

"How is He then His Son?"

It's the Christmas season already. For many in Marin this is a time of goodwill. It's a time to spread love and to give gifts. Of course, this holiday used to have a more Christian emphasis in our culture, but that's quickly becoming less and less the case anymore. And yet, even among people who don't go to church regularly, Christmas might be one of the times that they do. It's hard even for the secular public to get away from the fact that Christmas is a day for many to remember the birth of Jesus Christ.

And yet, even though many people might know that is what Christmas is historically about, that doesn't mean people really know who Jesus is. Sure, they might know something of Jesus Christ. They might know something about his teachings. They can probably even quote you a few sayings of Jesus. But that doesn't mean they really know who Jesus is. They might know the human Jesus in some general historical way, but that doesn't mean they know who he really is as the Christ.

And so as we turn to this passage in Mark for today, we find a fitting passage for this Christmas season. This is a passage that addresses this question. Who is the Christ? Who is the Christ that is celebrated at Christmas? Well of course, Jesus is the Christ. That's been revealed to us. And yet in our passage, not everyone agreed to that. Some hoped Jesus was the Christ. Some firmly believed it. Others, many, denied it. And yet regardless if someone identified Jesus as the Christ or not, these short three verses reveal the fact that there was some confusion on who the Christ really was. I'm not talking here about his identification, as in Jesus being the Christ, but in the sense of the role and nature of the Christ. Was the Messiah, the Christ, some mere human descendant of King David who would lead the people in extraordinary ways to reestablish Israel as a geopolitical force in Palestine? Or was he something more than that, with a mission greater than that? That's the question we'll ultimately look at today in our passage. We'll try to understand who the Messiah was really supposed to be. And we'll think about that in the way Jesus that is telling us to do - through Scripture. And not just with some of the Scriptures, as it seems the scribes were doing, but with the full revelation of the Messiah given in the Bible.

So our short passage begins in verse 35 with Jesus asking a question. He's still teaching in the temple. We just saw three different groups of people coming up to him to test him. The last one ended in verse 34 by Jesus silencing all his opponents. Now it's Jesus' turn to ask a question. And he asks this question to teach the people something about the Messiah. Essentially Jesus' question is this: Whose son is the Christ? Is he the son of David? Or, as implied, is he the son of someone else?

Well, with good reason we can affirm first that yes, the Christ is the son of David. In verse 35, Jesus tells us that this is something commonly taught by the scribes at the time. The Christ would be the son of David. And they certainly had good reason to teach that. It was a truth throughout the Old Testament scriptures. God himself had made a promise to David to bring forth the Christ from his descendants. That promise is found in 2 Samuel chapter 7. When we talk about the Davidic covenant, that's what we are talking about. We are talking about how God made a special promise to David that the Messiah would come from his offspring. In 2 Samuel 7:12 God says to David, "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. And God says in verse 16 of that chapter, "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." That was quite a promise God made to David. God made a promise to a mere man that one of his physical descendants would be the king of an eternal throne. And that is a promise that David could trust in. God is not like a man, making promises that he doesn't keep. When God promises something, he will keep it. (That should encourage all of us when times are difficult.)

And so what God promised David in 2 Samuel 7 kept getting flushed out more and more in the Old Testament. A number of different prophets spoke about how the Christ would be from the line of King David. Isaiah refers to the Christ as a "shoot from the stump of Jesse;" Jesse of course was David's father. Jeremiah talks of the Christ as a "righteous branch" from David. Hosea prophecies of the restoration of Israel and how the people will finally seek David their king; in other words Hosea actually refers to the Messiah as literally David the king, not because he will be David reincarnate, but as his offspring, he is coming in his name. So my point is that a number of prophets kept renewing the promise given to David: that the Christ would be one of his offspring. God would rise up another King from the line of David.

And of course you can't separate the king from the kingdom. And so along the same lines we see the prophets talk about the continuation of David's kingdom through his heir; through the Messiah. For example, the prophet Isaiah spoke about the reign of the Messiah in Isaiah 9 as being "upon the throne of David and over His kingdom." That was the hope of the crowds during Jesus day as well. Remember back in Mark 11, during the triumphal entry, the people blessed Jesus while saying "Blessed is the kingdom of our father David." The people who thought Jesus was the Christ assumed he would be ushering in the kingdom of David.

All of this is true. All of this is biblical. The Christ would be the son of David. And the Christ's kingdom could be rightly described as the kingdom of David. Jesus says the scribes at that time even taught this. The people at the time clearly expected this as well. All of this was true, but Jesus raises a question here. Is this a sufficient explanation of the Messiah? Yes, he is the son of David, but is there more to be said? Jesus clearly suggests yes. And he uses David's own words to make his point. Actually he uses David's own words that have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to make his point.

