the preview of the Second Advent in the Transfiguration will become a reality as He returns in great power and glory.

Tonight in Matt 17:14-21 we have some teaching about the principle of faith which is to characterize the believer's life during the church age while the kingdom is in postponement. In 17:22-23 we see another direct statement predicting His death and resurrection which was to prepare His disciples for what was coming. Then in 17:24-27 we have some teaching about the principle of taxation which is to characterize the sons of the kingdom during this church age until the kingdom comes. These are very important teachings of Jesus that are applicable to us in the present Church age as we prepare for the kingdom.

The first pericope is 17:14-21 and here we find the principle of faith. Let me mention that it is helpful to study the parallels in Mark and Luke in order to fill in additional details to many of these events. I've been doing that where I think helpful and I'll continue to do that tonight. In 17:14 the situation was that Jesus, Peter, James and John were returning from Mt Hermon to join the other nine disciples. The parallel in Mark 9:14 says that as they were approaching they noticed that the nine disciples were arguing with the scribes in the midst of a large crowd. When they saw Jesus they left the discussion and ran to meet Him. As they got near Jesus asked them what topic they had been discussing. He never got an answer because in Matt 17:14, one of the men from the crowd **came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him** requesting help. The man was obviously in a dire situation and understood that **Jesus** could help him. In 17:15 he makes his request, **Lord, have mercy on my son**. The parallel in Luke 9:38 says "my only son" using the Greek word *μονογενής* which in this context means this was the man's

one and only son. His request for **mercy** indicates that he knows that he doesn't deserve anything. His son's situation is then stated, **for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.** If you skip down to verse 18 you'll see that the boy's condition was caused by a **demon**. What the demon was doing to the boy was causing a condition here translated as **a lunatic**. The word means one who "experiences epileptic seizures." So the demon was causing the boy to have seizures. The parallel in Mark 9:18 says that the demon would seize him, slam him to the ground and cause him to foam at the mouth and grind his teeth and then pass out. It's gathered from the parallel in Luke 9:39 that the demon would come and go and was not a permanent resident in this boy because the father said that when the demon leaves it leaves with difficulty, damaging him severely as he left only to return later to inflict this harm again. In the parallel in Mark 9:21 Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And the father said, "From childhood." So this was a problem that had a long history. The father added that the demon often threw the boy in fire or water to try and kill him. The last important note is in the parallel of Mark 9:17 and 25 which says that the demon made the boy mute and Jesus adds that it also caused deafness. That made this a unique case because Jewish exorcists could cast out demons as long as they could establish verbal communication with the demon. But in cases where the demon caused deafness and muteness no communication could be established. This was considered a hopeless case.

In 17:16 the man says, **I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.** Now did the man think that Jesus' disciples could possibly cast him out? Of course. Jesus had given them the "authority" to cast out demons in Matt 10:1 and as they went out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel proclaiming the kingdom to be at hand they were to "cast out demons" as signs of the authenticity of their message (Matt 10:8). Obviously they had been successful at casting out demons as attested by three facts; first, in another passage they came back and reported that they had cast out demons; second, in 17:16, the man was under the impression that they could cast out demons; and third, in 17:19, the disciples questioned Jesus as to why they could not drive out this demon. In any case, this was a difficult case, the man had already exhausted his options of Jewish exorcists and Jesus' disciples, so now he comes to Jesus Himself.

What Jesus says next in 17:17 is reported by all three synoptic gospels, **You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.** Note the rebuke is a general one directed at that **generation**. This was a characteristic of that entire generation. As Toussaint says, "The Lord rebukes that "generation" (*γενεα* is used here in the sense of "a race of people alike in character and pursuits") for their lack of faith and perverseness."¹ He's speaking of the Jews, of course. The entire generation of Jews was characterized by unbelief; even Jesus' disciples are simply said to have had little faith. As Barbieri said, "He rebuked not only the disciples but also the entire crowd for their lack of faith."² This was the major distinguishing mark of that generation. The word **perverted** is possibly telling us why they were so characterized by unbelief. It's the word *διαστρεφω* and means to "make crooked" or "deform." In the perfect

tense it refers to a past completed action with ongoing results. What this means is that generation had so deformed the OT that when the Messiah, predicted by the OT, came they were not believing in Him.

