

# THE QUESTION OF THE DAY

## *A Meditation on Mark 12:35-37 and Psalm 110:1*

It's Wednesday—"Ash Wednesday"—two days before Jesus will be "tried" before a kangaroo court and crucified for being the King of the Jews. The day has been spent at the Temple (Mk. 11:27, 12:35, 13:1). It has been a day of continual questions. It began with a question about Jesus' authority (11:28) to disrupt ministry in the Temple, when He overturned the tables and called it a "den of robbers."

Following this incident, Jesus told The Parable of the Tenants. The parable ended with Jesus saying that the owner of the vineyard will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others, because the tenants killed the owner's beloved son. The religious leaders "perceived that he had told the parable against them" (12:12). After Jesus' stinging indictment, different religious leaders sought to discredit Jesus with thorny "stump the Messiah" questions.

They fired three retaliatory questions at Jesus "to trap him in his talk" (12:13). First, the Pharisees and Herodians asked, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" Questions about taxes must always be handled with kid gloves, but Jesus answers it brilliantly. Now it was the Sadducees' turn. They asked about marriage at the resurrection. Jesus had no problem answering their question either. Finally, one of the scribes asked, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Again, Jesus easily answers the question. "And after that," Mark says, "no one dared to ask him any more questions" (12:34).

However, as Ralph Martin said, "After a day of questions comes the question of the day." Now it's time for Jesus to ask a question of His own. Bear in mind that Jesus' question is not designed to win a debate, or show that He is smarter than those dummies. Jesus is *not* stooping to their level. His question is motivated by love and grace. His question is intended to help them see from the Scriptures, that the Messiah is much more than a human descendant of David.

Jesus' question (a few others will set up the main question) will help the people answer the question, "Who is the Messiah?" The magnitude of this question can not be overstated. Imagine a teacher saying, "Class, this is the most important question on the final exam. Think carefully before you answer. If you miss some of the other questions you can still get a good grade. But if you get this question wrong, you go to hell." Jesus isn't playing games with His questions. He knows that eternal destinies depend upon knowing who the Messiah is, knowing who He is.

Jesus begins with what the people already understand, and then He tries to expand their theology. Matthew fills in a few details that are not found in Mark: "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?'" (Matt. 22:41-42a). I'm sure the Pharisees smiled and thought, "That's a no-brainer." They answer confidently, "the son of David" (vs. 42b). They knew that in the Davidic Covenant, the LORD had promised David, "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam. 7:12-14). So clearly, the Christ would be the son of David—a descendant from his line.

Jesus presses further, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, in 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. So how is he his son?" (Mk. 12:35-37; cf. Ps. 110:1). This is the question of the day.

If I can paraphrase, Jesus is saying, "Your answer is correct as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. It fails to incorporate what Psalm 110:1 says about the Messiah." Jesus stresses that the Psalm is written by David under inspiration of the Spirit, perhaps, because what David says about the Messiah could only have been revealed by the Spirit. In Hebrew, Psalm 110:1 is, "Yahweh (God's personal name) said to my adonai (God's title)..." To put it simply, it means, "God the Father said to God the Son..." When Jesus asked, "David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" everybody was stumped. They didn't have the theological categories necessary to answer Jesus' question. Jesus is proving to them, from the Scriptures, that the Messiah is not just the son of David; He is also the sovereign Lord. Jesus' question cannot be comprehended or answered apart from the doctrines of the incarnation and the Trinity. The Christ is David's descendant *and* He is divine. Thus, David calls his son, "my Lord." By Wayne Christensen/Fox Lake Community Church/ See "**Permissions**" for reproduction authorization.

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