

THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER

by

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Part VI: The Model Teacher

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Master Teacher

NO ONE can make a careful study of the Gospels without coming to the realization that our Lord Jesus Christ was the master teacher, and was not only the master teacher, but the master of all teaching. He did not establish a system of teaching. Nevertheless, it is well to note to what extent He appears to have observed modern laws of pedagogy.

I. THE TEACHER

We, who believe the truths of Scripture, of course realize that Jesus cannot be regarded as an ordinary person. He was, as Peter confessed, truly the Son of God. As such He must be conceded supernatural knowledge and power. However, in considering His life as a teacher we must not overlook His humanity. Though He was equal with God, He chose to make Himself **“of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men”** (Philippians 2:6, 7). Therefore, it is only from a consideration of His life from the human side that it would be possible in any way to evaluate His teaching methods.

1. His preparation.

In no other country has the art of teaching been so magnified as in Palestine. In no other country has a teacher ever attained to such an exalted position. Jesus was born at a time and in a place where the honor due to a teacher bordered on reverence. While we are not told that He went to school, it cannot be doubted that He did go. His parents' knowledge of the all-important place He was to take in life makes it reasonable to believe that they gave Him every opportunity their limited means would permit, to fit Him for His ministry. Moreover, the fact that He did not enter into His life work until He was thirty would indicate that ample time was provided. However, He was not, like Paul, a student of one of the great teachers of the day (Acts 22:3); nor did He receive recognition as having completed a prescribed course, as John 7:15 suggests. When the Jews marveled at His teaching ability, and exclaimed, **“How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?”** they voiced their astonishment that He should demonstrate such exceptional ability without having completed the preparatory course they deemed essential.

His education, from the human standpoint, may be summed up as follows:

a. He was a master of the art of reading.

This was demonstrated when He went into the synagogue at Nazareth and was given the Book of Isaiah from which to read the lesson of the day.

b. He was familiar with the less common art of writing His allusions to the forms of the Hebrew letters (Matthew 5:18), and His writing with His finger on the ground (John 8:6), are conclusive evidence on that point.

c. He knew Hebrew as well as the Aramaic dialect.

Long before this, the Hebrew language had become a dead letter. The common people spoke the Aramaic dialect, but the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and in Greek (Septuagint).

d. He was profoundly versed in the Scripture.

Again and again in His controversies with the rabbis, He would throw out a challenge to their scholarship - "**Have ye not read?**" This thorough knowledge of the Scripture was the content of the instruction in the Jewish school, and it is evident that as a boy our Lord was not only a faithful attendant, but a zealous student of the law, and like His associates committed vast portions of it to memory.

e. He was familiar with the traditions.

This is evident from what we read of His controversies with the Jews (Matthew 15:1-20). (B. A. Hinsdale, *Jesus As a Teacher*, p. 37).

2. His convictions.

He was not primarily an orator, reformer, or ruler, but rather a teacher. Evidence could be multiplied that Jesus regarded Himself as a teacher (C. F. McKoy, *The Art of Jesus As a Teacher*, p. 24).

We have the direct statement that He made to His disciples: "**Ye call me Master [Teacher] and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am**" (John 13:13).

The entire Gospel record assumes that Jesus regarded Himself as a teacher. He went frequently into synagogues and temple for the evident purpose of teaching. Teaching was His chief business. Jesus thoroughly believed in teaching-an indispensable prerequisite for any teacher. He gave Himself to it, and forever dignified the calling. The supreme glory of the teaching profession consists in the fact that when our Lord faced His life work He chose to be a teacher. He was the embodiment of His profession. He assumed a pedagogic authority different from that of the scribes and rabbis, the official teachers of the times. Their authority was based upon knowledge largely from without-what they had been taught. His was from within, and needed not the support of the authorities. He quoted nobody. His own word was offered as sufficient.

Therefore, the people were astonished at His teaching. Never before had they listened to messages given with such assurance. Instead of asking support for His position by an appeal to the tradition of the elders, He shows their inconsistencies and shortcomings.

Living what He taught inspired confidence in His statements. People saw embodied in His teachings what He sought to have them to do. They observed how He experienced sorrow, criticism, disappointment, persecution. His living re-enforced and gave weight to what He said.

No other teacher ever exhibited such poise in any classroom. He never appeared at a disadvantage. He was never taken unawares. Although beset by the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, He maintained the equilibrium of His disposition. He never lost control of any situation. In every instance He remained master of the field.

