

Jesus - Lord of All

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Date: 22 September 2019

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[0 : 00] Please turn back with me to Matthew 22 and verses 41 through 46 as we continue our series of studies into this marvelous book of the Bible, which tells us all about Jesus, page 991.

It is widely acknowledged that Scotland is becoming the most secular country in Europe. And yet I want to argue that this truth doesn't carry over into what we might call God talk.

People in Scotland are often quite happy to talk about God, as long as the God they're talking about is of little or no relevance to them.

In what might seem to us to be a highly counterintuitive movement, Scotland's secularism really does God. Just not the way we know God.

Secular Scotland does all kinds of gods and know God, just as long as they can define what God it is they want to speak about.

[1 : 11] I say this because while Scotland's secularism does God, it most definitely does not do Jesus. God talk is unthreatening.

But talk about Jesus is met by the palm of indifference at best, hostility at worst, tolerance at best, intolerance at worst, only very rarely with sympathy and interest.

And that's because, although it sounds wrong, you can take or leave a God whose character you're free to define for yourself. But you can only take Jesus for who he is.

Because he leaves us in no doubt as to what he's like and why he came. What's true for secular Scotland is also true for the Pharisees of Jesus' day.

They did God. Their whole lives were devoted to serving God and their mouths were full of God talk. But when it came to Jesus, their mouths were closed against him.

[2 : 19] And he was met by the outstretched palm of hostility and indifference. And that's because the Pharisees felt able to define God according to their terms of reference.

But they had to take Jesus for who he was. Because Jesus left them in no doubt as to who he was, what he was like, and why he came. I don't know if you've got the presentation, Samuel.

Could you please put it up? But in Matthew 22 verses 41 through 46, Jesus drives home the truth about who he is, what he's like, and why he came.

He does so to leave the Pharisees in no doubt at all about him and to bring them to the point of decision about him. That decision whether to oppose him or whether to accept him.

Jesus takes the initiative in this passage and presses his hearers to a point of decision. He did that then to the Pharisees.

[3 : 19] He's doing that today through his word to us. He's asking us questions. He's telling us who he is. And he's calling us to make a decision for him.

In this passage, Jesus is telling us four things. What he wants to talk with us about. Who he wants us to know he is. Why he wants us to know he came.

And what he wants us now to do. Let me stress, this is not secular God talk. Acceptable to the world around us. We're right down deep in the awkward truths which make Christianity real.

First of all, what Christ wants to talk about with us. What Christ wants to talk about with us. Most of us of a certain vintage will remember the famous Fawlty Tower sketch, Don't mention the war.

A German gentleman is staying at the hotel. And Basil Fawlty and his staff just can't help themselves. And so he says to himself and to his staff, Don't mention the war. And something of the don't mention Jesus was alive and well among the Pharisees of his day.

[4 : 34] They were happy to talk about everything else. But please, let's not get on to Jesus. And so in the previous three passages, as we've seen the last three weeks, Jesus has had to deal with questions about tax and nationalism, marriage and resurrection, law and politics.

The one thing the Pharisees and the Sadducees and all the others don't want to talk about is who Jesus is. But that is precisely what Jesus wants to talk to them about. And so when it comes time for him to ask them a question, he goes straight for the central question. What do you think about the Messiah, the Christ? Because that's what he wants to talk to them about.

He's tired of them skirting around the subject and trying to catch them out with the jots and tittles of the law, with theology and politics. He wants to know where they stand before him.

Now you know it's true. Because we do God talk in our society, many people are happy to speak about Christianity and politics. They want to debate on moral issues and to discuss the relationship of church to state.

[5 : 43] Others are quite happy to spend time talking about theology, to trap Christians in the net of unseen realities. Still others want to talk about the law, about how Christianity deals with a thorny interface perhaps between retributive and restorative justice.

Our society is very happy to talk at this level with Christians about the worldview of Christianity. Let me assure you that Christianity is a worldview and there isn't one inch of this world and all its culture and wonderful variety which God does not claim as his.

But primarily, God wants to talk to us about his son, Jesus Christ. He wants to get to the heart of the issue with us and ask the question, what do you think about the Christ?

