

Matthew 22:41-46

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-22/matthew-2241-46/>

With aid of Psalm 110, Jesus asks the Pharisees a series of questions about how the Messiah is both the Lord of David and his son? The Pharisees have no response, and Jesus's enemies are afraid to publicly confront Him.

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:41-44.

After Jesus answered the Pharisees' question about the great commandment (Matthew 22:34-40), He asked them a question while they were still gathered together in the Temple.

Matthew begins this encounter with the word *now* to indicate that this exchange took place immediately after the conversation about the great commandment.

The question Jesus asked the Pharisees was: *What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?* The word, *Christ*, comes from the Greek word "Christos," meaning "anointed one" or "Messiah."

The Messiah was to be a priest like Melchizedek, a prophet like Moses, and a king like *David*.

A Priest Like Melchizedek

David wrote of the Messiah, that "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). Melchizedek was the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. Melchizedek blessed Abraham. And Abraham recognized Melchizedek as one greater than himself when he offered him a tithe (Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:6-9).

The Jews, also, recognized the superiority of Melchizedek over their own priests and recognized his priesthood as everlasting and perpetual. Psalm 110 and the author of Hebrews capture this belief: Melchizedek was "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually" (Hebrews 7:3).

The Book of Hebrews makes much of *Jesus* as being a Messiah-priest in the order of Melchizedek.

A Prophet Like Moses

The Gospel of Matthew makes much of *Jesus* as being a Messiah-prophet like Moses and a Messiah-king like *David*.

Moses prophesied that God promised that He would send Israel a prophet who would be like him who will speak God's message directly to the people (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). This promise was

given by God after the people asked that God not speak to them directly, but to speak to them through a human agent like Moses. God fulfilled His promise by coming in human flesh, to speak to the people directly as a human.

A King Like David

Later, God promised to King *David*, “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” (2 Samuel 7:12-13). And the Lord promised through the prophet Ezekiel: “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the Lord have spoken” (Ezekiel 34:23-24). Because of these promises (and others like them) one of the common expressions for the Messiah was “*the Son of David*.”

Moreover, it was foretold that God would send a Messiah who would defeat Israel’s enemies and restore her to glory among the nations (Zechariah 9:9-17; Isaiah 9:2). And His kingdom would reign across the entire earth (Psalm 72:8-11; Psalm 110). Many Jews in *Jesus*’s day believed God would send His Messiah to overthrow and end the Roman occupation. And they were actively and eagerly seeking signs of *the Christ*’s appearance (Matthew 12:38-39).

Jesus was the Messiah (Matthew 1:1; 1:17; 2:2; 16:16). And many Jews were beginning to openly proclaim *Him* as such because of His powerful miracles and the authority in which *He* taught. Just days before, they declared *Jesus* to be *the Christ* with shouts of “Hosana” when *He* rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:6-9—and thus fulfilling Zechariah 9:9) and sang Messianic proclamations over *Him* as *He* entered the Temple (Matthew 21:15).

When *Jesus* asked the Pharisees what they thought about the *Christ*, “whose son is *He*?” *He* was asking them what they thought about *Him*.

The Pharisees replied, “*The son of David*.” This expression came from God’s promise to *David* that he would always have a descendant—a *son*—who would *sit* and reign upon the throne of Israel (2 Samuel 2:13-14). The Pharisees’ response was prophetically sound.

Jesus followed up their correct answer with a question over what *David* meant in Psalm 110 when he referred to his “son” as “*Lord*.” For the Pharisees this question was a paradigm-buster.

Jesus 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?"

King *David* was the author of Psalm 110. We know that "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). But here *Jesus* specifically claimed that God's *Spirit* inspired *David* to write Psalm 110, when *He* asked, *how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord'.*

This psalm elaborates the Messiah's eternal reign as king and eternal mediation as priest. And *David* begins the portion that *Jesus* quoted:

"The LORD said to my Lord,

'Sit at My right hand,

Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"

(Psalm 110:1)

The LORD invites *the LORD* (who is the Messiah) to *sit* to reign alongside Him. The reason the Messiah is invited to *sit at My right Hand* is because He has finished His work of subduing all adversaries. Incidentally, *the LORD* [God the Father] speaking *to my Lord* [God the Son and Messiah] in Psalm 110 is a reference to the Trinity nature of God: the Father; the Son; and *the Holy Spirit*.

The Hebrew words that are translated as "LORD" and "Lord" in this psalm are different. The first usage of *LORD* (all caps) is "Yehovah." It is God's sacred name: "Yaweh." The second usage of "Lord" is "Adon." It is a title of utmost respect for one who has great authority. It is the English word "Adonai."

The image of Yaweh God making the Messiah's *enemies a footstool for His feet* is an expression of total domination. It shows that the Messiah has completely subjugated His opponents. He has tamed them. They are no threat whatsoever, and the Messiah is using them as prop for His personal service.

But the conclusion that *Jesus* was drawing *the Pharisees* toward through His *question* was that the Messiah (David's son) is also David's Lord ("Adonai"). *The Christ* is both a descendant of *David* and one who is greater than *David*. *The Christ* is also (according to Psalm 110 which was written by King *David*) "*the Lord*" of *the LORD*, Jehovah God. How can these things be? How can the Messiah both be King *David's Lord* and *his son*?

Of course the answer is that the Messiah had to be both God and man. He had to be born of David as a human, but also be God come to earth, as Jesus was.

But the Pharisees did not consider this reality to be possible despite scriptures such as Ezekiel 34:23-24. So for the Pharisees, this paradox is unexplainable because of their false assumptions and beliefs. *Jesus* was underscoring for *the Pharisees* that there was much that *they* did not know

about God and the Messiah, and yet *they* were foolishly quick to act upon their ignorance about *Jesus* as the *Christ*. In some cases, *they* already had acted upon their wrong assumptions about who *Jesus* was (Matthew 9:2-6; 12:24; 21:45-46).

Through this series of questions about Psalm 110, *Jesus* was teaching *them* how it was possible that *He* was both God and *the Christ*. But this was unthinkable for *the Pharisees*. It seems that most of them did not allow themselves to consider this a possibility since it would threaten their status quo. Accordingly, they pursued a rationalization. For *them*, despite His numerous miracles and authoritative teaching, *Jesus* was more likely to be an agent of Satan than to be God's Messiah.

Instead of answering *Jesus's* question, *the Pharisees* remained silent. Matthew reported, *no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question*. Luke said, "they did not have courage to question Him any longer" (Luke 20:40). The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians alike were all afraid of how *Jesus* would upend their questions, and publicly humiliate them. *They* also may have suspected that *Jesus* might really be *the Christ*, but for one reason or another this possibility, was too terrifying for *them* to consider. They had much earthly power to lose, and were not willing to consider the possibility that there was something vastly superior to pursue.

Jesus had swatted aside their framing, avoided their traps, answered their questions, and passed their inspections. Now *Jesus* offered them a dilemma that would lead them to life, if they were willing.

Mark observed how "the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him" teach (Mark 12:37).

Biblical Text

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: ⁴² "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They *said to Him, "The son of David." ⁴³ He *said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying,

⁴⁴ 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,

"SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET"?"

⁴⁵ If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" ⁴⁶ No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.