



“And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes,” Mark 1:22.

Jesus, the Master Teacher

Lesson Subject: To find in the authority and methods of Jesus a basis for communicating the gospel to men.

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“Never man spake like this man,” John 7:46. Such was the reaction of those who heard Jesus teach. Their conclusion had to be, **“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God . . .”** John 3:2.

Jesus was the Master Teacher. He was fully qualified to interpret the truth, to apply it to existing situations, and to cause those who heard to learn so as to apply to their personal life situations. How fortunate that we, through the written Word of God, may share the teaching ministry of Jesus. How doubly fortunate that the Holy Spirit is in the world to illumine our minds and to teach us the things which Jesus taught.

Today's study will deal with Jesus as a teacher, particularly noting what He taught and how He taught. This study is very important. We must know and act according to what Jesus taught. We who are spiritual leaders should teach others the same truths that Jesus taught.

One of the most important offices in the church is that of teacher. No persons, with the possible exception of the pastor, influence the spirit and life of the congregation as the teachers of the church. Each progressive teacher should study this lesson with an open heart that God would make him like the Master Teacher.

I. WAS JESUS A TEACHER?

Was Jesus a teacher or a preacher? He was both. To teach is to

communicate truth. To preach is to exhort men to respond in faith to the truth presented. Jesus was, therefore, both teacher and preacher.

He was regarded as a teacher by the people in general. The title, “teacher,” was applied to Him by His disciples, His opponents, and the people as a whole. Examine the words used to address Him in the New Testament. He was called “rabbi” or “rabboni” (teacher) six times, John 3:2; 20:16. He was called an “**epistatas**” (the head-master of a corp of cadets) six times in Luke. He was called “**didaskalos**” (common term for “teacher”) more than thirty times.

Not only was He called by the title of teacher, but people also spoke with Him in such a way as to show that they thought of Him as a teacher. They asked His opinion on subjects of interest just as they did the professional teachers among the Jews. It was such questions which brought forth Jesus' discussion on divorce (Mark 10:1-12), stewardship (Luke 12:13, 15), and the respective value of the commandments (Mark 12:28-34). To ask such questions of a teacher indicated a high esteem for Him. The people respected Jesus as a teacher.

The strange thing is, however, that Jesus did not announce Himself to be a rabbi. The teaching profession was well established and highly esteemed in New Testament days. Men went to school and were well disciplined in learning before they became a rabbi among the Jews. The teacher composed the most learned class of the society. They were responsible to guide the religious, as well as the secular life of the nation. Teaching was an important profession.

Jesus had not been trained as a rabbi. He made no pretension of belonging to the professional teachers of the day. He seldom referred to Himself as a teacher. In the eyes of the learned teachers of the day, Jesus was an itinerant preacher but not a professional teacher.

According to the standards of education current in New Testament times, Jesus was an untrained and unlearned person. Those who knew Him best were the most surprised at His wisdom and skill in teaching. When they heard Him teach, they asked with surprise, **“Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?”** Matthew 13:55-56.

Jesus was not a professional teacher. His teaching was the natural outgrowth of His knowledge of God and men. Teaching was not a profession which Jesus entered and pursued but a ministry of blessing to be shared.

Though it is evident that Jesus was a teacher, He made no claims for Himself. Those who listened to Him speak of God honored Him by calling

Him "teacher." By not correcting them, He agreed that their judgment of Him was just. He was a teacher par excellence.

II. HOW DID JESUS TEACH?

Jesus taught without a classroom, without a textbook (except the Scriptures), and without all the "necessary" things which we require. He taught publicly. His classroom was the street of a town, the seashore, a village well, the courtyard of the temple, or the open countryside. His teaching was done in any place where people were willing to receive a word from God.

Jesus would teach any person. No one was too high: He dealt with a learned Doctor of the Law named Nicodemus, John 3. No one was too low: He dealt with a poor sinful woman at the well of Sychar, John 4. He taught a rich young ruler (Luke 18) and a poor blind beggar (Mark 10). Each person was of great value to Him. He had a sincere interest to help.

Jesus taught in very simple ways. Even a casual reading of Jesus' words indicates that He spoke naturally, not in a formal manner. "There is never the slightest indication of a striving for rhetorical effect. His language is the speech of everyday life, His illustrations are drawn from the commonest experiences of His hearers, the subject of His teaching is the practical problem of what normal life should be like"—Harvie Branscomb. No wonder "the common people heard him gladly," Mark 12:37. All He said was saturated with purest truth, but He made no effort to appear learned. He was concerned with communication of truth, not with impressing people with His person.

Jesus used very graphic language in teaching. Many of His words were picturesque, not literal. Figures of speech, illustrations, and catchy sayings abound in His teachings. Consider these illustrations of His vivid expression and graphic style: "**. . . I send you forth as lambs among wolves,**" Luke 10:3; "**. . . Be ye therefore as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves,**" Matthew 10:16; "**Ye are the salt of the earth . . . Ye are the light of the world,**" Matthew 5:13, 14; "**It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,**" Mark 10:25.

Put divine truth into such vivid expression, and people will listen in spite of themselves. That was what Jesus did as He spoke directly to the human heart. No wonder common people would stay all day, not even leaving to eat, to hear Him. Jesus was, indeed the Master Teacher.

Jesus' teaching was also marked by courage. No concern for possible

objection or criticism would seal the lips of Jesus. He praised goodness, condemned sin, denounced hypocrisy, and called sinners to repentance. Many did not like His message. Many hated Him personally. The attitude of men did not change His manner of teaching nor the truth which He taught.