3. His recognition.

When our Lord entered upon His public ministry, He is spoken of again and again as teaching in the synagogues, as distinct from preaching in them. While John the Baptist is represented only as a preacher, Christ is repeatedly spoken of as teacher (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 11:1; Mark 1:21, 22; Luke 20:1). The question, “How **knoweth this man letters, having never learned?**” (John 7:15), was not asked concerning John the Baptist, but concerning Jesus, because He occupied the more important place of teacher - questioning His pupils and answering their inquiries.

The proof that our Lord was recognized as a teacher may be set forth under five heads:

a. The name by which He was addressed.

Out of ninety times, in sixty He was given the title, “Teacher.” Even in the thirty other titles He was given, it is evident that most of them indicate a teaching rather than a preaching ministry.

b. The name by which His followers were known.

They were called disciples or learners, and their entire attitude was that of pupils.

c. The comparatively large amount of time He spent in instructing His disciples.

From the time He introduced the parables, He gave almost exclusive attention to the training of His disciples. His contacts with the multitude, His public miracles and parables, were used as a means for illustrating and illuminating His instruction for His disciples.

d. The method He employed in dealing with large groups.

In His controversies with the Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees, His frequent use of the question is evidence that He was a teacher.

e. The employment of the word teach in the Great Commission.

Not only did Jesus regard teaching as one of the principal factors of His ministry, but He commissioned His disciples to go forth and teach also. They were to contact all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them (Matthew 28:19). It may well be asked, in this connection, if the Christian church has sufficiently emphasized the teaching ministry of our Lord.

He was recognized as a teacher, despite the fact that He departed from the customary place as well as methods in teaching. The rabbis restricted their instruction to the school and the synagogue. Our Lord taught in the temple, and on the mountain, by the seaside, by the road, by the well, in the home (S. M. Price, *Jesus the Teacher*, p. 7).

The Gospel writer says He went all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and curing any disease or sickness among the people (Matthew 4:23). The atmosphere of a school predominated, for the people felt free to ask Him questions, and He in turn asked them questions.

II. THE CHARACTER OF HIS TEACHING

So much attention has been given to what our Lord taught that the manner in which He presented His instruction has been largely overlooked. Even from the limited material given us in the Gospels, it is not difficult to recognize in our Lord a master teacher. He knew His subjects. The most prolific cause of failure among teachers, next to the inability to discipline, is the lack of thorough knowledge of the subject taught. Christ knew His teaching material perfectly.

Moreover, His teaching was not a pouring in, but rather a pumping out, process. He did not do ninety-nine per cent of the talking Himself. Instead, He invited discussion and gave the class an opportunity to contribute and participate. He organized His material psychologically rather than logically. The needs of the pupils were put above the demands of the subject matter, and He adapted His teaching of the truth to the action or the question of the moment. He saw to it that His pupils mastered their subject. He taught them a few things at a time, and He repeated His instruction until He was assured that it had been not only acquired but assimilated. He taught leisurely. He never was in a hurry. He selected the most important principles and emphasized them.

Three observations should be made of His teaching:

1. His mastery of Scripture.

In the Gospels, which record only a brief portion of our Lord's ministry, it is significant that He quoted from at least sixteen books of the Old Testament. He not only knew the Scriptures, but had assimilated them to such an extent that He could apply them to any situation which might arise. He was not only able to hold His own with the doctors in the temple, at the age of twelve, but with the most severe critics at all times. His mastery of Scripture was demonstrated on the following occasions:

a. The temptation in the wilderness.

Our Lord met each of the three temptations to which He was subjected with an appropriate answer from the Book of Deuteronomy. When Satan attempted to quote Scripture for his purpose, our Lord proved His superior knowledge and resourcefulness with an effective counter quotation, and the enemy of God and the adversary of man was obliged to abandon the field.

b. The sermon in Nazareth.

At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus paid a visit to His home town, Nazareth, “**and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read**” (Luke 4:16).

The visiting Preacher was given the scroll containing the prophecy of Isaiah. He quickly found the place (Isaiah 61:1) where centuries before the prophet had predicted His ministry. Without comment of any kind, our Lord announced, after He had concluded the striking prophecy concerning Himself, “**This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears**” (Luke 4:21).

Instead of feeling honored, the people of His village were angered at this declaration, and it was necessary for our Lord to quote further Scripture to prove that God’s sovereign grace is for those whom He chooses. He reminded His hearers of the widow of Sarepta, to whom alone Elijah was sent in the time of famine. Then He spoke of Naaman the Syrian, who alone of all the lepers of his time was cleansed through the ministry of Elijah. His complete knowledge of Scripture enabled Him not only to recall the passages that were appropriate for meeting the situation, but also to wield the Word of God as a mighty sword, to strike the truth home to the hearts of His hearers.

c. The Sabbath controversy.

