

Just One Last Question!

Thomas Robinson, *Jesus and the Presence of God* 7, July 19, 2015

Matthew 22:34-46 (ESV Adapted; Cf Mk 12:28-37; Lk 10:25-28; 20:41-44)

³⁴ But when the **Pharisees** heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a **lawyer**, asked him **a question to test him**. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is **the great commandment in the Law?**"

³⁷ And he said to him, "**'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'** [Deut. 6:4-5] ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.

³⁹ And a second is like it: **'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'** [Lev. 19:18] ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend/hang **all the Law and the Prophets.**"

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, ⁴² saying, "What do you think about **the Messiah? Whose son is he?**"

They said to him, "The **son of David.**"

⁴³ He said to them, "How is it then that **David**, in the Spirit, **calls him Lord**, saying,

⁴⁴ **'Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'**? [Psa 110:1; 8:7]

⁴⁵ If then **David calls him Lord**, how is he his son?"

⁴⁶ And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Matthew 5:43-45

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who oppress you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 7:12

¹² "So whatever you wish others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

1 John 4:10-11

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be atonement for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Matthew 1:1

¹ The book of the beginning of Jesus Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham.

Matthew 20:30-34 See also Mt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22

³⁰ And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" ³¹ The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

³² And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³³ They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." ³⁴ And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

Matthew 21:9 See also Mt 21:15

⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

1 Corinthians 15:25-26

²⁵ For he [Jesus Messiah] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

The Command that Brings Focus

We are in the time of rising conflict between Jesus and the chief priests. Jesus answered the Sadducees (party of the chief priest) in their mocking question about resurrection. God is creator of life and God of the living. He can and will transform and renew creation.

Then a Pharisee law expert asked a serious question: *'Which is the great commandment?'*

Jesus gives two. The first is prominent: *'Love God with all your heart, soul, mind'* [Dt 6:5].

The second, Jesus picks a clause in a collection: *'Love your neighbor as yourself'* [Lev 19:18].

Jesus says these really are most important. Everything else in scripture hangs on them. Really?

Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah? Yes! As commands for people, this is what God wants!

Both are deep, all encompassing, un-legalistic. They require meditation, interpretation.

They are a filter and lens. Jesus was filtering and focusing in the Sermon on the Mount.

People Drawn into God's Life of Love

As commands they focus on the human response to God's identity/actions. God's love for his creation, opposition to all that corrupts / destroys human life, his love intervening to open a way of relationship with him through Abraham, Exodus, David, promise, even exile. His love always aims at all of humanity/creation, through calling the people Israel to his love.

The great commands reveal the heart of God and draw us into that central reality. They see at the core of us humans a love we often hide but that can answer to God's love. That love, activated, gives us the basis for interactions with others, even enemies, and all the world.

Jesus asks an Easy Question

Jesus' question to the Pharisees may seem a letdown. The ancestry of the Messiah/Christ?

Jesus knows there's an easy right answer (as with earlier questions). The Messiah is

David's son. But that's no mere cliché. Matthew has repeatedly highlighted significant

moments in Jesus' life when unexpected people recognized Jesus as *'Son of David.'* David

was the great king (1000 bc) anointed by Samuel, promised an anointed descendant,

Messiah, always to sit on his throne as king. The lapse of kingship in the exile (500s bc)

only heightened the questions about how God would fulfill his promise to David. Now

under Roman rule, many Jews longed for a mighty Messiah-king to restore independence.

After the easy answer, Jesus asks another question, quoting Ps 110:1, a well-known passage

about the Messiah conquering enemies. But David calls the Messiah *'my Lord,'* then how is

he David's son? Jesus leaves the question hanging. What just happened? All are silenced.

A Messiah who Transforms Imagination

Jesus is striking an idea in scripture strange to his hearers, a seed planted in his disciples. They

think of the Messiah as a ruler following David's pattern, maybe better. But Jesus wants

them to re-think their whole understanding. He says the scripture points to a complex

idea of the Messiah. Yes, David's son, but also David's Lord. How could such a thing be?

It cracks the imagination. David's Lord is God alone. David's son is a human descendant.

If the Messiah is only a human son, then he will deal with conquering human enemies. It's hard

to *'love your enemies'* under your feet. He may be good but still inside the human problem.

But if he is *'God with us,'* the Lord returning to Zion, then the scale of his work is vaster! He

takes on human sin and death. He embodies the love that is God's heart. Just a question!

Think about it as you watch the next events unfold. How do you recognize God's Anointed?