This was extremely frustrating to Jesus. As Jesus expressed in His two questions; **How long shall I be with you?** In other words, how much longer do I have to be around you people? and **How long shall I put up with you?** At these words Jesus said, **Bring him here to Me.** In the parallel in Mark 9:23 the man had said to Jesus, "...if You can do anything..." "And Jesus said to him, "If You can? All things are possible to him who believes." At that the man immediately cried out, "I do believe; help my unbelief." These words are a great help in what is being taught.

When the man said, "I do believe" he is saying that he believed that Jesus was the Messiah. He had been convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus. When he said, "help my unbelief" he was saying that he was having a hard time continually depending on Him to meet his every need. When the man requested this help Jesus did three things in 17:18. First, **Jesus rebuked him.** Him being the demon. In the parallel in Mark 9:25 He said to the demon, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." This was necessary because the demon kept leaving and coming back. Second, at the rebuke **the demon came out of him.** The parallel in Mark 9:26 indicates that the demon resisted leaving the boy and threw him into terrible convulsions but did come out leaving the boy looking so much like a corpse that the people supposed him to be dead. Then Jesus picked him up and he got up. Matthew does not state all these details but only third, **the boy was cured at once.** The verse is short and terse to demonstrate not the details but the fact that Jesus was able to cure an incurable case with a mere word. The obvious implication is that Jesus could cast the demons out of the nation Israel and bring them into their kingdom. As Pentecost said, "What Christ did for the demon-possessed boy was a revelation of what He could and would do for the nation Israel if they would put faith in Him."³ The situation set the stage for Jesus teaching his disciples.

In 17:19, **Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?"** This was evidently something they had done before but in this case could not do it. His answer in 17:20 is short and terse, **Because of the littleness of your faith.** They too, like that entire generation, were characterized by a lack of faith. The word **littleness of your faith** is *ολιγοπιστια* and means "a limited faith." What it means is that they only trusted in His person. One that trusts that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God has little faith. But one who continually trusts in Christ for enablement has great faith. Constable says, "The disciples were treating the gift of healing that Jesus had given them as a magical ability that worked regardless of their faith in Him. Now they learned that their power depended on...confidence in Jesus to work through them to heal. Continual dependence on Jesus rather than simply belief in who He is constitutes strong faith (cf. Mark 6:5-6)."⁴ The difference between little faith and great faith is a simple but profound one. Those who have faith that Jesus is the Christ have little faith but those who continually trust Him for all their needs manifest great faith. The disciples had the former but not the latter.

Jesus then gives a comparison of this truth and what they can accomplish when they have great faith. The translation is misleading. It says, **if you have faith the size of a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.** The expression **faith the size of a mustard seed** is the problem. The Greek text simply says, "if you have faith *as* a mustard seed." Commentators assume the comparison is related to the size of a mustard seed but that does not seem to be the comparison. The disciples already had small faith. Instead the comparison is between having faith as one might have a mustard seed. If one had a mustard seed it was guaranteed to grow into a large tree. This was a well-known fact. Thrown alongside that fact is that if one had faith it would result in overcoming seemingly impossible obstacles. This kind of faith is something more than simply believing that Jesus was the Christ. This kind of faith was living in continual dependence upon Him. They thought they could just cast out demons without continually depending upon Him. They were wrong. They needed to continually depend upon Him for that ability. That is why Jesus says next, "if you have faith (that is, continual dependence) ... **you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.** Many people have mistakenly taken the moving of mountains passages as ordinary-literal and wondered why they have not moved literal mountains. Constable is correct when he says, "Removing mountains is a proverbial figure of speech for overcoming great difficulties (cf. Isa. 40:4; 49:11; 54:10; Matt. 21:21–22; Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6; 1 Cor. 13:2)."⁵ The point is that if they continually depended upon Him then they would overcome great obstacles. In fact, as Jesus says, **no** obstacle would **be impossible to** overcome. Faith as continual dependence is the means to overcoming great obstacles.

The great obstacle they faced was casting this mute and deaf spirit out of this man's son. Because they did not have continual dependence upon Him they were unable to cast it out.

