

Jesus' Teachings

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Quotations from the Bible are ad hoc and not from any published Bible version.

This simple summary of the teachings of Jesus assumes no prior knowledge of history or of Christianity. Jesus was a Jew, and the terminology of Jewish beliefs pervade the record of his life and teachings. Words and phrases for aspects of Jewish religious life are briefly explained in the appendix on “Judaism at the Time of Jesus” at the end of this document.

Jesus is referred to here — for instance, in “Who Was Jesus?” — in the past tense. Christians believe in the continuing life and spiritual presence of Jesus now. But learning from Jesus must include what he said during a brief period of time long ago, and the subsequent establishment of the Christian faith was intended not to replace but to mediate Jesus’ call for people to become his followers.

Jesus’ teachings are, so to speak, available to the public. No institution owns him or can effectively claim sole right to explain what he is about. What he claimed for himself is absolute and uncompromising and what he asked of his followers is devastating to any attempt to moderate his teachings or divide them so as to use some parts and discard others.

Who Was Jesus?

Jesus was a Jewish man who lived about 2000 years ago, spending nearly all his life in Palestine/Israel, which was at that time under the rule of the Roman Empire, along with all the European, Asian, and African countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea and European countries on the Atlantic coast. Most of the people he was ever in contact with were Jewish. Though he was by family and training a village carpenter, he spent the last part of his life as a traveling teacher and worker of miracles, mainly miracles of healing. He gathered a group of disciples around him.

Jesus was tried and executed in Jerusalem under the authority of a non-Jewish Roman provincial governor. The means of execution was crucifixion — being nailed through his wrists and ankles to a wooden cross set up in a public place — which is why the cross (†) has been the most common symbol of Christianity. Two days after his death Jesus became alive again. He then appeared several times to his disciples for another forty days, and then rose into heaven in their presence. His disciples then came to be the beginning of what is now the worldwide Christian religion.

Christian writers of the first few centuries after the time of Jesus devoted considerable effort to understanding who Jesus is in relation to both humanity and God. Is he really human? Is he God? The answer that came to be recognized as most in accord with the Christian Scriptures and Christian worship was yes to both questions. That conclusion is essential to the meaning of Christianity, as is also the understanding of Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice. But here the focus will be on what Jesus taught in the time before his execution.

The Four Gospels

To tell the story of Jesus' life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection (his being raised from death), Christians in different places in the Roman Empire wrote four documents, which are called "Gospels." All four Gospels were written within six decades after Jesus' death and resurrection. Their purpose was (and is) to enable people who do not live during the time of Jesus to be his disciples.

Each Gospel was eventually given the name of some early Christian who was (or was thought to be) involved in its writing. They are, therefore, the Gospels of (or "according to") Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The four Gospels have, unsurprisingly, considerable overlap among them. This is especially true of the first three and less so of John's Gospel. The summary of Jesus' teachings given here has been compiled mainly from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, with only a few references to John.

The Gospels are four of the "books" contained in the Bible, which is the authoritative holy book of the Christian religion. A "book" of the Bible may be as short as half a page or as long as a small book in the usual sense of the word. The books of the Bible are normally printed and bound together in one volume.

The Bible is divided into two "testaments." The "Old Testament" contains books that originated among the people of Israel and the Jews during several centuries prior to the time of Jesus. The "New Testament" is roughly 1/4 to 1/3 the size of the Old Testament and tells about Jesus' birth, life, teachings, death, and resurrection and about the early years of the church. The Bible is available in many languages at many websites for reading online or downloading. One such website is "The Unbound Bible" (<http://unbound.biola.edu/>), which has the Bible in more than fifty languages.

Books of the Bible are divided, for convenience, into chapters, which are divided into verses. A chapter will often be about a page in length. Verses are usually about sentence-length. References to passages in the Bible are given by the title of the "book," often in some abbreviated form, followed by chapter:verse(s). For example, "Matt 12:22-32" refers to verses 22 through 32 of the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

Because a given passage might appear in similar forms in different Gospels, references are often given in this booklet to two or more Gospels with "=" between the references. This does not mean that the passages are identical; indeed, in many cases they are quite different, even though they are accounts of the same event or teaching. Quotations are generally from just one Gospel's version of a teaching.

Because the four Gospels are nearly the only sources for our knowledge of Jesus, it can be said that we know about Jesus almost solely through the early Christians, that is, through what they included in the Gospels, which was, of course, shaped by their understanding of Jesus. Some historians have considered that problematic for an understanding of Jesus himself. The assumption behind this summary of Jesus' teachings is that there remains, nonetheless, value in gratefully reading the Gospels on their own terms, that is, in coming to know Jesus and his teachings as they have been mediated to us through the early Christians.

