

## JESUS, WISER THAN SOLOMON?

For Christians Jesus was the wisest man possible. He said he was. In fact he was so wise that he gave moral teachings that were often so open to interpretation he should not have spoken at all.

Jesus said that Solomon was the wisest man in the world but that he himself was wiser. There have been loads of people before and after Jesus who have been wiser than Jesus. His arrogant boast has been eloquently refuted by the mere existence of their wise writings. All of the teaching of Jesus was known before he came along. The golden rule was universal and Socrates taught to turn the other cheek. There is nothing impressive or unusual about the wisdom of Jesus.

Jesus did not have what was best for us at heart. The wisdom of Dale Carnegie is as superior to Jesus' as the moon is to a meteorite. Jesus was a very critical person. He attacked the Jews with real bitterness and in a morally superior tone in Matthew 23. He associated with tax collectors and prostitutes and then said to the self-righteous who criticised him for this that they did not need his attention for they were righteous but the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Thus he reinforced their smug superiority and patronised the tax collectors and prostitutes. His view that he could change the wayward smacks of arrogance. Tax collectors and prostitutes do not like the wrong things they do but often they will agree with some of the things they do that are condemned to a certain extent. A prostitute will have no objection morally to having oral sex with a single man for money. Criticism tries to force the victim to believe in doing better and not doing it because she or he wants to but because she or he will suffer if she or he doesn't. Carnegie believed that criticism was totally useless and only makes the victim resentful and more inclined to do something immoral. He said we should always look for good points and praise them. For example, if a child fails an exam through not working hard enough the parents should say, "You were fine but if you work a bit harder look at the marvellous results you will have in the next exam report". Jesus never talked like that. He was argumentative and arguments always cost friends.

Carnegie said we should smile a lot and say the other person's name and praise them for their achievements and be interested in their hobbies. Jesus never praised anybody. He probably never had a life to smile with but if he had then he smiled rarely if at all. Jesus said that nobody was good but God alone (Mark 10:17,18) when a man called him good teacher obviously meaning, "Helpful kindly person and teacher" because the man wanted to know how to get saved so Jesus was repudiating that compliment. When he did it, it means we should do the same. The Church says Jesus was simply denying that he was good in essence and only God is. So the Church is reading back wacky Greek philosophy into the gospels though they never support such philosophy and the New Testament was hostile to Greek philosophy. The Christian version says that God is goodness itself and that Jesus though sinless was not the essence of goodness as a human being but he was as God. Now Jesus was asked for help by the man who called him good teacher. The man wanted to know the right way. The idea that good teacher was insincere flattery from this man is just another Christian excuse for saying that Jesus rejected the title good coming from somebody like that. There is no reason to assume that. And Jesus answered his question showing the man was sincere. If a flatterer calls you intelligent and you are you don't respond by saying, "Why do you call me intelligent and only the professor down the road is?" unless you are saying you are not intelligent.

Jesus gave commands. Commands never work for they only lead to resentment and the other person making excuses. And commands are not necessary. Friendly suggestions will have more effect.

Jesus supported the God of the Law of Moses with his threats and commands so one could not expect him to be as wise as Carnegie who recognised how useless commands were. Points of agreement were not stressed and it was not noticed that it is better to tell a child that friends do not like visiting untidy rooms which will spur them to tidy their rooms better than a command will.

Jesus assures his hearers that the plants of the field are arrayed better than Solomon and that no bird drops dead without Heavenly Father knowing about it. He paints a rosy picture about the pointlessness of worry. But in those brutal times worry was sane and inevitable. He was clearly trying to give the people a placebo and put a rosy filter over their perception of reality. Realistically, humans who have a good life are a tiny minority when you consider how many people have lived in horror and suffered and got maimed and died young. The picture gets terrible when you include animal suffering. He endorsed gratitude but there is something warped about one person thanking the king for giving him bread when he knows thousands are going without though his majesty can feed them too. There is no real thanking where there is no possibility of not thanking, "I thank you for you could do wrong and often do terrible things to others and for that I do not thank you but condemn you." Thanking and the possibility of not thanking but attacking the giver go together. Thanking means recognising the person could hurt or neglect you but does not. It is not about you and your thanking is making it about you. Thank him for your smug arrogance? Go ahead!

To honour this too-human man is just plain stupid and is dangerous for to honour him as God or the Son of God is to give implicit approval for his senseless behaviour and to make it a model to aspire to.