The Pharisees, who were very punctilious for the observance of the letter of law, criticized the disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day. Jesus answered His critics from the very law that they claimed His disciples had broken. He reminded them of what David did when he and his followers were hungry on the Sabbath day. He also referred to the custom of the priests in the temple, “**who profane the sabbath and are blameless.**” As a culmination to these Scripture illustrations, which showed the Pharisees their ignorance of the real spirit of the law, the Master Teacher proclaimed Himself as “**Lord even of the sabbath day**” (Matthew 12:1-8). Not only was the law made for the benefit of man, and not man for the law, but Christ Himself was the Author of the law, and could make what alterations He chose.

d. The post-resurrection instruction.

Probably at no time did our Lord so exhibit His mastery of Scripture as in those days He spent with His disciples after His resurrection. To Cleopas and his companion who were journeying to Emmaus on the afternoon of the resurrection day, a Stranger appeared and entered into their discussion concerning the mystery of a crucified and risen Messiah. It was only when the Stranger opened up the Scriptures and expounded to them the many prophecies concerning Himself, that the mystery was explained (Luke 24:13-27).

Later in the evening of the same day, He appeared to the disciples in an upper room, and quieted their fears not only by showing them the wounds in His hands and His feet, but by rehearsing in their ears the things **“written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms”** concerning Himself (Luke 24:33-45). He had told them much about Himself, and after the Old Testament passages were rehearsed in their ears, we read, **“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.”**

2. His knowledge of human nature.

Our Lord’s understanding of human nature was an important factor in His successful use of the Scriptures. He not only understood the Jewish mind in general, as to factions and sects, but He also was a master in penetrating the heart and understanding the inner workings of the individual mind (Price, op. cit., p. 10).

While our recognition of our Lord’s deity would require that we admit His omniscience, nevertheless we can observe even from the human standpoint that He was a master of psychology. From the outset, He loved all His pupils, not merely the lovable or the bright ones, but even the unlovable. He never held a grudge against a pupil for some past conduct. It was the disciple who denied Him thrice that He particularly sought out after His resurrection and commanded to feed His lambs. He was more swift to commend than to condemn. He commended Peter particularly when he made his great confession of faith, and refrained from criticizing his blunders (Matthew 16:17; John 18:10, 11).

a. He knew the minds of His disciples.

On one occasion, when the disciples complained at His saying that they must eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, in order to have life, Jesus knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at Him, said to them, **“Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? . . . But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him”** (John 6:60-64).

Shortly after our Lord had come down from the mount of transfiguration, there arose a reasoning among the disciples, which of them should be greatest. It was then that our Lord **“perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great”** (Luke 9:47, 48).

b. Jesus knew the minds of His enemies.

When the man sick of the palsy was lowered from the roof of the house into the room where our Lord was ministering, he was greeted with this statement, **“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”** This utterance led certain of the scribes to say within themselves, **“This man blasphemeth.”** But Jesus, knowing their thoughts said,

“Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house” (Matthew 9:2-7).

On another occasion, when the scribes and Pharisees were carefully watching our Lord to see whether or not He would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against Him, we read that **“He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth”** (Luke 6:6-8).

In the last days of His ministry, when every effort was being made to entangle Him in His talk, the Herodians propounded what they regarded as an unanswerable question, **“What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s”** (Matthew 22:16-21).

c. He knew the minds of honest inquirers.

Early in His ministry, when He was choosing His disciples, Nathanael accompanied Philip that he might investigate the Man whom the latter claimed was the Messiah. When Jesus saw him coming, He remarked, **“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.”** It was only natural then that Nathanael should inquire, **“Whence knowest thou me?”** Jesus replied that even before Philip had spoken to him, when he was under the fig tree, He had seen him. Nathanael was evidently surprised to hear this information concerning himself, and the foreknowledge that our Lord exhibited called forth his remarkable confession, **“Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel”** (John 1:45-49).

In His interview with the Samaritan woman who came to Jacob’s well for water, our Lord asked her to call her husband, and when she replied that she had none, He startled her by saying, **“Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly”** (John 4:16-18). No wonder this surprised woman admitted that He was a prophet and later told her friends and neighbors, **“Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”** (John 4:29). The insight that He portrayed into this woman’s character not only convinced her that He was the Messiah, but made her a missionary to the Samaritans of that city, who **“believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did”** (v. 39).

3. His diversified methods.

Our Lord was not only unique in His teaching methods, but He was supreme. He employed various forms of teaching as they suited the various relationships in which He stood to His pupils. In general, the stage of enlightenment that His hearers had reached, and their disposition toward Him, determined the method of teaching.

