

To Seek and to Save the Lost

Whose Son Is the Christ?

Luke 20:41-44

Rev. Freddy Fritz

December 20, 2015

Whose Son Is the Christ?

Scripture

Jesus is in the final week of his life.

After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus returned to the temple on Monday and drove out the merchants who were selling their wares and obscuring people's access to God. This enraged the religious rulers, who then engaged in several controversies with Jesus. Commentator Darrell Bock says, "Luke 20:1–44 contains five controversies between Jesus and the leadership: the source of Jesus' authority (20:1–8), Jesus' confrontational parable of the vineyard (20:9–19), the dispute over Caesar's tax (20:20–26), the Sadducees' trick question about resurrection (20:27–40), and Jesus' question about the interpretation of Ps. 110:1 (20:41–44)."¹

Today, we are going to look at that fifth controversy between Jesus and the religious leadership (20:41–44). In this controversy it is Jesus who asks a question. It is a question about King David's son.

Let's read about Jesus' question in Luke 20:41–44:

⁴¹ But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? ⁴² For David himself says in the Book of Psalms,

**"The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
⁴³ until I make your enemies your footstool." "**

⁴⁴ David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?" (Luke 20:41–44)

Introduction

Commentator Tom Wright tells a story of children trying to fit a

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51–24:53*, vol. 2, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1582.

balloon into a box:

“Can you get this balloon into that box?” I asked the little children at the party. The balloon was big, and the box was small. They tried squeezing it in but it wouldn’t fit. It kept oozing out through their fingers. One little boy suggested sticking a pin into it, but the others agreed that that was cheating.

Then a little girl, with small, nimble fingers, took the balloon, and undid the knot that was keeping the air inside it. Very carefully she let about half the air out, and quickly tied it up again. Then, with a smile of triumph, she placed the balloon in the box, where it fitted exactly.

That wasn’t quite what I’d had in mind, but I had to admit it was clever. Meanwhile, another child had seen the answer. The box was made of cardboard, folded double in places. She unglued two of its sides, and opened it up to its full dimensions. Now the full-size balloon went in perfectly.²

Wright goes on to say that some people struggle with the nature of Jesus’ identity. They imagine that God, in order to take on human nature, either stopped being God altogether (which is the equivalent of a pin in the balloon), or at least severely shrank his divine nature (which is the equivalent of letting the air out of the balloon). But the entire New Testament, including Luke, would disagree. The first-century Christians believed that Jesus was fully man and fully God. That is, Jesus had a human nature and a divine nature; two natures in one person. Or, as Tom Wright put it, “For the early Christians, part of the point about Jesus was that the living God was fully and personally present in him, not half present or partly present. What happened in Jesus, and supremely in his death, was the personal action of God himself, not some deputy or demi-god.”³

The problem for the people in Jesus’ day is that the kind of Christ that they were expecting was very different than the one God sent. By

² Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 247.

³ Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone*, 247–248.

the way, “Christ” is simply the New Testament word for the Old Testament word “Messiah.” It means “the Anointed One,” the savior and king whom God had promised from ancient times to send to liberate his people. The people in Jesus’ day were expecting a Christ who would be their king. He would fight their battles, overthrow the Roman government, rebuild the temple, and rule them with justice. In other words, the Christ they were expecting was a *political* or *military* Christ who would liberate them from Roman oppression. But they did not realize that the Christ that God sent was a *spiritual* Christ who would liberate them from their sin and spiritual oppression.

In Jesus’ fifth controversy with the religious leaders he asked them a question about the Christ. Interestingly, the religious leaders did not answer Jesus. The question was brilliant, and it forced them to consider it, and then come to the conclusion about who the Christ really is. Jesus’ question was about the Christ, King David’s son.

Lesson

The question about David’s son in Luke 20:41-44 teaches us that Jesus is David’s son and also David’s Lord.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. Jesus Is David’s Son, Thus Affirming His Human Nature (20:41)
2. Jesus Is David’s Lord, Thus Affirming His Divine Nature (20:42-44)

I. Jesus Is David’s Son, Thus Affirming His Human Nature (20:41)

First, we learn that Jesus is David’s son, thus affirming his human nature.

In Jesus’ day the people all agreed that the Christ would be a descendant of King David. So that is where Jesus started. He asked them a question that would be easy for them to answer. Jesus **said to them,**

“How can they say that the Christ is David’s son?” (20:41). The wording of this question is perhaps slightly different than we might expect, but Jesus essentially asked, “Why do they say **that the Christ is David’s son?**”⁴

The people in Jesus’ day commonly believed that the Christ would be a physical, hereditary descendant of King David. Many Scripture passages pointed to this truth.

For example, Isaiah 9:7 said, “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, *on the throne of David* and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this” (cf. also 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89:20-37; Isaiah 9:2-7; Jeremiah 23:5f; 33:14-18; Ezekiel 34:23f).

Four times Luke says that Jesus was a descendant of King David, the clearest of which is Luke 2:4, “And Joseph [Jesus’ earthly father] also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, *because he was of the house and lineage of David*” (cf. also Luke 1:27; 1:32; 1:69).

