



What Do You Think About the Christ?

Matthew 22:41-46

1. He is David's Son (verses 41-42).
2. He is David's Superior (verse 43-44).

Consider the following words from some familiar Christmas Carols, ...

What Child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

Who is He in yonder stall, at whose feet the shepherds fall?
'Tis the Lord! O wondrous story! 'Tis the Lord! The King of glory!
At His feet we humbly fall, Crown Him! Crown Him, Lord of all!

I want for you to notice the structure of each of these hymns. In each of them, there were questions about Jesus. After each of the questions, a declaration was given that indeed He was the Christ. The One "on Mary's lap is sleeping" is Christ, the King. The One "whom angels greet with anthems sweet" is Christ, the King. The One whom "shepherds watch are keeping" is Christ, the King. The One "in yonder stall" is the Lord! The King of glory! The One "at whose feet the shepherds fall" is the Lord! The King of glory!

I have entitled my message this morning, "What Do You Think About the Christ?" Do you think of the Christ as a tiny little baby, who is the King of glory? Do you think of the Christ as one whom angels worship? Do you think of the Christ as the one who receives our worship? There are great questions for us to ponder this morning, our last Sunday together before the celebration of Christmas. I thought about deviating from my regular pattern of exposition in the gospel of Matthew to preach on Christmas, as many fellow pastors I know are doing this morning. However, our next text in the gospel of Matthew lends itself very well to the theme of Christmas. And so, this morning, we will stay right in the gospel of Matthew (22:41-46).

For the past several Sundays, we have seen Jesus Christ under fire from the religious leaders of His day. They have put forth some very difficult questions to Him, in hopes that they might trap Him in His words (see Matt. 22:15, 35). But in every instance, Jesus answered the question without being ensnared. In our text this morning, we reach a point where the roles are switched. No longer will Jesus be answering questions. Instead, he is the one who will be asking questions. He asks two questions. The first question was a simple question. The second question was a "super" question. All of the Pharisees knew the answer to the first question. But, none of them knew the answer to the second question.

The questions that Jesus asked brought the focus around to the key issue at hand. Taxes weren't the most important issue of the day. The resurrection was certainly important, but the majority believed in the resurrection and therefore it was not often debated. The discussion revolving around the great commandment often produced mere theological speculation, with little action. But, in this text, Jesus sets aside the periphery issues and centered His question upon the real issue of the day: the nature of the Christ. In theological terms, it is called "christology," the study of the Christ. In verse 42, Jesus said, "What do you think about the Christ?" When Jesus said, "the Christ," He was referring to the Messiah. That is what "Christ" means. Jesus was referring to the Anointed One who would come to save.

You may remember that when the Pharisees were directing questions to Jesus, they had an agenda. But here the roles are reversed, and Jesus has an agenda of his own. His questions were intended to focus attention upon the character of the Christ. Jesus didn't want to skirt the issue by talking about other theological things. He wanted to get down to the crucial question of life. "What do you think about the Christ?" This was the question of the day! Was Jesus the Christ as He claimed? (Matt. 16:16). Was Jesus not the Christ?

As these Pharisees thought about the character of the Christ, they should have been able to conclude that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Sadly, the Pharisees refused to learn from their ignorance, and rejected Jesus as their Messiah. This rejection continues today. The Jews today think that the Christ hasn't yet come. They do not believe that Jesus was the Christ. They are still expecting Him to come in the future.

Various religions have various opinions regarding Jesus and the Christ. The Muslims believe that Jesus was a good man. They would identify Him as a prophet, though they maintain that He was certainly not the Christ. If anyone was the Christ, it was Mohammed. The Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was the Christ. But, in their minds, they have a distorted understanding of who the Christ was. Rather than identifying that the Christ was God, Himself, they identify Jesus as the greatest *created* being, calling Him a god. The Christian Science religion believes that Jesus was the Christ in the sense that Jesus lived out the ideal truth in a way that nobody else has. In other words, they believe that Jesus lived the best life that anyone every lived.

