

Matthew 21-06-20b

Thank you, Dan, Anna, and Lori for our special music. I always like Victory in Jesus for multiple reasons. When we were in Tahlequah, my uncle Norman was there, and that was his favorite hymn.

So at Tahlequah Bible Church, we frequently sang Victory in Jesus, and he was the loudest voice in the audience. I came to appreciate that song, which I wasn't really too familiar with. My earlier churches didn't sing it much, but that's a wonderful hymn.

And the victory at the foot of the mountain, of course, unfortunately, is not channeled through Jesus' own disciples, but by his personal presence. And it's a reminder that even when the people of God fail, God will still come through where his presence and power need to be manifest. But what I want to do is finish up here and move on in our story.

So we're going to take a quick final look at this scene at the foot of the mountain using the additional information we have in the Gospel of Mark. And I could talk about this for three weeks, but we've already talked about the transfiguration for three weeks, and so we're going to move forward. I just want to point one final thing out.

Jesus said, if you can, and he focuses attention with that question in verse 23, echoing the words of the father of the child. If you can help us and have compassion is how it reads. All things are can do to him who believes.

All things are possible. And of course, this is all things in the realm of the plan and purpose of God. It's not, I will have a piece of leprechaun money in my hand and say, I wish, and it will suddenly take place.

So immediately verse 24, the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe pissed you. Oh, I believe help. My Apostia help my unbelief.

And the word help there is the very same word that is used in verse 22. If you can do anything, if you can help. And the word there for help is the same word that is in verse 24, two times, this man appeals directly to Jesus for help, help with the situation.

Jesus says the resolution of this situation depends on faith. And he says, help my faith. I'm, I'm willing to believe.

I believe help me where my faith is lacking. What has Jesus told his disciples in the preceding context that we've just seen in Matthew, we talked about the mustard seed fill that in. If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you can say this man's got that mustard seed faith.

It will grow. God can use it. God will help it.

God will cultivate it. God will grow it. And this man gets that oddly enough.

Wouldn't it have been great if Jesus had this conversation with his disciples, the nine that were at the foot of the mountain, if they had come to him and said at first, before the man's son is even healed, Lord, what's our problem here? And he says, it's, it's a faith problem. And if they had said, Lord, help our faith, they're going to ask that question at a later point, Lord, increase our faith. Remember that? So when Jesus noticed when Jesus saw verse 25, that the people came running together in Mark, you have this great emphasis on the crowd, on the opposition, the scribes.

And once again, here on the observation of the crowd, what is the lesson we take from this? Not only is lack of faith, a problem for us, but in terms of the actual function of witness that we as Jesus representatives on earth are to have, how can someone ask us a reason for the hope that is in us? When we look hopeless, when we sound hopeless, when we act hopeless, how can we represent Christ as the crowd assembles? Is Jesus going to have to intervene directly because we're not up to the task? Now, here's another question for you. And I don't really have the answer. I was telling the girls the other day, it's like a lawyer should never ask a question that he doesn't know the answer to.

And I don't, I haven't really thought through the answer to this question. I think I know, I suspect I know. And I think you'll suspect it as well.

But why did Jesus not turn to Peter, James, and John and say, boys, handle this demon problem for me. They were the ones that went to the top of the mountain. They're the ones who heard Moses and Elijah speak.

They're the ones who saw the coming glory of the Lord Jesus. Why didn't Jesus turn to them and say, Peter, James, John, handle it. Just as a side note, I think I've not mentioned this in this particular go round, but you do know that the name James is not James, right? Point of, point of Bible trivia, perhaps, but, you know, Jesus is not Jesus.

It's Yeshua. And James is not James. It is what? Jacob, Jacob, Yakov, Yakobu.

I don't know if it was because of King James that they decided to make this, James. I'm not sure the weird process by which you go from Jacob to James, you lose two letters and pick up one. Anyway, Jesus does not appeal to them.

Jesus, I think, doesn't want to draw out this contrast publicly and embarrass the nine. There is going to be enough shame and enduring loss and contempt to go around based on Daniel 12 too. Jesus doesn't add to it here.

Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit saying to it, death and dumb spirit. Interesting since all of the symptoms given in all of the gospels, don't talk about the fact that the boy can't hear or the boy can't speak, but he is called a death and dumb spirit. And once again,

deafness and dumbness are not symptoms of epilepsy.

This is not epilepsy. This is demon possession, deaf and dumb spirit. I command you come out of him and enter him no more.

Don't come back. Go and don't come back. Once again, when you look at this boy, as with so many other symbolic miracles in scripture representing Israel, when they are delivered from that evil presence in their midst, when they are finally delivered.

And that was the picture up on the mountain. This is the coming of the son of man in his kingdom. This evil presence is never going to infect Israel again.

What is going to happen is that in the millennial kingdom, the outsiders that are not a part of the kingdom are going to proliferate and eventually surround the camp of the saints at Gog Magog. But Israel itself is never again going to be taken over by self-righteousness, by ritualism, by legalism, by these evils that Satan spawns and sponsors in the midst of God's people. Why? Because a part of the fulfillment of Old Testament promise, the Moses and Elijah promise.

Elijah is famously representative, as I mentioned, of the spirit. It's the double portion of his spirit that falls on Elisha, right? The mantle falling from the chariot and so on. You remember that? The final scene with Elijah is the transfer of the spirit to Elisha.

And Elisha has no failures. Elijah has a couple of spectacular failures. He's afraid of Jezebel.

He slays the prophets. But when the double portion of his spirit hits Elisha, Elisha has zero failures. It's like Elihu in Job.

All of the other three friends of Job, the other three friends of Job, you can spot the errors and the shortcomings in their arguments and their diatribes. But when Elihu speaks, he represents divine point of view. He speaks as the Lord Jesus himself would speak.

And he is not condemned. At the end of Job, God says to Job, you need to offer sacrifices for your three friends, not your four friends. Elihu significantly needs no sacrifice on his behalf on the part of Job.

And Elisha represents Elihu kind of like Joshua. You find no failures in Joshua's career, the biblical successor to Moses. Can you think of a single failure on Joshua's part? The only time they suffer defeat under Joshua is when other people malfunction.

But Joshua himself doesn't fail. He's foreshadows. Joseph doesn't have any spectacular failures.

When he goes into captivity and works in Potiphar's house and eventually rises to be second in the land, you don't see any failures on Joseph's part because he foreshadows

Christ. Joseph, Joshua, Elihu, Elisha are wonderful foreshadowings of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so here when Jesus says, deaf and dumb spirit, I command you come out of him and enter him no more.

The deliverance of Israel in the millennial kingdom is going to be permanent because it's fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant promise. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your old men, your young men, your daughters, your sons, all of them will have the spirit.

I will take out your heart of stone. I will give you a heart of flesh. And it is amenable and susceptible to the presence and power of the spirit.

So what do you have at each side of the Lord Jesus? When he comes in his kingdom glory, you have the word of God and the spirit of God. One to the right hand and one to the left. Moses representing the word, Elijah representing the spirit.

You say, well, why wasn't it Elisha? Well, it's in the purview of God to choose his symbols and he chose Elijah. And I think it's a recognition of several things, which is the beginning of the end for the Northern kingdom. And the distinction between the Southern and Northern kingdom, Elijah really draws that out in ways that Elisha does not.

And the days of Ahab and Jezebel are also spoken of. When you think of Elijah, the prophets of Baal come into view when you see Elijah and that conflict is not over in the millennial kingdom. And I think that's why you have Elijah instead of Elisha.

Well, so the spirit cried greatly. Verse 26 of Mark nine convulsed him, came out of him. Notice the disobedience of these fallen angel demonic spirits.

When Jesus says come out and enter no more, he is rebellious. Jesus tells other demons be quiet and they make loud noises. They don't just quietly leave.

They don't submissively hang their heads and kick their toe in the dirt and disappear. They do as much as they think they can get away with without being sent ahead of time into the pit. So the spirit cried out.