Jesus' Identity and Authority

The Questions

Questions about Jesus' identity and authority were raised in response to his miracles and teaching:

- ▲ “Where did he get this wisdom and these miracles? Isn't this the carpenter's son?” (Matt 13:54-56 = Mark 6:2-3; Luke 4:22; John 6:42; 7:15).
- ▲ “They were astonished because he taught as one with authority” (Matt 7:28-29 = Mark 1:22 = Luke 4:32).
- ▲ After he had driven an evil spirit out of a man: “What is this? A new teaching? With authority he commands the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (Mark 1:27 = Luke 4:36).
- ▲ After he had miraculously calmed a lake storm: “Who is this that even wind and sea obey him?” (Matt 8:27 = Mark 4:41 = Luke 8:25).
- ▲ Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do the people say I am? . . . Who do you say I am?” (Matt 16:13, 15 = Mark 8:27, 29 = Luke 9:18, 20).
- ▲ From official leaders: “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” Matt 21:23 = Mark 11:27-28 = Luke 20:1-2).
- ▲ At his trial: “Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?” (Matt 26:63 = Mark 14:61 = Luke 22:67, 70) and “Are you the King of the Jews?” (Matt 27:11 = Mark 15:2 = Luke 23:2-3 = John 18:33).

The Answers

The answers to these questions suggested by different people tended to be either completely negative or completely positive:

- ▲ Some teachers, in response to Jesus' exorcisms and to his healing a man by pronouncing forgiveness of his sins, accused Jesus of evil or of being in league with the devil (Matt 9:3 = Mark 2:7 = Luke 5:21; Matt 9:34; Matt 12:24 = Mark 3:22 = Luke 11:15).
- ▲ Some among the people thought he might be one of the end-time figures expected by many Jews (“the one who is to come”: Matt 11:3 = Luke 7:19-20), whether
 - a king (including the titles “son of David,” “Son of God,” and “Messiah/Christ”: Matt 12:23; 14:33; John 1:34, 41; Matt 16:16 = Mark 8:29 = Luke 9:20; Matt 21:9 = Luke 19:38 = John 12:13)
 - or a prophet (Matt 16:14 = Mark 8:28 = Luke 9:19; both king and prophet: John 6:14-15, 68-69).

Jesus' Answer

Jesus endorsed both end-time answers to the question about his identity, prophet and king:

- ▲ He placed himself among the prophets (Matt 13:57 = Mark 6:4 = Luke 4:24),
- ▲ but apparently rejected the idea that he was one of the prophets of the Old Testament come back to earth or John the baptizer (a Jewish preacher of repentance whose work had overlapped with Jesus') come back to life (Matt 16:14 = Mark 8:28 = Luke 9:19).
- ▲ He claimed, rather, to be the end-time prophet described in the vision of Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet (Luke 4:17-21, quoting Isaiah 61:1-2).
- ▲ He selected a core group of twelve disciples and gave them special authority to teach and heal. Their number represented their future leadership of the twelve tribes of Israel, with himself as the principal leader (Matt 10:1-4 = Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:13-16; Matt 19:28; Luke 22:28-30).

- ▲ The disciples James and John's request to sit at either side of Jesus' eventual throne presupposed his end-time coronation (Matt 20:21 = Mark 10:37).
- ▲ When told to silence those who were giving him a royal welcome into Jerusalem, he responded that if those people were quiet the stones of the city would cry out, presumably giving him the same welcome (Luke 19:37-40).
- ▲ At his trial he accepted the accusation that he considered himself Messiah/Son of God/king of the Jews (Matt 26:63-64 = Mark 14:61-62; Luke 22:67-70; Matt 27:11 = Mark 15:2 = Luke 23:2-3 = John 18:33-37).

The Presence of God's Kingdom

That Jesus had either end-time identity meant that the end time had in some sense come, and that it had come because he had come:

- ▲ "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).
- ▲ Jesus called his disciples "blessed" because they were seeing and hearing what prophets and kings, or prophets and righteous people, had wanted to see and hear but had not (Matt 13:16-17 = Luke 10:23-24).
- ▲ Asked "when God's kingdom would come," Jesus answered, "God's kingdom is not coming with observable signs, nor will people say 'here it is!' or 'there!' since God's kingdom is in your midst"; that is, it was present already (Luke 17:20-21).
- ▲ Jesus gave much of his teaching in parables, that is, in short narratives that conveyed parts of the teaching. He might have told the parable of the banquet (Matt 22:1-10 = Luke 14:16-24) as a rebuke against those who did not recognize his ministry as the coming of the kingdom since in Luke he tells the parable in response to someone speaking of the blessedness of those who will eat in the banquet celebrating the coming of the kingdom (Luke 14:15).