With all of these differing ideas floating around, it is of great importance that you think rightly of Him. To misunderstand the Christ is to misunderstand His work. To misunderstand His work will lead you to damnation. This doesn't mean that you need to have a Ph. D. in

Christology to be saved. I'm not saying that. But, if you are trusting in different Christ, you are trusting in a false Christ. And a false Christ leads you to hell, rather than joy and bliss in heaven.

This morning I want to give you two characteristics about Christ. My aim this morning is to teach you about the Christ, that you might think rightly about Him. By nature of the text before us this morning, my sermon this morning will have a theological emphasis. Last week, we were highly practical, as we looked at the greatest commandment. This week, we will be highly theological. You simply can't understand this text without a bit of theology. Furthermore, we will be doing a bit more flipping through our Bibles this morning to understand this text as we ought. Let's pick up the first question by beginning to read in verse 41, ...

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" (Matt. 22:41-42)

For the Pharisees, this was a very simple question. We almost get the sense from verse 42 that they answered Jesus right away, hardly without thinking at all. "They said to Him, 'The son of David.'" (verse 42). This is my first point this morning. The first characteristic about the Christ.

1. He is David's Son (verses 41-42).

Is this a simple question for you? When you think about the Messiah, what do you think? Do you think of Him as being born, "the son of David"? If you do think that it is a simple question, how would you prove it? Are there passages of Scripture that you could go to right now that would show that the Messiah would come from the line of David? If some Scriptures come to mind, I commend you. If they don't, perhaps you might try doing what I have done in my Bible. In the margin of my Bible, I have written down some passages that clearly show this. I do this to help remind me of the things that I should know. So, as I read this passage, I am again brought back to what the Pharisees knew of the Scripture when they answered this question for Jesus. Let me give you a few passages that clearly demonstrate that the Christ would be David's son.

The most foundational of all of Scripture in this regard is in 2 Samuel 7. This chapter is often referred to as the location of the Davidic Covenant. This is where God gave His first promise to bless the house of David. The chapter begins with David reflecting upon the tabernacle of God. David was thinking how "the ark of God dwells within tent curtains" (2 Sam. 7:2). And he was thinking about how he lived in a "house of cedar." An idea came into his mind of building a permanent structure for the ark of God. It was at this point that God spoke to David, through Nathan, the prophet, saying,

"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

The exact identity of this person is difficult to understand. In many ways, I appears to be speaking about Solomon, for it was he who built a house for His name (verse 13). Additionally, it was Solomon who committed iniquity and received the rod of God's anger (verse 14). However, it wasn't Solomon's throne that lasted forever. In fact, his throne was quickly broken after he left it. It must be speaking about one greater than Solomon. Much of prophesy works like there. There is often a person described in the near future who appears to be the fulfillment of the prophesy and yet, the ultimate fulfillment of the prophesy often awaits a later day.

At any rate, it is an incredible promise given to David in the Old Testament, promising that His kingdom would endure forever. And the Jews rightly understood that the Messiah would be of the line of David. Whose son is the Messiah? He is the son of David.

Psalms 89 gives a similar promise. There are many verses in this Psalm that describe the promise that God made with David. That his kingdom would endure forever. Here are a few to give you a flavor of this Psalm, ...

"I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant. I will establish your seed forever, And build up your throne to all generations. ... My lovingkindness I will keep for him [i.e. David] forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him. So I will establish his descendants forever, And his throne as the days of heaven. ... Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever, And his throne as the sun before Me. ... It shall be established forever like the moon, And the witness in the sky is faithful" (Psalm 89:3, 4, 28, 29, 35, 36, 39).

There are two ways for this prophesy to be fulfilled. Either, the earthly throne of David will last forever through an endless succession of kings, or there will be one king to sit upon the throne forever. We know from history that the throne of David lost its power. Shortly after Solomon, the kingdom split in two. Assyria destroyed Israel a few hundred years later. Babylon, captured Judah, a hundred and twenty years after that. So, in order for this prophesy to be fulfilled, there needs to be one coming, who would sit upon the throne of David forever. Whose son is the Messiah? He is the son of David.

