

## **With Knowledge And Spiritual Power**

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Even though present-day society has been transformed by science, and time has wrought many changes upon the land of Palestine, there are still many things about the Holy Land which remind us of Jesus' day. It was while in Jerusalem last summer that I received the request to write this article for teachers, and as I looked out upon the city I pondered with a renewed interest the subject I was to discuss. I could see Mount Moriah—the site of the temple in ancient times. To the east was the Mount of Olives, with the Kidron Valley (sometimes called Cedron, and known also as the valley of Jehoshaphat) lying between. On the west side of the Mount of Olives lay the garden of Gethsemane; and on the east, the village of Bethany, the home of Lazarus. These and other landmarks were familiar to Jesus.

As I studied the city with its teeming life, I became more aware of the challenge that had faced the Master and could visualize him on these very streets. There was a peddler hawking his wares. A man with his donkey, heavily laden with produce, moved briskly along a narrow passage. A woman passed with a large pot filled to capacity upon her head. In the shops merchants were busy displaying their goods and bartering with their customers over the final price of various articles. As in the days of Jesus, each person was going about his daily activities with his personal interests on his mind.

How could even a master teacher get and hold the attention of the people and bring them to understand the greatest message ever told?

In his teaching, Jesus could discern the hearts of men and anticipate their needs. He used various techniques at appropriate times to teach and motivate them. He had the rare ability to make truth live through apt illustrations taken from daily life. He made reference to the fig tree, the mustard seed, and the leaven hidden in three measures of meal. His parables of The Sower, The Prodigal Son, The Talents, The Good Samaritan, expressed vital points that made the principles of the gospel live in the minds of men. He employed appropriate metaphors, calling himself, for example, the bread of life which came from heaven to give life to men.

But as a teacher of divine truth, Jesus exemplified two things that no person who attempts to instruct others in the gospel can disregard or neglect: First, he taught in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit; second, he had a message which he thoroughly comprehended and which he expressed in various ways, using different approaches, to suit the circumstances of his discourse and the individuals to whom he was speaking.

## A Teacher Must Teach With the Spirit

In stressing the first of the above prerequisites to teaching, the Lord has said in our day: "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach."<sup>1</sup>

There is something stirring and moving about a dynamic message. And when that message is delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit, it then becomes the living word, or the word of life, which is Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Repeatedly the Lord said by revelation through Joseph Smith:

*Behold, I am God; give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my word.*<sup>3</sup>

*This does not mean* a teacher should be loud and bombastic in expressing his message. It does mean that the intelligent and thoughtful "prayer of faith" must precede and accompany the effort to teach. To the saints in our day Jesus said:

*... A commandment I give unto you, that ye shall declare whatsoever thing ye declare in my name, in solemnity of heart, in the spirit of meekness, in all things.*

*And I give unto you this promise, that inasmuch as ye do this the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record unto all things whatsoever ye shall say.*<sup>4</sup>

Though he was meek and humble, Jesus could also be bold, without being overbearing;<sup>5</sup> and because he gave implicit obedience to the Father, he taught in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit. Having seen in vision the Master's earthly ministry, Nephi wrote:

*And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people, in power and great glory; and the multitudes were gathered together to hear him....*<sup>6</sup>

In recording the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew said:

*And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*<sup>7</sup>

The Holy Spirit was Christ's badge of authority and the key to his effectiveness as a teacher. John declared that the Father gave not "the Spirit by measure" unto him.<sup>8</sup> And Joseph Smith explained that Jesus was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows," so that as the Son of God he "had the fulness of the Spirit, and greater power

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<sup>1</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 42:14.

<sup>2</sup> See John 6:63; also, Doctrine and Covenants 84:45.

<sup>3</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 11:2. See also Doctrine and Covenants 6:2; 12:2; 14:2; 33:1.

<sup>4</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 100:7, 8; italics added.

