

A Question about the Messiah

Matthew 22:41-46

Halifax: 15 October 2006

Introduction:

As we have studied the Gospel of Matthew over the last few weeks,

- We have seen how the Jewish leaders brought questions to Jesus...
 - not because they wanted to learn from Him,
 - but because they were full of malice and wanted to trap Him or find some way to discredit Him.
- Three times, we have seen how they were utterly frustrated in their efforts...
 - Instead of discrediting Him,
 - They found that the more they tested Him,
 - the more His glory and honour were revealed!
 - His answers caused both them and those who stood by to marvel at His wisdom.
 - Their efforts were back firing!
 - As Psalm 9 says,
 - Ps 9:15: In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.
 - They dig a pit and then they fall into it themselves.
 - They were like Wile E. Coyote trying to set a trap for the Road Runner...
 - Instead of catching their prey, they were the ones who were getting caught.

In a way, we are greatly indebted to these men...

- For their malicious efforts to ensnare Christ enables us to see His glory...
 - And because of the questions they asked Him,
 - we have the benefits of His most excellent answers—
 - “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s...”
 - “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”
 - “You shall love You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
- How thankful we should be that they asked Christ the questions they did so that we could see His surpassing wisdom and also have the benefit of His answers...

But as you might well imagine, Jesus' inquisitors were ready to give up...

- They had had quite enough by now...
- But before they have a chance to get away,
 - Jesus turns to ask **them** a question.

And of course, as you would expect from Jesus, it is a very great question...

- It is in many ways **the** question that every man who has ever been confronted with the gospel must answer...
 - It is **the** question that will determine the eternal destiny of every one of you...
 - "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?"
 - It is a very personal question...
 - A question that you must face and answer for yourself.
 - How you answer it will determine your eternal destiny...
 - Will it be an eternity in misery under the judgement of God?
 - or will it be an eternity in peace under the blessing of God?
 - It all comes down to this:
 - "What do you think of Christ?"

I. You may think a lot of Him...quite a lot in fact!

A. The Pharisees certainly did think a lot of the Christ...

1. You see how they answer Jesus' question without any hesitation whatsoever!
 - Jesus says: "What do you think of Christ? Whose son is He?"
 - And they say: "He is the son of David."
 - a. They were certain of this... their answer is confident and sure.
 - They had deduced this from the promises of the Scriptures...
 - Promises like the one in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 that we read a while ago in which God says to David...
 - 2 Sam 7:12-13: "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, 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 his Father, and he shall be My son."
 - Understand, of course, that when the Jews spoke of "David's Son," they meant David's descendent... somewhere down the line.

- The Messiah was always referred to by them as the Son of David.
 - Jeremiah refers to David's son as a "branch from David," that which will grow out of him, his offspring. In Jeremiah 23:5-6, he says:
 - Jer 23:5-6: "Behold, *the* days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this *is* His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."
 - In a similar way, Isaiah calls the Messiah "the stem of Jesse"—Jesse being David's father, and so showing that the Messiah will come from David.
 - And Ezekiel simply calls Him "David," quoting the LORD to say:
 - Eze 34:23-24: I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.
 - Ezekiel was not speaking of a reincarnated David, but of David's descendent that God had promised.
- b. And so you see that the Jews in general and the Pharisees in particular were entirely correct when they said that the Messiah would be David's Son.
- The Messiah was indeed to be the Son of David—a descendent of David according to the flesh.
 - By the way, you will remember that the title "Messiah" is synonymous with title "Christ"...
 - Both titles mean: "the anointed one" and refer to the one that God would raise up and anoint to be Israel's king,
 - just as David had been anointed in the days of old.

TRANS> And so "the Christ," or "the Messiah," or "the Son of David," was the One the Pharisees (and most all of Israel) were looking for.