And just a few days before Jesus’ current controversy with the religious leaders in the temple precincts in Jerusalem, blind Bartimaeus affirmed Jesus as being a descendant of King David, when he shouted, “Jesus, *Son of David*, have mercy on me!” (Luke 18:38).

The Christ would be a physical, hereditary descendant of King David. No one disputed this. In fact, that was the common expectation of the people in Jesus’ day. Jesus, of course, was a physical descendant of King David. Meticulous records were kept in the temple, and no one accused Jesus of not being a physical descendant of King David. It would have been very easy to prove that he was a direct descendant of King David, on both sides of his family.

Commentator Kent Hughes concludes:

So there was no question about his Davidic descent. But what Jesus was referencing by his question was the unfortunately limited

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51–24:53*, vol. 2, 1634.

and earthbound conception of Messiah that was prevalent. The common view was that the son of David would be a gifted human leader who would bring in a new political kingdom like David of old. The problem was that the scribes had not read the messianic prophecies with spiritual eyes, because those prophecies demanded a supra-human figure (cf. 2 Samuel 7:12–16).⁵

So, Jesus is David’s son, thus affirming his human nature.

II. **Jesus Is David’s Lord, Thus Affirming His Divine Nature (20:42-44)**

And second, we learn that Jesus is David’s Lord, thus affirming his divine nature.

Jesus continued his question to the religious leaders, **“For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?”** (20:42-44). Jesus quoted the first verse of Psalm 110.

Let’s take a few minutes to unpack what Jesus was getting at in using this psalm. Commentator Philip Ryken says that “Psalm 110 is a messianic psalm – a psalm that makes explicit prophecies about the coming of the Christ. All of the ancient rabbis agreed that David was prophesying about the Christ.”⁶ Later the Puritan Edward Reynolds would say, “This psalm is one of the fullest and most compendious prophecies of the person and offices of Christ in the whole Old Testament.”⁷ In fact, Psalm 110 is by far the most quoted passage in the New Testament. Commentator James Montgomery Boice says, “By my count, Psalm 110:1 is quoted directly or alluded to indirectly at least

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 281.

⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 392.

⁷ Edward Reynolds, quoted in James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms: An Expositional Commentary*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 3:893.

twenty-seven times.”⁸

Psalm 110 begins with a dialogue. The first question that comes to mind when one reads this Psalm is the identity of the two persons called “**Lord**” in verse 1, “**The Lord said to my Lord.**” Who are the two “Lords”?

Here it is helpful to look at Psalm 110 itself. Verse 1 begins, “The LORD says to my Lord.” Note that the first “LORD” is spelled with all capital letters: L – O – R – D. That same spelling occurs in verses 2 and 4 as well. Most English translations print this LORD with all capital letters to show that it refers to God himself. It is the usual translation for God’s name – “Jehovah.” That is the special divine name that belongs to God himself. So the first LORD, the one who is speaking, is none other than Jehovah, God himself.

But who is the second “Lord” to whom Jehovah is speaking? Again, looking at the text in Psalm 110:1 you will notice that the second “Lord” is spelled with an initial capital letter, followed by small letters: L – o – r – d. This Lord is a translation for “Adonai.” This is a general title that is used for any kind of lord, but here in Psalm 110:1 it refers to the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. This is clear from the rest of the psalm, which declares that this “Lord” will rule over the kingdom of God. Let’s read Psalm 110:1-4:

- 1 The LORD says to my Lord:
 “Sit at my right hand,
 until I make your enemies your footstool.”
- 2 The LORD sends forth from Zion
 your mighty scepter.
 Rule in the midst of your enemies!
- 3 Your people will offer themselves freely
 on the day of your power,
 in holy garments;
 from the womb of the morning,
 the dew of your youth will be yours.

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 107–150: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 892.

4 The LORD has sworn
 and will not change his mind,
 “You are a priest forever
 after the order of Melchizedek.”

Psalm 110 then is a dialogue between the LORD God (Jehovah) and the Lord Christ. The Psalm essentially is saying, “The LORD God says to my Lord the Christ, sit on the right hand of my throne to rule the universe.”

What is curious about the psalm is that David, the human author of Psalm 110, regards the Christ as superior to himself, calling him “my Lord.” It would have struck David’s readers as very strange that he called someone “my Lord.” As far as we know David never called anyone “Lord,” except the Lord God himself, and maybe his father, or perhaps Saul, who was king of Israel before him. David certainly did not call anyone “Lord” once he had become King of Israel. Yet, here is a person who is so great that David calls him “my Lord.”

The reason this is curious is that the Christ was supposed to be David’s descendant, and in that culture fathers never called their sons (or descendants) “Lord.” No patriarch in ancient culture would ever do that, and certainly no king would ever call his son “Lord.” The son was supposed to honor his father, not the other way around. So, it made sense to the people that when the Christ came he would surely pay honor to his father, King David, and not the other way around. Yet, here is King David giving honor to the Christ, acknowledging the superiority of his descendant. The Christ would be David’s son, yet David also calls him “Lord.”