The Call to Discipleship

Repentance

- ▲ Repentance in view of the closeness/coming of God's kingdom was the message of Jesus' initial preaching (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15; to "repent" is to consent to and experience a radical change in one's life-orientation and moral behavior).
- ▲ The response to his miracles (and to those performed by his disciples) that Jesus wanted was not just acknowledgement of his authority but also repentance (Matt 11:20-24 = Luke 10:13-15; the disciples' miracles: Matt 10:8; Luke 10:17).
- ▲ Jesus told people not to seek signs, that is confirmatory miracles. He did so out of impatience with those who had not responded to what he had already given in miracles and teaching. The issue was no longer whether he had authority: he did have authority and had already adequately demonstrated it. It was now the time to respond, not to ask further questions, and the appropriate response was immediate repentance (Matt 12:38-42 = Luke 11:16, 29-32; Matt 16:1-4; Mark 8:11-12; Luke 12:54-56; John 4:48).
- ▲ Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, exemplified the meaning of repentance as awakened regret for sin in response to a miracle ("Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!") and adoption of a new way of life in adherence to Jesus: along with others, he left his livelihood to become a disciple of Jesus (Luke 5:8-11).
- ▲ It is "the poor in spirit" and "those who mourn" who receive the blessing of God's kingdom (Matt 5:3-4).
- ▲ In a series of parables Jesus spoke of joy as heaven's response to the repentance of even one person — in contrast to anyone who "does not need to repent." He gave these parables in response to the accusation that he "receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2-32).
- ▲ Another parable teaches that not good intent but repentance counts (Matt 21:28-32).

Complete and Single Devotion

- ▲ Response to Jesus' call involves being singularly and unreservedly committed to God and to Jesus and his words. One must not get waylaid by side issues, must not give any of one's loyalty to anyone else, must "hunger and thirst for righteousness," and must follow an unpopular route (Matt 5:6, 20; 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24).
- ▲ Calling Jesus "Lord" can be just words, but the end-time final judgment will examine whether it is confirmed as true by obedience to God (Matt 7:21-23 = Luke 6:46 and 13:26-27).
- ▲ There is a distinction between hearing Jesus' words and acting on them (Matt 7:24-27 = Luke 6:47-49).
- ▲ Preserving life and body parts (the latter in figures of speech) is less important than avoiding sin, especially when one considers the coming judgment (Matt 5:29-30; Matt 18:8-9 = Mark 9:43-48).
- ▲ Jesus' disciples are those who do God's will. He acknowledges them as his own true family members (Matt 12:46-50 = Mark 3:31-35 = Luke 8:19-21).

Costs of Discipleship

Jesus spoke on several occasions about things that must be given up or risked by those who become his disciples. These specifically named costs of discipleship are:

- ▲ family and home, including fulfillment of family obligations (Matt 8:19-22 = Luke 9:57-62; Matt 10:37 = Luke 14:26; Matt 19:29 = Mark 10:29-30 = Luke 18:29-30; Luke 14:20),
- ▲ occupation (Matt 22:5 = Luke 14:18-19),
- ▲ wealth (Matt 6:19-24; Matt 19:16-29 = Mark 10:17-30 = Luke 18:18-30; Matt 13:44-46; Luke 12:13-21, 33-34; 14:33),
- ▲ even just enough to supply daily needs (Matt 6:25-34 = Luke 12:22-31),
- ▲ and, in imitation of Jesus, life itself (Matt 10:38-39 = Luke 14:27; Matt 16:24-26 = Mark 8:34-37 = Luke 9:23-25; Luke 17:33).

It may be that some of these costs of discipleship to Jesus were meant only for disciples who had a specific call to be proclaimers of his message, since

- ▲ Jesus called specific men to forsake their occupations and to be members of a core group of twelve disciples (Matt 4:18-22 = Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:11; Matt 9:9 = Mark 2:14 = Luke 5:27-28; John 1:35-51),
- ▲ and sent them on missions to proclaim his message and to heal people (Matt 10:1-11:1; Mark 3:14-15; 6:7-13; Luke 6:13-16; 9:1, 59-60).
- ▲ He also sent out larger groups on such missions as well (Luke 10:1-20).
- ▲ At some points things described above as to be given up or risked by those who become Jesus' disciples are mentioned as the burden specifically of the proclaimers (Mark 10:29; Matt 10:9-10; Mark 6:8-9; Luke 9:3; 10:4; Matt 19:12).

Jesus and the Jewish Law

Righteousness Exceeding the Pharisees'

Pharisees were Jews who emphasized the correct interpretation of the law of the Jewish people, which is recorded in the first five books of the Bible, and application of that law to all of life. They carried on lively discussions about details of interpretation and observance of the law. Jesus was involved in such discussions and had cordial relationships with some Pharisees (Luke 14:1; John 3:1-2). But his overall teachings on the application of the law differed from theirs and he denounced them as teachers of less-educated Jews in the strongest terms (Matt 23). His disputes with some Pharisees went so far that they ascribed his miracles to the devil (Matt 9:34; Matt 12:24 = Mark 3:22 = Luke 11:15) and sought to do away with him (Matt 12:10, 14 = Mark 3:2, 6 = Luke 6:7, 11; Luke 11:53-54).

