

# THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

## Lesson Three: Christ, The Master Teacher

Nicodemus paid Christ the ultimate compliment. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). Although Christ is much more than The Teacher sent from God, He is the ideal Teacher. Christ made teaching by word and deed the means of spreading His kingdom. As the Teacher sent from God, Jesus knew not only what to say, but also how to say it. The Lord used different forms in His teaching. We will study two examples.

### I. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (MATTHEW 5,6,7)

[You are encouraged to get your Bible and read the verses as they are mentioned.] This sermon has much to offer to the sincere student of Jesus. The wealth of material in the sermon is so rich that those who hunger for God's word should camp here. Two points are important in understanding this sermon.

The Lord provides materials for those who are really His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men" (Mt. 5:13; 7:7-11). Warnings are aimed at those who think they are disciples, but are not. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven..." (Mt. 7:21-23). Some passages provide challenges (Mt. 6:24,33). Some, invitation (Mt. 7:13,14). Those who are disciples need to press on. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (Mt. 6:19-21). The Lord opens with the beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12). The values set forth are fundamentally different from those of modern life, education, and life style. Those who live by the teaching of the Lord cannot do so in secret. Just as a city on a hill cannot be hid, so a true disciple cannot be hidden (Mt. 5:15,16).

Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament is one important point brought out in the sermon. Jesus came to fulfill; not to destroy the law (Mt. 5:17,18). He serves as that to which the Old Testament pointed. He begins five sections of the sermon with

some variation of "Ye have heard it said..." They had heard to "love your neighbor" (Mt. 5:43). Some said that we can hate our enemy. Jesus said otherwise. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you" (Mt. 5:44,45,48). Some struggle with the text because it strongly requires that we do something about lusts (Mt. 5:28,29).

Jesus warned against religion that confuses show with devotion. Jesus focused on three dominant actions in Jewish piety: giving to the needy, praying, and fasting. Our piety doesn't mean much if our public exercises of worshiping are our sole effort to glorify God. These negative lessons can be put into succinct principles on where our affections are to be centered (Mt. 6:19-24). There are other dangers that confront us. The first is a judgmental attitude (Mt. 7:1-5). The second is using no judgment at all (Mt. 7:6). The sermon ends with warnings (Mt. 7:24-27). The sermon must not simply be studied, but practiced.

### II. PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM.

Many parables are a certain kind of story. One of the best known is that of the seed and the soils (Mt. 13:3-9). The interpretation is given by Jesus (Mt. 13:18-23). The great point is that where the gospel is proclaimed, it receives varied receptions. Some are hardened until the message does not penetrate. Others are shallow. Some are choked by competing interests. Another parable also has the kingdom likened unto a man who sows good seeds (Mt. 13:24-30). The point of the story is clear. The servants want to rush in and attempt a separation. The owner decides to delay to a more appropriate time. Jesus provides the interpretation (Mt. 13:36-43).

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (Mt. 13:31-35) contrast the kingdom's small beginning to its greatness at a later time. False expectations are exploded. The mustard seed suggests extensive growth; the leaven, intensive growth. Jesus chose strange comparisons to evoke thought.

The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl (Mt. 13:44-46) demonstrate the supreme value of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever the cost of discipleship, the kingdom is worth more. The person who

spends all his life on pearls will, once he has found a truly superlative pearl, cheerfully sacrifice all his other treasures to obtain it. Once one learns the value of the kingdom, he will gladly change all for the kingdom of heaven. Its worth far outstrips all other pretensions of worth.

In the parable of the net (Mt. 13:47,48) Jesus draws the elements of this parable from every day life. Worthless fish are discarded; the good fish are kept. Jesus is foreseeing what the kingdom of God will be like. Good and bad will be together, but there will be a final separation.

Why speak in parables? That was the question put to Jesus by His disciples (Mt. 13:10). First, God makes a distinction between disciples and the indiscriminate crowd (Mt. 13:11,12). Secondly, God reveals truth to some and not to others in terms of the spiritual dullness of the hearers (Mt. 13:13-17). Matthew also insists that Jesus spoke in parables to fulfill scripture (Mt. 13: 34,35). With the Bible in your hand and all the opportunities available to study and learn, you will not be able to stand before God and claim you couldn't learn enough to know what to do to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

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