Let me give you one last verse. It is appropriate for us to hear these verses, as it is Christmas time.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His

government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

The message is clear. The Old Testament identifies that the Messiah would come from the line of David. When Jesus asked this question to the Pharisees, it wasn't the first time that they had heard it.

Turn back in your Bibles to Matthew 2. Here we pick up the story of what took place just after Jesus had been born. There was some sort of miraculous star that appeared the sky, leading some men to come to Jerusalem from Persia. They had followed this star and had arrived in Jerusalem in their search for the "King of the Jews." Let's start reading at the beginning of Matthew 2.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him." And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he [began] to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet, 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler, who will shepherd my people Israel.'" (Matt. 2:1-6)

Herod had no clue as to where the Messiah was to be born. And so He asked the religious experts of the law "where the Christ was to be born?" They knew that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, for so says the prophet Micah. We began our service this morning by meditating upon this verse. It's an obscure, Old Testament verse that said clearly that the Messiah would come forth out of the little town of Bethlehem. Two times in the gospel of Luke, Bethlehem is called, "the city of David" (Luke 2:4,11).

We have buildings named after people. We have streets named after people. Rarely do we name cities after people. If there's a city named after someone, then you can usually conclude that either the city is very small or the person was very great (or both). With the case of David and Bethlehem, both of these were the case. Bethlehem was a small and insignificant town. But, one of its residents became the king. In this sense, Bethlehem is like Dixon, Illinois. Dixon is a small, obscure town in northern Illinois. Yet it is the hometown of former president Ronald Reagan. Dixon is proud of this fact and won't let you forget it. I remember driving into Dixon one time and seeing a sign that says, "Welcome to Dixon, hometown of Ronald Reagan." The town of Dixon has preserved the home in which he grew up. You can visit it today. The church in which Ronald Reagan grew up is very proud of the fact that he was a member there. In fact, the Sunday after Ronald Reagan died, the pastor of the church delivered a message about Ronald Reagan. Each August, there is a city-wide celebration honoring Ronald Reagan, called, "Reagan Trail Days." Bethlehem had similar sentiment. This obscure, little town had produced the greatest king that every reigned in Israel, King David. And they certainly were proud of their king.

The promise of Micah 5:2, that a ruler would go forth from Bethlehem, was written hundreds of years after David died. And so, the little town of Bethlehem held onto this promise and was awaiting one who would come from her midst and rule Israel. It was no accident that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem for the census? Because they were both of the line of David and had to be in Bethlehem to register. Luke makes this clear in his account of this story when he said that Joseph "was of the house and family of David" (Luke 2:4). Nothing else would cause a woman, nine months pregnant to make such a hard journey. Clearly, Jesus was born into the line of David. But God's sovereign hand was also working it out so that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem according to the prophecy of Micah 5:2.

Crucial to the claims of Jesus that He was Messiah was that fact that He was of the line of David. You can go back one more chapter to see how Matthew began His gospel account. Matthew 1:1, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Right from the start, Jesus was identified as "the son of David." The genealogy that follows proves it. Several times in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is identified as "the Son of David" with a clear reference to the fact that He was being called the Messiah (Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15) Let me show you a few of these.

Turn over to Matthew 12. When Jesus was amazing the crowds with His miracles, they began to say in verse 23, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" It wasn't a question of His lineage, which was surely Davidic. It was a question of His identity. "Was Jesus the Messiah? It certainly looks like He is! Look at the wonderful things that He is doing among us!" The Pharisees quickly tried to dispel the notion. They said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons" (verse 24). Again, notice that it wasn't an issue of His genealogy. It was an issue of His Messiahship. These Pharisees said that Jesus certainly couldn't be the Messiah, as He was operating under the power of Satan, rather than under the power of God. Here, we see that the title, "Son of David" was equivalent to saying, "The Messiah."

