

RELIGION

Jesus Christ is our master teacher

Luke 4:31-37; 20:1-8

Many terms have been used to describe the earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the only begotten son of God. John 3:16. Among these descriptions is "teacher." The gospel writers recorded much of the teaching of this man. The lessons taught touch all areas of life. However, the underlying theme is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 4:17.

These teachings cut across the grain of the popular thinking of that day. The doctrine taught by Jesus was not some kind of new revelation, but an application — and amplification — of the things that had been given in the Old Testament.

The teachers of the Old Testament law had developed a system of secondary laws that were being imposed upon their hearers. Many of these added laws were contrary to the teachings that had been originally given. These rabbis — teachers — were considered the final authority in all matters of the law.

It is important for us to remember that authority can be assigned, acquired or

assumed. The authority that is assigned must come from an even higher authority. The acquired authority can come from personal study or experience. These two sources are considered legitimate. However, the assumed authority is self-imposed, and is usually dangerous to those who come under its influence.

At the conclusion of the teaching of the sermon on the mount, we are told that the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matthew 7:28b, 29. As the rabbis would teach, they would quote other rabbis as their sources of authority. Thus, the authority was second hand. The teachings of Jesus were fresh, because they were the words of the heavenly father — the creator of the universe. John 7:16; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10, 24. This source was new to these hearers.

We are told that Jesus "came down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power." Luke 4:30,

Sunday School Lesson



Rev. James Temples

31. There is no indication that these hearers questioned the authority of Jesus. They, simply, accepted the message.

We are told that, "in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the holy one of God." Luke 4:33, 34.

The accuracy of the identity was not the question that was addressed by the son of God. The record tells us that "Jesus rebuked him, saying, Holy thy peace, and come out of him." Luke 4:35a. This evil spirit had no choice, since he had received his command from the son of God. However, this evil spirit made one last attempt on the life of

this man — "And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not." Luke 4:35b.

Apparently, the members of this congregation knew the man who had been delivered. "And they were amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." Luke 4:36. Those who witnessed this deliverance could not keep the message to themselves. "And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about." Luke 4:37.

Over the next two years, Jesus taught in many places and performed many miracles. Luke recorded a scene that occurred near the end of the earthly ministry of the son of God. Jesus was in Jerusalem. "And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou

these things? Or who is he that gave thee this authority?" Luke 20:1, 2.

These men had been aware of the ministry and teachings of Jesus. They had sent spies to capture him. John 7:45, 46. The fact of some authority was not the question. These men recognized something or someone whose authority exceeded that which they assumed. These prejudiced inquirers must have had some kind of feelings relating to these questions that they presented. However, they were not prepared for the response given by the son of God.

Jesus presented these leaders with a challenge to the ministry that many of their group had witnessed — that of John the Baptist. Matthew 3:7-10. "And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men." Luke 20:3, 4.

It is interesting to note that these men with all the answers were aware of the correct answer to this question. However, they decided that they needed time to

consider their answer to the son of God. "And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet." Luke 20:5, 6.

One can stall only so long before the answer must be given. These men had bought all the time they could afford. "And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was." Luke 20:7. These men cared little for the fact of their breaking of one of the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:16. Thus, these men were not above breaking the law, if the situation seemed to lend itself to that act. These leaders were attempting to save face at the expense of their integrity. Following this false response, the master made this statement. "And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Luke 20:8.

The heavenly father — the creator of the universe — gave to his highest creature

See LESSON on page 11

Mary's reputation ruined by the world

Three of our great character studies in the gospel of John are women who share the same name, Mary. We have already examined the texts that tell us of the great faith of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Today we shall look at the most misunderstood of the three, Mary Magdalene. John 20:1-2, 11-18.

The Misunderstandings About Mary

This Mary is mentioned 12 times in the Bible, with all of the occurrences in the gospels. Only one reference, Luke 8:2-3, mentions Mary before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This is really

all we know about the Mary from Magdala until the final moments of Jesus' life. So why do people tend to think she was an exceedingly sinful woman, a prostitute or the wife of Jesus Christ?

