

The Book of Luke

Jesus, the Master Teacher

Lesson #9 for May 30, 2015

Scriptures: Luke 4:31-37; 6:20-49; 8:19-25; 10:25-37; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18.

1. In this lesson, we will discuss the teachings and actions of Jesus and what gave Him such great authority. Why were people so amazed at His teachings, recognizing that He spoke with authority. (Luke 4:32) His teachings were easy to understand, and they made sense!

When Christ came to the earth, humanity seemed to be fast reaching its lowest point. The very foundations of society were undermined. Life had become false and [75] artificial. The Jews, destitute of the power of God's word, gave to the world mind-benumbing, soul-deadening traditions and speculations. The worship of God "in Spirit and in truth" had been supplanted by the glorification of men in an endless round of man-made ceremonies. Throughout the world all systems of religion were losing their hold on mind and soul. Disgusted with fable and falsehood, seeking to drown thought, men turned to infidelity and materialism. Leaving eternity out of their reckoning, they lived for the present.

As they ceased to recognize the Divine, they ceased to regard the human. Truth, honor, integrity, confidence, compassion, were departing from the earth. Relentless greed and absorbing ambition gave birth to universal distrust. The idea of duty, of the obligation of strength to weakness, of human dignity and human rights, was cast aside as a dream or a fable. **The common people were regarded as beasts of burden or as the tools and the steppingstones for ambition. Wealth and power, ease and self-indulgence, were sought as the highest good. Physical degeneracy, mental stupor, spiritual death, characterized the age.**—Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 74.4-75.1. [Bold type is added.]

2. Is it any surprise then that the words and teachings of Jesus were so amazing and so powerful? Dr. Luke was acquainted with Greek scholarship and education, with Roman law and civil matters, and with ecclesiastical authority as demonstrated by Paul in his travels with the churches. But, after researching the life of Christ, Luke was convinced that the authority of Jesus was matchless. It certainly was not because Jesus was born into some royal family or had some powerful earthly government behind Him. Yet, His own townspeople "marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." (Luke 4:22, *NKJV*) Jesus's authority was based on the fact that He spoke nothing but truth. He lived as an example of what He taught; and His words demonstrated authority over death, demons, nature, sin, Satan, and disease. On Sunday morning television, we see people claiming to perform miracles before our eyes; and they say we should believe them because of the miracles! Is that safe? Remember that one day soon, Satan will arrive performing miracles.
3. So, how should we relate to people who claim to speak with the authority of God? How do we determine if God is really active in any given situation? Is it possible to determine if Ellen White was actually inspired by God? There are two very different approaches to inspiration. One approach says: Every new revelation takes precedence over all previous revelations. These groups believe that their church leaders—who are believed to speak for God—have the authority to replace any biblical teaching given in the past. The other group says: Every new teaching must be based on the teachings of the past and must never

contradict them. Current teachings must agree with the teachings given in the Bible. Last week's studies that talked about Christ's mission to earth are an example of such new teachings which do not contradict prior teachings.

4. Review once again the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7) This sermon is often regarded as the Christian manifesto. In Luke 6:20-49, Luke emphasized certain portions of that sermon; he placed it immediately after the choosing of the 12 disciples. Thus, it served as a kind of ordination charge for the disciples. (See *The Desire of Ages* 290-297.)
5. In Luke's presentation as recorded in Luke 6:20-49, he began with four blessings and followed them with four woes. Read Luke 6:20-23. How could Jesus say things like: "Happy (Blessed) are you poor, you who are hungry now, you who weep now, you who are hated now"? That was a complete contradiction of all that they had been taught by the Pharisees. What could be wrong with being rich, full, laughing, or being spoken well of? If people do all these evil things against us because we are Christians, is that not a reason to rejoice—not because of their evil deeds but because we have been identified as Christians. Could there be any greater blessing than living lives that represent Jesus correctly? (Matthew 5:16)
6. Read Luke 6:24-26. What was Jesus trying to tell us in these verses? Would it not be true that for people who are accustomed to living the easy life, it will be difficult to accept the kind of losses that afflicted Job? Will not the Devil do everything he can to make our lives—like Job's—as miserable as possible as we approach the end of this world's history? Right now, the Devil seems to be succeeding by just making things of this world seem as attractive as possible.
7. Read Luke 6:27-31. The message of this passage sets Christianity apart from all other religions. To live lives according to the golden rule is a fantastic witness. Christ did not limit Himself to saying, "Don't hate your enemies"; He said you must, "Love your enemies." Think of the incredible changes that have happened in our world as a result of nonviolent campaigns conducted by people such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Is there a place for non-violence in this world that is full of violence?
8. Read Luke 6:37-49. To be a Christian, we must follow Christ's directions by not judging, but being forgiving and generous, practicing exemplary living, and being tolerant of differences in others. In effect, Christ was saying: "Don't call me Lord if you are not going to do what I tell you to do! But, if you do what I tell you to do, I will care for you."
9. It was and is the purpose of Jesus Christ to create a new family to replace the lost family of Eden. In this new family, love is unmerited, nonexclusive, universal, and sacrificial. The door to this family's home is to be forever open and welcoming. So, what makes a family? Is it shared genetic material? Shared experiences? What is the most important factor in our lives: genetics or environment? Or truthfully, is it both?
10. Read Luke 8:19-21. Do Jesus's words in this passage make you feel uncomfortable? Was He really disrespecting His mother and His brothers? Or, was He trying to tell us and them that His family is much larger than one mother and a few brothers? In that middle-eastern culture, those brothers would not have dared to tell Jesus what to do unless they were older than He was. Thus, we can say that Jesus had older brothers but never had any younger brothers or sisters. (Compare Matthew 13:55.) Don't forget that even at the age of 12, He called the temple in Jerusalem His Father's house! (Luke 2:49) Jesus was incredibly ambitious in trying to tear down barriers. He turned two formerly demon-possessed tomb-dwellers in Gerasa into the first Gentile missionaries. (Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39; Mark 5:1-20) He treated the poor and despised as if they were on equal terms with the rich and respectable. (Luke 5:27-32) There was no difference in His mind

