

Who is Christ?

Luke 20:41-47

I would like to begin this morning by reading the opening paragraphs of Josh McDowell's book *More Than a Carpenter*.

[Read chapter 1 "What Makes Jesus Different?"]

While it was written almost 40 years ago, it is just as pertinent today. And we're seeing a marked increase in intolerance toward Christ and Christianity. Would you agree? Doesn't it seem like the attacks against Christ and Christians are more brazen, perhaps even more hate filled?

Mention that you follow Christ and you're automatically branded as a narrow-minded, intolerant, homophobic, bigot.

How is it that we can mention prayer for the people of France or Russia after experiencing horrific terrorist attacks and yet condemn a coach for praying after a game with players who voluntarily join him?

How is that we can talk about anything with a co-worker, but when we mention Christ it's taboo and we're told not to proselytize?

How is that when a student wants to draw a picture about the crucifixion in art class, or read a Bible during free time, or reference Christ in a graduation speech that those are condemned as inappropriate?

How is it that we are told not to judge all Muslims based on the actions of a few radical extremists yet all Christians are judged based on the actions of a few extremists?

Christians who want to be vocal about Christ aren't just being marginalized, we're being attacked. We're being told to tow the party line or there will be serious ramifications. Let's remember though that the attack is really against Christ.

But it's not just in our day that this is happening, it was going on in Jesus' day as well. The religious leaders were adamantly opposed to the claim by Jesus and a few others that He was the Christ.

In a final public appearance before His trial and crucifixion Jesus once more confronted the crowd with His claims of being Messiah. It was especially directed to the religious leaders because they were His biggest opponents refuting His claims to be the Messiah and refusing to believe Him or even believe in Him.

Let's pick up our narrative in Luke 20:41-47.

A sound defense about the Christ

A serious warning against the Scribes

A reasonable conclusion

I. A SOUND DEFENSE ABOUT THE CHRIST – vs. 41-44

We read in verse 40 that no one dared ask Jesus any more questions, but that didn't stop Jesus from asking them a question. In verses 41 He presents a quandary about His humanity.

A. A Quandary About His Humanity – vs. 41

We understand a quandary to mean a dilemma or a perplexing position.

Here it is in verse 41: "How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David?"

It's not all that different than the question they asked about whether or not it was right to pay taxes to Caesar.

In this case was Christ the son of David and if so why does David call Him Lord?

It is a question about the humanity of Jesus. His antagonists were left with a quandary. Unless they were willing to admit that Jesus was the Messiah, they couldn't answer His question. If they chose to

answer that He was not the Messiah (which they really believed) they risked a falling out with the people since just a few days earlier they had welcomed Him into Jerusalem with shouts proclaiming Him as the long awaited Messiah.

If they agreed that He was in fact the Christ, He would ask them why they didn't believe Him.

Ravi Zacharias gives a profound reason for man's unwillingness to accept Him. I'll apologize now for not having his Indian accent to give it more punch. He said: "A man rejects God neither because of intellectual demands nor because of the scarcity of evidence. A man rejects God because of a moral resistance that refuses to admit his need for God."

The religious leaders certainly had enough intellect and evidence to consider the facts. There were many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah all which were verifiable beginning with His virgin birth. They certainly could have interviewed and examined the evidence through eye witnesses from Mary, the mother of Jesus to John the Baptist who made the first public announcement of His coming to the many who were recipients of His benevolent, miraculous acts. Even some of the religious leaders were witnesses of many of His miracles. Why didn't they believe? It wasn't because of a lack of evidence. It was, as Ravi Zacharias admits, a refusal to admit their need for God, in this case a Savior in the person of Messiah. They refused because of hardened hearts. They could not believe because they would not believe.

It's the same today, don't you agree? Man rejects Christ because they don't believe they need Him, so they harden their heart toward Him. Man's rejection of Christ has always been about self-sufficiency.

They're good enough.

They give enough.

There are other ways other than Christ.

Or Christ was just or only a man, nothing more, nothing else. He couldn't save Himself from the crucifixion, what makes them think He could save them. They don't look any further than the physical aspect of His crucifixion never realizing that His death was for a greater purpose.

