

73 Mark 12:35-37

The Son of David

Text

35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 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.' 37 David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

Introduction

This final section of Mark has been an intensification of an already intense ministry. Filled with power and mystery and confrontation and authority, this final section heightens these themes as well as brings them all together. James Edwards observes:

The preceding story ended with the note that, "from then on no one dared ask [Jesus] any more questions" (12:34). The wording of verse 34 (particularly in the Greek) is strong and unequivocal, signifying that Jesus has prevailed over challenges from the Sanhedrin (11:27-33) and its various constituencies" (James Edwards, Mark, 374).

Having vanquished his foes verbally, Jesus now goes on the offensive.

35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 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.'

37 David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

Jesus is now teaching in the temple. He stands, as Malachi has written, as "the Lord whom you seek" and he has "suddenly come to his temple." He stands as one greater than the temple, in the temple to teach. His authority is plain to all.

Jesus poses a question to the scribes, the doctors of the law. He quotes from Psalm 110. It is only seven verses long so I will read it in its entirety.

Psalm 110 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.

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

5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.

6 He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.

7 He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

This Psalm was interpreted messianically by the rabbis and Jesus asks them how the Messiah can be merely David's son? The LORD (YHWH) said to my Lord (Adonai), "sit here at my right hand."

Even though this Psalm was rightly interpreted as messianic, there is surprising little rabbinical commentary on it. This may be due, in part to the fact that he sits at the right hand of God. This was the highest possible place to sit. This place had all the rule and all the power. It is akin to Joseph being made second in command in Egypt where only Pharaoh had more authority, and even that was in name only. This was the highest possible place without usurping authority. This was not just the highest place possible in a human kingdom, this was in God's kingdom. We remember the Seraphim who fly before the throne of God shouting "Holy Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty." These creatures were so powerful that their voice shook the posts of the threshold. They were created to be in his presence, and yet even these creatures had to cover their eyes with their wings because God's glory was so brilliant and his holiness burned with such intensity that they could not gaze upon him. It was, therefore, inconceivable to believe that some human could just walk past the event horizon where the seraphim flew, right up to the throne of God and take a seat there at his right hand. But in this passage God, who will not share his glory with another, *does* share all his kingly glory with Adonai. So how can the messiah be *merely* David's son?

There are three questions that I want to address. 1) Who is this Son of David? 2) When does his reign start? 3) What is the nature and duration of his reign?

Who is the Son of David?

This is not just some arbitrary puzzler that Jesus is giving. It is not as though he answered the hard questions from the scribes and now he has a hard one for them like, "How many angels can fit on the head of a pin?" This question has purpose. Two times in Mark's gospel, God has spoken from heaven identifying Jesus as his Son. The OT parallel to this declaration (which we have examined before) was Psalm 2. I haven't the time to go through all of it, so I'll just give you verses 7-9:

The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Twice God himself has identified Jesus as his Son - the Son who will break the nations with a rod of iron. Psalm 2 is widely recognized as the promises to the Son and Psalm 110 as the actuation of those promises. Thus this citation in chapter 12 culminates that theme. Section two of Mark's gospel began with Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, yet it was not until the close of that section that Bartimaeus identified him as the Son of David. Jesus' question to the scribes is forcing them to come to terms with what Bartimaeus had already accepted. Jesus himself is the Son of David. And he is not merely the Son of David, he is also David's Lord; he is Adonai. He is the Son of God!

When Does His Reign Start?

Acts 2:29-36

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord,

Sit at my right hand,

35 until I make your enemies your footstool.’

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Peter quotes from the exact same passage in Psalm 110 and says that this was fulfilled at Christ's ascension. The kingdom has come. The author of Hebrews also writes:

Hebrews 10:11-13 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

The author of Hebrews references Psalm 110 twice. Earlier he had spoken of Christ being after the order of Melchizedek. And in conjunction with his priestly work, Jesus also ascends to the throne of David at the right hand of God. When did it start? After he made atonement. We have two independent authors saying that the reign of Christ began and the kingdom of God began in Jesus' first coming. This fact is abundantly attested to in scripture:

Mark 1:15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Mark 9:1 And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,

Mark 10:15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

Mark 12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Luke 9:27 But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

Luke 11:20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Luke 17:20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will

they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

Revelation 5:10

and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

I had several pages of passages that I condensed to just this list. It is really unreasonable to deny that the kingdom of God, over which Christ reigns, began at his first coming.

What is the Nature and Duration of His Reign?

The Psalm said that he would reign until he put his enemies under his foot. So Jesus is the king, and one day he will not be king? How are we to understand this? There are many different aspects to the kingdom of God, but I am only going to focus on one of them this morning. Jesus is currently reigning as a conquering king.

Look at the context of Psalm 110 again. His enemies surround him. He will reign in the midst of them. He will shatter the kings, he will execute judgment on the nations, filling them with corpses. As Grover Gunn observed, "This reign of conquest will one day end because there is coming a day when all the enemies will be vanquished." (Grover Gunn, "The Christian Concept of Time," <http://www.grovergunn.net/andrew/1co1520.pdf>)

1 Corinthians 15 also quotes from Psalm 110:

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

The reign of conquest will naturally end when all the enemies are destroyed. Paul helpfully identifies the last enemy as death itself. Thus, at Christ's second coming is the resurrection of the dead. And this is the final victory over death. All is finished. Thus the reign of Christ on the throne of David at the right hand of God is from his first coming until his second coming. At that point he hands the keys of the kingdom over to the Father. Now Jesus will still be the head of the church and will begin his providential reign, but his reign of conquest is done at the resurrection.

Application

"And the great throngs heard him gladly."

The masses of people are still excited about Jesus. They still love him. They still are ready to receive his teaching, even if it causes the scribes great angst. They still listen with delight even

though he challenges their traditions. Dear Christian, how do you receive him? Do you also delight in his words? Are you ready to jettison your traditions if they do not square with his words? Are you eager to change your behavior if his words so challenge you? The question is, do you love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? If you think you can answer “yes,” then consider this application:

There has been a view of the kingdom of God which stated that things were going to get worse and worse and then Jesus was going to come back and make it all better. A famous line from one of its main teachers was, “Don’t polish brass on a sinking ship.” Consequently, many people stopped being involved in this world. They have pulled out of academia, pulled out of politics, pulled out of the arts, pulled out of entertainment. And with no Christians (or very few) our culture really has gone to hell in a hand basket. Although Jesus will come back and set everything straight, we have no reason to withdraw. In fact, as citizens of the kingdom he has established, we have the joy and the responsibility to expand the kingdom of God in our own spheres of influence.