

The Temple Tax

Matthew 17:14-27

by Don Falkos

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A man stepped out of a large crowd and knelt in front of Jesus. "Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him."

Jesus said, "Oh, you people. Where is your faith? How long do I have to put up with you before you believe? Bring the boy to me." Jesus healed the boy by expelling the evil spirit that had been causing the seizures.

Later Jesus disciples' asked, "Why couldn't we do that?"

Jesus said, "You don't have enough faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith the size of a tiny mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will. Nothing will be impossible for you. But this sort of spirit can only be cast out by prayer and fasting."

Once Jesus had rejoined all of his disciples in Galilee, he told them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." The disciples were grief-stricken.

At Capernaum the officials who collected the Temple tax asked Peter, "Your teacher pays the Temple tax, doesn't he?"

Peter replied, "Yes, of course." Then he went into the house, but before he had a chance to say anything, Jesus asked, "What do you think, Peter? Do kings collect taxes from their own children or from others?"

"From others."

"Well, then, the children are exempt! Still, we don't want to offend anyone, so go down to the sea and throw out a line. The first fish you catch – open its mouth, and you'll find a coin. Take that and pay the tax for both of us."