

**Introduction**

1. Who do you say Jesus is? That is the most important question that every person must answer.
2. Warren Wiersbe writes, “. . . [Jesus] focused on the most important question of all: Who is the Messiah? . . . This is a far more important question than the ones His enemies had asked Him, for if we are wrong about Jesus Christ, we are wrong about salvation. This means we end up condemning our own souls (Jn 3:16-21; 8:24; 1 John 2:18-23)” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 143).
3. **Read Mk 12:35-37.**

**A. Fourth Tricky Question (35-37a)**

1. In the context of Mark’s narrative, remember that Jesus has been confronted by the Jewish leaders about His authority for clearing the temple and for His teaching there.
  - a. Remember that Jesus said that He would answer their question if they answered His question of them about the source of John the Baptist’s authority. They refused and so did Jesus (cf., Mk 11:33)
  - b. Jesus then told the Parable of the Tenants to reinforce the fact that these Jewish leaders had ultimately rejected God’s authority! (cf, Mk 12:1-12)
  - c. Jewish leaders asked three tricky questions (cf. Mk 12:13-34) in an attempt to trap Jesus in His words.
  - d. In the passage under study, Jesus asked the Jewish leaders a final tricky question (cf. Mk 12:35-37).
2. Remember this insight from William Lane, “The sequence of questions proposed corresponds to four types of questions recognized by the rabbis: questions of wisdom, which concern a point of law (cf. Ch 12:13-17); of mockery, which frequently bear on the resurrection (cf. Ch. 12:18-27); of conduct, which center in relationship to God and men (cf. Ch. 12:28-34); and of biblical exegesis, which often concern the resolving of an apparent contradiction between two passages of Scripture (cf. Ch. 12:35-37). It is only in the Passover eve liturgy that the four types of questions appear in this particular order, and there the first three questions are posed by a wise son, a wicked son and a son of simple piety. The fourth is posed by the head of the family himself. This arrangement shed light on the sequence of questions in Ch. 12:13-37)” (William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 421, underlining/bold mine).
  - a. The Pharisees and Herodians played the role of the wise son asking the first question of wisdom about the law—“Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not?” Jesus wisely replied, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” (cf. Mk 12:13-17).
  - b. The Sadducees asked a second tricky question about marriage in the resurrection. Jesus wisely answered that there would be no marriage in the resurrection as our new spiritual bodies will experience new and even better intimacy than that found in earthly marriage. (cf. Mk 12:18-27).
  - c. A teacher of the law, most likely from the Pharisees, played the role of the son of simple piety by asking the third question of conduct regarding the greatest commandment of God. Jesus wisely answered that in our conduct we must first love God and our neighbors as ourselves.
  - d. After three good answers by Jesus to these tricky questions, “. . . no one dared ask him any more questions” (Mk 12:34).
3. Jesus was still in the temple courts teaching (v. 35).
  - a. He had not been chased away by the intimidation or tricky questions of the Jewish leaders.
  - b. Jesus, as head of the family, asked a final tricky question of biblical exegesis of the Jewish leaders regarding an apparent contradiction in their interpretation of scripture.
4. Jesus’ Question : “‘Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David?’ David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: “‘The Lord said to my Lord: “‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’” David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” (35-37a)
  - a. “. . . [Jesus] did not ask just any question; He asked the most important question. He asked the question concerning the identity of the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world” (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 293).
  - b. Jesus asked a question of biblical exegesis, of interpretation.
  - c. The teachers of the law believed Messiah would be a descendant of David, a son of David.

