

*Opening comments overheard in the Four Gospels class at imaginary Quest Bible College*

**Dr. Quest** (on why Mat. 17:24-27 is a personal favorite)

This story is one of my favorites. Why? Well, this is not my only reason by any means, but in part it's because the story involve fishing, and more exactly, the use of a hook instead of a net. The Plus Bible Study method works great here, since it's easy for a fishing fan like me to quickly see the positives. As always, there are some negatives as well, but 'the big one' did not get away! What are your first thoughts?

**Frank** (on fish being attracted by shinny objects)

Well, frankly I've done some fishing myself, and the first thought that came to mind is the fact that many fish are naturally interested to shinny metallic objects. Therefore I can see why a fish might go for a coin that someone accidentally dropped. So there is probably a natural aspect to the miracle. Why a fish would continue to hold onto such a coin, however, is beyond me, and, of course, the timing was miraculous too.

"...go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money;... ." (Mat. 17:27)



**Evan** (on what skeptics would say)

My first thought was about what skeptics might say. They, of course, would think there is something very 'fishy' about this story, and point out that nobody was with Peter to confirm what happened. So I do not think this a great passage to use in evangelism. Maybe that is why it is only in one Gospel. I don't doubt the story at all, but I like to use the feeding of the 5,000, because there were many witnesses.

**Dr. Quest** (on the proper use of the Gospels)

Perhaps those many witnesses are one of the reasons why the feeding of the 5,000 is in all four Gospels. Even so, the Gospels were intended to be read from beginning to end, rather than just used piecemeal in evangelistic meetings. Matthew's early Jewish readers would have been impressed by the Lord's teaching on the law, the feeding of the 5,000, and much more. So most of them were probably not stumbled by this short story the way skeptics quickly are today. That's why I encourage skeptics to read the entire Gospel instead of just picking on a few verses here and there.



*Caution: this is the answer sheet or study leader's note page. Use the blank worksheet for personal and group studies.*

NEGATIVES	POSITIVES
<i>bad, dangerous, difficult, evil, inadequate, sad, sinful, ugly, etc.</i>	<i>good, blessings, clean, healthy, joyful, safe, well done, wise, etc.</i>
<b>the temple tax</b>	<b>the temple tax</b>
The temple was not as important as Jesus.	It was for needed repairs and maintenance.
needed cleansing (21:12-13), was destroyed (24:1-2)	It was about two days wages (all 20+ males).
<b>the collectors of the temple tax</b>	<b>the collectors of the temple tax</b>
They thought Jesus was just a teacher (17:24).	They were not greedy secular tax collectors.
Jesus was Peter's teacher not their teacher.	Peter and Jesus did not wish to offend them.
They cared more about the temple than Jesus.	They probably cared about the temple worship.
Their question was negative and rude (17:24).	Jesus cared about temple worship too (21:12-13).
The picked on Peter (whom they probably knew).	They gave Jesus an opportunity to teach Peter.
<b>Peter was wrong (17:25).</b>	<b>Peter learned from Jesus (17:25-27)</b>
He sort of agreed that Jesus was just a teacher.	Peter was very teachable.
He seemed to forget the transfiguration (17:1-8).	He knew that Jesus was special — king like, etc.
Peter often said the wrong thing (17:4).	He did not say much (17:25, 26).
Jesus had to correct Peter (17:25-26).	like he said nothing in 17:7-8
Peter intended to ask for money (17:25).	The miracle fit Peter the fisherman (17:27).
<b>the miracle: only one fish, coin, and Gospel</b>	<b>the miracle: mostly for one disciple</b>
The miracle was not spectacular.	The miracle would have been spectacular to Peter.
It was not like the transfiguration.	A coin found on the street would not.
It was not like the feeding of 5,000+.	It was precise — no leftovers like with the 5,000.
The account is very short.	Jesus' teaching is main thing. — good 17:28 missing
The miracle itself is omitted — no 17:28.	Small, personal miracles can teach great things.
Someone probably lost the coin.	It was good that Jesus did not actually pay.
<b>after the miracle</b>	<b>after the miracle</b>
The tax which did not need to be paid was paid.	The tax was paid, but not out of Jesus' pocket.
The miracle was probably not soon made known.	The tax collectors were not offended (17:27).
<b>What is the biggest negative in the passage?</b>	<b>What is the biggest positive in the passage?</b>
Peter's wrong answer to the tax collectors.	Jesus combined care & correction (grace & truth).
He went along with them a little too much.	It was not just the catch & the tax being paid.

## APPLICATIONS

**Trust in Jesus who is the Lord of all and cares for and corrects his own.**

*Commentary from various perspectives as overheard in the Four Gospels class at imaginary Quest Bible College*

**Dr. Quest** (on the teaching passages in Matthew)

Last time we talked about the Lord's teaching ministry in the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7) and other long passages in Matthew. Today's short text is another example of Jesus' teaching, but one that is little known. We are using the Plus Bible Study method. So what are your favorite negative and positive observations?

**Frank** (on brevity being good)

Well, frankly I'm glad this passage is shorter than the ones we looked at last time, because to me brevity is not a negative. You don't have to be long-winded to make a point. You just need to be on target. This fish-related miracle was perfect for Peter.

**Theo** (on Peter being corrected)

I like the fact that the Lord anticipated what Peter was going to say and corrected him (17:25) before his disciple could say a thing. As a result, Peter didn't say much, which was a good thing. For once, I agree with Frank! — That said, Peter should have known better, anyway, since the Father had corrected his theology a short time earlier at the transfiguration (17:4-8). Peter knew that Jesus is Lord and not just a teacher.

**Indy** (on Peter giving in to social pressure)

So why did Peter go along with the tax collectors? I suspect it was because Peter knew them personally, since all of this took place in Peter's home town. So once again social connections led to sin. If Peter had not known them, he may have reacted differently. Friendships can be dangerous. That's my favorite takeaway from this passage.

**Socie** (on Jesus caring for the tax collectors)

Why be so negative and antisocial? The Lord himself wanted to avoid offending the collectors of the temple tax. They were not greedy thieves working for the Romans. The miracle shows that the Lord cared what they thought. That's my favorite positive point on this passage.

**Theo** (on contrasting opinions both being correct)

Who's right, Indy or Socie? I think they both are, as long as they don't overstate their positions. Relationships can be dangerous as well as great blessings.

**Dr. Quest** (on the combination of caring and correction)

I agree, Theo, but what is the main point? The Lord combined care and correction. He cared for Peter and the temple tax collectors but still upheld the truth about himself. As the Lord from heaven, HE did not need to pay the tax. That's what was stressed. Also, Jesus did not pay it in a way, since it wasn't out of his pocket. Maybe that's why there was a miracle. I do not think it was because there was no other money available.

So what? Well, today's short passage and the transfiguration scene in the same chapter show that the two most important things in life are to realize who Jesus truly is and to act accordingly. When we do not do so, we can expect the Lord's correction.