He invented nothing new in methods, but used old methods with perfect freedom and efficiency. His originality appears in His mastery of these old methods, in the spirit in which He used them, and in His subject matter (Hinsdale, op. cit., p. 137).

His instruction looked to a practical end. He expected progress. To this end, He always appealed to the will of His pupils. While the Greek teacher appealed to the reason, and the Roman teacher to the emotional life, Jesus centered His appeal upon the will. There is a fine illustration of this in the closing part of the Sermon on the Mount. Those who hear His Word and do it are wise. Those who hear His Word and do it not are foolish. The whole emphasis rests upon the conduct of the hearer. He was not content to reach the intellect only, but pressed beyond to contact the personality.

Faith must manifest itself in works. This important truth that He taught was fully illustrated in His life. When John the Baptist in his lowly prison, awaiting execution, had begun to question whether after all Jesus was the Messiah, he sent two disciples to interview Him personally. Pushing their way through the crowd that so frequently surrounded our Lord, they asked, “**Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?**” The ordinary teacher might have said, “Go back and tell John that everything is all right. He need not worry. I am the Christ.” But our Lord understood that this was the time and the opportunity to impress a great truth.

He sent back no word to the melancholy prisoner, but said, “**Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them**” (Matthew 11:2-5). How forcible this instruction! “Just tell John what you see Me do. Let him judge Me, not by what I say, but by what I do. Let My conduct be My answer.”

Jesus had no fixed method in teaching. He was not bound by any routine, or devoted to any system. Rather He was the master of all methods, and varied His process according to the situation He faced and the objective He had in mind. That He was a master of the teaching art is shown by the fact that He used from time to time practically every method that the teaching profession uses today. There were questions, lectures, stories, conversations, discussions, objects, projects, and demonstrations.

There were four methods which He seemed to use most:

a. The discourse.

This would appear to be a preaching method, and was commonly used in the early part of His ministry, when He was not only making public proclamation of His message, but was preparing His chosen disciples for the more intensive instruction they would receive later. Sometimes it was given to large crowds, and sometimes to small ones. Sometimes all the disciples were present, and at other times a mixed group of friends and enemies. As Dr. David James Burrell says, “His pulpit was often a hillside, or a boat moored by the margin of a lake, His auditorium the blue canopy of the skies, His audience the multitude gathered about Him with faces upturned in eager attention” (D. J. Burrell, *The Wonderful Teacher*, p. 13).

They called Him, “**a teacher come from God.**”

Three of these discourses occupy more than one chapter and are probably the most outstanding.

One is on the last judgment, comprising two chapters (Matthew 24 and 25); the longest, the farewell address, filling four chapters in John’s Gospel (14-17); the best known, the teaching on the mount, which occupies three chapters (Matthew 5-7).

The Sermon on the Mount, as it is generally erroneously called, was in reality the teaching on the mount, because even with this uninterrupted discourse there were the outstanding marks of the teaching profession.

In the first place, when the multitudes followed Him up into the mountain, He observed the custom of the rabbis and sat down before He began to teach. Then we are told, “**He opened his mouth, and taught them**” (Matthew 5:2). Again and again in the discourse, He used the rhetorical question: “**Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?**” “**Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?**” “**Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?**” “**Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?**”

Then at the conclusion of the discourse, we are told that “**The people were astonished at his doctrine (teaching): for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes**” (Matthew 7:28, 29).

b. The dialogue.

In this method, there are two or more speakers. Difficulties are propounded, and efforts made to remove them, all of which gives to the teaching greater variety and animation (Hinsdale, op. cit., p. 138).

The interviews with Nicodemus (John 3), with the woman of Samaria (John 4), and with Simon (Luke 7), are all illustrations of the dialogue. This method also was used when Jesus was teaching His disciples. It served both to instruct the mind and move the heart. In the dialogue there was ample opportunity given for the disciples to ask questions and to answer the inquiries of the Master. Not only did such questions afford the Saviour an opportunity of imparting more thorough instruction, but those who felt they were well enough acquainted to unburden their hearts to Him were thereby drawn into closer fellowship with Him.

Perhaps one of the best illustrations of the dialogue was the conversation our Lord held with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22).

This wealthy young man who had already attained sufficient pre-eminence to be elected a member of the synagogue, could not find satisfaction in either his position or his possessions, so he confronted the Master with his problem. The Teacher tested him out by telling him to keep the Commandments, to which the young man responded that he had done so from his youth.

Then discerning the heart of the difficulty, which was covetousness, our Lord said to him, **“If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.”**

However, his love for his possessions outweighed even his desire for life, and he went away sorrowful. The Teacher let the young man make his own choice, and in this case it was a refusal rather than an acceptance.

c. The disputation.

