

A Word Study On "Didache"

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Introduction: The word "didache" means "teaching" or "doctrine." It can refer to "teaching, process of teaching, or what is taught."^{1,2} The word 'didache' (teaching) can refer to both content and manner.³ "In the NT 'didache' denotes Christ's message (with his call to repentance and faith) and the early Christian preaching in the widest sense."⁴ "Didache" appears 30 times in the New Testament. The following facts can be learned from these passages.

1. "DIDACHE" AS A TEACHING CAN BE VERY BROAD IN SCOPE

"Didache" can refer to a wide variety of "teaching" or "doctrine" since the word was used with many groups such as: the doctrine of "Pharisees and Sadducees," (Mt. 16:12); the doctrine of the "Old Testament," (Heb. 6:2, i.e. "baptisms"); the doctrine of the "Apostles," (Acts 2:42); the doctrine of "Jesus," (Mt. 7:28; Mk 1:22,27; 11:18; Lk. 4:32); the doctrine of the "LORD," (Acts 13:12); the doctrine of "Christianity," (i.e. the "form" established early by the Apostles, Rom. 6:17); "various and strange" doctrines, (Heb. 13:9); the doctrine of "Balaam," (Rev. 2:14); and the doctrine of the "Nicolaitans," (Rev. 2:15).

2. "DIDACHE" HAS HISTORICALLY REFERRED TO JESUS' TEACHING

In the Gospels, Jesus' teaching or doctrine was called "didache" (Mark 1:22,27), however, the writers seldom defined what it was.⁵ The Apostles knew what Jesus' "didache" was. It was basically the whole of Jesus' Words.

3. JESUS USED "DIDACHE" FOR TEACHINGS ON SPECIFIC TRUTH

Some of the recordings of the "didache" of Jesus, specific teachings dealing with specific truths directed to specific people, such as: the giving and receiving of the Word of God, with the multitude, (Mk. 4:2, 4-20); and, true sacrifice and true service of the Lord, directed toward the Scribes of His day, (Mk. 12:38, 39-44).

4. PEOPLE WERE ASTONISHED AT JESUS' "DIDACHE"

The "didache" of Jesus "astonished" several groups, such as: the "people," (Mt. 7:28; Mk. 11:18; Lk. 4:32); the "multitude," (Mt. 22:33); the "Jews" in the synagogue, (Mk. 1:22,27); and many "Gentile" officials, (Acts 13:12).

"When Jesus stopped speaking, the large crowd that had been listening spell-bound was left in a state of amazement. In English it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to reproduce the exact flavor of the picturesque verb used in the original to describe the people's state of heart and mind. The literal meaning of the original is 'were struck out of themselves.' 'Struck out of their senses.' The tense of the verb shows that this state of astonishment was not just a momentary experience but lasted for a while."⁶

5. JESUS' "DIDACHE" WAS NEW TEACHING COMPARED TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

The "didache" of Jesus was "new" to the Jews compared to their Old Testament law, (Mk. 1:27), and "new" to the Greeks compared to their Epicurean and Stoic philosophies, (Acts 17:19). "The 'new' underscores the amazing character of Jesus' 'teaching with authority' in terms of its eschatological basis. Thus 'new' does not qualify simply the 'teaching' of the church, but Jesus' 'teaching with authority' as exegetically clarified (kai) by the unclean spirit's obedience of Jesus command (Mk. 1:12-27). The eschatological character of Jesus' authoritative teaching is demonstrated by the exorcism, indicating that 'teaching in Mark consists of Jesus' claim found in His words and works."⁷

6. JESUS' "DIDACHE" WAS ONE OF AUTHORITY AND POWER

The new "didache" of Jesus was one of "power" (Gr. "exousia" Lk. 4:32) and "authority" (Gr. "exousia" Mk. 1:22).⁸

7. JESUS' "DIDACHE" DEALT WITH SIN AND CONVERSION

The new "didache" of Jesus delivered people from sin and changed people's lives, (Rom. 6:17). "It is not the teaching that is handed down to believers but the believers who are handed over to the teaching. This unusual way of putting the matter is intentional; Paul wants to make clear that becoming a Christian means being placed under the authority of Christian "didache," that expression of God's will for NT believers. The new convert's obedience to this teaching is the outgrowth of God's action in handing us over to that teaching when we were converted."⁹

8. JESUS' "DIDACHE" WAS A TEST OF ONE'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

The new "didache" of Jesus was to be the test for one's relationship to Christ and the Father, (2 Jn. 1:9).

9. JESUS' "DIDACHE" HAD TWO MAJOR PURPOSES

The new "didache" of Jesus was: (1.) to protect by those who followed Jesus; and (2.) cause separation from those who caused offenses or divisions contrary to this new "didache," (Rom. 16:17).

10. SEPARATION FROM THOSE WHO REJECTED JESUS' "DIDACHE" WAS FOLLOWED

Anyone not abiding in the new "didache" of Jesus was not to be given audience, (2 Jn. 1:9-10).

11. THE APOSTLES' "DIDACHE" WAS BASED OR CONTAINED JESUS' "DIDACHE"

Apparently the "didache" of the Apostles (Acts 2:42) would have contained the "didache" of Jesus. The New Testament is the testimony to the authority of the apostolic teaching (cf. 1 Cor. 11:28; 14:37; Eph. 2:20; 3:5). "The apostles' teaching was authoritative because it was delivered as the teaching of the Lord through the apostles (cf. the title of the didache)."¹⁰

12. PASTOR'S ARE TO USE THE "DIDACHE" TO ADDRESS THINGS IN THE CHURCH"

Pastor Timothy was given three commands by the Apostle Paul: reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and "didache," (2 Tim. 4:2).

Conclusion: In the post-apostolic days, there was a formal "didache" which was a Greek Christian handbook of instruction or manual concerning church life and order, and Christian morals and practice.^{11,12}

"Didache" is an important "teaching" word for the Christian and for church ministry.

End Notes:

¹A Critical Lexicon and Concordance, Ethelbert W. Bullinger, Zondervan; Grand Rapids, 1975, p. 232

²A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1979, p. 192

³The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Frank E. Gaebelin, Ed., "Matthew," by D. A. Carson, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1984, Vol. 8., p. 195

⁴The New International Dictionary Of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Ed., "Teach" by K. Wegenast, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 770

⁵The New International Dictionary Of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Ed., "Teach" by K. Wegenast, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 769

⁶The Gospel of Matthew, by William Hendriksen, Baker: Grand Rapids, 1982, p. 382

⁷Mark 1:-8:26, by Robert A. Guelich, Word: Waco, 1989, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 34A, Pp. 58-59

⁸The Gospel of Mark, by William L. Lane, The New International Commentary On The New Testament, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1974, p. 72

⁹Romans 1-8, by Douglas Moo, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary, Kenneth Baker, Ed., Moody: Chicago, 1991, p. 416

¹⁰The Acts of the Apostles, F. F. Bruce, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1979, p. 100

¹¹Second peter and Jude, D. Edmond Hiebert, Greenville: Unusual Publications, 1989, p. 93

¹²Christian Theology, Alister McGrath, Malden: Blackwell, 2007, Pp. 13, 421