- d. So, why would David call his descendant, the Messiah, “Lord”?
- 1) “Messiah” (Gk., *christos* – “anointed one”) in v. 35 is the anticipated deliverer of Israel.
  - 2) In vs. 36, a quote of Ps 110:1, David says, “The Lord (Gk., *kurios*) said to my Lord (Gk., *kurios*)”
    - a) The first Lord is clearly God, who is King David’s Lord.
    - b) So who is the second Lord? David apparently spoke of someone else, but who?
- e. It would be a contradiction of fact for a father to call His son Lord. So, teachers of the law, how do you explain this?
5. To explain this seeming contradiction, we must examine Psalm 110 in more detail.
- a. Jesus ascribed this psalm to David and said it was divinely inspired by God’s Holy Spirit.
  - b. Daniel Akin notes, “Psalm 110 is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. . . . Jesus will cite this text again when the high priest asks Him, ‘Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One (Mark 14:61)’” (Akin, 295).
    - 1) Jesus replied, “‘I am . . . and all of you will see the son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven’” (Mk 14:62).
    - 2) Jesus definitely saw this psalm as applying to Himself as Messiah in the line of King David.
  - c. As Jesus quoted the opening verse of this psalm, He invoked the whole psalm. **Read Ps 110:1-7.**
  - d. Daniel Estes notes, “Scholars are deeply divided on their conclusions about the text, date, and purpose of Psalm 110. . . . the content of the psalm indicates that it is a royal psalm, similar to Psalms 2 and 72, . . . . However, the psalm does not make explicit reference to David or to one of his dynastic line, but rather it speaks of a different kind of king who will also be a priest. In its frequent NT usage, it is clearly messianic, as it is applied specifically to Christ and his rule” (Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73-150* in *New American Commentary* vol. 13, 340).
  - e. The different words used in the Hebrew text of Psalm 110 as compared to the Greek in Mark’s account are significant. James Brooks notes, “The quotation is of Ps 110:1. In the Hebrew the first word meaning ‘Lord’ is *Yahweh*, which always refers to God; but the second is *Adonai*, which sometimes refers to God and sometimes not—as in the psalm where it originally referred to a king, whoever and whenever he was. One might paraphrase, ‘God said to my superior.’ In Greek, however, the same word (*kyrios*, lord) is used in both places” (James Brooks, *Mark*, 200).
  - f. This psalm has eschatological (i.e., end times) implications as the enemies of Messiah are placed under David’s Lord’s “feet” (Gk., *podon*). It points to the final dominion and sovereignty of Messiah.
  - g. William Lane notes, “. . . the question posed by Jesus concerns the messianic fulfilment of the promise announced in Ps. 110:1 and anticipates his own resurrection and exaltation to God’s right hand. The point made is that David himself distinguished between his earthly political sovereignty and the higher level of sovereignty assigned to the Messiah. The Messiah is not only ‘son of David’; he is also, and especially, his Lord. His role is not to restore on earth the Davidic kingdom or the sovereignty of Israel. He does not simply extend the work of David, but comes to establish a wholly different Kingdom, the throne of which is situated at God’s right hand. It is thus the question of another kind of fulfilment to the promise than that which contemporary Judaism expected. The political-nationalistic concept of the messianic mission supported by the scribes is simplistic (William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 437-38).
6. The implied exegetical solution to this seeming contradiction of David calling his descendant “my lord” is that Jesus is both human, as David’s son, and divine, as David’s Lord.
- a. Wiersbe shares, “The Jews believed that the Messiah would be David’s son (John 7:41-42), but the only way David’s son could also be David’s Lord would be if Messiah were *God come in human flesh*” (Wiersbe, 143).
  - b. The Human identity of the Messiah as a son of David is secure in scripture.
    - 1) The Hebrew Bible clearly reveals this fact and orthodox Jews still believe to this today (cf. 2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:3-4; Isa 9:2,6-7, Isa 1:1-4,8-9; Jer 23:5-6, 30:9, 33:15-17,22; Ezek 34:23-24; Ho 3:5; Am 9:11; Mi 5:2-5).
    - 2) Jesus had been welcomed into Jerusalem by a crowd praising Him as the coming son of David “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Mk 11:9b-10)
    - 3) Also blind Bartimaeus had called out, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mk 10:47b)

- 4) The scribes and all Jews looked for the coming of Messiah, the son of David, as a warrior who would fulfill OT prophecy, free them from their bondage, and elevate them to their rightful place as God's people. This is clearly anticipated in Psalm 110.
- c. Daniel Akin writes, "Here is a problem no one had seen until Jesus raised it. The Messiah is both David's Son and David's Lord at the same time. Think about it. What father would ever call his son or great-grandson his Lord? . . . David's words will not work if Messiah is just a human being. He must be more" (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 295) .
- d. Brooks notes, "Mark acknowledged that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of David, but he also recognized that these terms were inadequate. As David's Lord, Jesus cannot be limited to Davidic categories. Jesus is more than Son of David; he is Son of Man, i.e., the representative of all humanity and not just the Jews, who had to suffer and then be exalted at God's right hand. Still more important he is Son of God!" (Brooks, 201)
- e. Jesus, the Messiah, is both son of David and son of God.

## **B. The Response (37b)**

1. The sound of crickets could be heard over the silence of the teachers of the law and other Jewish leaders in reply to Jesus' question.
  - a. They said nothing openly, but I'm sure the looks on their faces could have killed.
  - b. Their thoughts were focused on plans to deal with this teacher's blasphemy once for all (cf. Mk 11:18).
  - c. We are just three days away from the cross and the culmination of their evil plan.
2. Lane notes, ". . . no satisfactory answer could be given from a scribal viewpoint. Only from the perspective of the New Covenant is the answer provided: already in the exaltation of the Messiah to God's right hand is the promise of everlasting dominion fulfilled (II Sam. 7:13, 16; Ps. 110:1). In this way the Scriptures affirming Davidic sonship and the Messiah as David's Lord were united" (Lane, 438).
3. "The large crowd listened to him with delight." (37b)
4. Next week, Jesus will give a final warning about the hypocrisy, pride, and selfishness of the Jewish leaders (cf. Mk 12:38-40).

## **C. Questions/Thoughts for Reflection**

1. Do you have a better appreciation for how the OT leads us to better understand the truth of the NT as it relates to Jesus, the one who fulfills OT prophecy?
2. Do you acknowledge Jesus as fully human, a son of David, and fully divine, David's Lord, the son of God? Jesus is the Messiah, and He is God.
3. Are there other hard to understand scriptures that you need to investigate in light of the connections Jesus has made in this passage? Jesus is the key to unlocking the central meaning of OT prophecy!