When confronted by enemies and accusers, Christ adopted the method of disputation.

These disputations were controversial in form and searching in character. The purpose of His enemies was to entangle Him in His talk by asking hard questions. But He never appears at a disadvantage, is never taken unawares.

When the Pharisees challenged the authority of Jesus, He turned upon them with a question they found themselves unable to answer: **“The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or from men?”** (Matthew 21:25).

This question put His enemies into a predicament. If they had answered, **“From heaven,”** our Lord would have replied, **“Well, why did you not believe in him?”** If they had said, **“From men,”** they would have endangered their lives, for the people had a high regard for John the Baptist, and believed that he was all he claimed to be. So the Pharisees declared they could not answer, and in making this response they confessed their ignorance and cowardice.

In that last week of His ministry, He was viciously assaulted by representatives of the three political groups (Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees) with many perplexing questions. When He had successfully silenced His critics, He took the offensive and propounded a baffling question: **“What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.”** Whereupon our Lord asked His unanswerable question: **“How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?”** (Matthew 22:41-46).

The Pharisees were unable to answer this question without acknowledging the deity of Jesus Christ. With what marvelous skill did He use the Old Testament to effectively silence His enemies!

d. The parable.

It is the use of the parable in His teaching by which our Lord is most widely known. In fact they have been called the consummation of His art. About one-fourth of His words, as recorded by Mark, and about one-half as recorded by Luke, are in parable form. If the parables were omitted from His teaching, much of it would be gone, and if He had not used the method, He would not have been nearly so effective. He seems to have taken up the parable suddenly, about the middle of His ministry (Hinsdale, op. cit., p. 161).

The parable of the sower was the first one He uttered, and from that time on He used the parable so frequently we read that “**without a parable spake he not unto them**” (Mark 4:34).

One needs to read Matthew thirteen to fully understand the purpose of the parable.

The disciples did not understand the hidden meaning the parable of the sower contained. In consequence, they came to Him afterward for the explanation, and it was in this connection that He gave the reason for His speaking to them in parables. “**It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given . . . Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand . . . For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear**” (Matthew 13:11-18).

It is evident from this direct statement of our Lord that the parable was not used as a method of teaching because of its clearness and beauty. The parable was used to conceal truth, fully as much as to clarify it (Hinsdale, op. cit., p. 167).

This required marvelous ability. To His enemies, who resisted and refused the truth, the parable would appear as an innocent story. To the cognizant disciples, however, it conveyed important truth.

The reason for this is apparent. Our Lord wished to instruct His disciples in public as well as in private. It was impossible therefore, for Him to escape the scribes and Pharisees, who were plotting to put Him to death. That they might not find evidence upon which to base an accusation against Him, He withheld from their understanding the great truths His disciples alone could appreciate. It was only during the last week, when it was no longer necessary for Him to conceal His knowledge of their criminal intentions, that He uttered that outstanding denunciation against the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23). And He made His last parables so pointed that they grasped their true significance. After He had spoken the parable of the two sons, and the wicked husbandmen, we read, “When the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that He spake of them” (Matthew 21:45).

III. THE RESULTS OF HIS TEACHING

Our Lord must be recognized as a master teacher when judged by the results of His teaching. He left no book or written page behind Him. He bequeathed no system, no philosophy, no legislation. While He founded the Church, He trained others to establish it. During His ministry He devoted Himself primarily to the students He had enrolled in His training class. The results of His teaching were to be manifest in their lives and accomplishments.

And so it proved. It has been well said, “the greatest miracle in history seems to be the transformation that Jesus effected in the lives of His disciples.”

These disciples transformed by His teaching, His death, His resurrection, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, went forth to turn the world up-side-down. Ten of them gave their lives as a testimony to their faith in their Teacher.

1. Lives Transformed.

The men whom Jesus taught were far from perfect when they enrolled in His training class.

Simon, who was to be given the name Peter, was not only ignorant, but impulsive and sinful. It was after Peter and John had performed a notable miracle in Jerusalem that we read, **“When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled”** (Acts 4:13).

Peter was so reckless that he cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant when the soldiers came to arrest his Lord. Peter probably aimed for the head but slashed off only an ear. It was the bungling attempt of an impetuous disciple. Peter’s vulgar life came to the surface that night of His Lord’s betrayal when he cursed and swore that he never knew Him.

John, too, was impetuous. He became so angry at the Samaritans who refused to provide Jesus entertainment that he asked his Teacher for permission to bring fire down from Heaven and consume them. John and James, in their selfish ambitions to have the chief seats in our Lord’s kingdom, brought down upon themselves the scorn and contempt of all the other disciples.

