

LESSON ESSENTIALS

WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 4: THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

In order to get to know someone, you can watch their actions and listen to their words. But to know them on a deeper level you also need to discover what they believe to be true. To know Jesus we can read the narratives about Him in the Bible, but when we read what He says about Himself and about His purpose on earth, we get a much more complete understanding of who Jesus is.

When we read the Bible, we are not only learning about the Bible, but we are also learning about Jesus. He is the very Word of God, and what He says is an accurate reflection of who He is. As we study His teachings, we come to understand His character and His mission.

Where the Pharisees sought their justification, sanctification, rest, salvation, and satisfaction in their own rules, laws, and obedience, Christ taught that those blessings came through Him alone.

In Jesus' time, the Pharisees and Sadducees, were considered to be the experts on Biblical law. They taught the law as they understood it. They added more laws to what the Scriptures contain, and held everyone to an impossible level of obedience and perfection. When Jesus came, many who believed that He was the Messiah also expected that Jesus would support and reinforce the teaching of the Pharisees. However, in many cases, He did quite the opposite.

In Jesus' teaching that we call "The Sermon on the Mount," Jesus often repeats the two-part phrase, "You have heard it said... But I say." In this phrase he corrected the false (or incomplete) teaching of the Pharisees and reinforced Biblical truths and applications.

For example, where the Pharisees sought their justification, sanctification, rest, salvation, and satisfaction in their own rules, laws, and obedience, Christ taught that those blessings came through Him alone. Looking at what Jesus teaches in His "I Am" statements shows us how He corrected false teaching and established His identity as the Messiah all at once.

I am the gate for the sheep, I am the door, I am the Good Shepherd John 10:7-18

To establish the truth that Jesus is the true Messiah, and that He is the one to follow, He calls Himself the gate, the door and the Good Shepherd. In this passage, Jesus talks about the false shepherds, the false ways to salvation, and how they will all fail to keep their promises. Only Jesus is willing to lay down His life to protect His sheep – that is, His followers – and only Jesus is the way to everlasting, abundant life.

I am the resurrection and the life John 11:25

Jesus' friends, Martha and Mary, were grieving over the death of their brother, Lazarus. Both sisters cried out to Jesus that if He had been there, Lazarus could have been healed and would not have died. Jesus took the opportunity to teach them about Himself and His plans. He told them, "Your brother will rise again." Jesus then called Himself 'the resurrection and the life'. This goes beyond believing that there will one day be a resurrection. This places the power to raise people from the dead and to give them everlasting life directly in to the hands of Jesus. He says, "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." He was declaring Himself to be the

Messiah, and He was declaring His intention to give new life to those who believe. **I am the Light of the World** John 8:12

There are many ways of understanding the concept of darkness. There is the physical darkness that makes it hard to see where one is going. There is an intellectual darkness, or confusion, causing one to not understand what ought to happen next. There is also an emotional or spiritual darkness in which one is struggling against invisible enemies, trying to find their way to hope again. Over each of these, “Jesus spoke ... saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” The Pharisees would have believed that by obeying their laws one would know the way to walk. But Jesus taught that it was only in following Him that we would walk in the light.

I am the bread of Life, I am the bread that came down from heaven John 6:35, John 6:41

In the story of the Exodus, God the Father performed a miracle in that He provided bread for the Israelites every day for the entire 40 year journey. Bread from heaven fell to nourish them and to sustain them. In a much better and longer-lasting way, Jesus teaches that He is the bread of life, the bread that came down from Heaven. The Pharisees were offended by this teaching and challenged Jesus about it. Jesus’ response shows that the manna in the wilderness was just a symbol of what was to come, and that Jesus fulfills a greater need than physical bread ever could. “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

I am the way the truth and the life John 14:6

When other religious or political groups try to teach that there are many ways to reach God, or many ways to be spiritually satisfied, we need to remember Jesus’ teaching about Himself. He states so simply, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” While this statement on its own may seem arrogant and easy to dismiss, in light of all the other details we learn about Jesus, who He was, what He said, and what He did, we come to see validity to His claim. Who else has done miracles like Jesus? Who else had compassion like Jesus? But most

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(John 14:6)

importantly, who else was willing to lay down their life for the sake of their enemy like Jesus? Only Jesus took the punishment that we deserve. Surely it is becoming ever more obvious, and ever more praise worthy, that Jesus is the only way to be reconciled to God.

The teachings of Jesus really are simply His speaking out what He had already proven by His life. The testimony of His mouth and the integrity of His life teach us so much about Jesus, the one true Saviour!

IN REVIEW

- Jesus is the Word of God, so when we read and study the Bible we are also studying the person and character of Jesus.
- Jesus used His teaching to silence the false teaching of the Pharisees and to state His mission on earth.
- The verbal claims of Jesus are all supported and proven by His life.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Which of these “I Am” statements are helpful to you? Which ones are challenging? Do you believe them all? Take some time now to pray for the wisdom to understand and the faith to believe the things that Jesus taught about Himself.

- There are many more “I Am” statements in the Gospels that warrant a close reading. Take some time today to read them and to learn more about our wonderful Saviour!

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