One reason is a biblical misunderstanding. In Luke 7 we read the story of a "sinful woman" who breaks into a dinner party and anoints Jesus' feet with tears and perfume. This woman was clearly not Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who performed a similar act at the end of Jesus' ministry. And, this woman was clearly not Mary of Magdala since there is a clear transition of

The Gospel Truth



Dr. Charles F. DeVane Jr. First Baptist Church

places and people between Luke 7 and 8. As far as we know, Mary Magdalene was no former prostitute.

The worst misunderstanding about Mary does not come from an erroneous leap in biblical logic, however, but from terrible taste in fanatical fiction. Three infamous works portray Mary Magdalene as the lover, sexual partner and/or wife of

Jesus Christ. They are the third century's gospel according to Philip, Nikos Kazantzakis' 1951 novel "The Last Temptation of Christ" and the 2004 best-seller "The DaVinci Code." Building on the biblical error mentioned above, these writers tried to drag down Jesus by painting him as a typical man trysting with an atypically sexual woman.

But it's just fiction, right? Fiction that touches on history should be true to the facts. Forrest Gump was a fictional football player from Alabama, but where he touched history, history remained untouched. This is not so with the books that belittle Mary Magdalene and blaspheme Jesus Christ. And because of them a million doubts have been planted in the minds of people about the gospel, the person of Jesus Christ and even Mary Magdalene.

Perhaps a proper view of Mary can help clarify what it means to have a proper, biblical, saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Clarity About Mary
Mary, before she met Jesus Christ, was a well-to-do socialite from the city of Magdala on the coast of the Sea of Galilee whose life was messed up by demonic power. She was in love with the world, the flesh and the devil. This does not make her some kind of prostitute. It makes her something worse. She was a lost person.

There is nothing worse than having looks, money and power, when none of it belongs to the Lord. Perhaps it would be worse to have none of that and still not belong to the Lord. But the bottom line is that the worst person in the world is not necessarily a prostitute or a pimp, a war-monger or a murderer, a liar or a thief, but a lost

THANKS

On behalf of our family, we would like to express our gratitude for your visits, phone calls, cards, flowers, memorials, food and all other acts of kindness. The love and support shown to us during this very difficult time will always be cherished and remembered.

Please continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers.

With our love,
The Family of Blake Lusk

person without Jesus Christ.

Mary, when she met Jesus Christ, was a totally transformed person. Her love of the world was transformed into a love of the Lord. Her love of money and fleshly pursuits was transformed into tithing and supporting Jesus' ministry. Her love of, or at least letting in, of the devil was transformed into repentance, faith and the permanent presence of God in her life. Mary became a saved person.

There is always evidence of the transformed, saved life. There is a change in who controls your life. There is a change of what to do with your time and treasure. There is a new pledge of allegiance. I find it absurd to see Mexicans immigrate to the U.S. and fly the Mexican flag. I find it more absurd to see baptized Christians never attending church, studying the Bible or living a holy life. Salvation is transformation.

Mary, once she met Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, could never let go. That's why she followed him everywhere. That's why she was at the cross and the tomb. That's why she was first in line at the resurrection. That's why she should be revered as a great gospel character today. Mary was a wonderful Christian person. And this great charac-

ter in the gospel of John leaves for us a great legacy of genuine Christian faith.

The Legacy of Mary

God's love knows no boundaries. Frankly, it wouldn't have mattered if she had been a prostitute. It didn't matter that because of bad decisions, or perhaps just being in the wrong place at the wrong time, Mary's life had been marred by the seven-fold force of the devil in her life. Jesus set her free and Jesus can set you free, too.

God's service knows no obstacles. Mary didn't say, "Since I wasn't chosen to be an apostle, I'm not going to be a witness." She didn't protest or claim she lost the election because she was a woman. She was the first witness of the resurrection and one of the greatest witnesses and workers in the early Christian church. Woman or man, if you believe in Jesus you'd better be serving Jesus, actively and aggressively, in his church.

