

Whose Son is the Christ?

The Root and Descendant of David

Scripture: Matthew 22:41-46

Sermon Series: *Matthew*

Topic: Jesus, Christ, Messiah

Matthew 22:41-46 (ESV)

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, 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 is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴ "'The Lord said to my Lord,

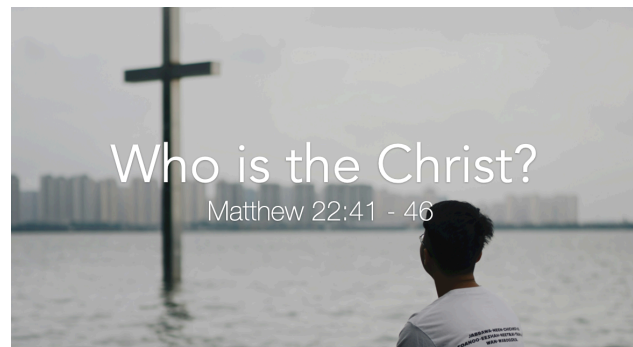
"Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet"?"

⁴⁵ If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" ⁴⁶ And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Introduction

This text is filled with questions. There are four of them. All of them are asked by Jesus. The central question is, "**Who is the Christ?**" One wonders, why is he asking these questions? He is trying to win an argument? Or is he aiming to help them discover something glorious about himself?



It's been a long day for Jesus. It is (still) Tuesday, three days before Jesus would be crucified. This day began with a question from the chief priests and elders. "**By what authority are you doing these things** (i.e. cleaning out the money changers and sacrifice sellers from the day before), **and who gave you this authority?**" (Mt 21:23). Jesus offered to answer their question if they would answer one of his, "**Was John's baptism from God or from man?**" They refused to answer his question and so Jesus refused to answer theirs.

Jesus then asked them, "*What do you think?*" (21:28) and told them a parable about two sons. He then told them a parable about some terrible tenants and asked them, "*Have you never read the Scriptures,*" and then quoted Psalm 118:22-23, which says that the cornerstone of God's kingdom will be a rejected stone. He then told them a parable about a great wedding feast that a great king held for his great son. This was a parable that warned the Jews that they would not automatically go into the kingdom of heaven simply because they were Jews.

Then the Herodians and the disciples of the Pharisees plotted together to trap Jesus and asked him a question, "*Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?*" (22:17). Jesus asked them, "*Why do you put me to the test?*" And then he gave a marvelous answer and shut them up (22:22).

Next the Sadducees came to him and asked a question about the resurrection (22:23-28). Jesus responded with a question, "*Have you never what God said...?*" (22:31) that silenced them and astonished the crowds (22:33).

Then the Pharisees regrouped (22:34-40) and asked him *which commandment was the greatest commandment*. Jesus gave a wonderful answer and again shut them up.

Now we come to today's portion of Scripture (22:41-46). Jesus asks four questions. But why? Because he's tired of their attacks and is seeking to shut them up? Or because he is broken hearted¹ over their spiritual blindness and he's forcing hard questions upon them in order pry open the eyes of their hearts? Don't be afraid to ask questions. When you read hard or confusing things in the Bible, ask lots of questions. Remember the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:7-8 (ESV) ⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Whether or not this was intended, the structure² of this passage is chiasmic.

Introduction (ἐπηρώτησεν), 41

Two questions of Jesus, 42a-b

Answer of opponents, 42c

Two questions of Jesus, 43-5

Conclusion (ἐπερωτῆσαι), 46

¹ Luke records that just two days before, as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he wept over the city saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:41-42).

² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 3, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 249.

Jesus is not merely aiming to win an argument. Rather he is aiming to reveal who He truly is. Perhaps he is even answering the question about his authority, which is the first question asked of him on this day (Mt 21:23).

