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## **Orthodox Christianity**

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The coming of Jesus as teacher is one aspect of his being Christ the Messiah. The word Christ in Greek is the word for the Hebrew Messiah, which means the Anointed of God. For when the messiah would come, it was foretold, men would be "taught by God" (Is 54:13, Jn 6:45).

Jesus comes to men as the divine teacher. He claimed on many occasions that his words were those of God. He spoke as "one having authority" not like the normal Jewish teachers (Mt 7:29). And he accused those who rejected his teachings as rejecting God Himself.

He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees Him who sent me. I have come as light into the world ... for I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to speak. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me. (Jn 12:44-50)

Jesus taught men not only by his words, but also by his actions; and indeed by his very own person. He referred to himself as the Truth (John 14:6) and as the Light (Jn 8:12). He showed himself not merely to be speaking God's words, but to be himself the Living Word of God in human flesh, the Logos who is eternal and uncreated, but who has become man as Jesus of Nazareth in order to make God known to the world. In the beginning was the Word [Logos] and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father.

And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law came through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

(See Jn 1:1-18. The Easter Liturgy Gospel Reading in the Orthodox Church)

Jesus, the divine Word of God in human flesh, comes to teach men by his presence, his words and his deeds. His disciples are sent into the world to proclaim Him and His

Gospel, which means literally the "glad tidings" or the "good news" of the Kingdom of God. Those whom Jesus sends are called the apostles, which means literally "those who are sent." The apostles are directly inspired by God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (Jn 15:26), to "make disciples of all nations" teaching them what Christ has commanded (Mt 28:19).

The early Church, we are told, "devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). Doctrine as a word simply means teaching or instruction. The apostles' doctrine is the doctrine of Jesus and becomes the doctrine of the Christian Church. It is received by the disciples of every age and generation as the very doctrine of God. It is proclaimed everywhere and always as the doctrine of eternal life through which all men and the whole world are enlightened and saved.

At this point it must be mentioned that although God's self-revelation in history through the chosen people of Israel--the revelation which culminates in the coming of Christ the Messiah--is of primary importance, it is also the doctrine of the Christian Church that all genuine strivings of men after the truth are fulfilled in Christ. Every genuine insight into the meaning of life finds its perfection in the Christian Gospel. Thus, the holy fathers of the Church taught that the yearnings of pagan religions and the wisdom of many philosophers are also capable of serving to prepare men for the doctrines of Jesus and are indeed valid and genuine ways to the one Truth of God.

In this way Christians considered certain Greek philosophers to have been enlightened by God to serve the cause of Truth and to lead men to fullness of life in God since the Word and Wisdom of God is revealed to all men and is found in all men who in the purity of their minds and hearts have been inspired by the Divine Light which enlightens every man who comes into this world. This Divine Light is the word of God, Jesus of Nazareth in human flesh, the perfection and fullness of God's self-revelation to the world.

It cannot be overstressed that divine revelation in the Old Testament, in the Church of the New Testament, in the lives of the saints, in the wisdom of the fathers, in the beauty of creation ... and most fully and perfectly in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the revelation of God Himself. God has spoken. God has acted. God has manifested Himself and continues to manifest Himself in the lives of His people.

If we want to hear God's voice and see God's actions of self-revelation in the world, we must purify our minds and hearts from everything that is wicked and false. We must strive to love the truth, to love one another, and to love everything in God's good creation. According to the Orthodox faith, purification from falsehood and sin is the way to the knowledge of God. If we open ourselves to divine grace and purify ourselves from all evils, then it is certain that we will be able to interpret the scriptures properly and come into living communion with the true and living God who has revealed Himself and continues to reveal Himself to those who love Him.