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is closed to all but those whose righteousness “exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees” (Matt 5:20). Going on from that statement he responded to six moral commandments, referring to them as what Jews had “heard,” that is, not just the actual words of the law as written in the Old Testament but the law as read and interpreted by teachers who were Pharisees. In this way he taught how that greater righteousness is lived:

- ▲ Not just murder is prohibited but anger and name-calling as well. Reconciliation is more important than both religious rites and waiting on judicial processes (Matt 5:21-26).
- ▲ Not just adultery is prohibited but looking lustfully at a woman as well. Moral purity is more important than keeping body parts (Matt 5:27-30).
- ▲ It is not enough that divorce be carried out in prescribed ways. Rather, divorce is prohibited (Matt 5:31-32).
- ▲ It is not enough that oaths are enforced as binding. Rather, oaths are prohibited in favor of simple truthfulness (Matt 5:33-37).
- ▲ It is not enough that retribution is limited to equal loss. Rather, it is prohibited. If someone steals, give them more (Matt 5:38-42).
- ▲ It is not enough to love one's neighbor. “Love your enemies” (Matt 5:43-48).

Again, Jesus' Authority

- ▲ Unlike other teachers of the Jewish people, Jesus ascribed his authority to interpret the law not to superior training in the traditions of interpretation but to his unique identity (Matt 12:1-8 = Mark 2:23-28 = Luke 6:1-5; Matt 5:17-48).
- ▲ Furthermore, he expected discipleship: observance of the law is insufficient if it is not accompanied by all-else-surrendering following of Jesus himself (Matt 19:16-22 = Mark 10:17-22 = Luke 18:18-23).
- ▲ His authority is such, he taught, that one should not ask him to be what he is not or try to fit him into one's old ways of doing things or old understandings of what is proper (Matt 9:4-5 = Mark 2:8-9 = Luke 5:22-23; Matt 9:16-17 = Mark 2:21-22 = Luke 5:36-38; Luke 12:13-14).
- ▲ More simply, Jesus taught that following the standards given by religion is not living the life of discipleship, which goes further. If a person reaches a point of perfection in regard to observance of the law (Matt 19:20 = Mark 10:20 = Luke 18:21), then the “one thing still needed” is to give up everything else to follow Jesus (Matt 19:21 = Mark 10:21 = Luke 18:22).

So, in talking about the law of the Jewish people (Matt 5:21-48 again), Jesus moves from action to speech, thought, and relationship as he excludes excuses such as the natural inclination of eye

or hand, as he discards any use of the law to describe the boundaries of permitted action, and as he calls for self-denial for the sake of others, even where the law would encourage otherwise. What he describes is a very different sort of life than one whose code of behavior is limited only to what is described in the law.

How to Act toward God

Not with Hypocrisy

Jesus often called Pharisees “hypocrites” (Matt 15:7 = Mark 7:6; Matt 22:18 = Mark 12:15; Matt 23), particularly when he was saying that their concern for the details of religious practice got in the way of what he regarded as more important. As “hypocrites” they were also quicker to instruct and correct others than to recognize their own faults (Matt 7:5 = Luke 6:42).

In this vein, he specifically mentioned three typical expressions of Jewish piety (and of the piety of many religions): giving money for the poor (Matt 6:2-4), prayer (Matt 6:5-6), and fasting (Matt 6:16-18), reacting against how they were practiced and modeled by Pharisees. In regard to each of these practices he said one should not make a public display of it “as the hypocrites do” so that people will give recognition to the doer. Since such recognition from people is the reward “hypocrites” seek for performing these religious duties, “they have received their reward” (Matt 6:2, 5, and 16). Instead one should do each of these things in such a way that people do not know it is done, “and your Father [i.e., God] who sees in secret will reward you” (Matt 6:4, 6, and 18). The right motives are shaped by a recognition of the difference between — indeed, mutual exclusion of — praise from people and end-time reward from God.

