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## **The Teaching Of Jesus Christ Concerning God**

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Jesus Christ was the world's greatest Teacher. When He had ended the Sermon on the Mount, the multitudes were astonished at His teaching, for He taught as having authority and not as the scribes. The scribes were always quoting rabbi so and so, but Christ spoke with His own authority. He would say, You have heard that it has been said, but I say unto you. What He said was final and needed no support.

Jesus taught in the temple, in city streets, and from the bow of a ship. He taught in private homes and in the most public places. He was a sensation and was followed by crowds. He did not have to run people down in order to preach to them.

Jesus taught on many subjects. He taught about God, about Himself, and about the Holy Spirit. He taught about man, sin, salvation, and the kingdom of God. He had much to say concerning righteousness, repentance, responsibility, and judgment to come. He discussed anxiety, fear, faith, and forgiveness. He gave instruction about money, covetousness, hypocrisy, humility, and love. He gave the truth about divorce, defilement, prayer, and worship. And He was the most misunderstood teacher of all times.

We do not know much about the childhood of Jesus. We see Him at the age of twelve in the temple sitting in the midst of doctors, hearing them and asking questions. And He also answered some questions, for all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. One wonders if He did not embarrass the doc-

tors, with His superior knowledge, even at that early age. And after that, Luke tells us that He grew physically, mentally, and socially; He grew in favor with God and man. One cannot be sure just when He became conscious of His divine Sonship and Messianic mission; however, He seems to have realized something of it at the age of twelve when He said to His parents, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him at His baptism must have restored to Him His preincarnate wisdom and endowed Him with power to perform miracles.

Jesus wrote no books, but there are more books written about Him than about any other person who has ever lived. He built no schools, and yet there are more schools teaching His life than all other lives put together.

What Jesus taught about God was in marked contrast to the pantheistic and polytheistic systems prevailing among the oriental nations. The world by its own wisdom never has and never can know God. Man by searching cannot find God. God must reveal Himself if He is to be known. Jesus of Nazareth was the incarnate word of God—God clothed in flesh. John says, "No man hath seen God at anytime; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him."

### **JESUS RETAINED THE JEWISH CONCEPTION OF GOD**

And this was the Old Testament conception. He taught that God was a trinity of persons

in one divine essence. He did not confound the persons nor divide their substance. As to substance He said, "I and the Father are one." As to persons He distinguished between Himself and the Holy Spirit.

1. Jesus believed in a personal God of intelligence, moral sensibility, and will. He taught that men ought to love God with all their heart and soul and mind. He urged upon men the responsibility of doing the will of God, and this implies a personal God.

2. Jesus taught that God is universal. It is difficult for the mind to conceive of a universal person. One naturally thinks of pantheism, the idea that all things in the aggregate go to make up God; or that the universe in its totality is God. But when we speak of God as a universal Person, we mean that He is without limitation of locality or time. Limitation is essential to finite personality, but not to infinite personality, such as God has. God is universal as to space; He is everywhere. Solomon, in his prayer dedicating the temple, said, "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded" (I Kings 8:27). Jesus taught the woman of Sychar that no particular place is necessary for the worship of God; that He is Spirit and can be worshipped without going to any temple made with hands. God is also universal as to time. He is the God of eternity, self-existent and ever existent. He is the ancient of days, but not ancient in days. Time writes no wrinkles on His brow. To God there are no boundaries of time; one day to Him is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day. God is universal as to wisdom. He knows all things in one eternal now. He knows all things that are past, present, and future to us.

3. Jesus emphasized the ethical qualities of God. He believed not only in the natural attributes, such as omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and eternity of God; He also believed in the moral perfections, such as love, mercy, and holiness. Jesus taught that God only is good in the absolute sense.

#### THERE WERE SOME NEW FACTORS IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS CONCERNING GOD

And in this we see the Bible in its progressive revelation. All the truth about God is not found in the Old Testament. Christ built upon the foundation of the Old Testament, but He went beyond it in His teaching about God. In the Old Testament, God is predominantly a King. "The Lord is King forever" (Ps. 10:16). "For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us" (Isa. 33:22). "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103:19). Samuel was greatly displeased when Israel in-

sisted upon a King like other nations. The Lord said to him, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (I Sam. 8:7).

But with Jesus the characteristic name for God is Father. He speaks much of the kingdom of God, but seldom does He speak of God as King. He speaks of God as His own Father, and also as the Father of others. In speaking to His disciples, He not only said, "My Father," but He also said, "Your Father". But notice, He never said "Our Father", for God is not the Father of Jesus in the sense He is the Father of men. Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God; all others are sons by adoption. Paul often used the expression "our Father", because he like us was a son of God by adoption. How carefully the Scriptures guard the unique Sonship of Jesus Christ, thus emphasizing His deity.

Another new thing in the teaching of Jesus is that He makes God the Father of the individual. With Jesus, fatherhood is a personal relationship. In the Old Testament, God was the Father of the nation of Israel rather than of individuals. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt" (Hos. 11:1). The sin of the nation is described as disobedience of children. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isa. 1:2).

