

Jesus as the Master Teacher



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Heb. 1:1–4; 2 Cor. 4:1–6; John 1:14, 18; 14:1–14; Phil. 2:1–11; 2 Cor. 5:16–21.*

Memory Text: “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6, NKJV).

Billy Graham tells the story of when he visited soldiers at a field hospital in the company of their general. One young soldier “was so mangled that he lay facedown on a canvas-and-steel contraption.” A doctor whispered to Graham, “I doubt he’ll ever walk again.” The soldier made a request of the general: “Sir, . . . I fought for you, but I’ve never seen you. Could I see your face?” So the general got down, slid under that canvas-and-steel contraption, and talked with the soldier. As Graham watched, a tear fell from the soldier onto the general’s cheek.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, humanity lay mangled and bleeding, in need of a healing vision of God. It is as though humankind pleaded, “Oh, God, could we see Your face?” In sending His Son to this planet, the Father sent the Master Teacher on a mission: to show humankind His face. Ever since, we have had the wondrous privilege of beholding “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6, NKJV).

As we watch the Master Teacher make His way to earth, what can we learn from Him?

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 31.

Revealing the Father

What are the most important points the apostle makes about Jesus at the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews? (*Heb. 1:1–4*).

New Testament authors repeatedly accent a significant idea: Jesus comes to earth to show human beings who the Father is. In past times, God’s revelation came in a fragmented way through the prophets; in Jesus, however, the final and complete revelation of God has come.

Also, in His person, Jesus is “the reflection of God’s glory” (*Heb. 1:3, NRSV*). As sinful humans, we could not endure full access to the glory of God. As the incarnate Son, Jesus reflects that glory. It is muted in Christ’s humanity so that we might see it and understand clearly the character of God.

Jesus also is “the express image of his person” (*Heb. 1:3*). The term used here, the Greek word *charactēr*, is sometimes used of the impression a seal makes in wax or the representation stamped on a coin. So, Jesus is “the exact imprint of God’s very being” (*Heb. 1:3, NRSV*).

If we wish to know the Father, we must listen carefully to what the Master Teacher says about Him. And we must watch the Master Teacher, as well. The Father is seen in the Son.

Compare Hebrews 1:1–4 with 2 Corinthians 4:1–6. In 2 Corinthians 4:1–6, who is Jesus, and what do we learn from Him?

As they educated others about God, Paul and his coworkers sought to reflect Jesus’ own teaching ministry about the Father. As “the image of God” (*2 Cor. 4:4*), Jesus brought us knowledge about God the Father. Similarly, Paul avoids deception and distortion of God’s Word and, instead, sets forth the truth plainly (*2 Cor. 4:2*).

Just as God, at Creation, used light to dispel darkness, He has given us His Son, Jesus, to dispel false views about Him and to show us the truth about God. It is in “the face of Jesus” that we gain the clearest knowledge of God (*2 Cor. 4:6*).

Jesus accurately reflected the Father, something we, too, are called to do since we are invited to “be imitators of God as dear children” (*Eph. 5:1, NKJV*). What does that mean, and what can we learn from Jesus about how to be “imitators” of God?

Revealing the Father (Cont.)

In the moving prologue to his Gospel (*John 1:1–18*), John discusses Jesus as the eternal “Word.” John’s claims for Jesus are not timid or limited; they are bold and cosmic in scope. Jesus was in existence before the world came into being—from eternity, actually. In fact, Jesus is the agent of Creation (*John 1:2, 3*). He is “the light of all people” (*John 1:4, NRSV*), and, as the Word who came into the world, He “enlightens everyone” (*John 1:9, NRSV*).

According to John, what is the result of Christ’s becoming a human being? As the Word, what light did He bring? What qualifications does He possess to do so? *John 1:14, 18.*

“The Light appeared when the world’s darkness was deepest. . . .

“There was but one hope for the human race . . . that the knowledge of God might be restored to the world.