Let's look at another instance. Turn over to Matthew 21. Remember when Jesus rode into the town on a donkey? He was there proclaiming that He was their messiah, their king. They were singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David" in verse 9. The song continued to be sung in the temple, by the children, who were crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David" in verse 15. And this angered the Pharisees, who said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these are saying?" (verse 16). Again, I want for you to notice that it wasn't an issue of whether Jesus was born into the tribe of Judah, of which David was a part. The issue was that Jesus had come to take the title, "Son of David," which clearly had Messianic overtones. A fact which these Pharisees denied! With this background, I trust you can see why it was that the Pharisees answered Jesus' question so quickly. The Old Testament proved it. At the time of Jesus, "The Son of David" was used as a Messianic title.

2. He is David's Superior (verse 43-44).

My second point this morning comes from verses 43-45,

"He said to them, 'Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, sit at My right hand,

until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet.' If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" (Matt. 22:35-46)

This is a quote from Psalm 110. In order to understand this question, we need to look at the passage a bit. So, I invite you to turn back to Psalm 110. This Psalm is quoted more often in the New Testament than any other Old Testament passage. The reason for this is pretty simple. Of all passages in the Bible, this Psalm puts forth the kingly and priestly office of Jesus in clear and unmistakable terms. Look at verse 1,

"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" (Psalm 110:1)

In this verse, you have several people of whom you need to keep track of. First of all, there is the author of this Psalm. The superscription of the Psalm assigns this Psalm as written by David. We will see in a few moments, this is crucial, because if someone else wrote it, the question that Jesus put forth doesn't make any sense at all. The second person in this Psalm that you need to keep track of is "The LORD." This is the one who is speaking, "The LORD says." In fact, all of the quotations in this Psalm (verses 1, 2, 4) are spoken by Him. The third person in this Psalm is "the Lord." The identify of this person might be a bit confusing to you, but hang on for a few moments and I hope that all will become clear.

I have a five year old daughter at home, who is just learning her letters. In fact right now, the only letters that she knows are capital letters. I also have a ten year old daughter at home, who knows her letters very well. Now, look at your Bibles closely, and you will see a difference between the first "LORD" and the second "Lord." The first word is written in all capital letters, like my five year old might write, capital, "L" followed by a capital "O" followed by a capital "R" followed by a capital "D". The second word is written with regular letters, as my ten year old might write, capital, "L" followed by a lower case "o" followed by a lower case "r" followed by a lower case "d". This wasn't an accident. This is very intentional. The reason this was done this way is because of a difficulty in translation. The word, "Lord" is spelled differently, because there are two different words that we translate Lord in our English. The first word in Hebrew is the word, "Yahweh." It is the personal name of God. It is somewhat like the name "Steve." God has a name, and that name is "Yahweh." ^[1] Now, some use the word "Jehovah," here. And that's fine, but a better translation is "Yahweh." The second word in Hebrew is the word, "Adonai." It is the word that means, "Lord, master, sovereign." So, we read the Hebrew of this text and we get this: "Yahweh said to my Adonai." The American Standard Version says it well, "Jehovah saith unto my Lord."

And so, in this first verse, you have three people here. You have David writing. You have "the LORD" (i.e. Yahweh) who is speaking. You have Him speaking to another person identified as "my Lord." We know who David is. He is the shepherd-boy who became the king of Israel. He is the writer of many Psalms. We know who Yahweh is. He is God. But, who is this "Adonai"? Let's look and see what types of clues we might be able to glean from the context.

1. We see in verse 1 that He will take a place of **prominence**. "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." The right hand of a throne is a place of honor. It is a place of prominence.
2. We see in verse 2 that He will take a place of **power**. "The LORD with stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst of Your enemies.'" This is a clear declaration of the power that this one will have. He will rule over enemies.
3. We see in verse 3 that He will be leading a **people**. "Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew."