The last verse here is 17:21 and you will notice it is in brackets. **[But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.]** This verse is not in the earliest manuscripts of Matthew. However, the parallel in Mark 9:29 does include this in the original. As Metzger said, "copyists frequently inserted material derived from another Gospel..."⁶ That is what happened here? But what does the addition do except reinforce the very point Jesus is trying to make? **Prayer and fasting** are expressions of continual dependence upon Him. If they had been doing these things they would have been able to cast it out because Jesus' power would have worked through them. The bottom line is that His power is activated through them only as they depend upon Him.

The same lesson is true for us. For example, every believer in the Church has a new nature that desires to please God. However, no matter how hard we may try to please God in the flesh we cannot please Him. The only way that the new nature is energized to bear fruit that is pleasing to God is when we live by faithful dependence upon Him. It is this faithful dependence that unleashes the work of the Spirit in our lives and the good fruit of righteousness.

What then was the lesson Jesus was teaching them? That during the Church age the only way for a believer to overcome difficult situations is to faithfully depend upon Him. As Pentecost says, "This lesson was designed to teach the men that their ministry in future days must be carried on in dependence on God and faith in Him."⁷ To be clear, the father's response in Mk 9:24 is actually two lessons in one. "I do believe;" is lesson one. This lesson is that a man must believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God in order to be right before God. "Help my unbelief" is lesson two. This lesson is that a believer must exercise faithful dependence upon Him in order to have victory over obstacles. Lesson two is in view here. As Walvoord said, "It is not the greatness of the problem that is the difficulty; it is the lack of faith on the part of believers."⁸ And therefore the prayer of dependence, "Lord, help my unbelief!"

In 17:22-23 we move to another scene and lesson. **And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day."** This is the third direct revelation of His death and resurrection. The first was 16:21 at Caesarea Philippi where the important words, "From that time Jesus began to show..." prefaces the revelation of His death and resurrection. The second was in 17:9 and 12 after the Transfiguration on Mt Hermon to only Peter, James and John. Now the third time **while they were gathering together in Galilee** He made this revelation again. They needed to be prepared for what was coming in Jerusalem and he will repeat this many, many times because they do not understand. At this time, we are only a few months from the crucifixion and resurrection, probably 3-6 months. In the parallel of Luke 9:44 Jesus prefaced what He said here with these words, "Let these words sink into your ears." It is a very picturesque statement. These words were not sinking in. I cannot overemphasize that at this time they did not understand these things. They really needed to let these words sink in. The first words are somewhat enigmatic. **The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.** What is enigmatic is that in Jewish thought the Son of Man was to come and establish the kingdom but here it is revealed that the **Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.** This was not what they expected. The word **delivered** is *παραδίδωμι* and means "betrayed." It is passive voice and so someone was going to "betray" Him. Who is not revealed at this time but obviously someone close to Jesus, for that is the nature of betrayal. The second thing revealed is 17:23, **they will kill Him.** This is clearly the death, no mention of how is revealed, only the fact of His death at the hands of men. Since no one could take His life from Him then obviously it means that the men would carry out all that was necessary to **kill Him.** The third thing revealed is **He will be raised on the third day.** This is clearly the resurrection. And note their response; **they were deeply grieved.** This time nobody rebuked him but they were saddened and distressed. We can't tell exactly why. Some think it was because there was someone close to Him would betray Him, perhaps one of them. Others think they were saddened because He said He would be killed. We're not told for sure and it may have been both but one thing is certain. They did not understand His statement about the resurrection. This, in fact, is what both parallels in Mark and Luke major on. Mark 9:32 says, "But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him." They were afraid He might rebuke them. The parallel in Luke 9:45