“Christ came to restore this knowledge. He came to set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. He came to manifest the nature of His law, to reveal in His own character the beauty of holiness.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 74–76.

Everything Jesus did in His life on earth had a single purpose: “the revelation of God for the uplifting of humanity.”—*Education*, p. 82.

Jesus Himself says, “‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ ” (*John 14:9, NRSV*). **What was the setting of Jesus’ statement? Why did He make it?** *John 14:1–14.*

It is tempting to criticize Philip’s blundering statement (*John 14:8*). After years of close fellowship with Jesus, he still misses the essential point of the Incarnation—that Jesus has come to show the Father’s character. Perhaps teachers today can take some comfort in the fact that one of the Master Teacher’s pupils performed so badly! Philip’s statement is probably recorded, though, not to give us reason to criticize him but to give us opportunity to examine ourselves. How long have we walked with Jesus? And have we understood Jesus any better than Philip had? “ ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.’ ”

Reading the Master Teacher's Mind

What concern about the Christian community in Philippi is on Paul's heart as he writes his letter to them? *Phil. 2:1–4; Phil. 4:2, 3.*

Philippians 2:1–11 is one of the most profound passages in all the Bible. It discusses the preexistence of Christ, His divinity, His incarnation, His humanity, His acceptance of death on the cross. It describes the long, difficult, downward road that Jesus took from heaven to Calvary (*Phil. 2:5–8*). And it describes how the Father exalts Jesus to a position of universal worship (*Phil. 2:9–11*). A lot of amazing truth is packed into those verses.

How does Paul introduce Philippians 2:5–11? Of the events of Jesus' life that he celebrates, which ones do you think he expects believers to reflect in their own lives? *Phil. 2:6–11.*

Paul hopes that the believers at Philippi, who could be argumentative, will learn from Jesus and His incarnation. If Jesus could adopt human form—"the form of a slave, being born in human likeness" (*Phil. 2:7, NRSV*)—and even submit to crucifixion, how much more should they submit to each other out of love?

We are reminded that there is much to learn from the Master Teacher, Jesus. We learn from the messages that He shares during His earthly ministry. We learn from the miracles that He performs and the way that He acts toward others. We may seek to model our own relationships with others after His great condescension and by dwelling on His willingness to exchange the glories of heaven for a manger (what a lesson for us!).

In contrast, the world all too often invites us to exalt ourselves, to boast of our accomplishments. At a manger in Bethlehem and from the Master Teacher we learn a different lesson—that God's great work of education and salvation is accomplished, not by exalting ourselves but by humbling ourselves before God and becoming servants to others.

What situation are you facing, even now, in which your humbling yourself could give you a powerful opportunity to reflect Christ to others?

The Master Teacher and Reconciliation

Human relationships all too often break down. We become estranged from one another. The person who was once our close friend becomes, over time, someone we distrust. However, such a broken relationship can be mended. When that happens, we experience the wonder of reconciliation. Few human experiences are as sweet as this.

How does reconciliation lie at the heart of Christ's incarnation and His role as Master Teacher? *2 Cor. 5:16–21*.

If we feel blessed when a relationship with another human being is restored, how grand should we feel when we are reconciled to God? In 2 Corinthians 5:16–21, Paul is clear about who is doing the reconciling—God the Father has taken the lead in mending our broken relationship with Him. And He has done this reconciling work “through Christ” (*2 Cor. 5:18, NRSV*). “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (*2 Cor. 5:19, NKJV*).

Again, though, we are not simply to be consumers of the joys of reconciliation. We are to learn from the Master Teacher. In His incarnation, Jesus participated in the work of reconciliation. And we, too, are invited to participate in it. God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ. And now we, with Paul, are given “the ministry of reconciliation” (*2 Cor. 5:18*).

Colossians 1:15–20 is another of the great New Testament passages on Christ's incarnation. Often thought to be a hymn, the first half of the passage discusses Christ's role in Creation (*Col. 1:15–17*), while the last half focuses on Christ's role in Redemption (*Col. 1:18–20*). Through Christ's role as Creator-Redeemer, God reconciles all things to Himself. The work of reconciliation that God accomplishes through Christ is cosmic in scale, impacting “all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (*Col. 1:20, NRSV*).

