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Grace Bible Church NorthWest  
Matthew 22:15-46 Four Scenes of Conflict: Part Four  
Matthew 22: 41-46 Conflict with the Pharisees over “the Christ” (the Messiah)

Introduction: “The question that was bound to come up.” One of the benefits of teaching the same classes for a number of years is that I have learned to anticipate the questions that students will be asking. Frequently, (especially if I am lecturing on a controversial topic) the interaction in a class will go something like this: I will make an unexpected statement or point, or teach a difficult doctrine, or say something controversial—and (wait for it . . .) hands go up — I wave them down . . . (in my classes the students know that if they raise their hands, and I acknowledge them, they can lower their hands and I will get back to them when I’m done making my point . . .) — I continue my lecture—making my points, turning to Scripture, you know—I keep teaching. And as I am teaching, very often I will say something along these lines: “Now, I know this question (this matter, this verse) will come up, so let me address it here . . .” — I then ask and answer my own question. After that I will then address those who raised their hands, “Now, what’s your question?” And . . . they say, “You just asked and answered it.” Some students are impressed . . . a few are amazed . . . others still are disappointed (that they didn’t get to ask their question!) I am not, of course, clairvoyant . . . it’s just that I’ve taught this stuff enough times I knew “That question was bound to come up.”

I think something like that must have occurred to Jesus, which is why He turned the tables on the opposition and asked them the question He did in Matthew 22:42 **What do you think about the Christ (the Messiah), whose son is He?** Given Matthew’s main point—Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah—and given Jewish Messianic expectation—and we’ve mentioned that a number of times (see below) . . . the question(s) Jesus asked(asks) the Pharisees in this passage was(were) bound to come up. To see how/why let’s step back and take in the wider picture of Matthew’s gospel.

We’ve seen that Matthew’s purpose is to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. Permit me to quote a few lines from the very first sermon of this study in Matthew’s gospel\*: “Matthew is the most ‘Jewish’ of the gospels; he has emphases that would appeal especially to Jewish believers in their context. Matthew presents Jesus as the long-expected Messiah—the King!” “It’s Matthew’s burden to show that Jesus is the Messiah of the Jews. He is *the King* (and that’s why “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” cf. Matt 3:2; 4:17); He is also the King *par excellence*! The One who has “all authority” (cf. Matt 28:19-20) and He is King *of Kings* and He is the Savior. It’s this part that is “the point” (not just of Matthew but the other gospels as well). The Jews were looking for “the King”—Messiah (they knew there were those “salvation” parts in the OT prophecies of the Messiah but they thought those would come *after* the kingdom was established) but ‘the point’ of Matthew (and really all the gospels) is (1) there will be two comings (a mystery from the OT perspective) and (2) the salvation part of the Messiah’s work on earth will come first!” \* That was preached on December 14, 2014.

Now a lot has gone into proving Matthew’s point—22 chapters!—Jesus’ genealogy, His birth, His teaching, His healing, the manifestations at His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17), and at His Transfiguration (Matthew 17)—fulfilled prophecy, the witness of John the Baptist . . . But, there was a question that was bound to come up: How can Jesus—a mere man, a lowly man—be the Messiah? Actually, this specific question about Jesus reveals a deeper question—something of a conundrum (irresolvable question) in Jewish messianic expectation. As Wiersbe puts it simply, “The (Jewish) scholars in that day were confused about the Messiah. They saw two pictures of the Messiah in the Old Testament and could not reconcile them. One showed a Suffering Servant, and the other a conquering and reigning monarch. Were there two Messiah’s?” (Wiersbe, *Be Loyal*, 205) The prevailing view of the Messiah (as the one who will

come and overthrow Rome’s domination of the Land and set up the Davidic Kingdom) (see David R. Bauer, “Son of David,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 767—citing *Psalms of Solomon* 17-18; cf. Dead Sea Scrolls 1QM11:1-18; 4QFlor 1:11-14; 4QP Bless 1-7; 4QTestim 9-13) For them the Messiah was a (virtually) transcendent figure . . . a glorious-one (Jesus Christ—Superstar!)—even semi-divine individual So . . . how could Jesus—again, a mere man—be *that* Messiah? In a way Jesus is answering that question (about Himself) by raising this underlying conundrum (irresolvable question) in Jewish messianic expectation—how can those very different OT expectations of the Messiah be resolved.

