

Jesus Defined the Characteristics of a Disciple

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be able to explain the parables about the kingdom of heaven so that they can explain them to others. That means we must help them develop a clear understanding of those parables. In this topic, we will see that Jesus defined the characteristics of a disciple.

We see that Jesus defined what a disciple is like. Matthew 13:52 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.’” Many of the times that scribes are mentioned in the New Testament, we see that they join the Pharisees in opposing Jesus. However, the word is also used in a positive way to speak of a religious teacher that was known for his ability to teach accurately regarding the kingdom of heaven (God). In Matthew 23:34, Jesus said, “‘Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city.’” In Mark 12:32-33, we read, “So the scribe said to Him, ‘Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’”

First, since this verse talks about a scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven, the word is used to speak about all those who will teach accurately concerning the kingdom. As a result, when this word is used positively, it describes one who has become a disciple of Jesus and is able to accurately teach others about Him. Second, we see that every scribe instructed has become the head of a spiritual household. In the book of Acts, we read about a number of entire physical households turning to the Lord. A spiritual household includes people we lead to Christ and help grow spiritually.

Acts 16:14-15 says, “Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged *us*, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded *us*.” Just a few verses later, in Acts 16:30-34, we read, “And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.” Paul had a spiritual household that included many sons in the faith like Timothy, Titus and many others.

Third, a disciple is one who has a treasure. Luke 6:45 says, “‘A good man out of the good treasure

of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Colossians 2:2-3 says, “That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” When we come to Christ by grace through faith, we receive Christ as a treasure in our hearts. In turn, Christ gives us the Holy Spirit to teach us and help us to understand spiritual truth. As that spiritual truth becomes rooted in our hearts, we are able to share with others what we are learning and what we have learned in the past. That is why we are able to share things both new and old.

After Jesus finished teaching these parables about the kingdom of heaven, we see that He left that area. Matthew 13:53-57a says, “Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?’ So they were offended at Him.” Here, we see that Jesus made His last recorded visit to the town of Nazareth where He had lived most of His life.

Jesus had often read the Old Testament in the synagogue in Nazareth as He grew up. Luke 4:16 says, “So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.” Here, we see that it had been His custom for many years to read the Old Testament scriptures in this synagogue. As Jesus began His public ministry, we see that He was teaching in the synagogues throughout Galilee. Matthew 4:23 says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Now, as He returned to Nazareth, we see that Jesus began teaching in the synagogue just as He had done in towns throughout Galilee.

However, instead of listening and learning from the teaching of Jesus, the people began to question where He had learned wisdom and received power to do mighty works. By these questions, they were asking what right Jesus had to teach them. The older people had known Jesus since He was a young boy and they did not want to accept His teaching. They chose instead to remind one another that they all knew His whole family. They had known Joseph as the one who served as a carpenter in their town. They knew Mary by name, as they had known her since she was a child. Luke 1:26-27 says, “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name *was* Mary.” The fact that all of the people knew Jesus is an indication that the town was a fairly small town where everyone knew the others who lived there.

The people of the town also knew all of the half-brothers and half-sisters of Jesus. These would have been children that were born to Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1:24-25 says, “Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he

called His name JESUS.” Jesus had four half-brothers and two or more half-sisters that were born to Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus. As we mentioned in an earlier topic, two of the half-brothers, James and Judas, wrote the New Testament books of James and Jude.

The people of Nazareth were forced to recognize that Jesus spoke with great wisdom. The thing that they did not understand was where Jesus had received that wisdom. However, we see that they used that as an excuse not to believe what Jesus taught. Here, we see an example of the fact that many people will use excuses when they do not want to believe. Hebrews 3:12 was written as a warning to the Jews when that verse says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” Here, we see that a heart of unbelief is an evil heart that causes a person to depart from the living God. That was what had happened among the people in the synagogue of Nazareth that day. It is also the one sin that keeps a person from receiving eternal life. The Holy Spirit convicts those who are not Christians of that sin. John 16:8-9 says, ““And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me.”” Those who continue to live in unbelief until they die will experience eternal judgment.

Jesus went on to say, in Matthew 13:57-58, “But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.’ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” The word translated “without honor” means *less honored, dishonored or despised*. In these verses, we see that Jesus said that the place where He experienced the greatest rejection was in His own country. In fact, Jesus made a similar statement, in John 4:44, where we read, “For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.” Here, we see an attitude that many people have shown through the years. They feel that someone they have known since the person was a child is not able to teach them the Word of God because of the fact that they are younger. Paul said to Timothy, in 1 Timothy 4:12, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” In this case, we see that Paul told Timothy that he could change that attitude among Christians by providing an example of godly character.

We also see how Jesus handled the unbelief in the town of Nazareth. We see that Jesus chose not to do many miracles in that area because of their unbelief. John 20:30-31 says, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” The miracles that Jesus did were signs to the Jews that He was the Messiah and came from God. The people of Nazareth had already made up their minds that they would not recognize Jesus as the Messiah who came from God. As a result, Jesus did not try to give them additional signs in an effort to try and change their minds. Instead, He allowed them to make the choice to continue in their unbelief. We want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that there are some people who will continue in their unbelief and only God is able to change their hard hearts. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand why there are those who choose to continue to reject Jesus because of their unbelief.