Simon the Zealot, as the title indicates, belonged to a radical political party and must have been regarded by outsiders as more of a liability than an asset to the cause.

Matthew was one of those much despised tax gatherers, and surely his presence could not have added any prestige to the group. Matthew, the publican, he calls himself - that was his occupation - and more, that was his character. He sets that mark of ignominy upon himself. He was recognized as a traitor to his country. In order to enrich himself, and to do so as quickly as possible, he joined hands with the oppressors of his people.

Judas was such a hard case that all the years of association with the Master proved to have no effect upon his character. He was already so far down the pathway of evil that although he was for three years in the best environment this world has ever provided, and even became the treasurer of the group, he yielded to his great greed for gain and sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. The transformation of character in the case of the disciples was accomplished so gradually and yet so completely that the courageous and consecrated men who occupied the stage in the Acts of the Apostles were altogether different from the untrained, uncouth, unlettered men who first enrolled in our Lord’s training class.

- Peter is a man of faith - confident and aggressive.
- John becomes the beloved disciple who writes, **“Little children, love one another.”**
- James is so zealous for the truth that he becomes first of the martyred disciples.
- Matthew, no longer scorned as publican and sinner, gives us the first of the Gospels.

2. Lives dedicated.

As the result of our Lord's teaching, we find there soon existed between Him and His disciples a bond of union, a personal attachment so strong that they early left all that was dear to them in life that they might dedicate themselves to His service. There are several illustrations of this in the Gospel (cf. Mark 1:18, 20).

Since Peter was recognized as spokesman for the Twelve, it is not always plain whether he was expressing only his own personal feelings or those of the entire group. He seems to have spoken for all the disciples, on the occasion when the rich young ruler found that he was unable to meet the test of discipleship, and went away sorrowful. Peter had occasion to ask, "**Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?**" Jesus commends their loyalty, "**Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel**" (Matthew 19:27, 28).

On another occasion in the synagogue of Capernaum our Lord's discourse gave such offense that many of His professed followers "**went back, and walked no more with him.**"

Jesus then put the test to the twelve, "**Will ye also go away?**" Peter replied in behalf of them all, "**Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God**" (John 6:66-69). The noble and explicit confession of loyalty and recognition of their Teacher as the Messiah was not long after repeated on another occasion, at Caesarea Philippi.

Thomas expressed his loyalty in the later days of our Lord's ministry. By this time it was well known that danger lurked in the city of Jerusalem. In fact, the last time our Lord had been in Jerusalem the angry Jews had taken up stones to hurl at Him. It was only by a miracle that He escaped out of their hands and retired with His disciples into a secluded place. But at last to this desert spot came tidings of the death of Lazarus in Bethany, near Jerusalem. Jesus resolved to return; the disciples were startled. They reminded Him, "**Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?**" But when He insisted upon making this journey which was to prove His last, Thomas said unto his fellow disciples, "**Let us also go, that we may die with him**" (John 11:8-16).

That was a most noble sentiment, for the disciple meant every word of it. It was a cruel death and his flesh shrank from it. He saw death in all its hardness, cruelty and pain, and yet his devotion to his Lord was so great that he said, "**Let us also go, that we may die with him.**" He expressed a fervor of love that is faithful unto death, a loyal devotion that only in the presence of peril asserts its full strength and nobility.

When James and John and their ambitious mother felt that the hour of the coming kingdom was at hand, they asked a great favor. "**Grant,**" says the mother, "**that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom**" (Matthew 20:20-28).

Thus they exposed their vain ambitions, and at the same time their blindness to spiritual values, and their ignorance of the true nature of the honors and rewards in Christ's kingdom. In that kingdom every true and faithful follower of Jesus must, in some sense, drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism.

And so, Jesus asked the sons of Zebedee if they were able to fulfill these conditions of service; had they the moral and the spiritual power to walk in His footsteps.

It was a searching question and it brought out again the nobler side of their characters. Even if their confident answer betrayed an improper knowledge of what the cup and the baptism meant, it at any rate proved to Christ their implicit trust and their splendid devotion to His cause. To walk in His steps and share in His experiences - that was the only life they cared to live. Not, therefore, with foolish boasting, but with the daring of a great love, they answered, "**We are able.**"

In a few years, when the testing time came, both of these disciples proved that they were able, and did not shrink from the ordeal of persecution and death itself.