It seems David also received further prophecy from God about the Christ. David learned that the Christ would also be the son of God. Just look at verse 36. Jesus quotes David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is Psalm 110, verse 1. "The LORD said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool." Jesus points out in verse 37 an important observation from this Psalm. David calls the Christ *his* Lord. Let me slow down at this point and make sure everyone follows this.

If you have your pew bibles open, look carefully at verse 36. Do you see how the first word there for "LORD" is all capitalized? Do you see how the second one is not? That's because there are two different words in the original Hebrew Psalm being used here. And many English translations will distinguish them for us. The first LORD is actually the divine name for God, the one revealed to Moses at the burning bush. If we pronounce this divine name from the Hebrew you get either Yahweh or Jehovah depending on how you set the vowels in the word. And so the first LORD in this verse is the personal name of God, we'll use Yahweh. Yahweh says. The second word for Lord in verse 36, the one with only the capital "L", is just the generic Hebrew word for lord. It's not God's personal name found in the

Old Testament Hebrew. It's just the simple Hebrew word for Lord, pronounced adonia. And so the Psalm literally says, "Yahweh says to my Adonai."

So what's going on here? Well David is describing how God, referred to here as Yahweh, is speaking to the Christ, referred to here as Adonia. And so David is acting as a prophet here to record for us a message from God to the Christ. David actually is using prophetic idiom here even. You could translate this "Thus says the Lord;" just like all the prophets use that idiom; "Thus says Yahweh to my Lord."

But what Jesus is especially pointing out is that David calls the Christ, "my Lord." David makes himself a servant and subject of the Christ. A servant of a king refers to the king as "my Lord." That's the sort of honor a subject of a king would show the king. But Jesus says that raises a question. I thought the Christ was to be the son of David? How is the Christ the son of David, if David submits himself to the Christ?

You see, if you are king, then your son is the prince. He's an heir to the throne. But you as king would be above him. The very words here in Psalm 110, "Sit at my right hand," would be something a king might tell his son. A king might sit his son at his right hand as a way to empower him with authority. The son would have kingly power in the land, sitting at the right hand of the king. But that power would always be subordinate to the king! And so the king would not serve the son, the son would serve the king. It would make sense for the son to refer to the father who is king as "my Lord." Not the other way around. As a king, you put your son at your right hand as an authority under you. You don't serve them, they serve you.

But notice that David isn't the one in Psalm 110 telling the Christ to sit at his right hand. David doesn't say that he is putting the Messiah at his right hand. No, Psalm 110 is recording God setting the Christ at God's right hand. And David understands the significance. David as a man after God's own heart knows his place before God. David knows that God has raised him up as king over Israel. He appreciates that. But David knows that he has not been exalted to sit at the right hand of God! And so when David sees that the Christ would sit at the right hand of God, David knows the significance. David understands what that means. It means that the Christ cannot be just *merely* David's physical offspring. This son that would come from his lineage is actually greater than him. Because of this, David calls the Christ, *his* Lord. David submits to the Christ. David honors the Christ. David sees that the Christ, though his son, is one greater than him. Indeed, the Christ would also be the very son of God.

That's the image we see in Psalm 110. The image of God setting up the Christ at his right hand is the very action you'd expect a king to do to his own son. That's what kingly dynasties do, they set their oldest son with the greatest authority in the kingdom, just under the king himself. Another psalm, Psalm 2, also brings home this similar message. That's a Messianic psalm where it prophecies the Messiah speaking and saying, "The LORD has said to me, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."

And so Scripture reveals two important things about the Messiah. On the one hand, we are told that the Christ will be the son of David. He will physically descend from David's line. But on the other hand, we see that the Christ is more than just the son of David. Scripture is showing how the Christ would also be the son of God. That was the problem with the teaching of the scribes. They had only understood and taught one part of the Messiah. They evidently had limited the Christ to only being the earthly son of David. But Jesus uses this Psalm of David

to show us something more about the Christ. Jesus shows us a beautiful mystery. This is the mystery of the incarnation. The Christ would be both son of David and son of God. Jesus is both son of David and son of God.

It is this mystery of the incarnation that is revealed in part in the Old Testament, and even more clearly in the New Testament. Certainly in the Old Testament, there is more emphasis on his physical lineage from David. But there are definitely passages such as this Psalm that point to his divine sonship. And yet that becomes even clearer in the New Testament. I think of John chapter 1 that describes the Christ as the Word that is eternal. It is the eternal Word that John says has always been with the Father, and now reveals the Father to us as the only begotten son of God.

