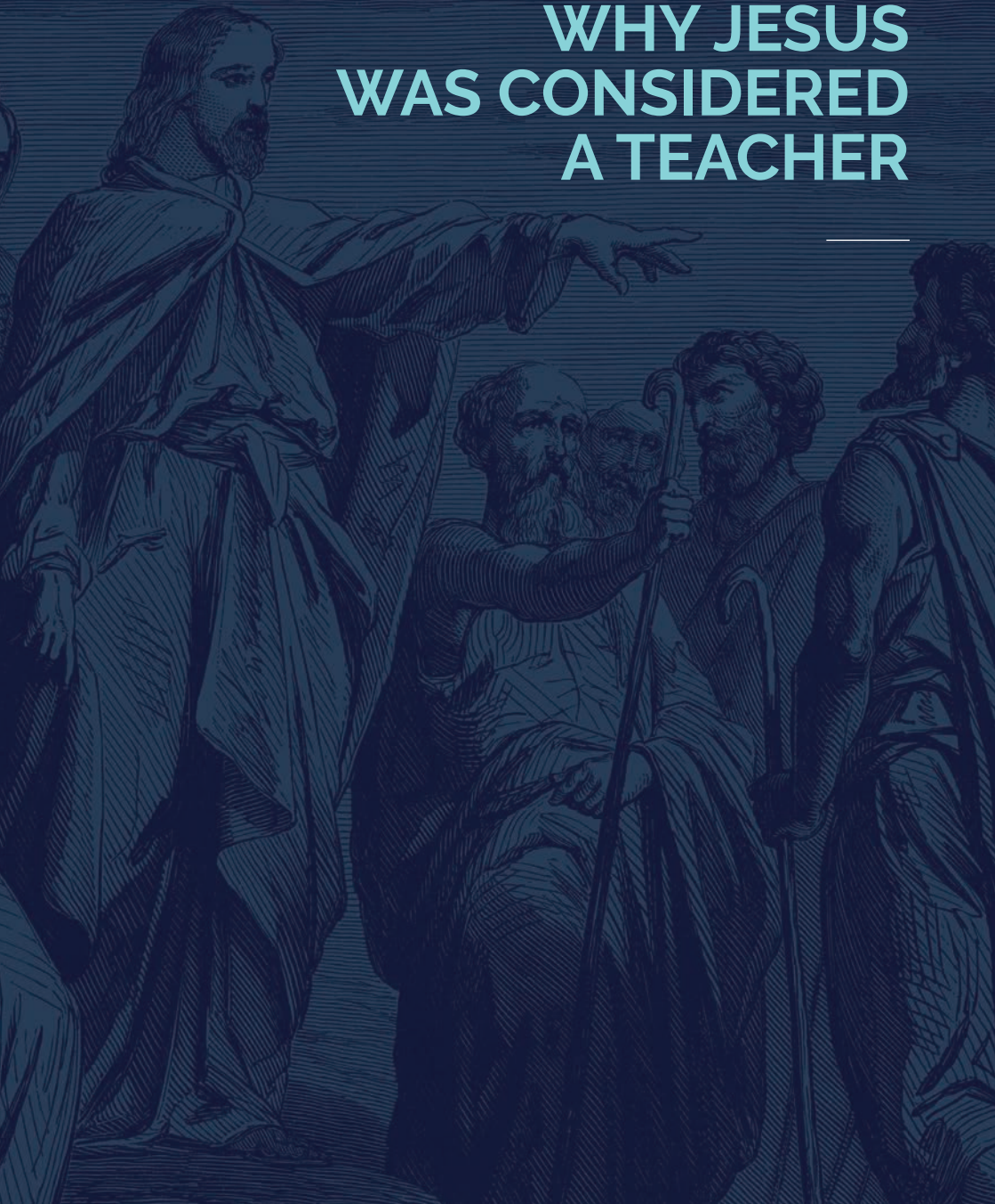


CHAPTER 1

WHY JESUS WAS CONSIDERED A TEACHER



CHAPTER 1

Why Jesus was considered a teacher

◉ REVEAL

From the gospel writers through to present times, Jesus has been written about and referred to as a teacher. He was recognised as a teacher by the Pharisees (Matt. 9:11), tax collectors (Matt. 17:24), Nicodemus (John 3:2) and the disciples (Mark 4:38). The writers of the New Testament used over 40 different titles for Jesus with the most frequent title being 'teacher' (Stein, 1991, p.1). *Teacher* was usually used as a title of address although Jesus used it of Himself at times (Matt. 10:24, 24; Mark 14:14; John 13:13-14). The most common expression for teacher in the New Testament was the Greek word *didaskolos* and it applied to an individual who "publicly instructed others about the things of God" (Matt. 8:19, 9:11, John 1:38, John 13:13-14) (Zuck, 1995, p.28). Its common meaning for teaching was the idea to "cause someone to accept knowledge, a concept, an idea or to accept improvement in a skill".

The next most commonly used word for teacher was *rabbi*. Its literal meaning was "my great one" and was used as a title of respect⁸. Bromiley describes a *rabbi* as one who was "officially recognised as an authoritative teacher and judge in the realm of Jewish law"⁹. Despite lacking the formal training of such a person, Jesus was recognised as a *rabbi* because He proclaimed divine law (Mark 12:28-34), taught in synagogues (Mark 1: 21-28, 3:1-6), gathered disciples (Mark 1:16-20, John 1:35-51), debated with scribes (Mark 7:5f., 11:27-33) and was asked to settle legal disputes (Mark 12:13-17)¹⁰.

Unlike the rabbis of His time, Jesus' classrooms and audiences were as varied as the content of His lessons. He taught not only in synagogues (Matt. 4:23, Mark 1:21) and the temple courts (Matt. 19:11), but also in towns (Matt. 11:1), houses (Luke 5:17,18), the countryside (Mark 6:35,36, Luke 4:14) and on the shore of lakes (Matt.13:1).

Jesus' students were not the elite Jewish male rabbis-in-training but were crowds (Matt. 7:28-29), prostitutes (Luke 7:7), tax collectors (Luke 19:1-10), Roman soldiers (Matt.8:5-13), a Samaritan woman (John 4), religious leaders (John 3), children (Mark 10:15,16) and a collection of disciples from diverse backgrounds (Matt. 4:18, 9:9, Luke 6:12-16).