2. And if you had asked them what this Son of David would be like,
- they would have spoken quite highly of him...
 - a. They greatly loved David and considered him to be their greatest king...and they expected the Messiah to be just like him...
 - Like David, He would be a righteous man with a heart after God...
 - Like David, He would lead them into battle against their enemies and be victorious.

- Like David, He would restore their dominion in the earth and bring in days like the days of Solomon.
 - Already the temple had been rebuilt, and now they needed the Son of David to come and throw off the oppressive yoke of the Romans.
- b. They believed the time had come for the Messiah to appear...
 - The prophets had pointed to their day in the 70 weeks of Daniel and in the prediction of four kingdoms that were to rise—
 - the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman...
 - The Christ, the Son of David, was to come in the Roman period and restore the kingdom of God to its former glories.
 - They had high expectations that He would soon appear...

TRANS> So you see that they thought quite a lot of Christ!

- Not of the person who stood before them—not of Jesus whom we now know to be the Christ of God...
 - They did not think much of Him—they wanted to kill Him...
 - But they thought quite a lot of the Christ that they had come to hope in from God’s promises in the Scriptures.
- B. Things have not changed all that much. God’s covenant people are very much the same...
 - There are many baptised persons who think very highly of Christ today,
 - just like the Pharisees did...
 - The only difference is that they have now learned of Him through the New Testament Scriptures as well as the Old...
 - And they think quite highly of Him so far as they understand Him.
 - 1. They know Him as a man who is a very virtuous man—a man of highest integrity and goodness...
 - a. Here is what some famous people have said about Him...
 - 1) Ralph Waldo Emerson held Jesus to be “the most perfect of all men who have appeared on earth.”
 - 2) English Philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill said Jesus is “the pattern of perfection for humanity”
 - 3) William E Lecky, an Irish historian and essayist, said Jesus is “the highest pattern of virtue.”

- b. You will find many people all over the world who share these sentiments...
 - They see the virtue of His life, His unwavering commitment to His principles, and His kindness to all...
 - They deeply admire Jesus as their example that they wish to follow.
 - Many see His compassion and want to have Him as a sympathising friend who is always near...
 - I hope all you see Him and admire Him as a man of superior virtue, for the scriptures show Him to be such a man!

- 2. Others know Him further as a very great teacher—
 - A man whose teachings, if followed, would bring peace on the earth.
 - The English novelist H.G. Wells saw him as the most influential man who ever lived...
 - He wrote, “When I was asked which single individual has left the most permanent impression on the world, the manner of the questioner almost carried the implication that it was Jesus of Nazareth. I agreed... Jesus stands first.”
 - There are many who want to live according to all that is taught in the Sermon on the Mount...
 - They consider this to be some of the best teaching around on ethics.
 - They are convinced as some of the Jews were that no man ever spoke like this man spoke!
 - Here is the golden rule and the command to love our enemies!
 - What a great place of the world would be if only we would follow His teaching.
 - I hope that all of you see Jesus as the most excellent teacher and that you too desire to follow His instruction,
 - for the Bible reveals Him as such...

- 3. Still others will go on to acknowledge Him as a prophet—a man who was sent by God with a message from God and who worked miracles of healings among his people...
 - Mohammed counts Jesus as a prophet and the Jews acknowledged that He worked miracles among them—many of them said He was a prophet...
 - There are a lot of people today who will readily acknowledge that He was sent by God to do a great work,
 - I hope you see Him this way too, for the Bible testifies that He is such.

4. There are even many that will gladly confess that He is in some sense God.
 - Rousseau, the 18th century philosopher, wrote:
 - “When Plato describes his imaginary righteous man loaded with all the punishments of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ... The life and death of Jesus are those of a God.”
 - Napoleon said simply:
 - “I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ was not a man.”
 - The Bible verifies that was God incarnate...
 - The Son of God from heaven in human flesh.
 - I am very glad that there are many in the church today who confess that He is God.

TRANS> But now I want to warn you of a great danger...