The fatherhood of God to Israel denoted His gracious interest in and providential care over them as His vehicle for bringing the Messiah into the world. The primary purpose of the law of Moses was to keep Israel a separate and distinct people until Christ as the seed of Abraham should come, through whom the promises to Abraham were to be fulfilled. The law served as a partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and did more to keep the seed of Abraham a separate and distinct people than all physical barriers could have done. A Jewish pedigree was very important until Christ, the seed of Abraham, came into the world. But it has no importance in our day, for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. Today the Jews themselves cannot agree on who is a Jew. But in the New Testament, the real Jew is a believer in Christ, who has experienced circumcision of heart. Rom. 2:28,29; Phil. 3:3; Gal. 3:7,29.

Jesus taught that God's fatherhood involves an ethical relationship. It can exist only where the correlative sonship exists. One must become a child of God by the new birth, and an adopted son through faith before God becomes his Father. Christ said to certain Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil" (Jno. 8:44). He also said to them, "If God were your Father ye would love me." And Jesus taught that the

Father-child relationship is personal, and not as the result of being included in a nation, or institution, or organization. It is not by virtue of church membership that God is our Father, but because of the new birth. Nobody has any business in the church until he is a child of God in regeneration. In Rom. 9:8, speaking of the natural descendants of Abraham, Paul says, that the children of the flesh are not the children of God.

Jesus taught that God is good to all men, making His sun to shine on the evil and sending rain on the just and unjust alike. He also taught a special providence watches over His people and that God exercises a Fatherly care over His children. He warned against anxiety and carping care on the ground that God our Father takes care of us. He who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds will not neglect His children.

Jesus taught that God loves sinners. He was charged with being the friend of publicans and sinners. One of the most amazing things is that God loves sinners, especially the sinner who now speaks to you. Do not ask me to explain why God loves me. As a matter of reason there was no more in any sinner to cause God to love him than there was in Jesus Christ to cause men to hate Him. Just as Jesus could say, "They hated me without a cause," there is nothing within us to attract His love. God's love for sinners is a gracious, sovereign love. We do not deserve His love. His love is not a matter of justice; He was under no obligation to love us. I repeat with adoring wonder, that the love of God for sinners—for rebels—for those who would, if they could, climb to heaven and drag Him from the throne—is the most amazing thing one can conceive of. God's love for sinners is a matter of revelation and not a deduction from human reasoning. Where the Bible has not gone, people have no conception of a God of love.

One day as the officers of law were taking a drunken, dirty, profligate woman to prison, a beautiful, charming, and cultured Christian woman left her place among the spectators, made her way to the vile wretch and planted a kiss upon her cheek. Shocked into sobriety for the moment, the poor wretch exclaimed, "Why did you do that?" And the answer was, "Because I love you." Beloved, this is only a weak illustration of the love of God that caused Him to stoop and give us the kiss of reconciliation. We love Him because He first loved us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10).

#### THE LOVE OF GOD IS A RIGHTEOUS LOVE

Christ taught that the love of God is a righteous love, and is consistent with His justice. God's love does not dethrone His justice, for "Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne" (Ps. 89:14). Christ gave recognition to

the justice of God against sin when He said to Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Paul was giving recognition to the justice of God when he wrote, "That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19). In love God was in Christ on the cross rendering satisfaction to His justice, so that the believer might not perish at the hands of justice. The death of Christ was not the cause of God's love, but it did enable God to remain just and at the same time, justify the believer in Christ. Rom. 3:26. The writer to the Hebrews says in substance, that it was becoming in God to bring many sons to glory through a suffering Saviour. See Heb. 2:10. Any other plan of salvation would not have been suitable to a God of holiness and justice. What so-called modernists ridicule as derogatory to the divine character is, according to the Bible, highly becoming to God. Redemption by blood is the only scheme that harmonizes all the attributes of God. To exemplify, let us suppose a sinner standing before God, the Judge of all the earth, to see what is to be done with him. For the sake of clarity, I will be the sinner. I stand before God, and the question is, "What shall be done with me?" We ask justice, and justice says, "Cut him down for he is a rebel before God." We ask truth, and truth says, "He or I, one must perish, for I have said that the wages of sin is death." We ask holiness, and holiness says, "Send him away, for I hate the workers of iniquity." What a sad situation! How hopeless am I! Is there no voice to plead on my behalf? Has the last word been said? Is there not some attribute to plead for me? Yes, blessed be His Name, for God is rich in mercy because of His great love for us. And mercy pleads on my behalf. What then! How perplexing! Is God divided? Is there to be war among the divine attributes? Yes, unless there is still another attribute to be heard from. Will justice and mercy quarrel? No, a thousand times, No, for God is also a God of wisdom, and here comes wisdom, leading a bleeding Saviour and saying, "Deliver this sinner from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." And so in the dear Lamb of God—in the Christ of Calvary—"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10). Without Jesus Christ, the only Saviour, every man faces the justice of God to receive the reward of rebellion. Sinners are saved by grace, and this grace operates through faith in Christ's redeeming blood. How blessed are the words of Paul concerning Christ Jesus: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).