Another word used for teacher in the New Testament, although only referred to twice, is *kathegetes* (Matt. 23:10). It carried the meaning of a teacher as a "guide" which is also a ministry of the Holy Spirit who would lead and guide in all truth (John 14:26)¹¹.

7 Zuck, 1995, p.29

8 Ibid, p.35

9 1988, p.30

10 Stein, 1994, pp.1,2

11 Zuck, 1995, p.43

Jesus was also recognised as a teacher because of the authority with which He taught. Those who listened to Him were astounded by the force of His message which was delivered with a real sense of mission that captivated His audiences (Matt. 7:28, Mark 1:22, 10:26, 11:18, 12:17, Luke 4:22, John 7:15). This authority was inherent in Jesus as the Son of God (John 8:49), unlike the rabbis and priests of His day, whose authority was in themselves, their official appointments or their formal training. The authority that Jesus had as a teacher was also demonstrated by His power over nature (Luke 8:22, John 2:1-11); evil spirits (Luke 8:26-39); sickness (Luke 17:11-19); death (Luke 8:51-56, John 11) and forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:5).

Unlike any other teacher, Jesus knew the heart of His students which meant He was sure of the content of His teaching (John 4:39). His claims and assertions were profound. He never apologised, backed down, revised or tempered His teaching. Jesus gave instructions and commands with such authority that His audiences were compelled to either accept His teaching or to reject it, there was no middle road.

► REVIEW

Hendricks uses the expression that “Jesus was congruent”, that is, what Jesus said and what He did were one¹². Consider the implications of this principle as a Christian Educator, and for your teaching?

► REFLECT

What is your definition of a teacher and teaching?

What aspects of your definitions are seen in Jesus the teacher?

If you had no formal teaching qualifications would you still be considered a teacher?

How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

- a public instructor
- great
- a guide
- other

Where does your authority come from to teach (Eph 4:11,12)?

Jesus said that His followers were not to ‘lord’ it over those in their care (Matt. 20:25). How does this instruction apply to your teaching?

¹² Gangel & Hendricks, 1989, p.13