Notice it's a deaf and dumb spirit, but when Jesus sends it out, it cries out. It's no longer the boy now speaks with the demon's voice, cries out, convulsed him greatly one more time just to show that he can and then leaves. And the boy became as one dead, became as one dead.

Many said he is dead. Again, this has great significance when you look at the career of the nation of Israel, because at the end of the millennial kingdom with the Gog Magog rebellion and they are surrounded, the camp of the saints is surrounded and Satan is leading those forces. It looks like it's all over.

And many would say, well, that's the end of that. The, you know, it prevailed for 999 years. But in this final year of the millennium, Satan has been released and he is going to overcome, just like he overcame the two witnesses back in the 70th week.

He's going to prevail. He's going to overcome. They're dead.

And Israel is going to die in the sense that these resuscitated long-term pre-flood type bodies that can last hundreds of years, they are still earthly. They are still fleshly. And on the strength of this passage and a few others, I see Israel resuscitation at the beginning of the kingdom.

They go through the equivalent of the rapture where they receive their eternal kingdom of the father bodies at the end. And they will go through sort of a process of death, as it were, in the sense of being transferred into the same kind of bodies that the church gets a thousand years before. And then all of us as the people of God will enter, hopefully, the kingdom of the father, or at least be there to view it from afar.

We don't want to view it from afar. We want to be in it. We want to be in the center of it.

We want to be residents and landowners in the new Jerusalem. That's why we are fueled by hope. Hope of the glory of God.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ in you. That's the hope of that glory.

The glory that the millennial glory that the three see at the top of the mountain and the future glory that Paul has so much to say about. Many said he's dead. Jesus took him up by the hand and lifted him up and he arose.

And when he had come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast it out? Very same question we have in Matthew. What was the answer in Matthew? Because of faithlessness, because of tiny faith, microscopic faith, depending on the manuscript you read, it is either a pistilla or oligo pistilla. And looking at the different gospels, the weight of evidence is on a pistilla faithlessness.

You didn't even have enough mustard seed faith for God to honor. But what does it say here? He said to them, this kind can come out by nothing but prayer, period. Cross out and fasting.

Fasting isn't in Matthew and it isn't in Mark. Prayer and fasting is not in Matthew. Prayer is in Mark.

So we use some of our Old Testament interpretive knowledge here. When you have two things that are in parallel, you know, you have these synonymous stitches in the Psalms and other places in poetry of Old Testament scripture. Two things are compared and you get two facets of the same thing.

So what was the expression of their lack of faith? It's easy to say, oh, well, I just need more faith. Well, what is the mechanism? What is the means of expression? How do you implement faith? If you don't want to be a pistilla or oligo pistilla, if you don't want to be faithless or tiny faith, how do you get your faith going? What does Jesus say here? He said both things in the conversation. Matthew focuses on the event itself and records Jesus' words about faithlessness.

What does Mark record? What did Peter hear? You didn't pray. Because of your lack of faith, your prayer life fell to the ground. You didn't look to heaven, the source of the power.

Jesus says, if you can, all things are possible through faith because faith implements the power of God. How do you express that faith? How many times does it say Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven? How many times does Jesus commune with his father and spend time in prayer? A powerful faith life is reflected in a powerful prayer life. Faithlessness is prayerlessness, and this can just be partial, sporadic in certain areas of our life.

Maybe there's some things we pray about all the time. Other places we fail to pray. Now, all solutions to problems do not come by prayer, right? Scripture tells us if you want to grow in grace and knowledge, you don't get that by prayer.

You get that by investing time in hearing the word, cultivating the presence of the spirit. But faith is expressed in prayer. Go over to James.

The half brother of the Lord, when he writes that epistle, the prayer of faith will deliver those who are ill. The prayer of faith. James uses the phrase, the prayer of faith will save the sick.

The Old King James. Prayer is an expression of faith. What is it you believe? Put it in your prayer.