They believed that the Messiah, based on the promise given to David in II Samuel, would come through His lineage. In that sense the Messiah is the son of David, a descendant. It would be no different than saying that I am the son of Peter Wideman who was my Great-great-great grandfather. In that same sense we could say that Noah was the son of Adam.

According to the promise given to David, the Messiah would be a physical descendant, someone born in his family tree. So they believed the Messiah would be from David's lineage, but they didn't believe it was Jesus.

Yet there are those like philosopher/atheist Bertrand Russell who claim that Jesus never lived. He asserts "Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him."

The Bible is not a history book, but it is historically accurate. The religious leaders certainly knew that Jesus was a physical descendant of David. If they doubted His ancestry all they had to do was go to the Temple and check the historical birth records beginning with Joseph and Mary and trace their lineage back through the royal line and they would come to David as a direct ancestor of theirs. That alone would stand regarding His birth in history.

There is plenty of other evidence in the gospels to refute the claims of those like Bertrand Russell that Jesus was an actual person, recorded in history for posterity. If the Jewish records housed in the Temple were not sufficient enough, there would have been the meticulous census records taken at

the time of the taxation under Caesar Augustus.

Other Biblical evidence supports the physical nature of His humanity.

Romans 1:3 “He was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.”

Luke 2:52 “He kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.”

Hebrews 2:14 “Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same.”

Hebrews 2:17 Jesus “had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

Matthew 4:1-2 – Jesus was hungry.

John 4:7 – Jesus was thirsty.

John 4:5-6 – Jesus got tired

Luke 10:21 – Jesus experienced joy.

Matthew 26:37 – Jesus experienced grief.

John 11:5, 36 – Jesus experienced love.

Matthew 9:36 – Jesus experienced compassion.

Luke 7:9 – Jesus exhibited amazement.

Mark 3:5 – Jesus was angered.

Perhaps the best passage explaining the humanity of Jesus is in John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”

Yet, it isn't just in the New Testament that we read and would expect to find evidence of Christ's humanity. The Old Testament gives prophetic promise to His humanity.

II Samuel 7:11b-14

Isaiah 11:1 “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse: from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.”

Jeremiah 23:5 “‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.’”

Micah 5:2 “But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

The physical and emotional characteristics of Jesus were all experienced by Him, except one. He did not sin. Of the many names and titles in the New Testament, son of David speaks to His humanity.

In Matthew's parallel account of this event, when Jesus asked the question about what they thought of Christ as to whose son He was, the Pharisees respond that He was the Son of David. This came from their own conclusion based on the prophecies of the Old Testament not based on the popular opinion of the crowd earlier in the week when they also called Christ the son of David.

Let's be certain about one thing as to why Jesus asked the question in the first place. After all, any other efforts to convince them that He was the Messiah had fallen on deaf ears and hard hearts. Why would Jesus choose to engage them again with His identity knowing their past refusal? John Mac Arthur suggests that Jesus uses this as yet one more evangelistic opportunity to reach the lost, to convince them that He is the Messiah and that they need a Savior. He revealed His purpose for coming in Luke 19:10 “The son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”

This was yet one more opportunity for Him to present the truth of the gospel found in Him as the Christ. Let me say before going any further that it was essential that the Messiah be human, born in the flesh. Jesus, the Christ had to become a man. If He was only God He could not die. If He was only man He could not atone for sin.

For the religious leaders it was a quandary concerning His humanity, the validity of which is supported by Scripture. But Christ wasn't just a

human. Jesus quotes from the Old Testament confirming His deity.

B. A Quote Confirming His Deity – vs. 42-44

Jesus once asked the disciples who people thought He was. (Matthew 16:13-20)
Some said He was John the Baptist.
Others said He was Elijah.
Still others concluded He was one of the prophets.

Then He asked the disciples who they thought He was. Peter responded that He was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Earlier when Jesus calmed the storm following the feeding of the 5,000, they concluded that He was the Son of God.

But Jesus wasn't asking them here to confirm His identity. He was asking the religious leaders. Mankind is asking all kinds of questions to which we may never find an answer?
Where did we come from?
Why are we here?
Is there life elsewhere in the universe?
Will we be able to time travel?
Some will never be known apart from Scripture. But perhaps the greatest question that we must answer is the one posed by Christ. “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?”
The answer to that will determine our eternal destiny.