And so that's the mystery we affirm as Christians. Jesus is both son of David and son of God. He is both man and God; human and divine. That's the incarnation. That's what we especially celebrate at Christmas. That the eternal son of God, the second person of the Trinity, was miraculously conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary and born to Mary and Joseph. The one who was the son of God took up human flesh, specifically human flesh that descended from David. Thus, Jesus is both son of God and son of David. He is both God and man. It's a mystery how that can be the case. But it is a revealed mystery. It's not a mystery that has been kept secret, but has been revealed to us. And what a wonderful, life giving, revelation.

I'd like to think for a moment of one of the implications of this truth. I'd like to think about the implications of this truth to the kingdom. For Jesus to be both the son of David and of God, has implications for what kind of kingdom he was to be king over. If Jesus was merely the son of David, then his kingdom would be merely a continuation of the Davidic kingdom. And that's how the people were thinking. When they hailed the coming of the kingdom of David at Palm Sunday, we are not led to believe that they thought of anything more than a restoration of the sort of earthly kingdom David had.

Now it is correct to refer to the Christ's kingdom as the kingdom of David. Remember, God had promised David that he would have an heir that would establish his kingdom forever. But of course that should have signaled how much greater the Christ's kingdom really was - God promised that it would be an *eternal* kingdom!

You see, if the Christ was just the son of David, and he was just continuing on the Davidic kingdom as we saw it in the Old Testament, then that's a pretty limited view of the Messiah. But it was the view that most people held at the time. They were looking for an earthly leader to bring them freedom from the Romans. They were looking for an earthly leader to restore Israel as a political power in Palestine.

But if the Christ is more than just the son of David, if he is actually the son of God, what implications does that have for his kingdom? It has *huge* implications I hope you see! Remember, this Psalm records God setting the Christ at *God's right hand*! For the Christ to be set at the right hand of God has a much bigger kingdom in view. It is not just one earthly kingdom among many. It is the one kingdom that is above all!

You see, a different sonship, implies a different kingship, and therefore a different kingdom. But since the Christ is both the son of David and the son of God, that is why the Bible speaks of Christ's kingdom in two ways. At times it refers to it as the Davidic kingdom, but other times it refers to it as the very kingdom of God. And so the very mystery of the incarnation, how the Christ can be

both God and man, applies even to the kingdom. In one sense we see the kingdom on earth as it is manifested through the church. But Jesus says that ultimately his kingdom is not of this world. Understanding the mystery of the king tells us a little bit about the mystery of his kingdom.

This is an important topic that Jesus is raising. We already saw people like the disciples acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. But many had a limited view of the Christ. Many limited his kingdom to just some earthly expression of the nation of Israel. But God intended to set his Christ over all. He intended to use his Christ to rescue fallen humanity, Jew and Gentile. And so by Jesus raising this topic in this passage, we are challenged to think more about who the Christ really is. It causes us to look beyond the physical lineage. And it causes us to look beyond the Old Testament expression of God's kingdom. God has even bigger plans for his Christ. Plans to be the savior not just of Israel, but of the whole world.

Part of that plan is referenced in this Psalm that Jesus quotes. Sit at my right hand *til*. Until what? Until all his enemies are vanquished. You see this Psalm doesn't just tell us about who the Christ is. It doesn't just tell us about his kingdom. It tells us a little bit about his mission. His work as the Christ is described here as one of conquest. He will be doing away with all his enemies.

And who are his enemies? Well, sin and rebellion are certainly his enemies. Satan and death are also his enemies as well. So how does this Psalm tell us about Christ's dealing with those enemies? Well, a few other New Testament passages help us out here. In Hebrews 10 this Psalm is referenced, and it says that Jesus has taken this seat at the right hand of God ever since the cross. So Hebrews sees Christ's work of conquest over his enemies beginning at the cross. It's at the cross where Jesus dealt a decisive blow to Satan. But it is at the cross where he paid the penalty for all the sins of his people. And since the cross, Jesus is taking that forgiveness to his people. He's taking that forgiveness to the very people who have been his enemies. We who receive that forgiveness are converted from enemies to friends. We rebels are conquered by being converted! We become eager subjects who call the Christ, "my Lord," just as David did.

But for those who reject this forgiveness, their final destruction is imminent. You see the Hebrews passage says that the Christ is still at the right hand of God while he is putting all his enemies under his feet. 1 Corinthians 15 refers to this Psalm also. And it says that Christ will be in this same position until all the enemies are vanquished. And it says that the last enemy is "death."