To “cut to the chase” (and explain why we may not sense the dilemma that Jesus is presenting to the Pharisees here) we can say the answer is *easy* for us and *impossible* for the Pharisees!—the answer is The Messiah had to be—at the same time—a *Son* of David, but *Greater* than David! And . . . He would be Greater than David not only in the role of conquering King (He will be that conquering King one day!) but His “greatest greatness” is in the role of Suffering Servant . . . of Savior and Lord. In other words, the Messiah must be the Son of David and the Son of God! He must be—a man (not, to be sure, a mere man, but a true man—even a humble man) and He must also be God (very God of Very God as the Nicene Creed affirms)! And . . . Jesus is the Only One who could be *that* Messiah! (So I’ve just given the punch line away . . . nevertheless . . .)

Transition / Review: One more time! We are in a section of Matthew’s gospel (in Passion Week!) after Jesus has indicted the opposition in three parables (see 21:28-32; 21:33-46; 22:1-14) the opposition comes after Him with a series of questions that intend to discredit Him—they are looking for a pretense to arrest Him (and more!)

Overview: Four Scenes of Conflict 22:15-46

Conflict with Pharisees and Herodians 22:15-22

Conflict with Sadducees 22:23-33

Conflict with a lawyer regarding the Law 22:34-40

\*Conflict with the Pharisees over “the Christ” (the Messiah) 22:41-46

The Set-Up 22:41a

The Pharisees were still **gathered together**. They were stymied but they had not given up! Before they could come up with their next attempt to trap Him, He preempts them with a question of His own for them. So . . .

While they were strategizing . . .

Jesus Asks the Pharisees Three Questions:

Application: Before we get into the exchange here I must make an application (that I’ve made often—it’s about how we converse / interact / dialogue with unbelievers). Jesus has answered their questions and now He asks them questions. He’s not (OF COURSE!) “dialoging” the way some recommend that we dialogue with unbelief (to find common ground, to discover mutual insights, to seek reconciliation by mutual compromise—not at all!) But we do need to talk—and we talk with an objective (the gospel ultimately!) He answered and asked questions (listen!) intended to allow them to see their own error or the inadequacy of their own ideas. It’s indirect—it’s undermining their “worldview.” (“You don’t know as much as you think you know, do you?”) It’s not defensive—it’s offensive (and there is a pun in that!) So . . . He asks questions . . .

Jesus’ First Question: **What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?**—v. 42a. You are aware, no doubt, that the expression “son of” in a context like this means “descendant of,” not necessarily an immediate father / son relationship. “He is asking a question about (distant) ancestry” not a question of

immediate paternity. (Morris, *Matthew: Pillar Commentary Series*, 565) This was a “soft-ball” question which Jesus knew they would be able to answer easily. Many texts in the OT could be cited to prove that the Messiah would be a descendant of David (see 2 Samuel 7:12-13; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Psalm 78:68-72; Psalm 89; Isaiah 11:1, 10; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:21-25; Amos 9:11; Micah 5:2). (See MacArthur, *Matthew 16-23*, 345-47)

Pharisees’ Answer: **They said to Him, ‘The son of David’**—v. 42b. They may have said this . . . with a smirk (“Who doesn’t know this? Are you kidding me? [He’s not much of a ‘cross examiner].”) . . . or with eager confidence (“Hah! We got this! Easy.”) . . . or with caution (pause “Uh . . . okay, we’ll play along . . .”). In any case, it was an answer He knew they would give . . . everyone knew this.

Jesus builds on that answer with another question:

Jesus’ Second Question: **He said to them, ‘Then how does David in the Spirit call Him Lord . . .?’**—v. 43. Now, the key here is that title **Lord**. The term in Greek is κύριον –ος / *kurion –os* and means “master, lord”—when used by slaves or subjects of a ruler or king; or, since it is used for the OT’s term LORD (all caps in the English translations = YHWH = the Lord GOD) (cf. Rom. 4:8; 9:28-29; 10:16) it is a term of deity, divine sovereignty. However, there is some ambiguity here . . . so far . . . (and Jesus is using that ambiguity . . . and we’ll sort it out in a moment . . .) Here Jesus cites Psalm 110:1 . . . (v. 44).