II. You may think highly of Christ, but it may be that your understanding of Him is entirely inadequate...

A. You see, the Pharisees,

- even though they were right that Christ was the Son of David,
 - and even though they thought quite a lot of Christ as they understood Him...
 - did not have an adequate understanding of Him at all!
 - They were right that He was the Son of David, but they did not realise that He was also the Son of God...
 - They missed the bigger point!
1. But these Pharisees were quite happy with their understanding of the Christ—
 - and quite confident that they knew Him from scripture as God had revealed Him...
 - a. They could look with disdain on those who had inadequate understanding—
 - like the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection...
 - and like the heathen who knew nothing of Christ more than perhaps that it was a Jewish hope...
 - b. They were confident that they were guides to the blind and knew of the way of God in truth.

- They were quite satisfied that God was going to restore the kingdom of David just as He had promised, and they rested in this understanding.
2. But you see here that Jesus, with further questioning, exposes the inadequacy of their understanding!
- a. Having heard them affirm the truth that the Christ is to be the Son of David,
 - Jesus now asks them:
 - “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’? If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” (Mat 22:43-45)
 - b. They were dumbfounded!
 - Verse 46 tells us that
 - “no one was able to answer Him a word.”
- 1) They were exposed.
 - Something was wrong with their understanding of the Christ...
 - They are exposed.
 - There is a great hole in their understanding...
 - 2) The Christ that they were looking for was to be David’s Son and He would be a great man for sure...
 - Indeed, they themselves would call him their king and might even, in a way of respect, call him “lord” in the lesser sense of the term...
 - not as one who was equal with God,
 - but as one who was their king, anointed by God.
 - 3) But how could *David*, who was Israel’s greatest king, call him “Lord” when He was David’s Son?
 - a) For *David* to call Him Lord would mean that *He, the Christ*, was greater than David.
 - Not just a greater King than David who essentially held the same position as David...
 - but One who was seated over David so that even David was subject to Him.
 - A King on a whole different level than David...
 - Not just another king like Solomon who had greater dominions and greater wealth than David...

- David would never have dreamed of referring to Solomon as “my Lord.”
 - But here, right in the inspired record of Scripture...
 - “by the Spirit” as Jesus puts it...
 - David calls this future Son—
 - this Son that is so highly spoken of in Scripture...
 - “My Lord.”
- b) What’s more, David called Him “my Lord” even before the Christ had been born...
- David saw himself as under the Messiah in a sort of timeless sense...
 - What I mean is,
 - David saw his own reign as somehow subject to this promised Son...
 - He saw himself as entirely dependent on this one who was yet to come...
 - this seed that would reign until all his enemies were put under His feet!
 - this One in whom the promise of God to be a God to His people would be brought to fulfilment!
 - Clearly, David was speaking of a Son who was far greater than himself...
 - What did David mean by this?

TRANS> The Pharisees had no answer!

- Jesus is showing them that their understanding of the Christ was inadequate and incomplete.
 - They did not understand the Scriptures as well as they thought.
- B. My friends, don’t despise it when the Lord exposes your ignorance like this!
1. Our Lord graciously humbles us in order that we might be taught of Him...
 - You see, we are fallen creatures and we are all wrong about God and about our place in the world...
 - until the Holy Spirit Himself becomes our teacher.

