

Christ, the Teacher

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Christ is our teacher. He came as a teacher and taught from the beginning to the end of his life here on earth. Through his inspired word, he continues to teach mankind in each generation. As a boy 12 years old, Jesus was teaching in the temple: "After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers." Luke 2:46-47. Jesus began his ministry by teaching in Matthew 4:23: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom."

Matthew records the Sermon on the Mount, as some now call it. In Matt 5:1-2, Christ began teaching: "Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying: . . ." The sermon itself is, perhaps, the greatest lesson ever taught and, certainly, taught by the greatest teacher who ever lived. The certitude of the sermon and the ethos (moral nature) of the teacher were evident to the multitude of listeners who were amazed: "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." Matt 7:28-29.

A Teacher by Example

The absolute righteousness of the Lord allowed him to teach by his powerful example. In setting this example, the Lord met all God's expectations. For example, when Jesus came to John to be baptized in Matt 3:13-15, John was reluctant. "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" he said. Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Because of his own righteousness, Jesus became an example to us and a demonstration of the father before us.

In Acts 1:1-2, Luke gave equal weight to what Jesus did and taught: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven." His righteous life, recorded in Luke and the other gospels was so powerful that Jesus contended that when one looked at him, he could see the father. In John 14:8-11, Philip requested proof of God and said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." To which Jesus responded:

Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has **seen me** has **seen the Father**. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. [Emphasis added].

The Lord expects us to follow his teaching by example in the same way that we would follow his words. In John 13:13-15, he taught clearly, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." The power of this Christ's example to edify and teach extended to the apostles and indeed to all true Christians. Paul taught in 1 Cor 11:1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." The examples of Jesus and the apostles are just a much of the pattern as direct commands: "Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you." Phil 3:17.

As Christ lived and taught by example, so should we:

7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Titus 2:7-8

A Teacher Using Stories and Examples

Just as Jesus taught by his example, he taught using examples. These examples were most often in the form of parables. The history of the word *parable* is interesting, going back to classical Greek languages:

parable n [ME, fr. MF, fr. LL *parabola*, fr. Gk *parabōle* comparison, fr. *paraballein* to compare, *paraballein* to throw—more at DEVIL] (14c) EXAMPLE. specif: a. usually a short fictitious story that

illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle. Merriam Webster's Collegiate, 10th Edition.

Parables are not to be confused with fables. In parables, the characteristics and details are true to life and real. In fables, characteristics and details may defy true life, such as talking animals or flying humans. According to Peter, the apostles and prophets did not use fables. 2 Peter 1:16 says, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty [ASV]. .When Jesus told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the story may have been fictitious but the elements are true to life, making the fire, hell, torment, and Abraham's bosom real and true to life.

Parables were used to convey the spiritual truth to the people, leaving it up to them to understand or not:

34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables,

I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." Matt 13:34-35

It was given to the apostles to understand the secret of the kingdom. However, Christ expects his students, including those of us still living, to see and believe, hear and understand, and turn and be forgiven, according to Mark 4:9-12:

9 Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables . 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

Mark 4: 33 explains that he used parables to teach "them, as much as they could understand." The passage concludes in verse 34: "But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything." The special treatment of the apostles continued after Jesus returned to the Father:

12 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth , comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." John 16:12-15

Conclusion

Christ is our teacher by his example and by the word that he left for us. However, we must perceive it, understand it, turn from sin to him, and be forgiven. In short, Christ has taught, but the will to learn is up to each one who lives. Jesus placed the will to learn on all those who come to him in John 6:44-48:

44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. 47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

Study Questions

1. What is the difference in a parable and a fable? _____
2. In what ways was Jesus an example to us? _____
3. Why did Christ explain everything to the apostles and not the other people? _____
4. How can we be sure the apostles taught the things of Christ? _____
5. Who comes to Christ? _____