>First let’s talk about Psalm 110 as a whole: There is hardly a more important OT prophecy in the Psalms (or even the whole OT—excluding Isaiah 53<sup>1</sup>) than this Psalm. Boice notes that Psalm 110 is cited directly or alluded to at least twenty-seven times in the NT. Psalm 110:4 is cited in Hebrews in that author’s discussion of the priesthood of Melchizedek (cf. Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21; 8:1; 10:11-13) “and is the dominant idea in those chapters” (Boice, *Matthew 18-28*, 482-83). [GET THE BOOK <>](#)

Now . . . let’s notice the assumptions Jesus makes about Psalm 110. He assumes it is authored by David.<sup>2</sup> He assumes it is inspired by the Spirit<sup>3</sup> (cf. 2 Pet. 1:20-21; in Mark’s gospel it reads “David himself said in the *Holy Spirit*” Mark 12:36, emphasis added). He assumes it is authoritative. He assumes it is “messianic.” (See Michael Rydelnick, *The Messianic Hope*, chapter 11 “An Example From The Writings: Interpreting Psalm 110 As Messianic Prophecy,” 164-84)

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<sup>1</sup> While many other Messianic prophecies have a “dual reference” (e.g. Psalm 22 is about David’s experience hyperbolically [it’s “as if” he was experiencing the things he wrote about] Psalm 22 is about Jesus’ experience on the cross literally [it’s not “as if”—He really suffered what Psalm 22 describes. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me . . .]) both Isaiah 53 and Psalm 110 can refer to none other than Jesus Christ! They are (perhaps the only) directly Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament—and you know how important Isaiah 53 is, right?

<sup>2</sup> On this key assumption of Davidic authorship see Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 391-92. [GET BOOK](#)

<sup>3</sup> We should not pass over this point too quickly: It’s not the main point being made, in fact it’s a “bit” of Jesus’ statement here that doesn’t need to be made to establish His point. Why even mention that David’s words were written **in the Spirit**? It’s as if Jesus takes the opportunity to subtly but clearly affirm His belief in the inspiration of the Psalms—indeed, of the whole Word of God!

All of these assumptions would have been granted by the Pharisees and the scholars of that day. Among the “biblical scholars” of today many (all liberals and even a few “evangelicals”<sup>4</sup>) would question these assumptions. Application: Once again, we either take Jesus (Matthew) as His word or we listen to the scholars.

>Second let’s talk about Psalm 110 verse 1— **THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES UNDER YOUR FEET**—Now, this requires some “sorting out” . . . three Persons are in view here:

(1) **THE LORD** – this is Yahweh (all major caps in the English text in the OT means the Name of the LORD is YHWH יהוה)

(2) **SAID TO MY** – this is David speaking / writing, David is “quoting” something Yahweh has said.

(3) **LORD** – this the person Yahweh is speaking to; this person is David’s Lord; the term is אֲדֹנָי (at the beginning [right to left] אֲ = “to”; אֲדֹנָי *adonai* = the generic title “lord” = master, sovereign)

**SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES UNDER YOUR FEET**— The promise The LORD (YHWH) is making to David’s Lord is a promise of victory, sovereignty, authority along the line of the Messianic promises of Psalm 2 and Daniel 7:13-14. (cf. Turner, *Matthew: ECNT*, 541) Jesus does not elaborate on the details of this verse—His point is made in the simple fact that David calls the Messiah his Lord—but the significance of this part of the verse (and the rest of the psalm “could hardly have been lost on them.” [See Boice, *Matthew 18-28*, 485.] There is much about the Messiah they really did not understand—and could not understand—until they acknowledged that Jesus is the Messiah—like He is a priest after the order of Melchizedek—King and High Priest—Who but Jesus!?)

But what this part of the verse mainly reveals is . . . The Messiah was more than a man! To “**sit at His (God’s) right hand**, [was/is] a place recognized by Jews to be a designation of coequal rank and authority.” “At God’s **right hand**, the Messiah would be invincible . . .” (MacArthur, *Matthew 16-23*, 348) He would be divine! (The expression **PUT YOUR ENEMIES UNDER YOUR FEET** alludes to the ancient practice of victorious kings who would symbolically put his feet on the necks of defeated kings, like a footstool (cf. Josh. 10:24) to prove their impotence and his power and authority.)

Again—key point—this Messianic Figure—David’s **Lord**—is more than a man.

Jesus builds on that citation with another question:

Jesus’ Third Question: **If David calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He (The Messiah) his (David’s) son?**—v. 45a. The conundrum should be apparent but Jesus makes it explicit—“How can David’s son be David’s Lord?” That is, assuming the “son” / descendant is always subservient to a “father” (this was a “given” in the hierarchical / patriarchal societies of the ancient world) how can David assume a “lesser” status to the Messiah—Who is his “son” / descendant?

