

Sermons on Matthew
What Do You Think About the Christ?
Matthew 22:41-46

With Study Questions

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While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁻⁴²⁻ saying, “_What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?_”

They said to Him, “_The __Son of David._”

⁻⁴³⁻ He said to them, “_How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘_Lord,_’ saying: ⁴⁴ ‘_The __Lord said to my Lord, “_Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool_”_’?”

⁻⁴⁵⁻ If David then calls Him ‘_Lord,_’ how is He his Son?_” ⁻⁴⁶⁻ __And no one was able to answer Him a word, __nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore (Matthew 22:41-46).

Introduction

Jesus had entered Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1), where all the sacrifices took place, and was highly honored by the multitudes who cried out saying: **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”** (Matthew 21:9a), which is a combination praise and petition that means, **“Save (us) we pray.”** These praises by the people caused the spiritual leaders to become indignant (cf. Matthew 21:15).

What we saw then and what we see today is that Jesus will be tolerated provided He keeps his place. When faith in Jesus begins affecting people’s decisions in real life, whether in the family or in society (and sadly, sometimes in church), the ungodly will seek to stop Him and His influence.

This is what we’ve been studying in the past weeks: the chief priests questioned His authority (cf. Matthew 21:23); the Pharisees and the Herodians (natural enemies of each other) sought to **“entangle Him in His talk”** (Matthew 22:15b); the Sadducees (also natural enemies of the Pharisees) questioned His view of the resurrection (cf. Matthew 22:23-33); after He had muzzled them, the Pharisees once again put Jesus to the test regarding the **“greatest commandment”** (cf. Matthew 22:34-40).

These people had been teaming up on Jesus, offering the best they had to denounce and disgrace Him, and they all failed miserably. Jesus would now ask His own question which no one **“was able to answer”** (Matthew 22:46a), after which no one **“dared question Him anymore”** (Matthew 22:46b).

What question would Jesus ask that would be so paralyzing and why would it be so?

**While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them...
(Matthew 22:41)**

The Pharisees were Gathered

The first thing we notice is how Matthew records that the Pharisees were gathered together. People would team up on Jesus, but Jesus had no need of help. Jesus would not put His hand over the microphone and consult His attorney prior to answering the judiciary committee. His wisdom is as infinite as His authority.

Indeed, let __God be __true but __every man a liar (Romans 3:4b).

Jesus would approach the gathering as a Lion in a den full of Daniels. He had answered all their questions. Now He poses His own.

**...saying, “_What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?_”
(Matthew 22:42)**

About the Christ

They had asked Jesus about authority, taxes, the resurrection and the great commandment. These are fair enough questions. But they are gnats compared to this question. **“What do you think about the Christ?”** is the question of the ages.

Many people, even in the church, are satisfied with merely believing in Jesus. To a certain extent this is true, but what does it mean? To believe that Jesus existed is not believing in Jesus. To believe that Jesus was resurrected is not believing in Jesus. There were people who saw Jesus in the flesh and saw the resurrected Jesus in the flesh who did not believe in Jesus in a proper sense.

Believing in Jesus means we believe in things about Jesus. And when we believe in these things about Jesus, we put our trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. We acknowledge His rightful place. Jesus is not satisfied that people merely know that He is; He is concerned that we know who He is. Earlier in Matthew we read:

He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”⁻¹⁴⁻ So they said, __ “_Some say John the Baptist,

some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or __one of the prophets. _” -15- He said to them, “_But who do __you say that I am?_” -16- Simon Peter answered and said, __“_You are the Christ, the Son of the living God._” -17- Jesus answered and said to him, “_Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, __for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but __My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 16:13-17).

Incapable Belief

So deep, so profound, so eternally significant is a true knowledge of Christ, that man is incapable of obtaining it through his own wisdom, knowledge, virtue or efforts. We are utterly dependent upon the grace of God to reveal this to us. This is what I pray for when preparing sermons, prior to the church service, in regard to conversations with those who do not believe—that by the grace of God, men would know the truth about the Christ.

The Promised Christ

These Pharisees knew God had made a promise, which was to be fulfilled by the Christ,¹ but they had a very small view of the nature of the Christ. They likely viewed the promised Christ as a mere elevated man and political deliverer. Jesus would give them a definition that would leave them speechless—because it would elevate the Christ to deity or godhood—and that changes everything.