Why do you feel confident asking God for this particular request and its fulfillment? Why are you even bringing it before God? Is there a promise? Is there an example in scripture? Is there knowledge you've gained from the study of scripture and you can come boldly to the throne of grace for help in time of need? As it says in Hebrews, when Jesus says this kind, by the way, the word kind is Genos, G-E-N-O-S. Remember when Jesus says, oh, faithless and twisted generation, Genea, G-E-N-E-A. These come from the same root.

Oh, faithless kind, you're a faithless sort. This sort comes out by nothing but prayer, i.e. you've got to put your faith into action. You've got to appeal to God's power consciously, knowingly, effectively.

Prayer is the expression of faith. I've mentioned it before. One of Jake Hess's most well-known recordings is prayer is the key to heaven, but faith unlocks the door.

Prayer is the key, but you've got to turn that key and open the door so that the power of God can come into the life of the believer by faith. Prayer and faith, inseparable. Well, they departed from there and passed through Galilee.

I'm still in Mark. This is 930. He did not want anyone to know it.

He taught his disciples and said to them, the son of man is being betrayed into the hands of men and they will kill him. After he's killed, he will rise the third day. Jesus told them this over and over and over.

If they had listened to the word, if they had remembered the word, when they taste his death, they would have said, hey, let's watch for the third day. And it just got blown clear out of their mind. We can't afford for that to happen.

But back to Matthew, because there's an episode now here in Matthew chapter. We return to Matthew. I can't get my Bible to open.

I should have put a marker in there at the end of chapter 17, beginning in verse 24, when they had come to Capernaum. Jesus has just told them the same thing we saw in Mark is in 22 and 23 of this chapter, Matthew 17, 22, while they were staying in Galilee. Jesus said to them, by the way, staying is gathering.

It's a real interesting word. It's got soon and it's gathering with is the idea. It doesn't mean abiding or tabernacling.

It's gathering. They were gathering in Galilee. Jesus said to them, the son of man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.

They will kill him and the third day he will be raised up. Now think about this. We know that this is a prediction of the death ahead of time.

Jesus gives it multiple occasions and we know that they're going to kind of forget about this and not make sense of it and be afraid to ask him about it. But how does this follow what we just saw? If you have faith and you can move mountains and you have faith and you can cast out demons, how is it that the son of man is going to be betrayed and killed? The plan of God does not always include circumstantial success, circumstantial prevailing and overcoming. Sometimes the perfect plan of God appears to be failure and defeat to the untrained eye.

Is there a lack of faith on Jesus' part? And that's why he's going to be betrayed and killed. Is there a lack of power from God? Did Jesus do something wrong? The betrayal is going to succeed. The machinations of the scribes and chief priests and Pharisees are going to succeed.

They are going to kill Jesus. We say, well, I know that, but he had to die for our sins and

so on. Well, dying for our sins, providing atonement is a part of God's perfect plan.

It's the keystone. It's the essential part. But it is also emblematic of all of the parts of God's perfect plan.

And God's perfect plan sometimes calls for a seeming defeat, a seeming setback, a shortfall, a victory for the bad guys. And I've given you the example before, the two witnesses in Revelation. That's very obvious.

They've got power. They've got faith. They do God's work.

And then they are overcome and slain and their dead bodies lay in the street. And it's Christmas all around the world. People are giving gifts and heisting flagons of wine and celebrating their demise.

And it's a part of God's perfect plan, because if they do not die at the hands of their enemies, they cannot be raised and be a symbol of God's power in the same way that Jesus, without the resurrection, our faith is in vain. Paul talks about it all in 1 Corinthians 15 and move through there. It is necessary.

Jesus tells the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, it was necessary that the Messiah should come and suffer and die. It's essential. And it looks like a horrible defeat.

And these disciples are going to taste that bitterness. So we should not be discouraged when it looks as though we have a financial setback, a professional setback, a social setback, a relationship setback, a personal failure of our own. We shoot ourselves in the foot.

God works all things together for good to those who love him. It's a conditional promise to those who respond to his call and are his faithful. Are the called according to his purpose, not our purpose.