2. But He does not teach us without first humbling us...because we will not learn unless we are first humbled...
 - a. He has to show us that we are wrong...
 - He has to show us that our understanding is flawed and inadequate...
 - He has to show us that He is not our equal, but our Lord.
 - We need to see this before we will learn from Him!
 - b. It can be frustrating when this happens...
 - You may have to come to grips with the fact that your parents and your grandparents were wrong...
 - You may have to accept the fact that you have defended and proclaimed error for years...
 - You will have to reject the wisdom of this world as foolishness...
 - In every case,
 - you will have to admit that you don't have all the answers in yourself...
 - that only Jesus has the answers...
 - If you want to learn anything at all, you will have to sit humbly at His feet and learn from Him.
 - c. I hope you all know what it is to experience this...
 - Because if you haven't been humbled like this,
 - you are no disciple of Christ!
 - You may claim to be one,
 - but until His truth has broken into your life and taken dominion of your soul, you are still blind and ignorant.
 - And the process must go on...
 - If you are a true believer,
 - God is constantly renewing your mind and teaching you things that you did not know...
 - It is the way of life for the believer...
 - Your Lord continues His work in you all through your life...
 - He continues to show you, through His word, things that are wrong in your understanding...
 - and then to replace them with things that are right

- That's why Paul prays that believers will grow in the wisdom and knowledge of Christ.
 - If you are truly His disciple,
 - you look to be corrected by Him, to be straightened out,
 - not only in your conduct, but also in your understanding.
3. Be careful that you do not respond the way the Pharisees did when the Lord humbled them and showed them that they were wrong...
- a. Instead of submitting themselves to His instruction,
- instead of humbly saying,
 - "We do not understand, but we see that we have been wrong..."
 - Will you please explain how it is that David called the Christ his Lord when He is David's Son?"
 - Instead of doing that,
 - we are told that they did not dare to ask Him any more questions...
 - Instead of wanting to benefit from His superior wisdom and to be corrected and instructed by Him,
 - They just wanted to get away from Him...
 - They wanted to avoid the humiliation...
 - They wanted to save face when they might have learned the way of salvation from the Lord!
- b. My friends, each of you will go one way or the other when you are humbled by God's truth...
- Either you will say,
 - "Oh Lord, my way is all wrong, teach me your way!"
 - Or you will try to avoid Him...
 - You will try to explain away His word...
 - You will fight against Him and resist Him...
 - You will spin about in uncertainty and never come to know the truth...
 - You will search for arguments and justifications of what you think and what you are.
 - And so you will die in your sin!
- c. Don't be discouraged or angry when the Lord humbles you...

- Be glad...
- He has come to show you the truth...
- Listen to Him, learn from Him, and repent.

C. The real issue is that we need to see more of the glory of Christ as Lord!

1. Yes, the Pharisees had a high esteem for Christ in their own minds...
 - and yes, there are many Christians who have a high esteem for Christ...
 - But if you don't know Him as your Lord, then your understanding of Him is entirely inadequate.

2. You see, He is such a great One that you can have very high thoughts of Him...
 - higher thoughts of Him than you have anyone else...
 - and those high thoughts and beliefs about Him can still be so low that they are a terrible insult to Him!
 - those high thoughts can be so low that they will utterly disqualify you from heaven and bring down God's wrath and judgment on you...
 - It would be something like the problem of mistaking a great king for great dog...
 - You think highly of Him and you speak highly of Him,
 - but as a dog when He is in fact a great king!

3. And don't think that this is a rare problem...
 - It is not!
 - a. There are many who have this problem...
 - Jesus Himself told us that there are **many** who call Him "Lord, Lord," that He will command to depart from Him on the day of judgement.
 - He told us that there are **many** who enter His kingdom in the wrong way—
 - by the broad gate that leads to destruction rather than the narrow gate that leads to life.
 - b. The Pharisees' real problem was that they could see no essential difference between David and the Christ...
 - Christ might be a better David, but they could not see Him as David's Lord...
 - They thought too lowly of Christ,

- And they thought too highly of David (and of themselves) and who they were.
- They did not see that they (and David also) were in desperate need of salvation from Heaven...
 - A salvation that no one less than the Son of God could accomplish.
 - They thought another David was all they needed...
 - Someone to get the Romans out of their way.
 - Someone to make life nice again.
 - They were not yearning for the forgiveness of sin and a circumcised heart...
 - They only wanted nothing more from David's Son than what they might have had from David if he were to come back to life.
 - Their understanding of what God had promised to do was too small...
 - Their understanding the One God had promised to send was too small...