Jesus taught with authority. It was quite evident to His listeners that Jesus did not teach as the scribes taught. They constantly appealed to the writings of the rabbis and to the tradition of the elders to support their opinions. He appealed to nothing but the Word of God. Their teachings dealt with the traditions of their fathers; His dealt with the truths of His Father. They issued good advice and wise counsel; He issued demands to which they must answer before God in judgment. He looked for no authority other than the relationship which He bore with the God of heaven.

Many generations before, God had foretold the day when a Great Prophet would arise. As God had promised, the words of God were in His mouth, and He spoke all that God gave Him to speak, Deuteronomy 18:18. To men, Jesus testified, **“For I have not spoken of myself; but the father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. . . whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:49-50) . . . the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,”** John 6:63. To God, Jesus said, **“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me...”** John 17:8. No wonder Jesus spoke with authority. He was the Son of God, speaking the words commanded of God. Even His opponents had to admit, **“Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of . . . truth, neither carest thou for any man . . .”** Matthew 22:16.

Jesus' teachings were marked by compassion and a desire to help. He was not concerned with delivering a lecture on religion. He was concerned with helping sinners. He knew the answer to each person's need was a personal relationship with God. Having come from the Father and knowing that He would return to the Father, He told people what He knew to be the truth about God. Those who heard and believed were changed. It is still so. Through Him, you can meet God.

III. WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?

The teaching of Jesus is summarized by these words in the Gospel according to Mark, **“The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel,”** Mark 1:15. In general, Jesus' teaching may be gathered under four major ideas.

First, Jesus taught that the kingdom of God has come. Matthew 4:17

recounts the beginning of His ministry in these words, **“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

What did He mean by the kingdom of God? The popular Jewish idea was that the kingdom of God would be the political supremacy of the Jews over the Gentiles. That was not Jesus' concept of the kingdom. He spoke of the spiritual dominion of God in the hearts of men. He explained, **“The kingdom of God is within you,”** Luke 17:2. The kingdom is the spiritual rule of God, not the political rule of men.

Intimately involved in the kingdom is the concept of redemption. The gospel which Jesus preached was the gospel of the kingdom (government, rule) of God. Men enter the kingdom one by one, not in mass, by the strait gate of repentance and faith. The kingdom which Jesus announced was the redemptive rule of God in the hearts of those who received Him as their personal Savior. In view of that definition, are you in the kingdom of God? Remember the words of Jesus, **“Verify, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,”** John 3:3, 5.

Second, Jesus taught that forgiveness of sins is available. Jesus dealt much with the subject of sin — its nature, its reality, its danger, and its remedy. He announced that in Him God was offering a solution to the sin problem. He had come “to seek and to save” those who were lost, Luke 19:10. God seeks sinners like a shepherd searches for a lost sheep. Like a loving father yearns for the return of a wayward son. God longs for the salvation of sinners, Luke 15.

Jesus insisted that He was personally involved in the experience of forgiveness of sins. The sinner came to God when He came to Jesus. The sinner rejected God when he rejected Jesus. Any and all who Him, were received, forgiven, and made members of God's family. That could be true only because Jesus and the Father are one, John 10:30. Because of their unique relationship, Jesus could pronounce over the poor, needy sinner, **“Son, thy sins be forgiven thee,”** and it was so, Mark 2:5. The same blessed ministry is being continued today. Multitudes have found the truth: **“. . . through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things. . .”** Acts 13:38-39. Praise the Lord!

Third, Jesus taught that terrible judgment awaited all who rejected Him. The explanation for that truth was that one's attitude toward Jesus indicated his attitude toward God. Jesus said, “. . . whosoever shall receive me,

receiveth not me, but him that sent me,” Mark 9:37.

Matters of eternal consequence attended upon whether one received or rejected the teaching of Jesus. Read the parable about the wise man who built his house upon a rock and the foolish man who built his house upon the sand, Matthew 7:24-29. The difference between those two men was that one did according to the teachings of Jesus whereas the other did not. The consequence was the safety and protection of one and the great loss and regret of the other.

Fourth, Jesus taught that those who received Him assumed a solemn obligation of discipleship. To be a disciple means a lot more than merely to agree with doctrine, to adopt a philosophy, or to live by an ethic. It means assuming an obligation whereby one gives up all right to himself and surrenders full control of His life to Jesus.

Jesus said, **“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take his cross daily, and follow me,”** Luke 9:23. What is involved in discipleship? Jesus said that it includes (1) a denial of self, (2) a daily death to self in imitation of Him, and (3) an imitation of Him. What a demanding requirement.

Jesus did not gain followers by making the way sound easy. He called for absolute commitment. Anyone who would follow Him must give up all right to himself in devotion to Jesus. The only true disciple is one who can say, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and gave himself for me,” Galatians 2:20. That is true discipleship, the kind of discipleship which Jesus requires of all who follow Him.

There are two qualities necessary in a good teacher. (1) He must have a thorough mastery of his subject. (2) He must have an earnest desire to communicate truth to the learners that they might be profited thereby. In both ways, Jesus was and is the Master Teacher.

He taught the truth; know what He said. He taught with authority; obey what He said. He taught of God; believe what He said. He taught for all men; propagate what He said.

The Master Teacher is still teaching men. His ministry is no longer in the flesh, but it is exercised by the Holy Spirit of whom He said, **“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . . He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you,”** John 16:13-14. The Master Teacher will teach you.

Questions

1. In what sense was Jesus a teacher?
2. In what sense was Jesus a preacher?
3. Why is the office of teacher so important in the church?
4. Why would Jesus teach anywhere?
5. Why would Jesus teach anyone?