I have known many people over the years who have been absolutely orthodox when it comes to how they understand the relationship between church and state. Many people who hold to a better theology, I'm sure, than many of us.

Many people who are legal experts at applying the moral law into today's society. And yet these people have no thought of Jesus Christ, no personal experience of his grace at work in their lives, no personal opinion on who he really is and the importance of faith in him.

[7 : 10] The elephant in the room when it comes to Matthew 22 is the question of who Christ is. But that's what Jesus wants to talk with us all about today.

I'm sure he's interested in our political, theological, and legal views. But these are of little or no consequence at all if our view of him is wrong.

Because he didn't want to talk to us about politics or theology or law. He wants to talk to us about who he is and the nature of our relationship with him.

And we can deflect him and we can skirt around the subject as much as we like, but be sure eventually it will come down to this fundamental question Jesus is asking each one of us this morning. What do you think about the Christ?

Matthew 22 begins with a king who wants to honour his son with a banquet. Matthew 22 ends with us wrestling with the identity of that son.

[8 : 15] Who is he such that we should honour him, bow before him, and trust in him? Let's be careful not to engage in that tragic comedy called Don't Mention the Christ.

Rather, let's get to grips and answer the question that Jesus wants to talk to us about today. What do you think about the Christ? What Christ wants us to talk about.

What Christ wants to talk about with us. Secondly, who Christ wants us to know he is. Who Christ wants us to know he is. Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament.

Perhaps that's not so surprising given its teaching concerning the majesty and the dignity of Christ. Jesus' question to the Pharisees gathered together in general assembly, as it were, what do you think about the Christ?

Whose son is he? Now the Pharisees knew from their rabbis and from their tradition that the Messiah would be of the human line of David. That he would be a descendant of the greatest king Israel ever had, King David.

[9 : 33] He'd be David reincarnated, only greater still. He'd be a warrior king under whose sovereign rule Israel would be released from its captivity to the Romans. The Pharisees would have no doubt about this, that the Christ would be descended from King David.

And of course, we can trace Jesus' lineage back to David. Matthew 1 and Luke chapter 3 contain Jesus' family tree, showing how Jesus is David's son many times removed.

In Matthew 12, 23, one of the names we learn the people of Israel gave to the Messiah was the son of David. And this is why, because in their minds, the Messiah had to be directly descended from

King David.

So I say, Matthew has already proved to us the human ancestry of Jesus, his qualification as a son of David. But then Jesus goes on in verse 43, how is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him Lord?

Jesus is going on to quote Psalm 110, a psalm in which David calls the Messiah, my Lord, my Adonai.

[10:53] As an aside, isn't it interesting how Jesus describes the words of David in Psalm 110 as being spoken by the Spirit? that the whole Old Testament records the words of men as spoken by the Holy Spirit.

Not only does Jesus want us to talk about him, the Holy Spirit wants to talk about Jesus. And so in Psalm 110, he speaks through the mouth of David and calls him my Lord.

Jesus quotes the Psalm, the Lord said to my Lord and then asks the Pharisees, if David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?

In the world of the day, it was unheard of for a man to call his son Lord. In the American Deep South, children still respectfully call their fathers Sir.

but I've never yet heard a father call his son Sir. Jesus' point is that there is far more to him than meets the eye that the Messiah is not just David's son but also David's Lord.

[12:09] In other words, Jesus is pointing to the divinity of the Messiah that he shall not merely be the human descendant of David but that he shall be the Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

He is the Adonai of Psalm 110, David's Lord who relates to Yahweh as equal. This is who the Messiah will be. This is who Jesus is.

A man, yes, but more than a man. God also. The Pharisees so intent on playing with Jesus and testing him out.

Don't they realize that standing before them is the God of Israel himself, the mighty lawgiver from Sinai, the warrior king of God and they're quizzing him and they're questioning him, they're trapping him and they're twisting him but the him they're arguing against is the very God they say they worship.

The Messiah, you see, deserves praise and worship not just because he is the human descendant of King David but because he is the heavenly son of God. It's almost like in Matthew 22, the Pharisees are coming to Jesus with the arrogance of those who think they know God better than he does.