Jesus also spoke of hypocrisy in Pharisees’ close attention to three more distinctively Jewish practices. He set close attention to details of tithing over against “the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith,” and said that both should be attended to (Matt 23:23). He set close attention to details of ritual cleanness over against attention to one’s own hidden “extortion and excess” (Matt 23:25-26), teaching that attention to one’s own sins itself makes true ritual cleanness possible (“cleanse the inside first so that the outside may become clean also”). The Sabbath is the Jewish weekly day of rest and communal prayer. Detailed clarification of what constitutes work, for the purpose of Sabbath observance, was a large concern for Pharisees. On several occasions Pharisees accused Jesus or those taught by him of violating the Sabbath, or Jesus himself brought up the possibility of such an accusation (Matt 12:1-2 = Mark 2:23-24 = Luke 6:1-2; Matt 12:10 = Mark 3:2 = Luke 6:7; Luke 13:14; 14:3; John 5:10; 7:23; 9:13-16). His responses on these occasions usually set close attention to details of the Sabbath over against works of mercy that might be done on a Sabbath (Matt 12:11-12; Mark 3:4 = Luke 6:9; Luke 13:15-16; 14:5).

Jesus also brought the discussion of Sabbath regulations into the context of his teaching about himself as the authorized emissary of God, announcing and bringing in the end time. He referred to an Old Testament incident — David and his soldiers eating the temple bread, which was reserved for priests (Matt 12:3-4 = Mark 2:25-26 = Luke 6:3-4) — and to a periodic technical violation of the Sabbath by priests in the temple (Matt 12:5). These references stayed within the context of discussion of issues of law observance, but Jesus also said that “something more important than the temple is present here” (Matt 12:6), namely the end-time revelation through himself and the call to repentance, both of which he had been speaking of (Matt 11:20-30; Mark 2:19-22 = Luke 5:34-39). This same emphasis is present in his statement that “the Son of Man [i.e., Jesus himself] is lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12:8 = Mark 2:28 = Luke 6:5).

The sort of relationship to God that Jesus associated with Pharisees is seen especially in a parable in which a Pharisee uses the opportunity of prayer to parade his blessings and achievements before God, while a tax collector (thus a hated collaborator with the Roman occupation) admits his own reliance, as a sinner, on God’s mercy (Luke 18:9-14). Jesus saw Pharisees as exemplars of love of external qualification, human recognition, and social climbing, and he criticized them for this (Matt 23:6-7; Luke 11:43; 14:7-11).

Not with Presumption

Presumption in one's relationship with God can come into play in thoughts about the future end time.

- ▲ In trying to become a religious leader one might thus be trying to get a head-start on end-time glory (Matt 20:20-28 = Mark 10:35-45 = Luke 22:24-27).
- ▲ The presumption exercised by some Pharisees included, Jesus taught, even just assuming that one has a place in God's kingdom at all (Matt 23:13).
- ▲ "Unless you turn around and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:3).
- ▲ And for disciples of Jesus, false claims to have Jesus as one's "lord" will be exposed at the final judgment (Matt 7:21-27 = Luke 6:46-49 and 13:26-27).
- ▲ One should not focus on what one supposedly deserves from God (Luke 17:7-10; Matt 20:1-16; Matt 20:20-28 = Mark 10:35-45 = Luke 22:24-27 again)
- ▲ or claim to deserve more from God than others do (yet again, Matt 20:20-28 = Mark 10:35-45 = Luke 22:24-27).
- ▲ In the same vein, Jesus instructed his disciples that they should not presume on their end-time status in relation to the question about whether they should pay the temple taxes required of all Jews (Matt 17:24-27).
- ▲ Part of the reason he forbade making oaths (Matt 5:33-37) might have been that oaths presume too much about one's end-time destiny.
- ▲ In a parable (Luke 14:7-11), if it is taken to be about the completion of the end time, Jesus taught that social climbing will lead to humiliation in the end time.
- ▲ In other parables (Matt 20:1-16; Luke 17:7-10) Jesus taught that, no matter how well one has carried out God's will, the distinction between God and human (portrayed as class distinctions in the parables) remains and that no one can bring claims against God.
- ▲ Underlying all this is a repeated teaching of end-time reversal according to which exalting oneself now leads to humiliation in the end time and humbling oneself now leads to exaltation in the end time (Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14).
- ▲ "The last will be first and the first last" (Matt 20:16);
- ▲ "many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Matt 19:30 = Mark 10:31 = Luke 13:30).
- ▲ Similarly, Jesus taught that there is blessing in the end time for those who are poor in spirit, mourning, or meek (Matt 5:3-5).

Faith and Prayer

Jesus taught his disciples to pray and have faith, that is, to rely on God for all their needs:

- ▲ God answers prayer (Matt 7:7-11 = Luke 11:9-13).
- ▲ God provides for the needs of disciples (Luke 11:5-8).
- ▲ Prayer expresses reliance on God for even the most basic needs (Matt 6:11 = Luke 11:3).
- ▲ A prayer based on faith can bring about differences in how things happen (Matt 17:20 = Luke 17:6; Matt 21:21-22 = Mark 11:22-24).
- ▲ Jesus criticized his disciples for their smallness of faith or lack of faith (Matt 8:26 = Mark 4:40 = Luke 8:25; Matt 14:31; 17:19-20).
- ▲ One should pray when faced with opposition or crisis (Luke 21:36; 22:40; Matt 26:41 = Mark 14:38 = Luke 22:46).
- ▲ Prayer is not to be done for show (Matt 6:5-8).

