

Lesson Seventy-nine

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE TEACHING
OF JESUS

Scripture Reading: John 8:31-42, 14:1-11.

Scripture to Memorize: "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

I. Q. What is a first unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. A first unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its high evaluation of human personality.

(1) "The advent of Christianity created a new epoch both in the development and recognition of personality. Its Founder lived a life and exercised a personal attraction, but is expressly reported to have told His followers that the full meaning of that Life and its attractions would not be understood till he was gone. . . . The fact of the unique Life came first, the new Personality; and then the gradual explanation of the fact, in the doctrine of the Person of Christ" (J. R. Illingworth, *Personality—Human and Divine*, p. 8). (2) Jesus teaches that God is a Spirit, *i.e.*, a personal Being (John 4:24). Therefore man, having been created in God's image *personally*, needs now to be re-created in God's image *morally*, in order to become a partaker of the Divine nature. 2 Cor. 5:17—"if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." Eph. 2:10—"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." 2 Pet. 1:4—"that . . . ye may become partakers of the divine nature." (3) Hence the Christian life is pictured in the New Testament writings as a continuous enhancement of the personality, as the believer grows in grace, spiritual knowl-

edge, and holiness. 2 Pet. 1:5-7, "in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control; and in your self-control, patience; and in your patience, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness, love." 2 Pet. 3:18—"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (4) Jesus proposes nothing short of the complete liberation of the human personality from the love, guilt, practice, even the consequences, of sin. John 8:31, 32—"If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." All that He asks of us, in order to achieve these things in us and for us, is that we yield ourselves in loving obedience to Him and "abide in His word." Phil. 2:5 "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." John 15:5—"he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing." *If we will but submit wholeheartedly to His leading, He will do the rest.* John 6:40—"For this is the will of the Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (5) Christianity thus, by its high evaluation of personality, breaks down all religious distinctions between the sexes. Its Gospel invitations are extended to women as well as men, and its privileges and blessings are proffered to both sexes alike, and on the same terms. Gal. 3:28—"There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus." (6) It is this high evaluation of personality which has resulted in the outlawing of slavery, in the liberation of womankind, and in increased agitation for a just economic, political, and social order in all Christian lands. (7) Our chief objection to current materialistic theories is that they degrade the human personality. I refuse to accept—I hurl back with scorn!—the notion that I am in the world just to eat and drink and repro-

duce my kind, and then lie down and die and cease to be! I reject the notion that I am of no higher order than a beast of the field. It is obvious that if such a theory, which is, after all, but a revival of ancient paganism, were to be accepted and practiced universally, the result would inevitably be the complete degradation of all mankind.

2. Q. What is a second unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. A second unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its distinct appeal to the individual.

(1) The teaching of Jesus makes its appeal directly to the *individual*. It is the *individual*, male or female, who must hear, believe, obey, and be born anew—not the neighborhood, community, or state. The spiritual law is analogous at this point, as at every other, to the physical law. Every birth, every form of birth, is of necessity *individualistic*. Thus are we born of the flesh into the kingdom of nature, one by one; thus are we born of water and the Spirit into the kingdom of grace, one by one; and thus shall we be born from the grave, into the kingdom of glory. The Church is a community of pardoned individuals; and Heaven itself will be a society of glorified, redeemed souls. This law is universal—there is no changing it. (2) Those who contemplate the “regeneration of the social order” *en masse*, ignore this fundamental principle. The teaching of Jesus is as silent as the grave with regard to any such thing as *mass regeneration*. “Social regeneration” will come only as redeemed individuals practice the teaching of Jesus with respect to neighborly responsibility, and to the degree that their social idealism shall permeate the structure of the entire social and civic body—and in no other way. Hence the first and most important business of the Church is to preach the Gospel to men and women, that they may hear, believe, yield, obey, and be born anew. John 3:5—“Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

3. Q. What is a third unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. A third unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its high evaluation of life.

(1) One of the very first truths revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures is that our *physical* life is a gift from the very essence of God. God breathed life, we are told, out of Himself into the first man when He created him (Gen. 2:7). At this point the teaching of Jesus builds upon the foundation laid by Moses: for we learn from the apostolic writings that neither *spiritual* life nor *eternal* life can be acquired by men on their own merits, but can only be *accepted* by them through faith in Christ, for the simple reason that *both are divine gifts*. John 3:16—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." I John 5:12—"He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the son hath not the life." Rom. 6:23—"the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (2) *Jesus had more to say about life and about how to live it*, than possibly about any other subject. John 5:26—"For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself." John 14:6—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life." John 11:25, 26—"I am the resurrection and the life . . . whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." John 6:35—"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." John 6:51—"I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world." John 8:51—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." John 10:27, 28—"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life." John 17:3—"And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom

thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." Concerning His own life, He said: "I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). He proved this claim by raising Lazarus and certain others from the dead (John 11:40-44; Luke 7:11-17, 8:49-56), and by rising from the dead Himself (Acts 2:24-33). From these numerous scriptures and many others not quoted here, it will be seen that *Jesus presents Himself as the mediator through whom this fulness of life is transmitted from God, the Source of all life, to believing men and women.* (3) Further, this fulness of life which He offers to all who accept Him is, He affirms, of an infinitely nobler order than mere physical life. A man's real life, He affirms, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). The real life is *spiritual* life—the life that is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). In just one human being it is more valuable, He declares, than the total wealth of the whole material world. Matt. 16:26—"For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" It is designated by Jesus Himself the *abundant* life. John 10:10—"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (How tragic that this precious and meaningful expression should be prostituted by present-day politicians to have reference in any way to the social order!) (4) The essential principle of this fulness of life is *union with God through Jesus Christ*, we are told. I John 1:3—"our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (5) From all these considerations it is obvious that life, no matter of what order or rank, is a divine gift, and man's most priceless possession. It is a most sacred possession, one that is not to be undervalued, not to be treated lightly, not to be taken by him at will; but, on the contrary, a possession which he should cherish and nourish, by feeding upon the Word, by imbibing of the Spirit, by dwelling in close fellowship with the Father and with the Son: thus

budding, then blossoming, and finally fructifying in the life everlasting. It can readily be seen that the universal acceptance and practice of Jesus' teaching on the subject of life, would soon eliminate murder, suicide, infanticide, abortion, crime, lawlessness, and even that curse of mankind—war. In Oriental systems life is regarded as illusion (*Maya*) something to be escaped from; in Christianity life is considered to be man's greatest good.

4. Q. What is a fourth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. A fourth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its emphasis on righteousness as the supreme ideal of life.

(1) Note well: *righteousness*; not *peace*, as so many would have us believe. In no instance does Jesus even intimate that *right* should ever be sacrificed for the sake of peace. To the contrary He says: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36). "The wisdom that is from above," says James, "is first pure, *then* peaceable," etc. (Jas. 3:17). In the moral conflict with Satan, in which precious souls are at stake, there can be no peace; the warfare must go on until the last enemy shall have been abolished, which is death (I Cor. 15:25-26). (2) Righteousness is *doing the will of God*. Jesus exemplified this ideal perfectly in everything that He said and did while on earth. His constant passion was to be about the Father's business, and to do the will of the Father in all things. When He came to John and asked to be baptized, and John hesitated about it, feeling his own unworthiness, Jesus said: "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (What better reason could any human being offer for submitting to baptism than just this: to do the will of the Father who

is in heaven!). Even in the hour of great crisis, in the throes of the intense anguish of spirit which He underwent in the Garden of Gethsemane, He never wavered for one moment, but His thrice-repeated prayer was: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Cf. John 4:34—"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work." John 5:30—"I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." John 9:4—"We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." What human teacher ever proposed such an exalted ideal as this: one so spiritual, so noble, and yet so eminently practical!

5. Q. What is a fifth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. A fifth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its emphasis on the supremacy of the law of love in all human relations.

(1) Matt. 22:36-40, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets." (2) It should be noted here that love *to God* is the great and first commandment. The intellectuals of our day who put first emphasis on brotherly love are, so to speak, "getting the cart before the horse." Love to God naturally and necessarily comes first, for the simple reason that man's consciousness and realization of all human obligations is born of his love for God and his knowledge of God's will. The man who loves God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind, will naturally love his neighbor as himself.

6. Q. What is a sixth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. A sixth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its emphasis upon the reality and superiority of the spiritual.

(1) John 6:27—"Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed." (2) Matt. 6:19-21, "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, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." Matt. 6:24-25, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore, I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment?" Matt. 6:33—"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you." (3) Luke 9:59, 60—"And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But he said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead: but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God." (4) John 6:63—"It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life." Matt. 24:35—"Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away."

7. Q. What is a seventh unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. A seventh unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its emphasis upon personal purity and holiness.

(1) Matt. 5:3-10, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn:

for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (2) John 15:2—"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit." (3) Rom. 14:17—"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Heb. 12:14—"Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." (4) Phil. 4:8—"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (5) Gal. 5:22-25, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." Holiness, from the Greek *holon*, is literally *wholeness*.

8. Q. What is an eighth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. An eighth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its emphasis on the sacredness of the home and the marriage relationship.

(1) *Jesus reaffirms the divine authority for marriage, and sanctions only the monogamous relationship, i.e., pairing with a single mate through life.* Matt. 19:4-6, "Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall

a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (2) *He allows divorce on one ground only, viz., that of inconstancy (i.e., fornication or adultery).* Matt. 19:7-9, "They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, *except for fornication*, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery." *There is no other scriptural ground for divorce*, excepting possibly *unbelief*, in certain instances. Paul seems to teach, in I Cor. 7:10-16, that in cases of desertion, where the deserting party is an *unbeliever*, the marriage covenant may be considered dissolved. Indiscriminate divorce is an unfailing sign of a decadent civilization.

9. Q. What is a ninth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

A. A ninth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is its identification of belief and practice.

Matt. 7:21—"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." Luke 6:46—"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Jas. 2:26—"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON SEVENTY-NINE

1. What is a first unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?
2. What is a second unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

3. What is a third unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?
4. What is a fourth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?
5. What is a fifth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?
6. What is a sixth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?
7. What is a seventh unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?
8. What is an eighth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?
9. What is a ninth unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus?

Lesson Eighty

JESUS THE GREAT TEACHER: A SUMMARY

Scripture Reading: Matt. 7:24-27.

Scriptures to Memorize: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Luke 10:22). "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father" (John 16:28). "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John 7:16-17).

10. Q. What is the effect of the teaching of Jesus upon human civilization wherever it is generally accepted and applied?

A. The teaching of Jesus always builds the highest type of human civilization wherever it is generally accepted and applied.

(1) By its high evaluation of the human personality, it