TRANS> What about you? What do you think of Christ?

III. Please now, let me attempt to set before you the glory of David's Son...

- **that you might understand why David called Him Lord**
- **and what it means for you to call Him Lord!**

A. Consider how much greater He was than David...

1. David was great...
 - By the grace of God,
 - he was able to subdue the Philistines and the many nations that continually rose up against Israel during the time of the judges...
 - But David's Son came to abolish death...
 - It never even occurred to David to do that as Israel's King!
 - Only Christ, the Son of God was able to abolish death and bring life and immortality to light!
2. David was great...
 - By the grace of God,
 - he was able to slay Goliath of Gath,

- But David's Son was the One who came to crush the serpent's head, to destroy the works of the Devil and to cast Him into the Lake of Fire with all His cohorts.
 - David wrestled with Satan, but it was not possible for him to destroy the Devil and he knew it...
 - Only the Son of God could do that.
3. David was great...
- By the grace of God,
 - he was able to offer sacrifices to turn away God's anger when David provoked Him by numbering Israel...
 - But David's Son was the only One who could offer a sacrifice that would atone for all His people's sins...
 - Nothing less than the precious blood of the sinless Christ is able to pay the penalty of our sin...
 - Only He could meet the demand of divine justice that had sentenced us to everlasting punishment in Hell...
 - Nothing else could satisfy God's wrath.
 - In fact, it was only in virtue of Christ promised that David was able to stay the plague by the sacrifice he offered.
4. David was great...
- By the grace of God,
 - he was able to set up a righteous government in which God's law was the law of the land...
 - But David never even tried to change the hearts of the people...
 - Only Christ is able to take our cold stony hearts and replace them with tender hearts that love God and delight in His law...
 - This was far too much for David,
 - but it is not too much for the Son of God...
 - In Him alone, we have hope that we will be holy so that we may live in the house of God forever.
5. David was great...
- By the grace of God,

- he was able to set up judges in the land to execute justice in the land—
 - But only Christ is able to bring perfect judgement that searches every man and woman from top to bottom...
 - Only He can root out every secret rebel as well as every open rebel...
 - Only He can establish a kingdom in which perfect righteousness is found.
 - Only He can execute justice that is due upon sinners.
 - And so He will at the last day.
6. In short, David was not able to bestow everlasting life on God's elect people...
- No—David was not even able to bring God's great salvation to himself apart from Christ...
 - That's why David gladly owned Christ as his Lord.
 - God may have used David to bring His people together to serve Him and to overcome their enemies in Palestine...
 - But none of this could compare with what Christ would do when He came!
 - When God told His people in ancient times that He would be their God and make them to be His people,
 - He was talking about a whole lot more than a temporary arrangement in Palestine!
 - He was talking about eternal life in full fellowship and communion with Himself!
 - The Pharisees were looking for nothing more than David all over again,
 - but David himself was looking for eternal life through God's promised seed.
 - That is why he called Christ his Lord.
 - All his hope was in Christ, the Lord of all, the Lord of David.

TRANS> And so the big question for each of you is this...

B. What do *you* think of Christ?

- Is He your Lord in the same way that He was David's Lord?
1. It will do you no good to recognise Him as nothing more than David's Son...
- a. He **is** David's Son, but if He is only David's Son, He cannot save you...
 - If He is only great in the way that David was great, you have no real hope.

- b. You must see Him the way Peter saw Him when Jesus ask his disciples,
 - “Who do **you** say that I am?”
 - And Peter replied,
 - “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God...”
 - Peter knew that Jesus was the Son of David,
 - but he also knew that He was the Son of God.
 - He knew that Jesus was David’s Son,
 - but he also knew that He was David’s Lord.