[13:33] When all the time that Jesus they are coming to is God himself. Charlie Chaplin was one of Hollywood's greatest stars, famed for his mustache and walking stick.

Chaplin made the world laugh. In later life, Charlie Chaplin entered a Charlie Chaplin lookalike competition. He figured that he was a shoe-in for first prize because after all, he really was Charlie Chaplin.

He came third. I guess if the judges had known who he was, he'd have won. But it just goes to show you that the judges didn't know Charlie Chaplin half as well as they thought they did.

And Jesus wants us to know who he is. That he is both human and divine. He is God incarnate of the earth but also of heaven. He is both David's son and David's Lord.

In the Messiah competition, if I may use that image with reverence, he comes in first every time. For a society which does God talk, Jesus talk should also be normal because Jesus is God.

[14:50] But this is where it all breaks down. Our lack of understanding of God shows itself in this. That just like those judges in the Charlie Chaplin competition, we don't know God half as well as we think we do.

Let's not play with Jesus. Let's not toy with him. Let's not skirt around the issue of who he is by talking about the politics or the theology or the jurisprudence.

Rather, before we go anywhere near any of these topics, let's make sure that we've established this. Jesus Christ is Lord. Let's make sure we're listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit as he speaks through Psalm 110 and proclaims to us, Jesus Christ is Lord.

God. Matthew 22 begins with a king honoring his son with a banquet where the king is most obviously God. And now at the end of Matthew 22, we learn that his son also is God, which makes the denial and excuses of the Pharisees for not believing in him all the more serious.

Is this true for us also, that we shall refuse to believe in Jesus even though he is God? Who Christ wants us to know he is.

[16:13] Third, why Christ wants us to know he came. Why Christ wants us to know he came. The Pharisees were Jewish nationalists.

It was they who were having secret meetings in the temple planning terrorist attacks against the Roman authorities. It was they who were edgy about paying the Roman denarius as a tax. Their slogan was, make Israel great again. And their vision of the Messiah was that of a great warrior king like David who would throw off the chains of oppression and restore Israel's empire. The Messiah would sit on the earthly throne of Israel as king and his armies would destroy everything sent against them. He would be an earthly king rather like the emperor of Rome only far more powerful because God would be on his side.

The Pharisees had historical precedent for this. A couple of hundred years before this encounter in Matthew 22 there was a famous Jewish warrior called Judas Maccabeus who had risen up and he led the Jews to military success against all their enemies.

[17:28] for the Pharisees the Messiah would be another Maccabeus only this time greater. The earthly empire the Messiah would build would stretch from sea to sea and last for a thousand years.

This they thought that this was why the Messiah would come to Israel to make the nation great again. But the genuine Messiah the real Christ has different ideas as we learn from this passage. Once again quoting Psalm 110 Jesus says the Lord said to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies till I put your enemies under your feet.

The reign of the Messiah shall be characterized by God putting all his enemies under his feet. Vanquishing them, subduing them, destroying them.

And yes Jesus here paints himself in the colors of Israel's warrior king who has come to defeat God's enemies. But whereas the Pharisees thought that what David meant by God's enemies were Israel's enemies.

[18:44] Jesus had different ideas. The enemies of Jesus and the enemies of Israel were not the same thing at all. Rather the enemies Jesus came to crush were far more powerful and universal.

He came to destroy death by rising on the third day. He came to vanquish the world by overcoming it in righteousness. He came to subdue our sin by being punished on our behalf.

He crushed the serpent's head on the cross even as the serpent struck out at his heel. And now Jesus is Lord of all. Lord of life and death.

Lord of heaven and hell. Lord of forgiveness and salvation. All things, all things are under his feet. He is the great warrior king of God whose sword is shaped like a cross and in whose battle scars we have the victory.

In his day, King David defeated the armies of his enemies only for them to return after he had died. But King Jesus, having defeated all his enemies once and for all on the cross, will never lose his grip on us or on our salvation.

[20:05] Rather, he is driving home his victory every day as he sits at God's right hand. Make no mistake, the Christ came to do battle, but not with the patsy Romans, rather with the genuine enemies of God.

