

4. The Wisdom of His Teachings (2Q 2008—The Wonder of Jesus)

Biblical material: Matt. 5-7, 20:25-28, John 4:22-24, 8:1-11, Mark 1:22.

Quotes

- The Devil has had a field day with the prejudicial assumption that you have to be some sort of moron to swallow Christianity.... Far from being in conflict, Christian faith goes hand in hand with reason, common sense, and historical fact. *Cliff Richard*
- God will answer all our questions in one way and one way only. Namely, by showing us more of his Son. *Watchman Nee*
- Jesus: An unsurpassed master of the art of laying bare the inmost core of spiritual truth. *Geza Vermes*
- I never saw a contradiction between the ideas that sustain me and the ideas of that symbol, of that extraordinary figure, Jesus Christ. *Fidel Castro*
- I believe in God, but not as one thing, not as an old man in the sky. I believe that what people call God is something in all of us. I believe that what Jesus and Mohammed and Buddha and all the rest said was right. It's just that the translations have gone wrong. *John Lennon*

Questions

What is so significant about the sermon on the mount? What perspective on God does this reflect? How is this part of the great controversy? How do we judge what is wise? Can we be distracted from Jesus true message by admiring his wisdom? What truly leads to eternal life? How can we use wisdom in our words?

Discussion/ Comment

“They left for Capernaum, and on Sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue and taught there. The people were amazed at what he taught them, for he spoke with conviction, unlike the scribal teachers.” Mark 1:21, 22 FBV.

The first point in this study to consider is: in what way were Jesus' sayings wise? Probably many at the time did not think so—they were just confused, or upset, or horrified. What is the standard for judging wisdom anyway? Because something agrees with what you believe already? Paul makes the comment that Christian wisdom is foolishness to the world, and surely people of Jesus' time would have thought him foolish also...

Secondly, there are many others who are considered wise in what they have said. To what degree are we saying that Jesus fits into the mold of a “wise man”? Jesus was not primarily concerned to provide wise sayings; he wanted to demonstrate God and to save the lost.

Thirdly, how much of this is really appreciated? Note this from Sunday's lesson: “During the First World War, the Society of Friends printed *The Sermon on the Mount* as a separate pamphlet, without commentary, for distribution among the allied forces. But

both the British and French governments forbade its distribution among their troops. After all, a sermon telling people to love their enemies was not exactly what you wanted men on the front lines in a war to be reading!" Yet ironically, both the Allied forces and the Germans provided pocket New Testaments to their soldiers, encouraging them to believe that God was on their side!

In the sermon on the mount, in his life and teachings, Jesus illustrated and demonstrated God. As Monday's lesson comments, "Into a world dark with misunderstanding about the person and character of God, Jesus came to set things straight." His words are more than good sayings—they are word of life. Jesus commented on the value of words—even scripture's words—when he said, "You search through the scriptures, because you think that they'll give you eternal life, but they're speaking about me, and yet you don't want to come to me to have that life." John 5:39, 40 FBV.

In is wonderful conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, as well as to the woman taken in adultery (both scriptural passages for this lesson), we see not only wisdom, but an intense desire to invite response to his demonstration of God so that they might be saved. I believe he was disappointed when the adulterous woman's accusers left—because he wanted to win them too! So while the wisdom of his teachings is not in any doubt, it is because his words lead to eternal life, not simply because they are wise...

Ellen White Comments

When Christ came to speak the words of life, the common people heard him gladly; and many, even of the priests and rulers, believed on him. But the chief of the priesthood and the leading men of the nation were determined to condemn and repudiate his teachings. Though they were baffled in all their efforts to find accusations against him, though they could not but feel the influence of the divine power and wisdom attending his words, yet they encased themselves in prejudice; they rejected the clearest evidence of his Messiahship, lest they should be forced to become his disciples. These opponents of Jesus were men whom the people had been taught from infancy to reverence, to whose authority they had been accustomed implicitly to bow. "How is it," they asked, "that our rulers and learned scribes do not believe on Jesus? Would not these pious men receive him if he were the Christ?" It was the influence of such teachers that led the Jewish nation to reject their Redeemer. {4SP 414}

The mission of Jesus was demonstrated by convincing miracles. His doctrine astonished the people. It was not the contradictory jargon of the scribes, full of mysticism, burdened with absurd forms and meaningless exactions; but it was a system of truth that met the wants of the heart. His teaching was plain, clear, comprehensive. The practical truths he uttered, had a convincing power, and arrested the attention of the people. Multitudes lingered at his side, marveling at his wisdom. His manner corresponded with the great truths he proclaimed. There was no apology, no hesitancy, not the shadow of a doubt or uncertainty that it might be other than he declared. He spoke of the earthly and the heavenly, of the human and the divine, with positive authority; and the people "were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power." {RH, February 7, 1888}