<sup>5</sup> See Alma's advice to his son Shiblon on this point in Alma 38:12. The Holy Spirit was Christ's badge of authority and the key to his effectiveness as a teacher. John declared that the Father gave not "the Spirit by measure" unto him. (John 3:34.) And Joseph Smith explained that Jesus was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows," so that as the Son of God he "had the fulness of the Spirit, and greater power than any man."

<sup>6</sup> 1 Nephi 11:28; italics added.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 7:28, 29; italics added.

<sup>8</sup> John 3:34.

than any man."<sup>9</sup> By the Spirit Jesus discerned the hearts of men and ascertained their needs. By the Spirit he drew upon the intelligence of his Father in coping with the complex situations that confronted him from day to day. And by the Spirit his message became one of penetrating power in the lives of men. In saying that which ought to be said about Jesus as the greatest of all teachers, his teaching in the power of the Spirit is the factor that should be stressed.

### **A Teacher Must Teach the Gospel**

The second prerequisite of a great teacher of the gospel is that the message he declares should be an expression of his central purpose in life. Christ's central purpose was to renew and regenerate man by the truth and power which he received from the Father. This is the divine truth and power which is associated with the message of the gospel. By revelation Joseph Smith wrote:

*... He came into the world, even Jesus... to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness.*<sup>10</sup>

Christ declared the gospel to be a message of divine truth and power. He spoke of those who followed him in "the regeneration" which leads to eternal life,<sup>11</sup> and his message centered continuously upon this great "regeneration." The Master directed the attention of Nicodemus, who was fascinated by the outward evidences of Christ's divine power, to the inner renewal by the Holy Spirit that would have to take place, by faith, before he could see the kingdom of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," he declared, "except a man be born again [or born from above, as the marginal note in the Bible indicates], he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>12</sup> To a woman of Samaria he contrasted the life-giving power of the water which she drew from Jacob's Well to the spiritual powers of life which he was able to give and which would be in the recipient as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."<sup>13</sup> He came to the central point of his discourse when he said:

*The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*<sup>14</sup>

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing," Jesus again declared as he centered attention upon the renewing and regenerating power of the Holy Spirit: "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."<sup>15</sup> To his disciples he showed the need for man to abide continually in the life-giving powers which center in

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<sup>9</sup> History of the Church, Volume IV, pages 29, 358. By the Spirit Jesus discerned the hearts of men and ascertained their needs. By the Spirit he drew upon the intelligence of his Father in coping with the complex situations that confronted him from day to day. And by the Spirit his message became one of penetrating power in the lives of men. In saying that which ought to be said about Jesus as the greatest of all teachers, his teaching in the power of the Spirit is the factor that should be stressed.

<sup>10</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 76:41; italics added.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 19:28.

<sup>12</sup> John 3:3.

<sup>13</sup> John 4:14.

<sup>14</sup> John 4:23; italics added.

<sup>15</sup> John 6:63.

him, as the light and the life of the world, by likening himself to a vine and them to the branches:

*... As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.<sup>16</sup>*

### **A Teacher Must Study the Gospel**

The two prerequisites mentioned above are directly related to each other. Man cannot teach by the Holy Spirit, as Jesus taught, unless he knows, by the Spirit, that which God has made known to his holy prophets. To the elders in our day the Lord declared:

*... Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted to every man.<sup>17</sup>*

Constant study of the scriptures and of the words of the living prophets, with a diligent effort to apply their teachings in daily life, enables the prayerful teacher to teach by the Spirit. This fact is illustrated by Mormon's report of the sons of Mosiah, after they had employed their time teaching the Lamanites. Of their meeting with Alma, Mormon wrote:

*... Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.*

*But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.<sup>18</sup>*

Granted, the modern classroom teacher is not faced with the same distractions that Jesus encountered on the streets of Jerusalem. But as the teacher today faces the members of his class, he knows that there may be many among them whose thoughts are busily occupied with the cares and interests of their own world. To be a great teacher, he must compete with these several interests and distractions; and to do so effectively, he must draw from the light and example of Jesus and teach divine truth with power from on high.

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<sup>16</sup> John 15:4.

<sup>17</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 84:85; italics added.

<sup>18</sup> Alma 17:2, 3; italics added.