between Roman and Jew. (Luke 7:1-10) The rich and the invited were despised while the poor, crippled, blind, and lame were welcomed. (Luke 14:15-24) Even when healing patients with leprosy, He pointed out that the Samaritan was the one who came back and said, "Thank you" and not the nine Jews. He traveled a long distance with His disciples into the area of Tyre and Sidon to heal the daughter of a Canaanite woman. (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30) These Canaanites were the ones the Israelites were supposed to have wiped out when they came out of Egypt!

11. How well are we doing in our church at reaching across social, political, gender, and financial barriers? We seem to do fairly well at reaching the poor; but, how well are we doing at reaching the rich? They do not feel any need.
12. Luke was the only Gospel writer who recorded the stories of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37) A young teacher of the law came to Jesus with the intention of tricking Him by getting Him to take a side in a very old Jewish argument. He wanted to know what he needed to do to earn eternal life. Jesus, reading his life as an open book, turned the question on him and asked, "What is written in the law?" Almost without thinking, the young lawyer responded with the correct answer from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. He then recognized that having answered his own question, he was looking a bit foolish. So, he asked the fundamental but very controversial question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus did not answer the question directly but told the story that we have come to know as the story of the good Samaritan. Should we sympathize with the priest and the Levite? Ellen White really enhanced the story by revealing to us these facts:

God in His providence had brought the priest and the Levite along the road where the wounded sufferer lay, that they might see his need of mercy and help. All heaven watched to see if the hearts of these men would be touched with pity for human woe.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 500.1.

While the whole universe was watching, all they could think about was themselves! We should not worry about all the surveillance cameras that are being installed because we already know the whole universe is watching us!

This was no imaginary scene, but an actual occurrence, which was known to be exactly as represented. The priest and the Levite who had passed by on the other side were in the company that listened to Christ's words.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 499.1.

13. The priest and the Levite each asked himself the question: "What might happen to me if I stop and help this man?" The Samaritan asked: "What might happen to this man if I don't help him?" What is the difference between the two?

In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 497.1.

The lesson is no less needed in the world today than when it fell from the lips of Jesus. Selfishness and cold formality have well-nigh extinguished the fire of love, and dispelled the graces that should make fragrant the character. Many who profess His name have lost sight of the fact that Christians are to represent Christ. **Unless there is practical self-sacrifice for the good of others, in the family circle, in the neighborhood, in the church, and wherever we may be, then whatever our profession, we are not Christians.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. DA 504.2. [Bold type is

added.]

