

August 11, 2019

“What Do You Think About the Christ?”
Matthew 22:41-46

FCF: Resistance to rule/governance

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Jesus is the Christ.
(magnet) We should rejoice in His coming.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Well, another round of “Shark Week” has come and gone. “Shark Week” is an annual week-long TV programming block on the Discovery Channel dedicated to sharks. Of course, the star of the show is the Great White Shark, a fearsome creature few see outside of documentaries.

You won’t see a Great White in an aquarium. It is a migratory species that needs large volumes of water and has to keep moving so it can breathe. Its food has to be live - not good for young families. These sharks can’t be domesticated or tamed. They can’t be ruled or governed.

Not unlike our hearts. We resist being ruled or governed. And need news of the Christ.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Matthew 22:41-46](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Who was Alf Landen? He was governor of Kansas in the 1930’s but also ([READ quote](#)):

In the 1930s, the popular magazine "Literary Digest" conducted public opinion polls of its large subscribership by mail and phone, believing that a large sample size would automatically generate infallible results. The magazine failed to notice that its readership was wealthier and more likely to be Republican than the average U.S. voter, leading the magazine to erroneously predict a landslide victory for Alf Landon over Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936.

The tally in the electoral college was Roosevelt-523 and Landen-8. A real nail-biter. Of course, polling data has never been infallible. Just ask the political pundits after Election Day in 2016.

Jesus asked a polling question of sorts to some folks. “What do you think about the Christ?” This was in the context of disputes over His authority, His right to say and do as He was among the people. “What do you think about the Christ?” Just to be clear, “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name. It is a title, the Greek translation of the Hebrew “Messiah” meaning “the anointed.” The Christ was the long-awaited Savior, the promised deliverer of God’s people.

Jesus had been hailed and claimed to be this very figure. And He is. Jesus is the Christ. The Jewish leaders reviled Him for this. And the people eventually rejected Him. But He should be neither reviled nor rejected. For Jesus is the Christ. And we should rejoice in His coming.

Especially in view of three things that are clear in our text. First, His wisdom. Second, His lineage. And, third, His reign. These three show us all the more who Jesus is as the Christ.

I. HIS WISDOM

First, His wisdom ([READ Matthew 22:46](#)). Something was really happening here.

A) His Answers

Think back to what we have seen over the last few weeks and the answers Jesus gave.

1. The questioners

His questioners were Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees - united only by their opposition to Jesus. They had come in three successive waves, vainly attempting to ensnare and entrap Him.

2. The responses

Yet despite their hostility and the pressure of the situation, Jesus parries each sword thrust. And He demonstrates profound insight into the issues raised, insight unlike anyone had ever heard.

B) His Question

So His wisdom shines forth with His answers. But then also with this question He posed.

1. Going to the heart of the issue

Jesus goes right to the heart of the issue. This was not about politics, theology, or ethics - the topics His opponents raised. It was about identity - His. Which is what takes Him to Psalm 110.

2. The master of questions

Jesus goes to the heart of the issue. And He does so by asking questions. He is the master of questions. Here's just a sampling from Matthew's Gospel. Chapter 14 "Why did you doubt?" Chapter 16 "But who do you say that I am?" Chapter 20 "What do you want me to do for you?" Why do we ask questions? Sure, to help us understand. But sometimes it's to help someone else understand. That's what Jesus is doing here - drawing out His hearers, forcing them to think.

All of this shows us Jesus' wisdom. And so we learn more about who He is as Christ.

Application:

He's still asking such questions of us today - by the Holy Spirit's work through the Word, the Scriptures. He is still asking, still guiding - mercifully pursuing us and working to change and transform us, especially in the context of community and relationship with one another.

Such is His great wisdom. Jesus is the Christ. We should rejoice in His coming.

II. HIS LINEAGE

And that great wisdom is tied to His unique lineage, the fact that He is both fully man and fully God. This is the wonder of our celebration at Christmas (**READ Matthew 22:41-45**).

A) Son of David

We have these two things, both equally true. First, Jesus is fully man, the Son of David.

1. Historical figure

David was an historical figure - the great warrior king of Israel, the preeminent ruler in their eventful history. It was made clear in the genealogy of Matthew 1 that Jesus is the Son of David.

2. Covenant promise

The Lord made a covenant with David, recorded in 2 Samuel 7. The promise was that David's throne would be established, that his line would last forever. But how was that really possible? How could the exalted language of Psalm 110 be taken as more than just ancient hyperbole?

B) Lord of David

The answer is in the other side of this tension. Jesus is fully man and fully God. He is not just the Son of David but the Lord of David as well. And, again, both are equally true.

1. Words of a courtier

Think back to Psalm 110. If these are just the words of a courtier, then it simply means “The Lord God said to my lord the king...” Which is how some read it. But that is clearly not how Jesus read it. Or anyone else in His day, for that matter. These are not the words of a courtier.

2. Words of the king

These are the words of the king. Which means “my lord” has to be someone other than David. It has to be the Messiah, the Christ. Which is why this is quoted so often in the New Testament.