Once again, let's not play with Jesus. Let's not toy with him. Let's not skirt around the issue of why he came by talking about politics or theology or law.

Our society wants to talk about God, but not Jesus. And perhaps one of the reasons is because we can't fit this Jesus into a neat box. A Jesus who fiercely loves us, and yet who fiercely fights against his enemies by giving himself on the cross and rising on the third day.

Matthew 22 begins with a king honoring his son with a banquet, and now we learn that the son deserves all the honor the father will ever give him, because in his name the son has defeated all his enemies.

Are you happy about that victory? Does Jesus need to do yet more, to achieve more, to win your faith and love?

[21:24] Tell me exactly what more does he need to do? And then lastly, what Christ wants us to do, what Christ wants us to do.

our passage and the whole of Matthew 22 ends with the silence of the Pharisees. No one could say a word in reply. And from that day on, no one dared ask him any more questions.

In fact, the next time the Pharisees ask him any kind of question is during his trial, when having spat in his face, beat and slapped him, they said, prophesy to us Messiah, who was it that hit you? They could not deal with Jesus' infallible logic and divine identity, so they conspired against him and handed him over to Pilate to be put to death. He silenced them, so they're going to make every effort now to silence him.

Actually, that's not quite true. Not at all. He didn't silence them. In fact, I wonder whether this passage in Matthew 22 is Jesus' last gracious invitation to them to believe and trust in him.

[22 : 40] They've tested and tried him, and now at the very end of this passage, Jesus is calling to them, and he's beckoning to them, and he's inviting them to put their faith in him as David's greater son and Lord.

He finishes this discussion with them by asking them a question. How can he be his son? And we want to say to the Pharisees, don't just stand there, answer the man.

But they do not say a word. Jesus was looking for an immediate response from the Pharisees, but he did not get one. Or rather, he did.

It was the cowardly rejection and inward silence. Silence. In fact, given that this episode happened on the Tuesday of what we call Holy Week, that in just two days time, Jesus would be arrested and hauled before the Sanhedrin, condemned and handed over to Pilate to be crucified, we take this as their response.

Crucifixion. That's how serious the crime. That they should crucify David's son and Lord. And you know, Jesus is looking for no less an immediate response from us today.

[24 : 05] There may be some among us who, having heard the voice of Scripture today, want to go home and think about how they'll respond to Jesus' question, what do you think about the Christ?

We both know that the moment we leave this building, the voice of uncertainty will fill our minds and we will quickly forget our resolve to think through who Jesus is and how we'll respond to him.

In fact, I wonder without being disrespectful, I wonder to what extent our procrastination and delay in answering Jesus' question could be construed as cowardly silence and inward rejection.

Because he's looking for an immediate response from all of us today. In just 72 hours from these events taking place, the divine son of God will die on a cross to take away the sins of the world.

On account of our sin and his love for us, he'll be battling against sin, death, and the devil. Now is the time to respond to him. Now, right now.

[25 : 20] Not later, not tomorrow. Now. But pray tell me, how can I respond to what Jesus says here? The answer is God talk.

God talk. The very thing our society does but does not do. Look again at Jesus' quotation from David in Psalm 120. The Lord said to my Lord.

The answer is in the smallest of words. My. My. My Lord. Who is willing, right here, right now, having heard Jesus answer to his own question?

To confess for the first time on the basis of the cross and resurrection of David's Lord, that he is my Lord.

Who is willing to do what Christ wants them to do? And echo the words of David's, of Jesus' grandfather many times removed David, who from his heart said, the Lord said to my Lord.

[26 : 35] Who is willing to say, Jesus Christ is my Lord? Are you? Let us pray. We thank you for your word today.

That word which has only one focus. The glory of your son, Jesus Christ.

And how Jesus, by his gospel, extends the hand of grace to us and says, make me yours. Make me your Lord.

Live for me. Trust me. Believe in me. We ask then, oh Lord, that all of our responses today would be drawn toward this great statement.

Jesus Christ is my Lord. In his name we pray. Amen.