My purpose is I have a wonderful, happy life. I live to the age of 120 and I'm just as healthy as Moses when I get there. It's probably not God's plan.

We're going to succumb to the ravages of age and decrepitation. God works it together for good. We learn things.

We learn dependence. We learn reliance. We learn to overcome in our spirit even as we succumb in our bodies.

We experience what sin and death do and it inoculates us for the eternal future. I don't want to go through this deterioration. I don't want to experience the ravages of sin and death ever again.

I see what it does. I know what it does. I've experienced it.

You know how they say once burned twice shy? Well, I say once burned forever shy. And God isn't going to have to lock our chooser down on positive in the eternal future because we know what the negative side feels like. We've seen it.

We've experienced it. And nobody is going to want this kind of world ever again. But it's a necessary part of God's plan.

Sometimes we need a defeat. We need a setback. We need to be pulled up short.

Sometimes we need to redirect our focus and our attention and the investment of our time into more profitable and eternally significant things. And God has to knock our pins out from under us to do it. So now in verse 24, after the sorrow of the disciples, this is something only Matthew records.

It doesn't take long to cover it. When they come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, does your teacher not pay the tax? And Peter says, yes, which is yes in Greek. Yes, he does pay it.

And I don't know if that's true because he had paid it in the past or if Peter is kind of shooting from the hip and not wanting his master to be portrayed as a disobedient or law-breaking Israelite. We don't know if Jesus had ever paid this tax in the past or not. I suspect not because of the supernatural way it is paid this time.

You get the idea, well, shouldn't all 12 disciples have to pay it? And here it's only Peter and Jesus for whom it is paid. I think he did not pay it. And I think Peter spoke in haste and kind of put himself on the line here.

And it explains why this miracle follows. So Peter says yes. And in saying yes, he betrays a principle that Jesus is going to bring out.

So when he had come into the house, Jesus spoke first, a really great Greek word here that I won't go into. But Jesus anticipated him. This is good.

Jesus spoke first and said, what do you think, Simon? Notice he doesn't say, what do you think, Peter? Because you get the idea that the Shimon side of this disciple's character had manifested itself. This is the Simon who says, oh, no, Lord, you won't go and die in Jerusalem and get thee behind me, Satan. So he says, what do you think, Shimon? And if Peter is the Lord's nickname for him, you get the idea that by going back to his old name, this is sort of a gentle expression of rebuke.

What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers? Peter said to him, from strangers. Jesus said to him, then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, take the fish that comes up first.

When you open its mouth, you will find a piece of money. Take that and give it to them for me and you. Now, this wasn't a coin big enough to pay for all of the disciples.

It's only for Peter and the Lord Jesus, right? Now, what's interesting is this is not a Roman tax. This is the temple tax. And they put the word temple in italics.

But the reason they know it's the temple tax is the Greek word here is diadrachma. Diadrachma. And di means two, drachma is a piece of money.

So this is the two drachma tax. It's two drachma. Now, for two men, this would be four drachmas.

What's interesting is, and again, I'm not going to go back and belabor all of the details. But if you go back to Exodus chapter 20 and chapter 28 in the Septuagint, in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures that talk about this atonement money for every man in Israel, the shekel, it's supposed to be according to the shekel of the sanctuary. And what happened here is that from the time of the translation of the Septuagint, which was a couple of hundred years before the Lord Jesus, this tax should have been a drachma each.

According to what the Septuagint translates by converting Hebrew money into drachmas, this should have been a drachma tax for each man. What happened? The temple operatives, the money changers and so on, used this loophole according to the shekel that the temple defines, and they jacked it up a hundred percent. This is an unfair and unbiblical tax being a didrachma, one didrachma, one, two drachma coin, as it were, or two drachmas should have paid for Peter and the Lord Jesus.

But this has been unfairly and illegitimately unbiblically doubled. And so Jesus is going to end up supplying a stater, S-T-A-T-E-R, which is a four drachma coin. That's what's going to come up in the fish's mouth.

That's the Greek in our passage, stater. That stater is worth four drachma. Jesus doesn't make any issue out of the fact that this is an unfair, unjustified, unbiblical tax.