This lineage is unlike any other. And so, again, we learn more of who Jesus is as Christ.

Application:

This lineage is unlike any other because Jesus is unlike any other. In some ways, that can be quite comforting. His claims outstrip, outpace, and outdo the claims of any other religious figure. His insight exceeds and excels that of any other sage that the world has ever known. And this is the One we follow. This is the One who sends us, accompanies us, and empowers us.

So, at one level, this can be comforting. But not necessarily comfortable. Again, He is unlike any other. He stands above us all. So those who follow Him as His disciples should be prepared to be contradicted and corrected. That is not comfortable. But it is truly needed.

Such is His unique lineage. Jesus is the Christ. We should rejoice in His coming.

III. HIS REIGN

But, of course, His unique lineage is tied to His great reign (**READ Matthew 22:44**).

A) As Conqueror

By quoting here from Psalm 110, Jesus makes clear that, as the Christ, He is a conqueror.

1. Greatest of enemies

He stares down and puts down the greatest of enemies. Sin - its tyranny within us, crushing its power over us and casting its presence from us. Satan - binding our tempter, accuser, and deceiver. Death - undoing all the effects of its dissolution and disintegration, restoring shalom.

2. Greatest of victories

Jesus decisively deals with the greatest of enemies and brings the greatest of victories. This is quite a visual - one's enemies underfoot. The warrior's heel upon the throat. All of which has been accomplished at the cross. All of which will be fully realized upon this Warrior's return.

B) As King

Jesus is conqueror. And, as such, He now rules as King. We see that here as well.

1. Sitting

This image of sitting is not of resting but ruling, not of passive inactivity but active authority.

2. At (His) right hand

And to be “at (His) right hand” is to be in the position of preeminence and honor. Which is to say Jesus is indeed the King of kings and the Lord of lords. There is no sphere of life over which He does not rule and control. And there are no exceptions, qualifiers, or footnotes to this.

Such is His reign. And so we learn all the more who He is as the Christ.

Illustration:

Disney has come out with another of its live-action remakes. This time it's *Aladdin*. One of my favorite lines from the original was when the genie describes what it's like to live in the lamp - "Phenomenal cosmic power! Itty bitty living space!" Which, if you've seen the film, you know how that plot device proves to be rather limiting in the free exercise of the lamp's power.

Application:

Jesus' reign is no myth, no fantasy of film or fiction. Again, He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, all things under His control. As we let this settle in, it can have great effect.

It can bring assurance and hope in trials, in the things that distress and disappoint us.

Illustration:

Some of you may have seen *Apollo 13*, the story of a mission failure and yet one of NASA's great successes. There's a scene where Jim Lovell is being interviewed ([READ quote](#)):

Uh well, I'll tell ya, I remember this one time - I'm in a Banshee at night in combat conditions, so there's no running lights on the carrier. It was the Shrangri-La, and we were in the Sea of Japan and my radar had jammed, and my homing signal was gone... because somebody in Japan was actually using the same frequency. And so it was - it was leading me away from where I was supposed to be. And I'm lookin' down at a big, black ocean, so I flip on my map light, and then suddenly: zap. Everything shorts out right there in my cockpit. All my instruments are gone. My lights are gone. And I can't even tell now what my altitude is. I know I'm running out of fuel, so I'm thinking about ditching in the ocean. And I, I look down there, and then in the darkness there's this uh, there's this green trail. It's like a long carpet that's just laid out right beneath me. And it was the algae, right? It was that phosphorescent stuff that gets churned up in the wake of a big ship. And it was - it was - it was leading me home. You know? If my cockpit lights hadn't shorted out, there's no way I'd ever been able to see that. So uh, you, uh, never know... what... what events are to transpire to get you home.

Sometimes the lesser lights have to go out for us to see. We may not know what God's reasons are. But we can know that there is a reason. And His great love is guaranteed to be behind it.

Such is His great reign. Jesus is the Christ. We should rejoice in His coming.

CONCLUSION:

NFL preseason football is here. I'm a lifelong Redskins fan. Thus far, we are undefeated in the regular season. It's been a long time since fans of the Redskins have felt any anticipation or excitement. Not since Joe Gibbs, their three-time Super Bowl winning coach, was rehired. When the news broke, the *Washington Post* ran the headline, "The Return of the King." Stories began with "Hall of Fame Coach Returns to Team After 11-Year Hiatus" and "Faithful See Chance of Salvation." Well, that was a bit much. Gibbs did okay in that second run. But a lot about the game had changed in the years he had been gone. So eventually, he stepped down.

Bear with me as I make a "from lesser to greater" argument. If Washington Redskins fans could rejoice in the coming of a beloved football coach, how much more should we with the coming of the Christ? How much more? As big a place as football has in our culture, it's still just a game. There are no cosmic consequences or eternal stakes involved. Again, consider the great wisdom, lineage, and reign of Jesus. He is the Christ. We should rejoice in His coming.

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