Jesus’ question, unlike theirs, addresses the heart of man’s hope. If Jesus (the Christ) is a mere man, even a righteous man, how can we place all of our hopes of redemption upon the shoulders of a mere man? If Jesus is merely God and not man at all, how can He die for our sins granting us access to God since God has no flesh and cannot die?

It is no wonder that this has been at the forefront of church councils throughout the ages. John Calvin wrote:

For from the very commencement Satan endeavored, by all the arts which he could devise, to put forward some pretended Christ, who was not the true Mediator between God and men...Satan therefore permitted Christ to be acknowledged as a

¹Which means the Anointed One, or Messiah: “ ‘_We have found the __Messiah’_ (which is translated, the Christ)” (John 1:41b)

true man and a *son of David*,... ever since Christ was manifested to the world, heretics have attempted by various contrivances—and as it were under ground—to overturn sometimes his human, and sometimes his Divine nature, that either he might not have full power to save us, or we might not have ready access to him.²

‘Important’ is an understatement when it comes to the issue of the promised Christ. The hope of all mankind is wrapped up in that Person. It would be the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the enemy of God’s people (cf. Genesis 3:15).

It would be through the seed of Abraham that all the nations of the world would be blessed (cf. Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 26:4). It would be the seed of David that would “**endure forever**” with His throne shining as “**the sun**” (cf. **Psalm 89:35, 36**). The Christ is that child who would be upon the eternal throne to establish “**order, judgment and justice forever**” (cf. **Isaiah 9:6, 7**).

The hope of the world is the promised Messiah, the person of Christ. So when Jesus asks, “**What do you think about the Christ?**” it is a loaded question. And to help them dismiss their feeble notions and embrace the fullness of redemption, He asks them a question they could not answer unless they were willing to abandon their false notions, “**Whose Son is He?**”

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They said to Him, “_The __Son of David_” (Matthew 22:42b).

²Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin’s Commentaries: The Harmony of the Gospels: Calvin’s Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin’s Commentaries. Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Son of David—Only?

There may be nothing worse than a half-right answer—like attempting a flip and getting halfway there. The Son of David was not incorrect. But now Jesus will force them to become apologists and give a reasoned explanation for their half-right answer according to their own authority—the Scriptures.

He said to them, “_How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘_Lord,_’ saying: ⁴⁴ ‘_The __Lord said to my Lord, “_Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool_”_’? ⁻⁴⁵⁻ If David then calls Him ‘_Lord,_’ how is He his Son_?” (Matthew 22:43-45)

In the Spirit

When Jesus refers to David’s words as “**in the Spirit,**” He is equating the words of David, when spoken this way, with the word of God. Not all of David’s words were the word of God. But they are the words of God when he speaks in the Spirit. As we read in 2 Samuel:

Now these *are* the last words of David. *Thus* says David the son of Jesse; *Thus* says __the man raised up on high, _The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel: ² “_The __Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word *was* on my tongue (2 Samuel 23:1, 2).

Let us imitate Jesus and find our answers in the word of God.

How Does David Call Him “Lord”?

Jesus’ question amounts to this: how can the Christ be both the Son of David (and by this is meant physical ancestor) and the Lord of David? How does one keep this from being entirely absurd? Because there is no sense in which Jesus, as a mere Man, should be considered David’s Lord. In a pure physical sense it would be just the opposite, it is the parent, grandparent or ancestor who is to be the lord over the children and grandchildren, etc. not vice-versa.

It is also highly impractical since David in the flesh and Christ in the flesh would not walk this earth at the same time. David would never have the opportunity to call the mere man his Lord. Not to mention that as far a

human institutions are concerned, David, as a king, held a higher office than Jesus. Some might argue that Jesus was more than a mere man—that He was an angel. But the Scriptures teach no such thing.

-For to which of the angels did He ever say: *“ You are My Son, Today I have begotten You?”* (Hebrews 1:5a)

Jesus was no angel nor did He die for angels.

For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16).

The Father says of the Son, **“Let all the angels of God worship Him” (Hebrews 1:6b).**

Perhaps David calls Jesus “Lord” because Jesus is a god, but a lesser god. But the Scriptures declare there to be only one true God (Deuteronomy 6:4). And we are called to worship the one true God and Him only (Matthew 4:10). So if Jesus were a lesser god He would be a false god.