While we could never match the cosmic scale of the Master Teacher's work as reconciler, we are invited to participate in “the ministry of reconciliation” in our own sphere (*2 Cor. 5:18*). Could this be what was in Jesus' mind when He prayed, “‘As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world’ ” (*John 17:18, NKJV*)?

What are practical ways we can reflect God's role as Reconciler? That is, in what situation right now (if any) can you help people be reconciled with each other?

The Master Teacher's First Pupils

One moment, they are a band of ordinary shepherds caring for an average flock of sheep outside a small town. In the next moment, they are the recipients of an amazing appearance of angels who bear startling, wondrous, world-shattering news. Motivated by that appearance, they seek out the child whom the angels announced.

Imagine standing with the shepherds and gazing into the manger. What would you see? *Luke 2:8–20.*

We must admire the first pupils of the Master Teacher—Joseph and Mary and the shepherds. The humble conditions of Jesus' birth give no indication of the wonder of the Incarnation—that, in the Person of this Infant, God has become One with humankind. However, with the aid of visions, dreams, and angels, those first students of His are able to look beyond the outward appearance of Jesus' birth. The shepherds share with others the identity of this infant, that He is “ ‘a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord’ ” (*Luke 2:11, NRSV; compare Luke 2:17*).

How do the wise men respond to the news of the birth of Jesus? How does Herod respond? *Matt. 2:1–12.*

Before He has spoken His first parable or performed His first miracle, the Master Teacher is worthy of our worship because of who He is. To fully appreciate the later teaching ministry of Jesus, we must join these early pupils, the wise men, in their worship of the Master Teacher. The one whose teachings we admire is more than a wise educator. He is God come to dwell with humankind. Christian education is rooted in the worship of Christ.

With wise men, shepherds, and angels, we are called to worship Christ, the newborn King—and to see in the infant Jesus the reality of God Himself.

Think about what the Incarnation of Jesus means regarding the character of God. The Creator of all the universe, which is so big that we cannot grasp it—this God “humbled himself” by coming into humanity, living as Jesus, and then dying on the cross, bearing in Himself the punishment for our sins. Why is this such good news?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “The Teacher Sent From God,” pp. 73–83, in *Education*.

“In the Teacher sent from God, all true educational work finds its center. Of this work today as verily as of the work He established eighteen hundred years ago, the Saviour speaks in the words—

“ ‘I am the First and the Last, and the Living One.’

“ ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.’ Revelation 1:17, 18, R.V.; 21:6, R.V.

“In the presence of such a Teacher, of such opportunity for divine education, what worse than folly is it to seek an education apart from Him—to seek to be wise apart from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from the Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

“Behold, He is still inviting: ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said,’ out of him ‘shall flow rivers of living water.’ ‘The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.’ John 7:37, 38; 4:14, R.V.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 83.

“Dear teacher, . . .

“As the highest preparation for your work, I point you to the words, the life, the methods, of the Prince of teachers. I bid you consider Him. Here is your true ideal. Behold it, dwell upon it, until the Spirit of the divine Teacher shall take possession of your heart and life.

“ ‘Reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord,’ you will be ‘transformed into the same image.’ 2 Corinthians 3:18, R.V.

“This is the secret of power over your pupils. Reflect Him.” —*Education*, p. 282.

Discussion Questions:

1 What values and actions would be important to Christian teachers and students who take seriously the idea of learning from the incarnation of the Master Teacher?

2 Christian parents and teachers have a high standard—to reflect the character of God as revealed in the incarnation of Jesus. What should we do when we fall short of this high standard?

3 In class, discuss the question at the end of Thursday’s study. What does the birth, life, and death of Jesus teach us about the character of God? Why should this be so comforting to us, especially during times of great trial?