- c. You can speak well of Him and cast your honours on Him,
 - but you quite frankly dishonour Him unless you bestow on Him the honour that belongs to God the Father.
 - No other honour is fitting for Him!
 - To Him has been given the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that He is **Lord** to the glory of God the Father.
 - Too only honour Him as a great man—even the greatest of men—and to fail to honour Him as the LORD of all is to dishonour Him.

TRANS> So what **do** you think of Christ?

- 2. Do you honour Him as your Lord?
 - a. Do you read His word as if it is the word of the LORD Christ?
 - I read the Bible for a long time as the word of man—
 - I had no true life from Christ until I came to know the Bible as **His** Word...
 - Do you who know it to be so...
 - Do you receive it as God’s word?
 - Do you humble yourself under it and renew your mind through it so that you are transformed in your belief and practice?
 - Do you hunger for it and seek it as your life?
 - You do if Christ is your LORD.

 - b. Secondly, do pray to Him as LORD?

- Do you come humbly to the throne of grace and plead with Him as the One who rules in heaven and earth?
 - as the one who sets up kings and pulls down kings...
 - as the one who can change your heart and empower you to serve Him?
 - as the one who cleanse you from sin and given you eternal life?

- c. Thirdly, do you obey Him as LORD?
 - Do you know what it really means to do His will instead of your own will?
 - to deny yourself and follow Him wherever He may lead you?

 - Do you know what is to obey Him as the One who sees you in secret?
 - Believe me, my friend, the measure of your obedience is no greater than what you are in your thoughts before God...
 - You may be restrained by the eyes of your neighbours or your family from certain sins because you are embarrassed...
 - but that is not obedience to God...
 - Your obedience to Christ the LORD must include heart obedience.

 - But this is not at all to say that real obedience will not also manifest itself in actions...
 - It will show itself in loving service to your neighbour—
 - service to your neighbour that is done as unto the Lord—for His honour and glory.

- d. Fourthly, do you tremble before Him as LORD?
 - How much better it would have been for those Pharisees if they had trembled before the Lord Jesus instead of crucifying Him!
 - When you hear His judgements, they ought to make you tremble, not because you are unsure of His saving grace,
 - but because you realise what a mighty God He is and how terrible His judgements are.
 - They ought to deter you from following the way of rebellion and cause you to reverence Him highly.

- e. Fifthly, do you rejoice before Him as LORD?
 - Do you rejoice that He has all power in heaven and earth?

- Do you rejoice that He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him?
 - Do you rejoice in Him as the One who provides you with all things for life and godliness...
 - or do you somehow suppose that these come from some other source?
 - My friend, does your heart overflow with thanksgiving for all that He has done for you and do you praise Him for His excellent greatness?
 - It makes me sad to see Christians who do not sing praises to the Lord with a hearty spirit...
 - There are times when we are sick and our voice is lost...
 - But as a rule, our lips should sound His praise...
 - If you don't know how to sing, you should learn!
 - If your heart is too cold to sing, you should repent, for He is the Lord our God!
- f. And finally, I would ask, do you rest in Him as your LORD?
- 1) Do you rest confidently in Him as the One who will destroy every last one of His enemies to establish a world of perfect righteousness...
 - 2) Do you rest in Him as the One who has abolished death so that you might live in God's house forever...
 - 3) Do you rest in Him as the One who alone is able to take away all your sins so that you might be reconciled to God and so that all His wrath might be turned away?
 - 4) Do you rest in Him as the One who takes you by the hand and brings you into His Father's house to live in communion with Him?
 - 5) Do you rest in Him as the One who pours out His Holy Spirit on you to give you new life?

Conclusion...

I tell you, He is the Lord of all!

- It is not enough—not nearly enough—to honour Him as a great man—even the greatest of men...
 - He is the LORD of all...
 - Unless you know Him as LORD, you do not know Him adequately...
 - You need to repent.
 - You need to bow your knees at once and plead with Him to have mercy on your soul.