I am hoping at some point to have a discussion with someone about what he thinks regarding Christ. In the past he has said that there are many ways to heaven. If that's true then Jesus was a liar and Scripture can't be trusted.
Jesus said He was the only way to the Father. He said if you believe in Him you will have eternal life.
He said He was the door, the bread of life, the living water.

Paul wrote that the gift of God is eternal life through Christ, something we receive by grace through faith.

If that isn't true then the Bible is false and we have been duped into believing a lie.
If it is true, and I believe it is, then there are billions of people, right now who are deceived into believing a lie that their faith system will somehow save them. Because that is true, like Jesus, we need to take every opportunity to share the gospel with them to give them one more opportunity to receive Christ as Savior.

In his first epistle, John states that whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar, but everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and if you have the Son you have life, but if you don't have the Son you don't have life.
(I John 2:21-25; 4:1-6; 5:1, 11-13)

Jesus pointed out a quandary regarding their view concerning the humanity of the Christ. Then He confirmed through an Old Testament quote the deity of the Christ. In order to atone for sin He not only had to be a man, He had to be God.

Is He just the son of man or He is also the son of God? What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He?

To answer that Jesus quoted from Psalm 110, a Messianic psalm written by David. The humanity and the deity of the Christ are evident in this psalm. “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’”

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost Peter cited this same Psalm and declared that the one spoken of by David was the very one they crucified. He proclaimed that Jesus is both Lord and Christ.

When David wrote this psalm he was convinced

that his descendant would not only be the Messiah, the Christ but that He was also divine.

We won't take the time today, but a good study would be to consider the many names of God used in the Old Testament that are names used of Christ in the New Testament.

Many of the attributes that describe God in Scripture are attributes used to describe Christ. Many of the works that only God can do are also attributed to Christ.

Just as God is the one who is worshiped in the Old Testament we see that Christ is worshiped in the New Testament.

How is the Messiah David's Lord if He is his son? The only explanation is that He is both divine and human, God and man.

Paul affirmed this when he wrote to the Philippians stating that Christ set aside His glory while still retaining His deity in order to take on humanity. At no point while He lived on earth among us as a man was He ever not God.

If God became a man we would expect Him to be sinless;
we would expect Him to speak with wisdom and truth;
we would expect Him to display miraculous power;
we would expect Him to impact humanity;
we would expect Him to show God's nature.
That, my friends, is the person of Christ, the descendant of David who would also be his Lord.

But sadly people today continue in disbelief. They don't believe He is who He claimed to be, they see Him as merely a man, a great teacher or philosopher. Others are convinced He was deluded, nothing more than a schizophrenic idealist convincing Himself and others that He was something He was not. They think He was crazy much like they believe the woman who recently forced an airplane to make an emergency landing

because she was screaming that she was God.

Others think He was deceptive, that He knew exactly who He was but still led others in a ruse to gain a following and earn a living by intentionally deceiving others to believe His lie.

A person can take their chances that He was all that or they can be convinced by the Words of Scripture that He is in fact Lord and the Christ promised to David who would be both God and man.

Jesus gave a sound defense about the Christ. He then gives a serious warning against the Scribes.

II. A SERIOUS WARNING AGAINST THE SCRIBES – vs. 45-47

While the crowds were still there including the religious leaders, Jesus gave three warnings about their character to the disciples. It's a vivid reminder to test what people say to see if it is the true. Why is it that Jesus had to once again speak about who the Christ was? It's because the religious leaders had led the people astray. If you really want to know if someone is telling the truth just look at their character. The Scribes were the interpreters of the Law. From the Law they added traditions that were to be followed. The problem was that they taught one thing and lived another. They were hypocrites. That's why if you want to be discerning about the truth, look at their life.

Warren Wiersbe writes "There is a double tragedy here. First, of all, their deliberate hypocrisy was only a cover-up that enabled them to fool people and exploit them. Of all rackets, religious rackets are the worst. The Temple had been turned into a den of thieves all the while the people thought they were godly. The second tragedy (and worst of all), they rejected the Messiah. They (purposely, willfully) led the nation to (spiritual) ruin because they wouldn't admit their sins and confess Jesus as the Christ."

He gave the disciples three warnings to watch for.