- ▲ Prayer presupposes the praying disciple's mercy to others, and it seeks God's mercy (Matt 6:12 = Luke 11:4; Matt 6:14 = Mark 11:25).
- ▲ In prayer one should honor God as God and pray for the coming of God's kingdom (Matt 6:9-10 = Luke 11:2).
- ▲ Jesus prayed (Luke 11:1; 22:41).

How to Act toward Other People

Leaders and Followers

Partially in response to the Pharisees' manner of leadership, Jesus taught about the danger of accomplishment as a ruler or a teacher — a “master” in either sense. Jesus thus instructed his disciples

- ▲ not to be like overbearing rulers in relationship to each other (Matt 20:20-28 = Mark 10:35-45 = Luke 22:24-27),
- ▲ not to seek honorific titles as teachers (Matt 23:8, 10), and
- ▲ to apply judgment to themselves, not to others. Attempts to lead others out of their faults should come after attention to one's own faults (Matt 7:1-5 = Luke 6:37-42).
- ▲ They were also to be like children or servants, that is, like those with no authority, and were thus to keep in mind final reward in the end time rather than reward in this life (Matt 18:1-4; Matt 19:14 = Mark 10:14 = Luke 18:16; Mark 10:15 = Luke 18:17; Matt 20:26-27 = Mark 10:43-45 = Luke 22:26; Matt 23:11).

Another danger comes where a person might fall victim to a presumptuous leader or teacher. So Jesus' disciples should

- ▲ not submit entirely to any earthly leaders (as “fathers”), because leaders might come to compete with God and Jesus for allegiance (Matt 23:9),
- ▲ beware of “false prophets,” that is, deceptive teachers (Matt 7:15-16), and
- ▲ measure teachers by their “fruit,” that is their actions, rather than by their words (Matt 21:33-46 = Mark 12:1-12 = Luke 20:9-19).
- ▲ Jesus specifically cautioned his disciples against teachers who were opposing him (Matt 16:6 (and 12) = Mark 8:15 = Luke 12:1).

Goodness to Others

Fundamental to the life that Jesus prescribed for his followers was the imperative to be good to people. This imperative has often been seen as capsulized in “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matt 7:12 = Luke 6:31). That particular sentence and Jesus' teachings on goodness to others in general are similar to teachings found in other religious traditions. The particular emphasis Jesus gives to reconciliation, love for enemies, and forgiveness is the closest one comes to a distinctive focus.

Make Peace:

- ▲ “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt 5:9)
- ▲ Don't stay angry; rather, seek reconciliation, even before fulfilling religious obligations (Matt 5:23-24; Matt 18:15-22 = Luke 17:3-4; Mark 9:50).
- ▲ Love enemies (Matt 5:43-48 = Luke 6:27-36; Luke 10:29-37).
- ▲ Pray for those who persecute (Matt 5:43-48 = Luke 6:27-36)
- ▲ and count persecution as a blessing (Matt 5:10; Matt 5:11-12 = Luke 6:22-23).

Take Care of Others' Needs:

- ▲ Give to anyone who asks for something (Matt 5:42 = Luke 6:30).
- ▲ Take care of people in need, without discrimination (Luke 10:29-37; 14:1-6, 12-14; 16:19-31; Matt 25:31-46).
- ▲ Provide hospitality for the proclaimers (Matt 10:40-42; Mark 9:38-41) and generally for other disciples (Matt 18:1-5 = Mark 9:33-37 = Luke 9:46-48; Matt 19:14 = Mark 10:14 = Luke 18:16; Matt 20:26-27 = Mark 10:43-45 = Luke 22:26).

Welcome Sinners and Repenters:

- ▲ Forgive, have mercy (Matt 5:7; Matt 6:12 = Luke 11:4; Matt 6:14-15 = Mark 11:25-26; Matt 9:9-13 = Mark 2:13-17 = Luke 5:27-32; Matt 18:15-22 = Luke 17:3-4; Matt 18:23-35).
- ▲ Don't hate recent repenters, but rejoice over them (Matt 18:12-14 = Luke 15:1-10; Matt 20:1-16; 21:28-32; Luke 15:11-32; 18:9-14; 19:1-10).
- ▲ Don't avoid the company of sinners (Matt 9:9-13 = Mark 2:13-17 = Luke 5:27-32; Matt 11:16-19 = Luke 7:31-35).
- ▲ Don't cause other disciples to sin (Matt 18:6-7 = Mark 9:42 = Luke 17:1-2).