3. Lives multiplied.

The results of our Lord's teaching were further manifested by the multiplication of the men whom He chose to be His disciples. He wrought His ideals into their characters so they in turn were able to pass on these same ideals to others. His school of the Twelve became the Christian Church. The Acts of the Apostles reads like the Gospels. It is a record of living over the Master Teacher's life and ministry. The apostles "**entered into the temple early in the morning and taught.**" "**Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach.**" The apostles preached, taught, bore witness, testified, argued, and exhorted. In this ministry they multiplied themselves.

Andrew began his ministry in his own home. "**He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus**" (John 1:41, 42). But Andrew's labors were not confined to his own home. He was the means of introducing to Jesus those Greeks that were anxious to see Him. They were the first-fruits of our Lord among the Gentiles. In vision He saw the kingdom stretched from shore to shore, and from the river unto the ends of the earth, and it was Andrew who brought them. It seems that Philip was undecided until he had consulted Andrew. But the latter seems to have better understood his Teacher. He felt that Jesus would be glad to help and save anyone (John 12:20-22).

When Philip became a disciple and enrolled in our Lord's training class, he felt constrained to look up Nathanael. Nathanael was not so easily won by Philip, as was Simon by Andrew. Pious in heart as he was, and ready to accept the fulfillment of Scripture, he had certain preconceived ideas which prevented his immediate assent to Philip's good tidings. But Philip did not argue with his friend. He took a shorter course. He was convinced that if Nathanael could only see Jesus, speak with Him, breathe the atmosphere that surrounded Him, all prejudices would be removed. So he simply said, "**Come and see**" (John 1:45, 46).

Peter was a recognized leader in the early Church, and his remarkable sermon on the Day of Pentecost resulted in the first three thousand members being added to the faithful one hundred and twenty who had prayed ten days for that remarkable day of the Church's origin.

The first part of the Acts of the Apostles is in reality the acts of Peter, since he was the acknowledged leader in the early days of the Church. Later, John Mark accompanied him, and it was largely from his listening to the repeated accounts of Peter's teaching and preaching that he came to write the Gospel of Mark. Later Peter wrote the First and Second Epistles, which have his name, warning the Church, first of the enemies without, and second of the enemies within.

When Matthew rose up and left all to enter our Lord's training class, the only things he took with him out of his old occupation were his pen and ink (Matthew 9:9).

The Gospel of Matthew, which has been printed in more than one thousand different languages and dialects, represents Matthew's contribution of his pen and ink. After the record of the feast he prepared for our Lord and His disciples (Luke 5:27-32), he disappears from history. No more is heard of him in the New Testament. But by virtue of the Gospel which he was inspired to write, he is today one of the chief benefactors of the human race.

4. Lives Sacrificed.

All but one of the eleven disciples who attended our Lord's school gave their lives in witness of their faith in Him, as well as their firm belief in His instruction. The martyrdom of only one is recorded in Scripture, while a second writes of his anticipated execution; but from other sources, considered reliable, there is a record of the death of the others.

a. James the son of Zebedee (Acts 12:2).

Despite the fact that John appears the more active of the two sons of Zebedee in the early Church, it was James that Herod executed in prison with a sword, although he was thwarted by the prevailing prayers of the Church from putting Peter to death in the same way (Acts 12:3-11). Thus the first of the apostles partook of the cup he had long since told his Lord he was ready to drink (Matthew 20:22).

b. James the son of Alphaeus.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, states that this disciple, after a ministry of some years in Jerusalem, was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, but not being killed by the fall recovered himself sufficiently to pray fervently for his murderers.

Accordingly, his enemies, vexed that they had not fully accomplished their work, poured a shower of stones upon him, and one more merciful than the rest put an end to his suffering with a fuller's club.

c. Bartholomew.

Bartholomew was the first missionary to India, according to tradition, and after spending considerable time in the eastern extremities of Asia, he returned to labor in Phrygia and Lycaonia where, Chrysostom assures us, he instructed and trained up the inhabitants in the Christian discipline. His last days were spent at Albanople in Armenia where the magistrates, provoked by his preaching, prevailed upon the governor to put him to death.

d. Jude.

Paulinus tells us that Jude, or Thaddeus, traveled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria into Idumea and to the cities of Arabia, and afterwards to Syria and Mesopotamia. The writers of the Latin church are unanimous in declaring that he extended his ministry into Persia, where he was so outspoken in reproving the superstitious rites and customs that he was cruelly put to death.

e. Thomas.

Thomas first went into Ethiopia, but later followed Bartholomew into India. At Mattapour, not far from the mouth of the Ganges, he began to erect a place for divine worship until prohibited by the idolatrous priests. At a small distance from the city was a tomb whither the apostle was accustomed to retire for devotions. Hither the priests followed him, and while he was in prayer, shot at him with arrows, then ran a lance through his body.

f. Andrew.

