

October 16, 2022 The Master's Claim Matthew 22:41-45

It is a brief passage: Matthew 22:41-45. There was a time when the Bibles on our pulpits and lecterns, and in our pews were King James translations. I was a teenager at the time. So we are talking 60 years ago. The first Bible I actually owned, was given to me by Barbara. I was no longer a kid. I was 22. It was given to me on my birthday, February the 11<sup>th</sup>, in 1967. I had just turned 22, and we were married the following year. It was a King James Bible and a red letter edition. A red letter edition simply meant that in the New testament, all the words of Jesus in the Gospels were printed in red.

In this passage in Matthew 22, Jesus initiates the discussion. The Pharisees and the Sadducees often did not agree when it came to doctrinal matters. The Pharisees were a little like us...they took Scripture very seriously. They studied to understand the actual words of the Law, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. The Sadducees were much more liberal, they certainly were not literalists. The Sadducees did not necessarily hold to the possibility of resurrection, whereas the Pharisees did.

When Jesus had silenced the Sadducees on the question of the resurrection the Pharisees took notice and they gathered together. Jesus asked them in their gathering this very basic question based on Old Testament teaching. "What do you think of Christ, whose son is he?" I will translate that question for you because we tend to speak of Jesus Christ as

though that was HIS name. Jesus was not asking them what they thought of HIM. The Christ is the Messiah. Israel looked for the coming of the Messiah of God. The Christ of God. Jesus was asking them what they thought of the Messiah, whose son is he?

And the Pharisees gave a quick and easy answer based on the Scriptures. "The Son of David." There is a reason that Matthew's Gospel begins with that long list of names we call the "begats". The list begins in Matthew's writing, the list of the generations of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." It is the family tree of Jesus. And it begins with Abraham, and ends with Joseph, the husband of Mary. Verse 6 says, "Jesse begat David." There was a real and Biblical reason for the Pharisees answer to Jesus question. And it is also true that the lineage of Jesus was easy to trace back to both David the King, and Abraham, the father of the Jewish people.

But Jesus asked them another Biblical question. "How is it then, that David speaking by the Spirit, calls him (the Christ, or the Messiah) Lord?" And Jesus quotes to them the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of Psalm 110. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Jesus knew the Pharisees regarded this verse as being about the Messiah. HE knew it was written by David and Jesus believed as did the Pharisees, that David was inspired by the Spirit of God to write the Psalm. So here is the problem Jesus brings to the Bible scholars. How can the messiah just be the son of David, a

man, if David writes, inspired by the Lord and calls the Messiah, Lord?

It is a really deep question and one for which the Pharisees seem utterly unprepared. They would only use that word Lord, to speak of God, the ONE and ONLY. “If David then calls the Messiah, the Christ, Lord, how can he just be David’s son?”

Two things emerged from that singular question. The Pharisees could not or would not offer an answer. They realized Jesus had just asked them a question which no matter how they answered would discredit them in the eyes of everyone in the room, and of course it also went to the heart of a singular reality and the real question. Who is Jesus? If they stuck by their answer that Messiah was just a man, they would have failed to deal with the issue that David inspired by God had written sacred truth, calling the Messiah, Lord. And if they changed their answer that the Messiah was the Lord, they would be insinuating that Jesus was both Messiah and the son of God. They thought silence was safe.

“Neither durst any man, from that day forward, ask him, (that is Jesus) any more questions.” (Matthew 22:46) That last verse of the passage was printed in black because it is Matthew’s testimony. He understood the implications. Jesus had just asked the Bible scholars who is the Messiah. The Pharisees had answered a descendant of David. Clearly a man. And Jesus was a man. But Jesus had asked them to explain the

verse that begins Psalm 110 in which David referred to the Messiah as Lord. And the Pharisees got it. Jesus was making and staking a claim not only to be the Messiah, but of divine origin according to the prophecy of Psalm 110.

I speak as a representative of the world wide, church of Jesus Christ, we, the church did not invent, create or start the idea that Jesus is the Christ, nor did we start the idea that HE is the very Son of the living God. Jesus made the claim to be both: the Christ and the Son of God. And the reason Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote their Gospels, was that they wanted to testify that based on what they saw and heard from HIS very mouth, it is true. Hence the miracles that were part of Jesus ministry. Hence the testimony of Joseph and Mary as to how they came to have this child. Hence the stories of angels seen and heard by shepherds in the field announcing the birth of the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

Anyone who says, the church invented the faith we proclaim and celebrate, either has not read the Bible or dismisses it as providing any significant evidence. These words predate any church council that made any credal statements. And those credal statements that were eventually made by church Councils were made based on the teaching of Holy Scripture which stands the test of being closely examined. All of these New Testament writings were created within the lifetimes of the followers of Jesus to whose name they are attached. And the writing of the letters by other disciples of Jesus included in the New Testament make similar claims as to

the nature of Jesus and the ministry HE performed. Which is why we do cling to this collection of documents as the basis of church doctrine.

There are two other things that need to be said. As the Gospel accounts make clear, Jesus tried to prepare HIS disciples and followers for what would ultimately happen in Jerusalem. HE told them over and over again that HE was doing the work HIS Father, that HIS heavenly Father had given HIM to do. He knew when HE asked that question of the Pharisees that they would do everything in their power to end HIS life. Why did HE do it? There is only one answer that stands up to examination. HE so loved you and me and our neighbours and our relatives, our friends and even our enemies, that HE wanted to save us from our sins. He literally gave HIS life for us. And on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day HE rose from the dead. Because HIS claim of being the Christ and the Lord was true.

And second thing that needs to be added is this. The disciples, people like Matthew and Mark and Luke and John, Peter and the rest, did not find it easy to believe until the resurrection occurred. And when that happened they too became willing to die for the right to proclaim the truth about Jesus no matter the cost, no matter the place, as long as they had breath. With the exception of John they all died younger than I am. All became martyrs, telling the world of their time that Jesus was and is, Christ and Lord.

So here I am, saying one more time in your midst. Jesus is the Messiah of God. Jesus is God come among us. Jesus is the answer to life's deepest questions. And HE is the Lord God Almighty.

Let us pray;

Father there are things we understand and there are things we believe. Grant that our faith may be strong. Grant that our hearts may be in the work that you give us to do and to share. May we bring glory to your name in the manner in which we live and care for one another. Amen