A. A Warning Against Their Conceit –
vs. 45-46, 47b

Conceit blinds a man to his own sin and elevates him to a pedestal he ought not to be on. If you ever see me become conceited I'm giving you permission to come along and knock me off my pedestal. Conceit never admits wrong and always demeans others. It's his way or the highway. He seeks to be served rather than to serve and in this case, the Scribes displayed four visible characteristics of conceit. Everything they did was about getting attention. Look at them.

1. They wore flowing robes. When Moses was given the law they were instructed to put tassels on the corners of their outer garment as a way to remember God's commandments. The problem came when they began to make their tassels longer and longer as a show of piety all be it superficial.

Rabbinical tradition tells a story about God and angels having a discussion one day about purity. To settle the discussion they decided to confer with a certain Rabbi who was an expert on the matter. He was summoned to appear before God to give God his insight. It is said that as his soul left his body he repeated the word "pure" which was applied to the state of his soul. Shortly after God sent a letter to earth to the sages to inform them about why the Rabbi had been called to heaven. They were then instructed to continue mourning for an additional week or experience excommunication.

2. They loved special greetings in the marketplace. They liked to be called Rabbi – a term reserved for the most honored teachers. They wanted to be greeted with formality. Today it might be the person who always wants you to use all their titles and letters after their name in being addressed.

3. They loved seats of honor in the synagogues and at banquets. Rabbinical writings give elaborate instructions on what place Rabbis were to be assigned at banquets according to rank.

4. They make lengthy prayers. It is the same warning Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount when He stated that our prayers should not be like the hypocrites who stand on street corners and pray lofty prayers in order to be seen by men. One author described them as "hucksters peddling the Word of God."

Jesus warned against their conceit.

Jesus then warned against their covetousness.

B. A Warning Against Their Covetousness –
v. 47a

They were greedy and they took advantage of widows. Through fraud and deception they pilfered the meager income of those who already had so little. Rather than assisting the widows as instructed by the Law, they stole from them. We are commanded not to be covetous and steal. Leviticus 19:11 "You shall not steal, neither deal falsely neither lie one to another."

Ephesians 4:28 "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need."

Exodus 20:15 "You shall not steal."

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house."

Their warning is also our warning, don't covet. Finally, there is a warning about their condemnation.

C. A Warning About Their Condemnation –
v. 47c

The Scribes taught that it was more serious to transgress against their words than to transgress against the words of the Law. They actually put their teaching and traditions above God's Word.

Jesus said that they would have a more severe punishment. It's not that their sins were more egregious than the sins committed by others, but because being teachers of the Law they had greater knowledge and therefore would have greater accountability.

James 3:1 "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."

They were responsible for leading people away from the truth that Jesus was the Messiah and would be held responsible. How sobering to think that there will be many religious leaders, even pastors, who will spend eternity in hell experiencing a greater condemnation for their own spiritual blindness and for leading many people to believe a lie about Christ, for not teaching the truth concerning His gospel.

I want to end with a reasonable conclusion.

III. A REASONABLE CONCLUSION

A. A Reasonable Conclusion For Your Pastor

1. Pray with me.

Pray with me that as I study and prepare to teach and counsel that I might always handle accurately the Word of God so that you understand, believe, and follow His Word, a Word that teaches us the way of eternal life through Christ who was both David's son, and David's Lord, both man and God.

2. Proclaim the truth of the Gospel.

Pray that I might always proclaim to you the only gospel in Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again and that by faith in Him alone is our only

hope of eternal life.

B. A Reasonable Conclusion On Your Part

1. Be convinced about His person.

Be convinced in both the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ as essential for our salvation.

2. Be committed to His Word.

a. Love His Word.

Because Christ is who He claims to be, be committed to following His Word and to love Him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. John 14:21 says that we demonstrate our love for Him by obeying His commandments.

b. Be committed to study His Word.

The people took at face value what they were taught by the religious leaders and never questioned the validity of their teaching and many were led astray. Be a Berean and study for yourself.

c. Be committed to share this gospel.

We never know when we will only have one last opportunity to tell them about Christ.

Let us pray that they may be convinced of who Christ is and their need for Him as their Savior.

Who, in your opinion is Christ? If He is indeed God, then let's follow Him wholeheartedly. If the religious leaders had been convinced of the truth there would have been no need for a warning. This is the most important question you'll ever answer.