So we see strict limitations on the context in which David could call Jesus His Lord—not in a human sense, not in an angelic sense and not in the sense of a demi-god. The only sense in which the words of David make sense is to acknowledge that Jesus was both his ancestor according to the flesh and His one true God.

-But to the Son He says: *“ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever* (Hebrews 1:8a).

The Right Hand

There were many references in the Old Testament Jesus could have used to make His point. He chose Psalm 110—and I believe with purpose. Jesus would soon sit at His Father’s right hand (denoting both resting and ruling). God swore an oath to David that His physical descendant would be the Christ and sit on his throne:

-he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ... (Acts 2:31a)

It was days and weeks away from Christ being crucified, resurrecting and ascending to His Father’s right hand...

...in the heavenly *places*,⁻²¹⁻ __far above all __principality
__and __power and __might and dominion, and every name
that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to
come.⁻²²⁻ And _He put all *things* under His feet, and gave
Him __to be head over all *things* to the church,⁻²³⁻ __which is
His body, __the fullness of Him __who fills all in all
(Ephesians 1:20a-23).

The Christ would exercise His authority both as an eternal and continual Priest (Hebrews 7:3; Psalm 110:4) who would present His own blood by offering up, not a lamb, but Himself (Hebrews 7:27). In this office Jesus is redeeming the world. But the same Psalm presents the Christ as an executioner of justice among the “**nations in many countries**” (cf. Psalm 110:5-7).

And the nation in His immediate cross-hairs was the nation shepherded by those false teachers who had been seeking to disgrace Him. It would only be a matter of days before we would hear these words:

Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!_”⁻⁶⁴⁻ Jesus said to him, “_It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, __hereafter you will see the Son of Man __sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven_” (Matthew 26:63b-64).

This is the passage quoted with such frequency in the New Testament. Jesus “**must reign _till He has put all enemies under His feet.**⁻²⁶⁻ __The last enemy *that will be destroyed is death*” (1 Corinthians 15:25a-26). This prophecy of David would have an immediate impact upon those living during the New Testament era. They had heard the message and were exposed the fullness of God’s grace in Christ. Therefore it would be more tolerable for Sodom on the Day of Judgment than for them (Matthew 11:23).

Christ—the Truth

We live in an era where Jesus is presented so often as a man and not the Christ. The detractors of the Christian faith often bemoan the actions (usually political, because they don't care if we pray) of those who follow the teachings of Jesus because it makes no sense to them that we should seek to impose the teachings of a first century guru upon twenty-first century humanity.

But the Scriptures teach that Jesus did not merely tell the truth, He is the Truth; He didn't, like all other religious leaders, merely teach or show the way, He is the Way; He doesn't merely present life, He is the Life; and the same can be said for every other virtue. Jesus is justice, beauty, goodness, mercy, love, honor, and so on. These words are meaningless without foundational content and the foundation is Christ Himself.

It is, therefore, inevitable that when the Christ is rejected that everything virtuous will be rejected as well. It is no mere coincidence that the people during the time of this wholesale rejection of Christ **“were bound with heavy burdens, hard to bear” (Matthew 23:4b)**. It is not without cause that we read in the Proverbs:

He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker (Proverbs 14:31a).

The rejection of Jesus is the rejection of goodness, honor, truth and all that is right. They might be called crimes against humanity but they are crimes against God and His Christ. And such rebellion deserves judgment.

Psalm 110 indicates that Jesus will be our Priest or He will be our Judge. Let us learn from the foolishness displayed on these pages, exposing men who were wise in their own eyes and confident in their own righteousness. Let us cast away such folly and trust in Jesus our Brother and Savior and in Christ our Lord and God.

Questions for Study

1. When will people cease tolerating Jesus (page 2)?
2. What kind of relationship did Jesus have with the religious leaders of His day (pages 2, 3)?
3. What does it mean to believe in Jesus (pages 3, 4)?
4. How does one come about having true faith (page 4)?
5. Define “the Christ” (pages 4, 5).
6. What did the Pharisees leave out in their explanation of who the Christ is? Why is this important (pages 5, 6)?
7. What options are there for David calling Christ his Lord (pages 6, 7)?
8. Where is Jesus now? What is He doing (pages 7, 8)?
9. Why is important to seek to understand the full expression of Christ as both man and God (pages 8, 9)?