What Will Happen

The Nearer Future

Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

- ▲ Jesus told his disciples on several occasions that in the near future, after he had arrived in Jerusalem, he would be arrested and crucified and then raised back to life “on the third day” (Matt 16:21 = Mark 8:31 = Luke 9:22; Matt 17:22-23 = Mark 9:31 = Luke 9:44; Matt 20:18-19 = Mark 10:33-34 = Luke 18:31-33; Matt 17:9-12 = Mark 9:9-12; Luke 9:51-53; 13:33).
- ▲ The events that fulfilled this prediction take up much of the space in each of the four Gospels (Matt 26:37-27:66; Mark 14:33-15:46; Luke 22:39-23:53; John 18-19).
- ▲ After his resurrection Jesus recalled the now-fulfilled predictions (Luke 24:26-46).

The Destruction of Jerusalem

- ▲ Jesus predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed in war (Luke 19:41-44; Matt 24:1-2 = Mark 13:1-2 = Luke 21:5-6; Matt 24:15-22 = Mark 13:14-20 = Luke 21:20-24).
- ▲ He did not pin this event down chronologically other than placing it before the final judgment (which comes “after that suffering,” Matt 24:29 = Mark 13:24), though the Gospels surely intend that we identify it with the destruction of the city by Rome about forty years after Jesus' prediction.

The Church

Jesus spoke about how the community of his disciples would operate after his departure, including how disputes should be dealt with (Matt 16:18; 18:15-20). He also gave his disciples rituals to observe after his departure:

- ▲ baptism, which honors an individual person's repentance (Matt 28:18-20), and
- ▲ the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, in which the community together periodically remembers Jesus' death and anticipates his return (Matt 26:26-29 = Mark 14:22-25 = Luke 22:17-20).

The End Time

Jesus also predicted that in the future he will come again and that all humans will be judged. Here only a few passages among the many will be mentioned.

- ▲ The Son of man (a name Jesus used for himself) will return on the clouds of heaven and send angels to gather God's people from throughout the world (Mark 13:26-27; Matt 10:23).
- ▲ The day of judgment is coming (Matt 10:15 = Luke 10:12; Matt 11:22, 24; 12:36).
- ▲ The judgment will be disastrous (Luke 17:26-30)
- ▲ and will be carried out in a place of fire, or in “Gehenna,” a figurative name derived from that of a valley near Jerusalem that had been used as a constantly-burning garbage dump (Matt 5:22; 7:19; 23:15, 33; Matt 18:8-9 = Mark 9:43-48; Matt 10:28 = Luke 12:5; Luke 12:49; John 15:6).
- ▲ The judgment will result in division of people into two groups (Matt 24:40-41 = Luke 17:34-35; Matt 13:24-50; 25:31-46).
- ▲ The fate of at least some will depend on whether they have acknowledged Jesus (Mark 8:38; Matt 10:14-15 = Luke 10:10-12; Matt 10:32-33; Matt 11:20-24 = Luke 10:13-15; Luke 12:8-9)
- ▲ or have done what he said to do (Matt 7:21-27 = Luke 6:46-49).

- ▲ The punishment for having caused other disciples to “stumble” will be worse than being thrown into the sea with a millstone around one’s neck (Matt 18:6-7 = Mark 9:42 = Luke 17:1-2).
- ▲ This punishment is likened to being thrown out into the dark (Matt 22:13; 25:30) to weep and grind one’s teeth (Matt 24:51; 25:30).
- ▲ Punishment will have its counterpart in everlasting reward for others (Matt 5:12 = Luke 6:23; Matt 19:29 = Mark 10:29-30 = Luke 18:29-30; Matt 5:19; Luke 16:19-31; John 6:40; 14:2-3).

The judgment will result in reversal:

- ▲ “Many that are first will be last, and the last first” (Matt 19:30 = Mark 10:31 = Luke 13:30; Matt 20:16).
- ▲ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, because you will be filled” (Luke 6:21).
- ▲ “Blessed are those who mourn, because they will be comforted.” “Blessed are you who weep now, because you will laugh” (Matt 5:4; Luke 6:21).
- ▲ “Blessed are you when people insult and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely because of me . . . your reward is great in heaven” (Matt 5:11-12; Luke 6:22-23).
- ▲ “Those who humble themselves will be lifted up” (Matt 18:4; 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14).
- ▲ “He who loses his life will keep it” (Matt 10:39; Mark 8:35; Luke 17:33).

Appendix: Judaism at the time of Jesus

Judaism exists today, with Islam and Christianity, as one of the three great “Abrahamic faiths.” The ancient nation of Israel traced its lineage to Abraham. It later divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, which together occupied a territory roughly the same as that of modern Israel and Palestine. Both were defeated by and absorbed into large empires, but Judah managed to survive as a people and occasionally as a political unit within successive empires. It was part of the Roman Empire for about five centuries. Judah had become known as Judea and its people as Judeans, the source of the English words Judaism and Jew.

