

THE SCRIPTURAL IDENTITY OF CHRIST

Mark 12:34-43 (Key verse 36)

“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.””

In today's passage, we are going to think about the identity of the Christ (Also known as the Messiah). Do any of you know what “Christ” means? Yes....it means “Saviour.” And not just any Saviour.....but the Saviour that God specifically sent into the world to save you and me. This sounds really promising, right! I mean, we all need saving from something. For example financial troubles.....hardships at home and at work.....health concerns.....and career problems. These are all problems we need saving from. But these worldly problems are not what God sent the Christ to save us from....As they saying goes... “*we have much bigger problems.*” Problems caused by invisible yet powerful enemies like Satan (he is real and powerful)....sin (that lives in us).....and death (that always hang over our heads). Though people might regard their worldly or day to day problems as most urgent and serious.....nothing can be more serious than to be enslaved by the power of Satan.... nothing can be more serious than to live under the power of Sin....and nothing can be more serious than to live with Death in our hearts.....because they practically destroy our lives and aim to separate us eternally from the LORD our God. Then who can save us from these unseen and destructive spiritual enemies? Only the Christ of God! Today, let's deeply think about the **scriptural identity of the Christ**.....and newly accept Him into our hearts. So we move to from being **NEAR** the kingdom to **IN** the kingdom of God. Amen!

Before we look at today's passage, let's remind ourselves of what happened in the preceding verses. (28-31) Jesus was still in the temple courts when one of the teachers of the law came and asked Him:.... “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” Can you still remember what Jesus answered?.... Yes..... He proclaimed that the most important one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

At this the teacher of the law agreed 120% with Jesus. He said: “Well said, teacher.....You are right! (32-33) Wow!! This teacher of the law was very wise! He **knew** that God is one and there is no other but him.....He also **knew** that to love [God] with all [his] heart, with all [his] understanding and with all [his] strength, and to love [his] neighbour as [himself] was more **important than** any religious act! **HE KNEW** this fundamental truth that we though about last week. Then how did Jesus respond?

Let's turn to today's passage, and look at verse 34: When Jesus saw that the teacher of the law had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” This is surprising, don't you think? I mean, this teacher of the law was a bible expert.....he seemed to have known it back to front.....He also lived a religious life by strictly observing religious ceremonies and practices.....he adhered to oral laws and traditions.....he believed in the afterlife and even waited for the Christ to come. If this was true of this teacher of the law, then surely he was already **IN** the kingdom of God. Right? Surprisingly not!! For Jesus said to him: You are not far from the kingdom of God.”this teacher of the law.....with all his bible knowledge and religious living..... was **NEAR** the kingdom of God.....but not yet **IN** the kingdom of God. The question is.....practically what is the difference between being **NEAR** the kingdom of God and **IN** the kingdom of God? Is there even a difference?

Yes, there is a huge difference! And it lies in either living under the power of Satan....Sin...or death....or Not! Whether we know it or not.....these invisible enemies are what tortures our hearts daily..... these invisible enemies bring so much fear....stress.....anxiety and just trouble into our lives. In short, these invisible enemies separate us from the presence of God. Those who are **NEAR** the kingdom of God stand outside the presence of God and therefore have no chance to be free from these destructive enemies, and must live powerlessly under its power. However, once we enter the Kingdom, God delivers us from these destructive enemies! He delivers us from the power of death. He delivers us from discouragement. He frees us from fear and empowers us to challenge the troubles we face in this world. This is what it means to live **IN** the kingdom of God. As we stand and live **IN** God's presence and protective care.

The golden question then is, why was the teacher of the law – with all his scriptural knowledge – still being tormented by these enemies....Why was he **NEAR** instead of **IN** the kingdom of God. Was his biblical knowledge not enough? Look at verse 35. It was because the teacher of the law had a distorted understanding of the scriptural identity of the Christ! He thought, that the Christ would merely be the son of David. In other words, he believed that the Christ would be an ordinary person....like King David.....who as an ordinary man would wield political and military authority.....Such a Christ cannot deliver you from Satan... Such a Christ cannot deliver you from Sin. Such a Christ cannot deliver you from death.