Between the time of the translation of the Septuagint and the time of the Lord Jesus, they have increased this and fudged it up to be double what it was supposed to be. And because every man has to pay it, you think, wow, look at how much money they're... The poorest man in Israel has got to come up with this money. So it's an unfair tax and it is a religious tax.

This goes for the support of worship. This doesn't go to the Romans. But it's interesting that Matthew, the tax collector, is the only one who records this episode.

Do you think he had a little bit of special interest in it as a tax collector? And I wonder if somewhere in the back of his divinely inspired mind, he says, well, you know, people

were picking on me for being a tax collector for the Romans. But look at the Jews themselves cheating the population by doubling the temple tax on men. And that's exactly what they did.

You compare the Septuagint from Exodus. You can work this out on your own time. This is atonement money.

When you go back to Exodus, it's atonement money. And Jesus goes ahead and pays it, even though he doesn't need atonement. And those for whom he is going to atone don't need it.

But the people aren't going to understand this. And here's the thing. Peter has already told the collectors of the didrachma, my master pays this.

Jesus makes it possible for Peter's word to hold, even though technically Jesus doesn't owe the tax at all. And he certainly doesn't owe a cheating double tax. But he pays it for himself and he pays it for Peter so that those who are outside don't have an accusation against Peter for his rash claim.

I think this goes back to why Jesus didn't ask Peter, James and John to cast out the demon at the foot of the mountain. The Lord Jesus graciously shields Peter, even though he spoke rashly. He could have made an example and said, well, you go back to those didrachma collectors and tell them I don't collect it because I'm the king and I and my household don't have to pay this tax.

I'm the redeemer. I'm providing atonement. I don't have to pay atonement for money to upkeep this temple.

You've already got twice as much money as you need because you're collecting it unfairly. Jesus graciously does so. And how does he do it? Of all of the different ways you could have said, go to Judas.

He go to Judas. He carries the money box. He'll get some money and pay this for you.

It's a supernatural miracle. And what is the nature of it? Go to the sea, cast in a hook, catch a fish. This fish is going to miraculously have four drachmas worth of gold in its mouth.

So this coin, not sure if it was gold or silver, I could probably look that up, whatever a stater was, is in this fish's mouth. Here's my conclusion in short. Rather than take it from donations that people had given to the disciples to sustain them on their journey, rather than digging it out of a hole in the ground, there was a man who went to a field and found a buried treasure.

Why is it a fish? What is Peter's normal occupation? What does he do for a living? He is a

fisherman. The Lord Jesus, representing God himself, blesses what Peter does for a living with a supernatural increase. He doesn't catch a net full of fish and go sell them.

There is a special blessing on his work, a supernatural blessing on the kind of work he normally does that fills this need. Peter makes a mistake, which is a negative. Jesus fills it in with a miracle, which is a positive.

But the miracle is of a kind that doesn't dazzle. Peter may have been the only one that knew about this until he shared it with the disciples, and Matthew writes it down because it's of special interest to him. Even the Gospel of Mark doesn't record this, but it's meaningful to Peter.

And it's meaningful to us because of the grace of the Lord Jesus. And Jesus gives the reason. Notice he says, we don't owe this.

And I shouldn't have to fill in your hasty statement. But lest we offend them. This miracle is not so much to increase Peter's faith or even to fill in Peter's mistake.

This miracle is designed to avoid offense to those who represent God's temple. Those who represent God's temple. I would say a practical application of this, say just hypothetically that you understand that there are no required rituals in the church age when it comes to, say, water baptism or drinking a cup of Kool-Aid and eating a cracker or whatever it might be.

Suppose just for the sake of argument that you understand that these things were early pictures that substituted for the scriptures we would eventually have in full. Nevertheless, you go to a congregation and they are performing these rituals and they believe them to be valid and they believe them to be biblical. What should you do? Drink the cup, eat the cracker.

If you want to be a part of a fellowship that puts a big emphasis on water baptism, get dunked. This is my understanding. By extension, other things where we are circulating with believers who have a different understanding, perhaps a less advanced understanding.