And so do you see how Christ has been fulfilling this Psalm? Jesus is the Lord spoken of in Psalm 110. He came to earth to vanquish all his enemies. Some he has done that by converting us from enemies to friends. That's what he's done to us who believe. He's rescued us from our sinful rebellion, and changed our hearts to make us loyal to himself. Others who persist in their rebellion will ultimately meet their end in eternal damnation. When Christ returns he will put all of this to an end. Death will be done away with. For those he has rescued, we will spend eternity with him in his kingdom. For those who have persisted in their rebellion, they'll be cast into the place described as the lake of fire, the same place that God will throw death and Hades.

What a wonderful mission the Christ has. This is something far greater than the Old Testament kingdom of David. And yet it was something pictured in the Davidic Kingdom. David's kingdom was a type and shadow. It had earthly foretastes of this greater kingdom. It anticipated this kingdom. But it was not identical with this kingdom. That is why King David along with us can bow before the Lord Jesus Christ, worshipping him, and saying, "my Lord; my King; my Savior; my Life."

This was something the people desperately needed to hear in Jesus' day. The scribes had taught a watered down Messiah. They had too small of an understanding of the Christ. They hadn't taken the full picture given in the Scriptures; but just a partial one. Jesus knew that the people had this need, and so he taught them this in the temple. And what was the response? Verse 37, "The common people heard him gladly." The great crowd, the masses, heard him gladly. That's a good response. That's certainly better than many of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They did not reject his teaching, but heard it gladly. And yet, that response is not enough, is it? You see, what Jesus is teaching them is so very important. The people at the time really needed to know the true Christ. They needed to know the true kingdom that he was bringing. Just look at these three short verses about this subject. We've spent over 20 minutes just flushing them out, and certainly could do more. But the people aren't described as asking more. They don't seem to dig deeper. They don't ask Jesus to answer the very question he just raised about whose son is the Christ. They heard him gladly, but that's it. Oh, how they could have asked for more. They could have cried out to Jesus. They had the Christ right there before them. They could have asked him anything! Tell us, Jesus! Tell us the answer to your question. How is the Christ David's son? And how is he something more?

What about you? Will you sit back each week as you hear the gospel proclaimed, and just hear the sermons gladly, only to walk away unaffected? Do you go to church to be entertained, or mentally stimulated? Do you go hoping to hear a good sermon? Or do you go to hear Christ? Do you go that you might be changed?

You see, today, we face the same sort of challenges as the people did back then. It's the same sorts of challenges, with just a different historical face. Back then, they had the wrong idea of the Messiah. Their own religious leaders were helping to propagate those wrong ideas. But are things any different than today? Don't get me wrong. Most people we run into in our circles aren't looking for a Christ to free ethnic Israel. But most people also don't have a biblical view of Christ.

Of course, most people in Marin look down on Christianity. But some forms of Christianity are positively received in Marin. And yet the ones that are received well usually have a non-biblical view of Christ. You know, the kinds of Christianity that says that Jesus was a good moral teacher. That he had some good ideas and principles. That we should take his social principles, and some of his moral principles, summarize them all in love, and then go and strive to make this world a better place. Of course that sounds nice. But if that is the entire message that you take, then you only have a partial view of the Messiah. Then you are no different than the scribes who only taught about one aspect of the Christ.

But Jesus calls us to consider the full picture of the Christ. He was not just a human teacher with good ideas. He claimed to be God come in the flesh. He claimed to come to die on the cross to save us from our sins. He calls us to teach about sin and call people to repentance and change. He calls people to find forgiveness and healing and change in him. And he calls us to see his power over death, the power he showed through rising again from the dead.

My point is that doing ministry in Marin will mean that we'll hear about all kinds of different Jesus'. Almost every group quotes Scripture to tell you about their view of Jesus. But so did the scribes. They had Scripture to tell us that the Christ was the son of David. But we have to use *all* the Scriptures to give us the complete picture about who Christ is and what his mission was. If we do anything less, we've fallen short. We've missed the real Jesus.

But the real Jesus speaks to you again today. He brings this same question to you. Whose son is the Christ? How will you answer? Will you affirm that he is both God and man? Will you affirm that he died on the cross for your sins and rose again the third day? Will you affirm that he is king of a kingdom that is not of this world?

All of this sounds like foolishness to the modern mind. Most people in Marin think we are crazy for believing this stuff. But we are called not to have a modern mind, or a post-modern mind, but to have a Christian mind. Will you have a Christian mind? One that knows and follows the true Christ? Will you not just hear his words gladly but seek him out more and more? As you do that, you'll find that it is actually he who has sought you out - as he is doing again this morning. Praise be to him. Amen.

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