Then why would he have such a reductionist view of the Christ? I mean, the true identity of the Christ was not hidden, even in the Old Testament. It was explicitly revealed in Psalm 110. It was also revealed in Isaiah 9:6, which calls the Christ: “Mighty God,” and “Everlasting Father.” The point is, the Scriptures clearly teach that the Christ is in very nature God. So why then did the teacher of the law expect a human Christ? It was because, he regarded his worldly problems and challenges as most urgent and serious. That is why he wanted a human Christ to deliver Israel from Roman oppression.....a human Christ that can re-establish his country as a powerful kingdom among the nations.....just as in the days of king David.....No doubt he longed for this human Christ to bless his life to be filled with riches.....success....power and glory!

This seems like a noble view of the Christ.....don't you think? It holds so much promise for personal gain and convenience.....Just think of a Christ that can give you power, glory and success. It's nice!! As an Israelite, why would one not want to embrace this identity of Christ? Because it is a human made identity of Christ.....it's a distortion of Christ's real identity.....a distortion of why God sent as the Christand merely creates false hopes and ambitions in our hearts. That leaves our real problem.....our sin problem.....untouched!

Let's look at today's key verse. Verse 36. 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.” In this quote from Psalm 110:1 – the LORD who speaks is Yahweh and the Lord who is spoken to is the Christ. Importantly, King David refers to the Christ.....not as my son or great grandson.....but as “my Lord.” Yes, David himself calls the Christ ‘Lord.’ This means that David acknowledged that though Christ would come as one of his descendants, He would not be just an ordinary human beingwho would like any other human king.....come to save people from their political, military and economic or person problems. No! David understood that the scriptural identity of the Christ goes much.... Much..... deeper than that! That is why, though the Christ who as to his human nature was a descendant of David. He is also through the Spirit of

holiness..... the Son of God.(Rom 1:3-4)

Look again at verse 36. The LORD (or Yahweh) said to the Christ - "Sit at my right hand..........If the Christ was only human, God would never say to him.....Sit at my right hand...., because no human, no matter how great or powerful he is.....can ever sit as God's equal and so share in His power and authority.....God is infinitely superior to humans.....However, if the Christ is God incarnate.....then it absolutely make sense that God says to Him: Sit at my right hand....to share equally in God's almighty power and authority. Then why does the Christ need that much power and authority? Why do the Christ need to share the power and authority of the Almighty God?

Look again at verse 36. The LORD also said to the Christ.....until I put your enemies under your feet." When the teacher of the law, with his reductionist view of the Christ read this, he thought the LORD was talking about putting his human enemies, like the Romans, under the Christ's feet. Yet, that is not what God meant at all! The enemies God was referring to were way more dangerous.....way more powerful.....and presented way more serious problems than the day to day problems we face in this world. The enemies God referred to was Satansin..... and death......These are our spiritual enemies.....who fight day and night to separate us from our heavenly Father.....Think about it.....Satan Is a fallen angel.....and described as a great dragon.....who leads not only you and me astray.....but he is so powerful that he leads the whole world astray. (Rev 12:9) There is no way that you and I can ever on our own stand against and overcome Satan! He is too strong...He is too clever for us. That is why we need a Christ who sits at the right hand of God.....who with power and authority deliver us from Satan's lies and temptations and strongholds. What about sin...sin lives in us.....to constantly push us in rebellion and disobedience to God.....more than that, sin separates us from God....This is way more serious than finding a job.....it is way more serious than passing an exam.....it is way more serious than getting a pay rise.....as it deals with our eternal destiny. And our living relationship with God. The truth is, how can we ever deal with our sin problem on our own.....can you rip it out of your heart.....or extract it from your soul? We cannot. Sin lives powerfully within us. That is why we need a Christ who sits at the right hand of God...in power and authority.....to save us from the destructive force of sin..... What about death.....the last enemy? (1 Cor 15:26) It is the cause of so much fatalism....despair.....and hopelessness.....yet we stand absolutely powerless against it. That is why we need a Christ who sits at the right hand of God...in power and authority.....to save us from the power of death.....and one day even raise us to eternal life. That's the Christ God sends us.

Then who fits this scriptural identity of the Christ? Yes.....Jesus does! Because Jesus is the only one who can save you and me from the power of Satan.....Sin....and Death.....He is the only One, because he was the one who suffered....He was the One who was rejected.....and He was the One who died like a criminal in our place on the cross.....But He was the one whom God raised after three days, back to life. It is then through Jesus' death and resurrection that God with His almighty power and authority save us and deliver us from Satan...Sin.....and Death.....and this power of deliverance is poured out into our hearts daily when we..... embrace Jesus by faith.....as the Scriptural Christ for our lives. Amen! Yes we have many life problems.....financial problems.....health problems.....job problems.....relationship problems.....Generally, these are the problems that we are most concerned about.....and pray about! However, through this passage we can learn that we have way more serious problems.....spiritual problems as we face powerful and unseen enemies in and around us. Yet

we need not be discouraged....we need not live under the power of sin..Satan and Death.....We need not live in fear..... because Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God in power and authority.....to deliver us daily and eternally from this destructive enemies.....If only we have the correct view.....the scriptural view of Jesus Christ.....then we will earnestly and decisively approach Him moment by moment to save us! And in this way, we move from being **NEAR** the kingdom to **IN** the Kingdom of God. Amen!