Matthew 22:41 (ESV) Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question,

Jesus Asks Two Questions (v.42a-b)

Jesus here goes on the offensive. He has been attacked and questioned on this day and now he turns the tables and asks a question. In fact, Jesus takes the initiative by asking two questions with one aim; to force thought about the Christ and his relationship to the Christ.

“What do you think about the Christ?
Whose son is he?”

Matthew 22:42 (ESV)

What do you think about the Christ? (v.42). Many people think that **Christ** is Jesus’ last name. It is not. ‘Christ’ is the English transliteration of the Greek word *Christos* (Χριστός), which is the translation of the Hebrew word *māšîaḥ*, or **messiah**, which means, “one who has been anointed.”³ Christ is a title, which describes the office of promised savior or deliverer.

When Christians today use the word Christ, we typically think of “the one through whom God was going to fulfill his purpose of salvation for his people, as promised in the Old Testament.”⁴ This may be what we think, but that is not exactly what the Jews to whom Jesus was speaking would have imagined. We have the benefit of historical reflection, while they did not.

The title ‘Messiah’ would, for most ordinary Jews, have pointed to a coming king of the line of David, whom God would send to restore his people to national independence and to their rightful pre-eminence as the people of God.⁵

Being a political deliverer does not come close to fully describing the mission for which Jesus had come to Jerusalem. Clearly Jesus is leading his listeners to thinking deeply about the identity of the Christ. What do you think about the Christ?

Jesus had recently asked a similar question of his own disciples while they were in Caesarea Philippi. Jesus first asked them, “**Who do people say the Son of Man is?**” (Mt 16:13). Then he asked them, “**But who do you say that I am?**” (Mt 16:15). Peter

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 542.

⁴ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 45.

⁵ Ibid.

answered rightly saying, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Mt 16:16). Jesus praised this answer. He also explained that Peter didn't figure that out on his own, but rather it had been revealed to him by God the Father.

This is the most important question each of us must answer.

Do you think at all about him? Do you ever get up early in the morning and ponder who he is? Do you wake up late at night, and meditate on the meaning of the word 'Christ?' Why is there even such a word? If it came from ancient Jews, then why is that word so frequently on the lips of so many people? Why is it almost daily used as a swear word? What has happened that a holy word has morphed into a profane word?

Whose son is he? (v.42). Why does Jesus ask this? Apparently Jesus assumes that the Christ will be someone's son. Jesus assumes that the Pharisees will know the answer to this question. Where do find this taught in the OT? There are several places. The first place we get a hint is from God's words to Satan in the garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:15 (ESV) "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Here God speaks of a son, "he," who will be "offspring" of Eve. This son will be one who will "bruise" the head of Satan. The Hebrew word being 'bruise' is (שוף šwp, "shoof") and it means, "to grip hard; to strike suddenly; to crush."⁶ So a son of Eve is foretold who will overpower Satan. The second place is God's promise to David.

2 Samuel 7:12-13 (ESV) ¹² "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

God once again speaks of a son—who shall come from David's body—who will establish a kingdom that will have a throne which will endure forever. This son is both a physical descendant of David, a literal son, but he will also be quite a bit more than merely human, for "the throne of his kingdom" will be "established... *forever*." God always reveals what he is about to do through his prophets.⁷ He added to this notion through Isaiah.

Isaiah 11:1-2 (ESV) ¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

⁶ Rick Brannan, ed., *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

⁷ Amos 3:7.

² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

A son is promised by God. This anointed son will be a little "*shoot from the stump of Jesse*." He will be a small, insignificant descendant of Jesse, who was David's father, this son will be a "son of David."

These words were remembered by the disciples of Jesus. John the Baptist at the baptism of Jesus reported that he saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him and rest up him.⁸ Jesus was certainly filled with the Holy Spirit of God in such a way that his wisdom and understanding were noteworthy. Even at the age of 12 the teachers at the temple were "*amazed at his understanding*."⁹ His enemies "*marveled*" at his wisdom and counsel (Mt 22:22). His disciples and the crowds were astonished at his "*might*," when he calmed storms, cast out demons, and silenced the Sadducees. And his fear the LORD, his reverence for God the Father, is like none other. There is a lot of evidence pointing to think about Jesus.