You read these things and quickly get a sense that this is talking about the Messiah, the one who is going to come and rule and set His people free! And this is what almost all of the Rabbis taught during the times of Jesus.^[2] You have the LORD speaking with the Messiah, promising Him a place of honor, a power to rule, and a people who willingly follow.

Notice also how David describes the Messiah? He calls Him, "My Lord." "Lord" is a title of superiority. You bow down to lords. You do what lords tell you to do. This is exactly the point that Jesus wants for us to see: David calls the Messiah, "My Lord."

And now, we can understand the question that Jesus put before the Pharisees. So, let's turn back to Matthew 22 and see what the big deal is. The big question comes in verse 45, "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" Obviously, the Messiah is greater than David, as He is called, "Lord." And yet, the curious thing is that everybody knows that the Messiah will be a son of David. But, sons aren't superior to their fathers. It is the fathers who have authority over their sons and their grandsons. So now, we finally come to the question, "How can the same person be both at one time; both above and below; both Son and Lord; both subject and sovereign; both under another man and on a level with God?" ^[3]

The only way that you can explain these passages in the Bible is to believe in Christmas. I'm not talking about mistletoes, presents, and Christmas trees. I'm talking about Bethlehem, Mary, Joseph, a virgin birth, and angelic announcements. The only way that you can harmonize Psalm 110 and the indisputable fact that Messiah would come from the line of David is to believe the incarnation. It means believing that God took on human form. God Himself, David's Lord, became the Messiah, being born in the line of David. When David wrote, "The LORD said to my Lord," it was two of the three persons of the Trinity in conversation with each other. The Father was speaking with the Son, and explaining what His Messianic kingdom would be like. He would sit in a place of prominence with power to rule over his enemies, with people to reign over. But, in order to get that kingdom, He had to be the Messiah. In order to be the Messiah, He had to be born a son of David. He had to come down to earth in the form of a man. He had to come down in the form of a baby.

The thing that blew me away in my preparations this week was that Christmas had to take place. When you put the Scriptures together, there was no getting around it. This was the only way. God had to become a baby. And the only way for God to become a man is through supernatural intervention. That's what the virgin birth is all about. "'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:23). Thousands of babies have become kings, but only one king has become a baby. When you think about all of this, it will blow your mind.

Martin Luther once remarked that the incarnation consists of three miracles: "The first that God became man; the second, that a virgin was a mother; and the third, that the heart of man should believe this." Those are all equal miracles. Don't think for a moment that the facts alone will convince anybody apart from divine intervention. In fact, look at verse 46. Here we see the Pharisees remaining in their stubborn, hard-heartedness. We read, "And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question" (verse 46). The Pharisees were speechless. I can just imagine them quietly looking at each other with that look which says, "I don't know how to answer that question. I sure hope that you do." I can imagine all of them thinking the same thing, "I don't know how to answer that question. I sure hope that you do."

Rather than admitting the obvious, they continued in their rebellion. The Scriptures couldn't be clearer. The miracle of Christmas must be. The Messiah must be God. The Messiah must be a man. But, the Pharisees were unmoved. They should have said, "Jesus, you are right. Are you that man?" Upon receiving a positive response from Jesus, they should have bowed to the King of kings right then and there in Jerusalem. Instead, they put their stake in the ground that would declare themselves to be an enemy of the Messiah. Rather than "volunteering freely in the day of His power" (Psalm 110:3), they would be made "a footstool for Jesus' feet" (Psalm 110:1).

This is how it is with the kingdom of Jesus. You will either volunteer freely or you will be made a footstool. Your reaction will be based upon what you think about the Christ. May our minds be led to think rightly about Jesus.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 12, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Of worthy note here is the common practice of the Jehovah's Witnesses. They take great pride in the fact that they use the actual name of God, unlike many Christian groups. They use the name, "Jehovah." It is ironic, that they have probably mispronounced the word, as most scholars today regard "Yahweh" as a better pronunciation of the word.

[2] The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8, p. 467.

[3] The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary, Vol. 21, p. 527.