Now very interestingly...yet alarmingly.....if the teacher of the law studied the Scriptures, that proclaimed the Christ to be both human and God.....why did they miss or reject this scriptural identity of Jesus Christ? I mean they were experts bible students and teachers.....how did they still not get who the Christ is and ultimately Jesus was? Look again at verse 36. Jesus said that David spoke by the Holy Spirit. King David understood and accepted the scriptural identity of Christ, because the Holy Spirit worked in his heart. (John 16:14) The teachers of the law, on the other hand viewed the Christ based on their human understanding.....and therefore understood only what appealed to their carnal nature. Indeed, the teachers of the law were not stupid. They were brilliant and well educated. However, they were spiritually blind, because they did not listen to the Holy Spirit. **What about you and me? What about our ministry? We attend weekly Sunday worship services.....we have bible studies.....write bible testimonies.....And we participate in church activities...But are we any different from the teachers of the law? They studied the Scriptures even more than us.....yet they still did not know tge Christ of God.....They were still near the Kingdom and not in the Kingdom of God. Or are we a ministry filled with people like King David.....who hears and listens to the Holy Spirit when we study the bible?.....People who personally knows Christ and daily live in His Spirit and love!**

Indeed, knowing Christ and His saving power is not something that we can fake. We see this very clearly in the contrast between the behaviour of the teachers of the law and the poor widow!! Look at verses 38-40. The teachers of the law rejected the scriptural identity of Christ. This meant that they did not know Christ nor His power or love. Consequently, instead of honouring God and serving people in His love they instead liked to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces.....they also liked to trivial things like to have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets.....They also shamelessly cheated widows out of their property and then pretended to love God by making long prayers in public. Take the poor widow on the other hand.....who came and put in the treasury two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Yet, Jesus was so impressed with her. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.....combined. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, sacrificially put in EVERYTHING—all she had to live on." Why would she do this? Why would she put in all that she had to live on? It was because, unlike the teachers of the law, this widow already entered the kingdom of God through the power and deliverance of the Christ of God. Her heart was free from the restrictive power of sin.....Her heart was free from the deceiving temptations of Satan.....Her heart was free from the destructive force of death..... This meant that she was free to obey God's greatest commandment – to express her love to Him through her sacrificial offering! If her heart was still under the power of sin and death....if she was still enslaved by Satan.....she would never ever put in everything she had for God. She would simply be unable to. Just like the teachers of the law. Yet, because Christ saved her.....she was free and willing to obey Him and offer Him everything. This then is the

difference between being near the Kingdom and In the Kingdom of God.

In conclusion. We face many problems in this world. We struggle to put food on the table. We struggle to pay the bills. We struggle to pass our exams. We struggle with our health.....we are tired. These struggles are real and they are important. But they are not the most serious and urgent problems we face. If we do think they are most urgent, then like the teachers of the law we will look for a saviour that only saves people from these things. While we continue to live hypocritical and selfish lives, just like the teachers of the law. However if we understand that we have bigger problems and enemies.....like Satan, who is real.....like sin (its real).....like the power of death (its real) If we understand this, then we will come to search for God's Christ who sits at the right hand of God, in power and authority. Only this Christ is strong enough.is powerful enough. To bring us from NEAR the kingdom to IN the kingdom of God. Only Jesus is strong enough to free us from the burdens we carry in our hearts. Jesus is the Christ of God.

Then how did He became our Christ? He did so through suffering.....through rejection.....through His death on the cross and after three days rise again! When we accept this Christ by faith and sincerely in our heart – He delivers us and leads us into God's Kingdom! This does not mean God will ignore our daily struggles. But He did sent us a powerful and authoritative Christ from the bondage of sin.....and the destructive forces of death and the deceiving lies of Satan. Let us not make the same mistake as the teachers of the law. But firmly and absolutely accept Jesus as the scriptural fulfilment of God's Christ. Amen!