It could be us that's less advanced. But in the interest of avoiding scandalon, stumbling, creating an issue that doesn't need to be created, Paul is going to do this with Timothy when he brings him into the fellowship of a lot of Jews that put a big emphasis on circumcision. And he doesn't want to cause them to stumble.

Paul's heart is to try to bring these Jews along to Christ and to the fulfillment of their wonderful Old Testament scriptures. He just has Timothy circumcised. That takes that issue off the table.

Does Timothy have to be circumcised? No, we're in the age of grace, not the age of the

law. But to avoid scandalon, Timothy undergoes this ritual so that that's not going to be a stumbling block. We can evaluate our lives and say all things are lawful, but not all things are edifying.

So in the presence of others, as a witness to others, those who are of the faith, this is a temple tax, not a Roman tax, even though Jesus doesn't owe it. And even though it is unfair, it's doubly illegitimate for him and for his disciples. He pays it anyway.

And what does he do? He gives Peter a supernatural ability that is a confirmation to Peter of who the Lord Jesus is. And it avoids a stumbling block to people who just get the coin and go along. And that's one less charge they can make against the Lord that he doesn't keep the law.

He could have made a teaching issue out of it, but it's not the time. It's not the place. It's not the people.

These guys are just functionaries. They travel throughout the land. They're low-level functionaries.

They're nine levels down from the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees for whom there would be enough theological background for this argument to have traction. These guys aren't going to understand it. It's just, have you got your coin or not? Do I write you in the book as having paid it or not? Do I need to report you to the local authorities and priests and so on or not? Well, he doesn't.

This is why I never make big theological arguments to Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons or others who come to the door. They didn't write their church's doctrine. They have been told that this is the way to serve the Lord.

And I endeavor to find common ground with them. And I focus just on the Lord Jesus. If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and if you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, the rest of your theological persuasions will come along as long as you keep your focus on Him.

I don't try to argue them out of their faith, and I don't let them try to argue me out of mine. The one common ground is everybody knows the name of the Lord Jesus. And if we focus on who He is, why He came, what He does for us, that's the essential of the faith.

And I encourage any of these, if they do engage in conversation, focus on Jesus. Everything else will follow. If you love Him, if you want to know Him better, God will, through His Spirit and through His Word, teach you what you need to know.

But this is not the time for me to put a stumbling block in your path. I'm certainly not going to allow any stumbling blocks from you on mine. So let's focus on the essential.

Is there anything that could possibly unify me with a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness, which I consider the groups themselves and their defining doctrines are heretical and cultish. But the individuals, all of us came from somewhere. And these individuals, don't put a stumbling block in their path.

Give them Christ and encourage them to focus on Jesus. And if they do that, God will deliver them in His own way and in His own time. It's not going to be while they're on their mission.

It'll be in the quiet and solitude of their own heart, listening to the Spirit, looking at the Word. And that won't happen on a doorstep, in my view. So look at the grace and the discernment of the Lord Jesus in the same way that He told them that it's not the time to talk.

Remember in Mark, don't let anybody know that we're here or where we're going. Don't tell them that I'm on my way to Jerusalem to die. You all are having a hard enough time with that information without trying to share it with others.

There's a time and a place. Peter misspeaks. It's a bad tax on two different grounds.

Jesus fixes all of it. There's no stumbling block. And it is a wonderful source of blessing and application for us.

The Lord will fill in our errors if we're looking to Him. A little faith goes a long way. And there is grace to cover a multitude of errors.

And what a wonderful picture we see here. Well, we'll pick up our study next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for the truth of Your Word. We thank You for how powerfully it speaks to our souls and in the hands of the Holy Spirit can give us the power and the faith to implement that power in our daily lives. We pray that as we think about our own circumstances, our own opportunities, that Your Holy Spirit will illuminate these truths and show us where they are pertinent and applicable so that we can reflect Your glory and represent the Lord Jesus Christ properly and beautifully in this life and in the ages to come.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.