14. Does the story of the good Samaritan—recognizing that God led the priest and the Levite to encounter that injured Jew and then arranged for them to be in the audience as Jesus told the story—help us to understand how inclusive God’s family should be? How would you have felt if you had been the priest or the Levite as Christ told that story?
15. The ultimate question for each of us to ask is: Why do we do what we do? Is our total orientation selfish, like Satan’s? Or, loving, like God’s? Do we think of the welfare of others before we think of our own welfare? The Samaritan was taking a huge risk.
16. In answering that question, remember that more wars have been fought in the name of God (or the gods) than for any other reason! People love to give religious reasons for their actions!
17. Authority is “the power or right to control, judge, or prohibit the actions of others.”—*Collins English Dictionary* (Fourth Edition Updated). Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers. The power behind authority depends on the source of the authority: physical power, legal power, political power, religious power, even the power of truth.
18. After noting Jesus’s authority, (Compare Matthew 4:10-11; 16:23.) on what basis do we say that Jesus was the greatest Teacher who ever lived? Is that just religious prejudice? Jesus Himself stated: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6) He had/has the power to destroy heaven and earth and to rescue His people even from death. Everything He tells us to do is ultimately for our best good. His words proved to be self-authenticating.
19. What was it that drew people to Jesus and His teachings? The Sermon on the Mount seemed to be in such contrast with the usual teachings with which the Jews were familiar. It is sometimes called the Christian manifesto. It describes living a totally unselfish, Christ-like life. Is it really possible to live a completely loving life in the 21st century? How far can we carry out the “golden rule”? Should we give away all our possessions to the homeless poor? What would they do with those possessions if we did so? Christ is planning to create a new family of Christians. If you want to join that family, what changes do you need to make in your attitudes, your thoughts, and your behaviors?
20. What would it be like to live a Christ-like life of complete self-sacrifice in 2015? In a world riddled with different belief systems, why do we reject agnosticism, atheism, polytheism, animism, and other forms of so-called religion in favor of Seventh-day Adventism? Can we be sure that we have chosen the right religion? Jesus has taught us that only the principles taught by Him can prepare us for living lives in the completely loving and unselfish atmosphere of heaven. And in order to show us what that would be like, He came to live that kind of a life here on this earth.
21. Read Luke 4:35; 5:22-26; 6:20-49; 7:49; 8:19-25. What do these passages teach us about the authority of Jesus’s life? Are many of Jesus’s teachings inapplicable, impractical, or even impossible in the 21st century? Society may be different economically, socially, and relationally, but the Christ-like life is needed just as much now as when Jesus was here on this earth.

He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.2.

God was manifested in Him that He might be manifested in them. **Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers**

may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 664.4. [Bold type is added.]

How well are we doing?

22. Even then, Jesus’s critics acknowledged that He taught “rightly” without “favoritism” and always “the way of God in truth.” (Luke 20:21) What was it that set Jesus’s teachings apart even from the teachings of the Old Testament?

The prophets often prefaced their messages with the authority of a “Thus saith the Lord.” But Jesus used the phrase “I say to you” (more than one hundred thirty times in the Gospels, including 33 times in Luke) to indicate that His authority—to teach, to seek, to save, to raise the dead, to heal, to drive out demons, to proclaim the kingdom of God, and so on—comes from who He is. (*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 121)

23. The words and the life of Jesus were unique in that He spoke with absolute certainty, without contradiction or confusion, in all that He did. He was the very embodiment of truth.

In the ups and downs of human history, two laws seem to govern communities. First is the law of the jungle: if a person from one tribe kills a person in another tribe, the injured tribe goes for revenge, slaughtering all members of the first tribe. The jungle law takes revenge to its ultimate reach. Second is the law of reciprocity. Considered as an improvement over the first, this prescribes “an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth.” [Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21] No room for ultimate revenge, but there is some satisfaction of meting out a punishment. But can revenge or reciprocity build enduring communities and keep the social equilibrium at a working level? Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have said that even the lesser of the two reactive prescriptions created its own diabolic dread: “An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.” (*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 121-122) [Content in brackets is added.]

24. In contrast to these human stories and relationships, Jesus taught that we should love our enemies. And we should not just love our enemies as we love ourselves, but we should love as Jesus loved. (John 13:34-35) If you put that idea alongside Matthew 7:12, the golden rule, is it possible for us to love as completely as Jesus loved?
25. Jesus calls us to love without any reference to race, gender, nationality, tribe, language, or culture. But, it is so common for us to try to surround ourselves with those who think like we do. So, what would a new family built according to Jesus’s principles look like? Read Luke 5:27-32; 7:1-10,11-17,36-50; 8:43-48; and 14:15-24.
26. Luke reached out beyond the parochial limits of Judaism; he reached to all of mankind. He talked of the new family established by Christ according to the following principles: Love must be central to that family. In a Christian home, there are no partitions. Tax collectors, Roman centurion’s, dead sons of widows, Pharisees of all types, prostitutes, society women, and social outcasts along with wanderers on the highways and byways are all part of His family.

Christ has shown that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. **Our neighbor is every person who needs our help.** Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God.—Ellen G. White, *The*

Desire of Ages, p. 503.5; COL 376.2; LHU 154.3; ML 232.2.

Caste [anything that divides person and person—color, tribe, nation, gender, caste, language, or whatever] is hateful to God. He [Jesus] ignores everything of this character. **In His sight the souls of all men are of equal value.** [Acts 17:26-27 quoted] Without distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege, all are invited to come unto Him and live.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 403.3; CC 297.7. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

27. Is it any wonder that many critics of Christianity have said, “Show me a real Christian, and I will become one”?
28. This lesson has laid down a standard of self-sacrificing love as exemplified by the life and teachings of Jesus that surely must seem beyond human possibility. But, with the help of the Holy Spirit, it can and will happen in that final group of people who are able to look up into the clouds and see Jesus coming the second time. Will we be among that group?

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