Andrew traveled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Achaia, and Epirus preaching the gospel and confirming the doctrine with signs and miracles. At last he came to Petrea, a city of Achaia, where he gave his last and greatest testimony, sealing it with his blood. The apostle was first scourged by seven lictors and then crucified. He was fastened to two pieces of timber crossing each other in the center in the form of the letter X, and hence usually known by the name of St. Andrew's cross.

g. Simon the zealot.

Less is known of Simon's ministry than that of any other apostle, but he is said to have penetrated the remote, barbarous countries of Africa, sustaining great hardships and persecutions, and to have been crucified.

h. Matthew.

Matthew labored first among the Jews in different parts of Judaea, and later heard the call to the regions beyond. Before he left he was entreated by the Jewish converts to write up the ministry, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and leave the record with them as an enduring monument of what he had so often delivered to them in his teaching. This accounts for the preparation of the Gospel according to Matthew, the only Gospel to be written in Hebrew.

After leaving Judaea, he traveled into Africa and ministered to the Ethiopians, and after laboring indefatigably, he suffered martyrdom, being slain with a halberd.

i. Peter.

Peter, who was so active in establishing the Jerusalem church, appears later to have made Joppa his headquarters, where he raised Dorcas from the dead and received the call to Caesarea for his conference with the Roman centurion, Cornelius (Acts, chapters 9, 10). Later he returned to Jerusalem, where he was arrested and imprisoned by Herod who planned to execute him at the conclusion of the Passover. But God had other plans for him, and he was miraculously delivered by an angel on the eve of his martyrdom (Acts 12:1-19). After this, Caesarea was his residence until the meeting of the first Church council at Jerusalem, which he attended and in which he took an active part (Acts 15:7-11). Here the Bible writer leaves him, but we hear of him later at Babylon where he wrote his First Epistle. Ambrose tells us that he was in Rome at the time of Nero's persecution of the Christians, and for nine months was confined in prison, from which he wrote his Second Epistle. In this last writing he seems to have had a premonition of his execution (II Peter 1:14, 15). Instead of being beheaded, like Paul, he was sentenced to be crucified. Upon arrival at the place of execution, he requested that he might be nailed to the cross head downwards, affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same position in which his Lord had been crucified. Thus the leader of the apostolic group probably suffered the most agonizing death of all.

j. John.

John was the only one of the disciples that did not experience a violent death. He was the youngest of the group and lived long after all the others had passed off the scene. It will be remembered that this disciple whom Jesus loved was assigned the care of His mother (John 19:26, 27), and it probably was not until her death that John felt free to leave Jerusalem.

Asia appears to have been his field, for here he founded many churches. His chief place of residence was at Ephesus, where Paul had already founded a church. When Domitian began his persecution of the Christians, John was ordered to Rome where, according to Tertullian, he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, from which he miraculously escaped, only to be transported to the lonely island of Patmos; there, about the end of Domitian's reign, he wrote the Book of the Revelation.

Upon the death of Domitian, there was a spirit of tolerance shown the Christians, and the apostle was released from Patmos and permitted to return to Ephesus, exercising the office of bishop which was first held by the martyred Timothy. Now over ninety years of age, he spent his last days in an indefatigable execution of his charge, traveling from east to west in Asia Minor and composing the Gospel and three Epistles that have come down to us. Death finally put an end to his labors in the ninety-eighth year of his life, and according to Eusebius he was buried near Ephesus. Like Daniel, the beloved prophet of the Old Testament,

John not only outlived the emperors, as well as the disciples, but was accorded the most far-reaching visions of the future.

The test of the teacher and his teaching, we are again reminded, is what happens in the lives of his disciples. Our Lord fully met this all-exacting test in the unparalleled response of His disciples. Their lives were transformed, dedicated, multiplied and eventually sacrificed for their Teacher and the great task to which He had commissioned them.

QUESTIONS

1. In what five respects was our Lord prepared to be a teacher?
2. State five facts as evidence that our Lord was recognized as a teacher.
3. Name three characteristics of a teacher.
4. Give four illustrations of His mastery of the Scripture.
5. In His relation to others, on what three occasions did our Lord show His knowledge of human nature?
6. Name four methods that were employed by the Master Teacher.
7. What illustrations can be given to show that His instruction looked to a practical end?
8. Define and illustrate the discourse method.
9. Compare the dialogue with disputation methods and give illustration of each.
10. What was the purpose of the parable?
11. In what respects were the lives of His disciples transformed?
12. Name four results of His teaching.
13. Give an illustration of the devotion of the disciples.
14. In what respect were the lives of the disciples multiplied?
15. How did the disciples sacrifice their lives?

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