And another thing that is curious in Psalm 110 is that the second Lord – the Christ – will receive a kingdom. He will sit at God’s right hand, which represents God’s favor, blessing, rule, and authority. The second Lord in David’s psalm will be exalted to a position of power and authority from where he will rule over everything. He will reign in glory and share in the royal majesty of God.

So, Jesus asks, **“David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?”** (20:44).

Jesus knew that everyone in his audience agreed that he was a physical descendant of King David. No one argued that Jesus was a human descendant of David. But how could Jesus be the Christ? That is where the people had great difficulty. How is the question answered?

Jesus of course did not answer the question. However, the answer to the question lies in the two stages of the Christ's history. First, by birth Jesus is the "Son of David," as blind Bartimaeus affirmed. And second, by his death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and present session at God's right hand Jesus reigns as David's "**Lord.**" Jesus was in fact affirming his own divine nature, that he is indeed the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One sent by God to seek and to save the lost. The apostle Peter affirmed this understanding of Jesus in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. He said in Acts 2:34-36, "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Jesus wanted to help his listeners understand that his resurrection from the dead would be crucial to understanding his identity, particularly his divine nature. He knew that in just a few days he would be crucified. But he also knew that God would raise him back to life again three days after his death. And when that happened he wanted his listeners to understand that he was indeed the Christ.

The apostle Paul made this clear in his letter to the Romans, where he said in Romans 1:3-4, "... concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord."

During his ministry Jesus had given many convincing proofs that he was the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One who had been sent by God the Father to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus had demonstrated his power over sin, sickness, death, demons, and even nature itself. Jesus never ever sinned in his entire life. And he loved

sinner with an impeccable love. Those who did not believe in Jesus did not do so because there was not enough evidence. No, they rejected Jesus, his person and his work, in spite of all the evidence about who Jesus is and what he had come to do.

So, Jesus is David's son, thus affirming his human nature. And Jesus is also David's Lord, thus affirming his divine nature.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the question about David's son in Luke 20:41-44, we should believe that Jesus is the Christ who came to seek and to save the lost.

We should be very clear that Jesus' entire ministry was to seek and to save the lost, and to bring them to the Father for salvation.

Jesus experienced abandonment of his Father's love for our salvation. Here is how Tim Keller expresses it:

If after a service some Sunday morning one of the members of my church comes to me and says, "I never want to see you or talk to you again," I will feel pretty bad. But if today my wife or my lifelong best friend came up to me and said, "I never want to see you or talk to you again," I would be devastated. The longer the love, the deeper the love, the greater the torment of its loss.

But the forsakenness experienced by Christ on the Cross, the relational loss, was between the Father and the Son, who had loved each other from *all eternity*. . . . Jesus was experiencing Judgment Day. "My God, by God, why have you forsaken me?" It wasn't a rhetorical question. And the answer is: For you, for me, for us. Jesus was forsaken by God so that we would never have to be. The judgment that should have fallen on us fell instead on Jesus.⁹

Friends, Jesus came to earth for you and me. He suffered for you and me. He voluntarily died for you and me. And he wants you and me to be reconciled to God the Father.

⁹ Adapted from Timothy Keller, *King's Cross* (Penguin Group, 2011), 201-202.

Perhaps some of you want the gift of salvation, but you want to come with conditions. Again, listen to Tim Keller explain what it means to come to Jesus for salvation:

I've heard people say, "I'm checking out Christianity, but I also understand Christians can't do this and the Bible says you're supposed to do that. You're supposed to love the poor or you're supposed to give up sex outside of marriage. I can't accept that." So people want to come to Christ with a list of conditions.

But the real question is this: Is there a God who is the source of all beauty and glory and life, and if knowing Christ will fill your life with his goodness and power and joy, so that you would live with him in endless ages with his life increasing in you every day? If that's true, you wouldn't say things like, "You mean, I have to give up ___ (like sex or something else)."

Let's say you have a friend who is dying of some terrible disease. So you take him to the doctor and the doctor says, "I have a remedy for you. If you just follow my advice you will be healed and you will live a long and fruitful life, but there's only one problem: while you're taking my remedy you can't eat chocolate." Now what if your friend turned to you and said, "Forget it. No chocolate? What's the use of living? I'll follow the doctor's remedy, but I will also keep eating chocolate."

If Christ is really God, then all the conditions are gone. To know Jesus Christ is to say, "Lord, anywhere your will touches my life, anywhere your Word speaks, I will say, 'Lord, I will obey. There are no conditions anymore.'" If he's really God, he can't just be a supplement. We have to come to him and say, "Okay, Lord, I'm willing to let you start a complete reordering of my life."¹⁰

I urge you to turn to Jesus in faith and repentance today. Believe that he really is fully man and fully God, and that he is the only one sent by God to save sinners. And don't come to him with any conditions. Surrender every area of your life to him. And then you will be saved. Amen.

¹⁰ Adapted from Tim Keller, "Conversations about Christmas with Tim Keller," iAmplify.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be
found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
3. www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=Fred-dyFritz

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org

PRAYER:

O Lord our God, I want to thank you for sending your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Savior. Thank you that his mission was – and still is – to seek and to save the lost.

O God, if there is anyone here today who is not yet a Christian, please grant that person the gift of faith and repentance.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!