The focal point of the Jewish religion at the time of Jesus was the elaborate temple in Jerusalem, where nearly constant animal sacrifices were carried out. Many Jews lived outside the land of Judea. But all Jews paid a tax (mentioned in Matt 17:24-27) to support the temple, and many made feast-day pilgrimages to the temple. There was a spirit of revolt against the Roman Empire among many Jews, especially those living in Judea, during the first two centuries of Roman occupation, which began in 63 BCE (BCE = BC). The temple was destroyed, along with most of Jerusalem, when a revolt against Roman rule was defeated in 70 CE (CE = AD).

Judaism was also centered on daily observance of the law of the Jewish people, which had been received from God through Moses, an ancient leader, and is contained in the first five books of the Bible. Corporate prayer and teaching of the law were done in synagogues, assembly places located wherever Jews lived. It is the Judaism of the law and the synagogues, not that of the temple, that has survived until today.

Another aspect of faith for some Jews was eschatology, that is, belief that the present age of the world would give place to the “age to come,” when Jews would be gathered into their own land and freed from control by imperial powers. An eschatological (end-time) liberator/king was expected by some. Titles given to Jesus — “he who is to come,” “Son of David,” “Christ/Messiah,” “Son of God” — show that some identified him as that expected future Savior. The end time was characterized as the time when prophecies in Scripture (the Old Testament) would be fulfilled. “The kingdom of God” (or “of heaven”) is a term for the completed end time, the time when God’s justice will prevail. Jesus’ placement of God’s kingdom in the present, in his own work (“in your midst”), was a radical alteration of these expectations.

The Gospels mention members of two groups of Jews in Judea, generally from among the wealthier and more educated Jews, with particular emphases within the range of Jewish beliefs and concerns — Pharisees and Sadducees. Other such groups not mentioned by name in the Gospels were the Zealots and the Essenes.

The **Pharisees** regarded observance of the law in daily life on the part of all Jews as the key to the coming of the age to come. They were particularly influential among common less-educated Jews, and Jesus mentioned “the scribes [i.e., teachers of the Jewish law] and Pharisees” as those who taught the law to the people (Matt 23). The Pharisees’ detailed consideration of cases in which the law was to be applied formed the basis, through later compilations of their debates, for today’s Orthodox Judaism. A concern that comes up several times in the Gospels is the Sabbath, the Jewish weekly day (= Saturday) of rest and worship. The law against working on the Sabbath was expanded to delineate what should be considered work and what should not and to deal with many possible borderline and emergency situations.

The **Sadducees’** main religious concern was the continuation of the ritual sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. They were thus supporters of the hereditary priests, who alone were permitted

to carry out sacrifices. Since protection of the temple was paramount, the Sadducees were not supporters of revolt against Rome, and eschatology had no place in their beliefs.

The **Zealots** emerged as one of the revolutionary groups during the revolt against Rome of 66-73 CE, but the characterization of some Jews as “zealots,” that is, as those willing to kill or die for the preservation of the Jewish people and faith, went back further. Two members of the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples had descriptive surnames that place them among the number of such zealots.

The **Essenes**’ response to the Roman occupation was withdrawal and an attempt to live purely by the law in their own communities while awaiting the end time. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered beginning in 1947 and quite well known today, are the remains of a library assembled by one Essene community (or possibly a community of Jews under a different name but with similar concerns).

Another group mentioned in the Gospels is the **Herodians**, who were apparently not a group with specific religious concerns but supporters, perhaps relatives or policemen, of the dynasty of Herod, which supplied rulers for Judea or different parts of it or neighboring territories under the Roman occupation during the time of Jesus.

Jesus’ conflicts with Sadducees and Pharisees contributed to the reasons for his execution (Matt 12:14 = Mark 3:6 = Luke 6:11; Matt 22:15 = Mark 12:13 = Luke 20:20; Matt 26:3). When “the crowds” seemed to go against Jesus, they did so mainly under the influence of these two groups (culminating in Matt 27:20-25). But as Sadducees and Pharisees were different from each others, so they opposed Jesus for different reasons. Opposition from the collaborationist, temple-centered, priestly Judaism of the Sadducees arose mainly from their perception of Jesus as a threat to the status quo under Rome. In one instance we see him taking a position of the Pharisees when questioned by some Sadducees (Matt 22:23-32 = Mark 12:18-27 = Luke 20:27-38). Jesus was, like the Pharisees, concerned about the proper understanding and living-out of the law of the Jewish people. But his teachings on that subject differed from theirs, and he saw the Pharisees’ leadership of many of the common Jews as quite problematic.