God's heaven knows no beauty greater than the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary's last words in the gospel of John are, "I have seen the Lord." For those transformed by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, those will be our first words when we get to heaven. Thank you, Mary, for showing us how to live, how to witness and what to say when we get to heaven.

Bethel Baptist Association sings

"The Spirit of America," a patriotic musical event will be presented Sunday, July 6 at 6 p.m. at Mangham Auditorium in Blakely. This presentation is sponsored by the churches in the Bethel Baptist Association and is directed by Glenda Bates, minister of music at Cuthbert First Baptist Church. This special event is presented as a gift to the community of Southwest Georgia. Admission is free. Everyone is invited to be a part of this celebration of our nation and its legacy.

Make plans now to end your July 4 weekend celebration by attending "The

Spirit of America." This event will begin with a tribute to the Grand Old Flag and presentation of the colors by a color guard. A choir of approximately 100 singers and instrumentalists will present a rousing tribute to this great country we call home. The music will be accompanied by outstanding videos.

This musical focuses attention on five attitudes and characteristics that have made Americans unique throughout our history: the spirit of freedom, the spirit of adventure, the spirit of hope, the spirit of sacrifice and the spirit of divine purpose. This

group will bring our God and country celebration alive with songs such as "This is My Country," "Salute to the Armed Services," "America" and many more.

Men and women who are currently serving and those who have previously served in any branch of the armed services will be recognized. This is a perfect opportunity to thank these heroes for what they have done and are doing to make America greater and to make our lives better.

Remember the date, Sunday, July 6, at 6 p.m. at Mangham Auditorium in Blakely.

CHURCH NEWS

Glorious Community Holiness Church

Glorious Community Holiness Church of Jesus of the Apostolic Faith, Highway 62 West, cordially invites everyone to attend a Hallelujah Praise worship service which will convene June 30 through July 6 at 7:30 p.m. Elder Samuel Williams, host pastor, will speak. For more information please call 723-6990.

Midway M.B. Church

Midway Missionary Baptist Church will host their building fund program Sunday, July 6 at 11:30 a.m. Rev. Edward Williams will be the host pastor. Come dressed in your favorite jeans, if you like. Your support is needed. Everyone is invited to attend.

New Prospect A.M.E.

New Prospect African Methodist Episcopal Church, Hwy 62 West, will

have their annual homecoming July 6 at 3 p.m. Guest speaker is Minister Jonathan Moore and the Sons of Allen Choir of St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church, Donaldsonville. Everyone is invited to attend.

Union Church

The Five Jacobs Brothers anniversary of Bluffton will be Sunday, July 6 at 2 p.m. at Union Church. All other choirs, groups, and soloists are cordially invited to participate.

St. John F.W.B.

St. John Freewill Baptist Church cordially invites you to attend their annual revival meeting the week of July 7-11 at 7:30 p.m. Rev. Adolph Nobel of Bainbridge will be the guest evangelist for the week.

Greater Macedonia

Greater Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church will have their men and women

day July 6 at 11:30 a.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

Pleasant Grove A.M.E.

The Pleasant Grove African Methodist Episcopal Church family cordially invites everyone to attend its 21st annual homecoming program which will be Sunday, July 6 at 2:30 p.m. Rev. Willie Ross will be the guest speaker.

St. Mary M.B.

The Friendly Fives are celebrating their 62-year anniversary at St. Mary Missionary Baptist Church, July 6 at 2 p.m. until. The pastor is Elbert Williams. Everyone is invited to attend.

Shiloh Outreach

Dr. Alex Howell will speak at Shiloh Outreach, Hwy 37 East, Edison, at 7:30 p.m. July 8. Please plan to attend this meeting and being blessed.

"For, lo, the winter is past."



Everyone is encouraged to come hear the powerful testimony of

Bob & Glenyce Doorn

The Gate Worship Center

566 Pioneer Road - Arlington
Sunday, June 29 - 11 a.m.

Shiloh Outreach

17691 Highway 37 East - Edison
Thursday & Friday, June 26 & 27 - 7:30 p.m.

Everyone is welcome!