says, "But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement." While some think God just sovereignly hid it from them the text indicates that the reason they did not understand the resurrection is because they were not believing all that the Scriptures spoke of Him. Their unbelief was hindering their understanding and the Father was hiding these things from them until they believed. This is borne out by many Scriptures, most notably the strangers on the road to Emmaus who were not allowed to recognize Him until they were believing the Scriptures. How slow they were to believe all that was written! But are we any better? If you want understanding, you must come to God believing the Scriptures. Toussaint said, "It is evident that they did not understand because they did not want to believe it."⁹ This is why Jesus prefaced His statements with "Let these words sink into your ears." He knew that they were not believing and that the only way to start believing is to let His words sink into their ears. Faith cometh by hearing. But they did not want to hear them and so the words of resurrection were being concealed from them. Lenski said, "To the last their minds struggled against the plain meaning of what was dinned into their ears, and thus what they did not want to know they actually did not understand." So a major lesson here. When you don't want to hear some truth in the Scriptures you will be shut off from understanding it. It is very dangerous for you to not want to hear a truth. I have met this up close and personal. They state directly they don't want to believe that. Well, in that case they are shut up from understanding. This happened to the disciples and I assure you this is happening to you. There are things you don't want to believe. That is why J. Vernon McGee felt like the words of verse 17, "You unbelieving and perverted generation," fit the Church 50 years ago. I would say it is even more fitting now... There are very few people who want to believe what the Bible says. Instead they want the Bible to say what they believe. That is why they know so little.

So, the second principle tonight is that refusing to hear the truth will result in two things. First, God will hide further understanding from you. Some of you think that certain things could not possibly be true. Therefore, you will not hear it even when the Scriptures say it. You think there must be some way around it. This is stunting your spiritual growth. Because of this you have areas where you are living in utter darkness. Second, in these areas where you don't understand your emotional responses will always be wrong. Note that the disciples were deeply grieved. If they had accepted the truth of His resurrection they would have been greatly overjoyed. So they had the wrong emotional response. Every time you operate apart from the truth you have wrong emotions. That's another reason it's very important to want to know the truth and to accept the truth. Otherwise you are destroying yourself emotionally and spiritually (2 Thess 2:8-12). I would conclude this section by pointing out that the only way to correct the spiritual blindness you've brought on yourself is to let the truth of the word of God sink into your ears and accept it. Some of you are hung up on things. You need to believe every truth of the word of God, not just the ones you like, otherwise God will conceal further truth from you and you will be emotionally retarded and a spiritual slob.

The last lesson is 17:24-27 and this deals with an important miracle and the principle of paying tribute or taxes in the interadvent age. This is only recorded by Matthew. There are no parallels. Verse 24, **When they came to Capernaum.** This was where Peter lived and where Jesus set up His ministry base in the Galilee. The ruins are still there today and it is in ruins because Jesus said they saw more miracles than any city and yet did not repent (Matt 11:23-24). When they came into town on this occasion **those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?"** What's the **two-drachma tax?** It was a temple tax. The first time it was levied was in Exod 30:11-15 and in the context it seems it was only to be levied that one time for the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture. But after the exile the tradition developed that this tax was required for all Jews, even though it shouldn't have been. As Pentecost said, "The provision in Exodus 30:11-15 seems to have applied only to the original collection to be taken while the tabernacle was under construction. After the Babylonian captivity, the rabbinical tradition imposed this tax as customary for all Jews. Thus to refuse to pay this tax would not lead to an accusation of violating the law although it would be a violation of tradition."¹⁰ So the Mosaic law did not require this tax but the rabbinic law did. That's what they're trying to levy here, a **two-drachma tax** for the temple, which amounted to two day's wages.

In 17:25 when Peter was asked whether Jesus paid this tax Peter **said, "Yes.** In Peter's mind Jesus was a law-abiding Jew and so, of course He paid the tax, but evidently He hadn't paid it that year, perhaps because they'd been up north. But now that they're back in town it's time to pay the tax. **And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first...**The word **first** means He went ahead of Peter in addressing the issue. He saw it as a teaching situation. So He said, **What do you think, Simon?** This is the teaching by question format. He's trying to get Peter to think. What do you think Peter? **From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?** Now He's turned to civil taxes and then He's going to bring it back to the religious taxes. But this was helpful to turn to the civil taxes. It was customary in Rome to conquer a people and then collect taxes from them while giving citizens a tax break. So the **strangers** or foreigners are people Rome conquered. The sons are Roman citizens. From whom did the **kings of the earth collect** taxes? In 17:26 Peter answers, **From strangers.** Was he right? Of course he was right. But now Jesus wants to make use of this principle and apply it over to the religious taxes. "The principle is the same in both" religious and civil life, "but it was easier to illustrate in the civil arena of life."¹¹

