

Text: Matthew 17:22-27

Title: Another Gloomy Prediction, and Taxes

Truth: The Lord was going to die by the hands of sinners, but He advocated paying His taxes to avoid unnecessary offense.

Date/Location: Wednesday May 4, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

No, the gloomy prediction is not about the taxes! But the message is about “death and taxes,” just not the death that is commonly referenced in that proverbial phrase.

I. Jesus Prophesies His Death, 17:22-23

- A. Location: The Lord and disciples were together, perhaps staying together, in Galilee. There are a couple of letters difference between the first word in the NU text when compared to the Majority Text.
- B. The Lord had been speaking to the disciples about his death and resurrection several times now, and he would continue to do so. Here are the places where the Lord said similar things:

Matt. 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and **suffer** many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be **killed**, and be **raised** the third day.

Matthew 17:9 “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is **risen** from the dead.”

Matthew 17:12 Likewise the Son of Man is also about to **suffer** at their hands.”

Matthew 17:22-23 “The Son of Man is about to be **betrayed** into the hands of men, and they will **kill** Him, and the third day He will be **raised** up.”

Matthew 20:18-19 “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be **betrayed** to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to **death**, 19 and deliver

Him to the Gentiles to **mock** and to **scourge** and to **crucify**. And the third day He will **rise** again."

Matthew 20:22-23 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." 23 So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."

Matthew 21:38 "But when the vinedressers saw the **son**, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us **kill** him and seize his inheritance.'

Matthew 26:2 "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Matthew 26:21, 23-24 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will **betray** Me...He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will **betray** Me. "The Son of Man indeed goes **just as it is written** of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is **betrayed**! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Matthew 26:31-32 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will **strike the Shepherd**, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' 32 "But after I have been **raised**, I will go before you to Galilee."

Matthew 27:62-63 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, 63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'"

C. The repetition is undoubtedly meant to fix it in their minds and help them to mentally prepare for it because it will be such a shock.

D. The repetition also serves to strengthen their future ministry and ours, so that we can know that the events around our Lord's death and resurrection not only *happened to happen*, but they were planned to happen, ordained to happen, *had* to happen in order that the Scripture be fulfilled and our redemption be accomplished.

E. It does not take much empathy to understand the feelings of the disciples at this point. Peter had expressed their denial of this awful situation in 16:22. They could not conceive of this thing happening to the perfect person they knew the Son of Man to be. After a couple more mentions of it—that are recorded—the disciples may be starting to soften up to the reality that it was indeed going to happen.

We will not know this side of heaven, if ever, if the Lord had spoken to the disciples about this matter even more. I suspect it was not much more because I would expect the gospel writers to record these significant statements. But I have only combed through Matthew's gospel at this time, and I am happy to leave it at the level of speculation.

But be that as it may, now they were not denying the reality of what was about to occur, but they were very saddened by it. The "stages of grief" were already starting to unfold.

F. By the way, on grief, it is real, it is expected, and you have to turn it with faith into a God-ward, hope-filled, active kind of grief, not a self-isolationist, depressing kind of thing. Notice the radical difference in direction: the latter is inward and downward; the former is outward and upward toward God. Check yourself if you have some grief that you are looking and moving in the correct direction.

II. Taxes to Avoid Offense

A. Location: While in Galilee, they made their way back to the village called Capernaum, on the north and somewhat northwest of the Sea of Galilee. Although I have noted both locations, because the text does so, I am unaware of any major significance to these particular locations for the lessons that are being taught.

- B. The temple financial authorities came to Peter and asked him if his teacher pays the temple tax. They didn't see Peter or Jesus as anyone special, so they had to pay up just like everyone else.
- C. The tax was instituted in Exodus 30:11-16 and was for the sanctuary at that time. The Tabernacle had not been completed as yet, but it was being "stood up" for its religious functions amid the nation.
- D. The amount was half a shekel. There was no inflationary monetary policy that made it necessary to change that. It was silver, about 1/5th of an ounce. That does not seem to be an onerous tax. See 2 Chronicles 24:9.
- E. Peter answered the inquirer that yes, indeed, Jesus did pay the tax.
- F. The Lord, already knowing what had happened with Peter, asked when Peter entered the house about taxes in general. In our system, even the president pays taxes. That is a good thing—one law for all people (well, sort of). But that was traditionally not the case when there was a unitary head of government—holding the legislative, executive, and judicial functions in one person. There were special cut-outs for that person and everyone understood that the king who was paid taxes by others would not pay taxes to himself. Nor would his children have to pay taxes because at least one of them would be next in line for the throne anyway.
- G. Peter understood that concept, so he knew then that the Lord, as the Son of God (Matt. 16:16), would not be liable for any taxes to support God's work. He *was* God, as we now understand, but as one so closely related that He can be called Son, no taxes would be due.
- H. Even so, the Lord told Peter that they should not offend the tax collectors. It would be fruitless anyway because they would not understand Jesus as son of God. The principle was that Jesus would not cause a stir about it and just follow the normal custom as if He were anyone else.

He hereby teaches us to avoid stirring up trouble, doing things to "prove our point" or "prove someone else wrong" or stir up trouble because we like being contrary.

You do not have to imagine someone saying, “I’m not going to pay my taxes because the government uses the money for sinful things” because that sort of thing has happened. You were right, you tried to prove the point, but you offended the Law, and now you are sitting in jail for tax evasion! See Romans 13:6-7.

Or, perhaps you always have to have the last word and prove your point. Perhaps you are harsh in your support of the truth or righteousness (you are “right” but totally wrong in how you handle yourself with your spouse or children). Do those practices exhibit love for others, or rather love for yourself? Does that kind of conduct follow the Lord’s practice here indicated in the words “lest we offend them”?

- I. Jesus made miraculous provision for the tax so it was not a financial difficulty for them. Where did the coin come from? I do not know, but I am sure that was not “ill gotten” by the fish, nor by Peter, so I do not let that question concern me.

Conclusion

Death and taxes. The Lord’s death was inevitable because it was planned before the foundation of the world. And we do pay our taxes, so as to not cause trouble—and we are directed by God to do so anyway. Yes, even though we are sons of the Most High (Luke 6:35).

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