Now . . . of course, Jesus asks this because . . . He, Himself has been addressed as David’s son throughout Matthew’s gospel (!! ) (see Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15) . . . and He accepted that title (!! ) . . . and He proved He *was/is* David’s Son (!! ) He did so when He did the things the crowds,

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<sup>4</sup> Boice notes: “It is astonishing, therefore, that many commentators, including even some so-called evangelicals, believe Psalm 110 was written by another human writer [other than David]. They see it as flattery of a merely human king . . . they explain Jesus’ words as a concession to the widespread but mistaken opinions of His age, regarding David’s authorship of the Psalms. This is a terrible error, and misses the point of the psalm completely.” (Boice, *Matthew 18-28*, 484)

the blind-men, a Gentile woman, the disciples expected from the son of David! The healings, the feedings, the miracles prove He was/is the expected Messiah (see Matthew 11:3-5—John’s question and Jesus’ answer). But . . . those things also proved He was God! (See MacArthur, *Matthew 16-23*, 349-50) BOOK

So . . . when He is asking about the Messiah—the son of David—He is making a claim for Himself—He, Jesus, is the Messiah and He is greater than David!

Morris offers this summary: “We should not think of this as no more than an exercise in debating skills. There was a widespread idea that the Messiah would be ‘the son of David,’ and that meant for first-century Jews that he would be someone in David’s mold. They recalled David had been a mighty warrior and that in his day Israel’s conquests had been extensive. But Jesus was not that sort of Messiah [yet! KDZ].” “By drawing attention to a defect in the way the Pharisees understood the relationship of David to David’s son, Jesus was encouraging His hearers to think again about what [being the] Messiah meant. There were many things the Pharisees did not understand about [the Messiah]. Let His hearers then not trust those blind guides.” (Morris, *Matthew: Pillar Commentary Series*, 567)

The Pharisees are unable to answer: **No one was able to answer Him a word**—v. 46a. Then opposition had no clue—and they did a wise thing—they stopped talking!

But we know! Because we’ve been following Matthew’s argument all these months! “The answer to the enigma is based on the Matthean teaching of Jesus’ dual ‘paternity.’ Jesus is David’s son because He humanly descended from David, and yet more profoundly he is also David’s Lord (master lord and divine Lord! KDZ) because He is God’s Son. Jesus’ transcendent Sonship is prominently featured in Matthew. (See esp. 1:23; 2:15; 3:17; 4:3, 6; 7:21; 8:29; 11:25-27; 16:16; 17:26; 21:37-39; 22:2; 24:26; 26:29, 39, 42, 53, 63; 27:40, 43, 46, 54; 28:19.)” “In Matthew’s narrative Jesus’ humble Davidic roots (1:1, 16-17; cf. Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4, 11) are not the whole story. Jesus is also the miraculously born, divinely attested Son of God (Matt. 1:23; 3:17; 16:16; 17:5; 21:37; 22:2; 26:63-64). That Jesus is greater than David is already clear (12:1-4; cf. 12:6, 8, 41), but now” it’s clear “the Messiah is the son of David and the Son of God.” (Turner, *Matthew: ECNT*, 541) “Psalm 110 teaches the deity and humanity of Messiah. He is David’s Lord and He is David’s son.” (Wiersbe, *Be Loyal*, 205)

The Conclusion: 22:46b

The Opposition gives up on questions: **nor did anyone dare from that day on ask Him another question.** This not only concludes this particular exchange but “summarizes the result of Jesus debates with all the religious leaders going back as far as 21:15. The leaders have been vanquished by Jesus biblical and rhetorical prowess, yet they are unwilling to believe in Him.” (Turner, *Matthew: ECNT*, 542) Application: No one ever comes to faith by losing in a debate.

The opposition will come back—not with questions to trap Him but with accusations that will lead to His being executed (cf. 26:62-63; 27:11, 13). His predictions of His suffering and death are now looking more ominous than ever.

Conclusion: We should not have a sense of “triumph” here, but profound sadness. They could have known the Messiah! They could have been blessed beyond their expectations! They could have been saved. But they would not believe in Him. “The religious leaders were so blinded by tradition, position, and selfish pride that they could not—and would not—see the truth and receive it.” (Wiersbe, *Be Loyal*, 204)

The question has been asked and answered . . . but not believed.

This is the final break with the religious leadership—no more dialogue—now only a last warning to the disciples, an indictment of the opposition and more plotting to kill Him.