Pharisees Answer (v.42c)

This time the Pharisees need no huddle¹⁰ to answer this question.

They said to him, "The son of David."
Matthew 22:42 (ESV)

The son of David (v.42). They knew the answer. It was plain to all and beyond dispute. The Christ would be a "son of David."

Just one day before, the little children in temple sang songs to Jesus, praising him as "the *Son of David*!" (Mt 21:15).

Just a two days before this day, the crowds of pilgrims entering Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and hailed Jesus and welcomed him saying, "*Hosanna to the Son of David*!" (Mt 21:9).

A few days before that, two blind men heard Jesus passing by on his way to Jerusalem and they shouted to him saying, "*Have mercy on us, Son of David*!" (Mt 20:31).

⁸ John 1:32.

⁹ Luke 2:47.

¹⁰ See Matthew 21:25.

Months before this, when Jesus was in “the district of Tyre and Sidon,” had a Gentile woman, whose daughter was oppressed by a demon, came weeping to Jesus saying, “*Have mercy on me, O Son of David*” (Mt 15:22).

About a year or so before this, while Jesus was in Galilee, he healed a man who was both blind and mute, so that he could both see and speak, and all the people were amazed and said, “*Can this be the Son of David?*” (Mt 12:23).

Matthew at the very beginning of his gospel wrote, “*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*” (1:1).

The Pharisees are not wrong. The Christ will be a “son of David.” But does God’s word also hint at the fact that the Christ will also be so much more than a mere royal son and more than mere prince. This is what Jesus is driving toward.

Jesus Asks Two More Questions (v.43-5)

Jesus is not finished asking questions. He probes deeper with two more questions.

⁴³ He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,
⁴⁴ “‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet”’?
⁴⁵ If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?”
Matthew 22:43-45 (ESV)

How is it then that David... calls him Lord? (v.43). Jesus is here quoting Psalm 110:1, “the most frequently quoted OT chapter in the NT.”¹¹ The superscription of the psalm attributes it to David, “A Psalm of David,” and Jesus believes this to be authentic and right. Jesus believes that David wrote this psalm.

In the Spirit (v.43). This phrase means that what David was writing, he was writing with the help of the Holy Spirit. David was not making this up out of his own mind or imagination. He was writing as the Holy Spirit was leading him to write. The Holy Spirit was revealing to him what he would not have seen on his own. This means that *the source of this truth is the revelation of God himself*, and not the creative wisdom of David.

It is phrases like this that led the NT authors to make clear that writing Scripture never comes from a mere human author alone. Rather Scripture results from a human author being

¹¹ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 467.

humble and surrender to the leading of the of God's Holy Spirit who moves and directs the author to write.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21 (ESV)

God's word comes from God's Spirit as he lead's God's servants to write. What David wrote in Psalm 110, he wrote as he was led to write by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord said to my Lord (v.44). This is David speaking here. He is speaking about what he heard said between two other people. He is observing or hearing a conversation between two other individuals.

In the Hebrew, these two instances of "Lord" are different words. The first "Lord" is God's proper name, *Yahweh*. The second is the word *adonai*, which is generic word for 'master' or 'lord' or 'sir,' or some human man of higher rank.

"The Lord (*Yahweh*) said to my Lord (*adonai*)."

When David says, "my Lord (*adonai*)," he is referring to the Messiah, the Christ. Thus, what we have here is David being allowed to listen in on a conversation between God the Father and the Messiah, where Yahweh said to Messiah,

"Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet."
Matthew 22:44 (Psalm 110:1)

Messiah, the Christ, will be exalted to sit at God's right hand, until God puts his enemies under his feet. What Jesus is highlighting is that David calls the Messiah, "*my Lord*." And yet, the Messiah is promised to be the son of David. Hence, Jesus' question.

