



Ephesians

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But you have not so learned Christ, Ephesians 4:20

The sentence begins with an emphatic “But...” as Paul contrasts his readers to the darkened minds of the Gentiles. He is making an adamant statement concerning those who are born again. The words “learned Christ” are unique in the Bible, but they correspond to the idea of Christ being preached and taught. Through the message of Christ, we learn of His Person, His work, the scope of His work, the nature of His many offices, etc. Thus, it is not merely the doctrine of Christ, but rather the fact that He is the subject of His own message. We have learned of Him through the message of Him.

Because of this, we are not darkened in our minds, and we are not set on a path of futility leading to debauchery. In this we see that the term “Christ” is referring to the office which is held. Whereas “Jesus” in the next verse is speaking of the office holder. The Gentiles walk in futility because they are without an understanding of the office which Christ fills.

What Paul is doing is taking the words of verses 9 through 16 and contrasting them to verses 17-19. The offices of verse 11 are given to teach us of Christ and how to conduct ourselves in Him. We are to avoid the state which he describes in verse 14, that of being “children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.”

Such an existence in Christ would be comparable to the darkness which still exists in the walk of the Gentiles. We have not so learned Christ. Instead, we are to be sound in our theology; mature and perfect in our doctrine.

Life application: Paul, under inspiration of the Spirit, has shown us that our Christian walk is to be one which is completely contrasted to that of the world in which we walk. We are not to conform to the world and thus be ineffective in our presentation of Christ. If we are like the world, then there is no difference between us and them, and thus there is nothing to emulate.

...if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:
Ephesians 4:21

This verse is to be taken together with the previous verse –

“But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:”

There is a strong connection being made between “Christ” and “Jesus” in these verses. Paul is indicating that there is the true Christ and there are false presentations of Christ. He notes that true believers haven’t learned Christ in a way that leads to the lewdness and ungodliness of the previous verses “if indeed you have heard Him.” There is an emphasis on “Him” as if it should read, “if indeed you have heard He Himself.” In other words, “If it was the true Christ whom you heeded, then you have learned a way other than that which I just described.”

To further bolster this, he goes on by saying, “and have been taught by Him.” It is rather to be translated as, “and have been taught in (Greek: *en*) Him.” If one is in Christ and is taught in the teachings of Christ by those designated in verse 11, then they will not walk in the vile way of the unregenerate. Instead, they will fit the description of those who are properly trained in accord with the words of verses 12-16.

Paul is carefully and methodically establishing what is right and appropriate for Christians in the conduct of their lives, and also that which is unacceptable. We learn the proper spiritual understanding of what it means to be in Christ “as the truth is in Jesus.” Paul now moves from the title and position (Christ) to the Person (Jesus) who fulfilled and continues to fulfill the role of the title and position. Jesus claimed in John 14:6 that He is the Truth. It is through studying the life that He lived as recorded in the gospels that we come to understand the true Christ. Further, it is through an explanation of that same life of Jesus that we understand the nature of what His life meant, as well as the significance of His on-going work. This same use of “Christ” and “Jesus” to show the complement between the office and the One who fulfilled and fills the office is found elsewhere in the New Testament. One excellent example is given by Paul in Romans 8:11 –

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

The Spirit of Jesus is the Man raised from the dead and who dwells in us; the position of Christ was raised from the dead and is the same authority who will also give us life.

The two concepts, Christ the Man and Jesus the Man, must be taken together. A “Christ” who is not Jesus is a false Christ. The role of “Christ” which does not adhere to the life of Jesus is a false presentation of Christ. The doctrine which we follow of “Christ” must be the same doctrine which is presented in Jesus, or we are following a false Christ.

Life application: The only way to know if we are pursuing the true Christ is to pursue Him as revealed in the Person and work of Jesus who is the Christ and the only true Christ. And yet, we rise early and find a thousand reasons to not read and study the Bible. Let us not make this catastrophic mistake but let us be wise and diligent in our study of Christ Jesus.