Now let's apply that to the religions arena. And **Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt."**¹² **However, so that we do not offend them.** So he's talking about the temple tax. Who might they offend if they didn't pay the temple tax? The leadership of the house of Israel, the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees. Now did they owe the temple tax? No. Why not? Because the temple was His Father's house. Remember how Jesus went into the temple as a boy and his parents left and three days later they found Him at the temple. What did He say when they said, "Why have you treated us like this?" "Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" The temple was His Father's house. He was a son and the sons don't pay taxes. So the Son is exempt from the temple tax. Now what about Peter? Was Peter also a son of the Father? Oh, yes, absolutely. So neither Jesus nor Peter

owed the tax. Pentecost said, "Christ's inference was that since this taxation was to support the temple, which was His Father's house, He and those associated with Him should not have to pay taxes to support it."¹³ So who should have to pay the temple tax? Who was not exempt? The strangers. And who are they? The Pharisees, the scribes and the Sadducees. The very people who thought the Temple belonged to them! But it belonged to the Father and Jesus was the Son of the Father and all who were with Him were sons as well.

But they are going to pay it anyway. Why are they going to do that? **So that they do not offend them.** You know, it would just give them an occasion to accuse and arrest Him and it is not His time and so to just avoid it altogether Jesus says, "We'll just pay it." You know, there are some things that are just not worth it and paying taxes is one of them. You shouldn't make a big deal about that. Jesus taught that right here and Paul will pick it up in Romans 13. But I know Christians who don't pay their taxes and I know some who went to prison. They don't follow Christ's teaching and rightfully so they get arrested and thrown in the slammer.

So how did they pay them? Jesus says, alright Peter, you like to fish, why don't you go fishing, **go to the sea and throw in 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 you and Me.**" Now this is such an interesting way to pay taxes. How would you like to be able to pay your taxes this way? Every guy I know would love to get to go fishing on April 15. Apparently Jesus didn't like to go fishing too much because he sent Peter to fish out the tax for both of them. You note that the fish would have a **shekel** in its mouth. The shekel was a *στανηρ* and was worth four drachma and so would cover both Jesus' and Peter's temple tax. Constable says, "There was no two drachma coin in circulation at this time, so two adults often went together and paid one shekel that was worth four drachmas"¹⁴ Some people don't think they did pay it because Matthew doesn't mention it but as Walvoord said, "Although many have tried to explain away this incident because Matthew does not go on to complete the story, it seems clear that Peter caught the fish with the money in its mouth and paid the tax."

This leads us to think about this very interesting miracle. We're talking about a fish here, one fish out of who knows how many fish in the Sea of Galilee and the first one Peter would catch would have the exact tax money in its **mouth**. What did this miracle show? Many consider this to be an ultimate miracle. J. Vernon McGee said, "Now our Lord demonstrates that He has recovered all that Adam lost. The creatures were obedient to Him. The fish as well as Peter followed His command. I believe that God had given to Adam the same dominion over all creation, but he lost it at the Fall."¹⁵ I'm not sure how far we can go with the concept of original dominion, but you start to see here the original purpose of man and why we are premillennial. By premillennial we mean that Christ will return to earth before the millennial aspect of the kingdom. He could have established the kingdom at the first advent, as this miracle shows, but the nation rejected Him and so we have this period of postponement open up during which the church is built. Then, after the church, the 70th week of Daniel will transpire where He is removing all the usurpers from the earth, all those who have taken over what rightly belongs to Him. Then Israel will repent and He will return and establish His kingdom on earth. The reason He is doing this is to fulfill