If David calls him Lord, how is he his son? (v.45). David is king and no king ever calls his own son, "my Lord." No king would speak like this to one of his sons, a prince, who held a lower rank than the king himself. Jesus is arguing that because David is "*in the Spirit*" as he is writing this, then *David is not wrong to speak this way of the Messiah*. Thus, the only way to make sense of this statement is to conclude that the Messiah, who comes after David—though he is a son of David—actually ranks more highly than David and is greater than David. David could say the same words as did John the Baptist,

"He who comes after me ranks before me,
because he was before me."

John 1:15 (ESV)

Here we catch a glimpse of the glory of Messiah. He is the human descendant of king David and yet when in the Spirit David was allowed to see God's Messiah, David himself confessed that he is greater than himself. Messiah is a descendant of David and yet his glory transcends that of David. These questions of Jesus silenced the Pharisees. *"No one was able to answer him a word."*

How is Jesus able to know these things? How was an untrained, uneducated son of a carpenter able to see and understand such glorious truths from Scripture? **Who is this Jesus?** There is more to him than meets the eye. He is more than mere teacher, more than a powerful prophet, more than a mighty miracle worker. He is more than a mere son of David. ***Jesus is David's Lord and he is infinitely more glorious than David.*** Jesus, according to John, is the Word in the beginning who,

...was with God, and the Word was God.

All things were made through him,
and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and... light...

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father...
John 1:1, 3-5, 14 (ESV)

Consider what Jesus said about himself. The Samaritan woman at the well, when she met first Jesus, thought he was merely a prophet.

"Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."

Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

John 4:19, 25-26 (ESV)

The people of Samaria, after spending two days with Jesus, concluded,

"...we have heard for ourselves, and we know this is indeed the Savior of the world."

John 4:42 (ESV)

Jesus said about himself,

"If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me."

John 5:46 (ESV)

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

John 8:56-59 (ESV)

Conclusion (v.46)

So what's the point?

And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions. **Matthew 22:46 (ESV)**

Jesus asks unanswerable questions so that we will see his unfathomable wisdom. Jesus asks unanswerable questions to get us to silently think about who he truly is. If you think Jesus is just a good teacher, then you have not gone far enough in your thinking. If you think that you honor Jesus by calling him a prophet, then you must realize that such a title falls so far short from fully affirming all of who he is. He is not merely a prophet.

Peter said it well, he is "*the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God,*" and equal with God himself. This we affirm in the Nicene Creed.

Nicene Creed (A.D. 325, revised at Constantinople A.D. 381)

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

Let's conclude with what Jesus said about himself.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

Revelation 22:16 (ESV)

"I am the root of David," in other words, "David came from me." And he is the descendant of David, in other words, he came from David. Jesus is both the Son of David and the Source of David.

Jesus is not trying to win an argument. He is aiming at awakening worship. He is not playing a game of facts, but rather he is aiming to capture your affections!

We are not worshiping a dead idea, but rather we are praising a living person!

Rejoice in Him.

Delight in Him.

Praise Him.

Trust in Him.

Sing to Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What does 'Christ' mean?
2. Why does Jesus and the Pharisees assume the Christ will be a 'son'?
3. Why do the Pharisees answer, "the son of David?" How do they know the Christ will be a descendant of David?
4. What does Jesus mean by saying that David was "in the Spirit?" What are the implications for this regarding the nature of Scripture?
5. Who is talking to whom in the quote from Psalm 110:1? What does the word 'Lord' mean and is it the same word in both instances? Who is reporting this quote?
6. What are the implications of the Christ being both "lord" and "son?"
7. What does this portion of Scripture reveal about the nature of "the Christ?"
8. What does this reveal about Jesus? Who is Jesus?
9. Did this portion of Scripture in any way change your affections for the Lord Jesus? If so, explain how.
10. What is the Lord, through this Scripture, saying to you today?