the dominion mandate as given originally to Adam but which was lost when Adam sinned and turned it over to Satan at the Fall. In the meantime, Satan and his followers have become usurpers. He tried to stop the cross, tried to offer Jesus a kingdom without a cross and in fact Peter also tempted Jesus with a kingdom without a cross but Jesus knew that the only way to the kingdom was through the cross. And so He's going to go to the cross and here He is demonstrating the kind of authority that He is going to exercise in the kingdom, authority over "the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." All the authority Adam was originally to exert but failed to do He indeed will do, but only when Israel repents. So miracles like this show that He came to do what Adam failed to do and that He will do this on a global scale when Israel repents. That is why passages in Isaiah like the lamb will lie with the wolf and the little child will play by the viper's den are ordinary literal predictions of the kingdom. Jesus must fulfill what Adam failed to fulfill or else history remains unfinished. This is premillennialism and it's Adam's failure to fulfill man's original purpose that is one of the major reasons Jesus must come back and reign on the earth. And in the kingdom you will see many such things as this. In any case, Jesus demonstrated by the coin in the fish's mouth that He has recovered all that Adam lost and is therefore the rightful King. Peter's participation shows that he is a son of the kingdom and will therefore participate in the King's future dominion when he returns with Him in His kingdom.

In summary, in 17:14, as Jesus, Peter, James and John were returning from Mt Hermon a crowd came up to Jesus and a man fell on his knees desperate for help saying in 17:15, Lord, have mercy on my son. This son had epileptic seizures caused by a demon that caused him to fall down and thrash around and convulse and foam at the mouth and had tried to throw him in water to drown him and fire to destroy him. The demon came and went with great difficulty and was mute and deaf, a very difficult case. In 17:16 he says "I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." That was something they could normally do but they could not as a set up for what Jesus was going to teach them about how to live the Christian life. In 17:17 Jesus was bent out of shape, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." It was their lack of faith that was hindering their ability to cast out the demon. In 17:18 Jesus rebuked the demon, the demon came out and the boy was cured at once, piece of cake. In 17:19 the disciples came to Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out? The answer is because they only had faith that He was the Christ. They were not depending on Him for everyday matters. They thought they could just independently drive it out. Jesus is teaching them that is not possible. The only way they could overcome great obstacles would be to have faith as a mustard seed. That is, continual dependence upon Him. That is the only way to live the Christian life and that is what is expressed by the prayer and fasting of verse 21. In 17:22 He gave them another revelation of coming attractions saying, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." Their only response, they were deeply grieved. Obviously they did not understand. They did not want to understand. The only way to understand is to believe. They did not believe. And finally, in 17:24, another lesson, they came to Capernaum and the tax

collectors questioned Peter, "Does your teacher pay the two-drachma temple tax?" In 17:25, of course, said Peter, and when he came into the house Jesus approached him first about this issue saying, "What do you think, Simon? In the civil arena, who do kings collect taxes from? Their own citizens or conquered foreigners? Conquered foreigners said Peter. Right, then we are exempt because the Temple is My Father's house and you are exempt too because you are associated with Me. But so that we don't offend them over some petty detail and give them cause to arrest us, go fishing and the first fish that comes up is going to have a shekel in its mouth and you pay them that for both of us.

In conclusion, what can we learn? First, the Christian life in the Church age is lived successfully only as we continually depend upon Him, that is live in faithful dependence. We can't do it by the flesh any more than they could cast out demons on their own. It is a supernatural life of faith. Second, if you don't believe the Scriptures on a point the Father will hide further truth from you until you do. They didn't believe the things they were hearing and so they couldn't understand. There are areas in your thought that you are spiritually blind to because you don't want to believe certain things in the Scripture. That is too bad. Let the truths of the word of God sink into your ears. Third, pay your taxes. I don't care if you agree with how they are using them. That is irrelevant. Jesus didn't like what they were doing with them down at the temple, filling their fat wallets. But it was not worth it to be arrested and blow the whole thing. His kingdom is coming and we are not going to pay taxes then, but strangers and foreigners will.

¹ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 213.

² Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 60.

³ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 261.

⁴ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 17:19.

⁵ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 17:19.

⁶ Bruce Manning Metzger, United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)* (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 35.

⁷ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 261.

⁸ John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 132.

⁹ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 214.

¹⁰ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 263.

¹¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 17:25.

¹² The word exempt is *ελευθερος* and means “free.” In other words, if you don’t have to pay taxes you are free. Every tax you have to pay is a form of slavery.

¹³ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 263-64.

¹⁴ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 17:24.

¹⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels (Matthew 14-28)*, electronic ed., vol. 35 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 61.