

- Read through some of the passages of scripture mentioned in this study and check out what they mean and say. The names of Jesus are of particular interest to all Christians for what they tell us about Jesus.

Final Prayer

We give You eternal thanks, heavenly Father, for revealing to us the truth about Jesus Christ. May we live according to this truth once we have found it, and may we work hard to demonstrate its glory and its light. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that we might always do what is right according to the light of Your love. AMEN

Prayer

Lord God, Your glory extends far beyond what we or anyone has ever seen. Teach us to be cautious about assuming we know more than we do, so that with our limited knowledge we may be able to take delight in the greatness of Your creation and the glories of the world in which we are set. May we show humility before the magnificence of creation and before You, who has made all things. Thanks be to God; AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Faithfulness

Pray for children of all ages who need adults to show the commitment of faithfulness to each other and to their offspring, for their own good, for family life, and for the good of all.

On-going prayers

- Pray for the people of Afghanistan and the war still raging there.
- Pray for UN peacekeeping forces in countries around the world
- Give thanks to God for answers to your prayers

Meditation

When the ground we walk is hard,
grant us strength to endure the journey.

When the ground we walk is uneven,
grant us courage to hold our balance.

When the ground we walk is filthy,
grant us wisdom in taking each step.

When the ground we walk is slippery,
grant us the safety of a hand to hold.

When the ground we walk gives way beneath,
grant us speed to pass on through.

When the ground we walk is easy,
grant us faith to press onwards.

When the ground we walk is holy,
grant us humility before Your presence;

For we know our path will one day end with You.

Bible Study - Matthew 22:41-46

⁴¹ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question; ⁴² 'What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.'

⁴³ He said to them, 'How then can David, inspired by the Spirit, call him Lord? He says, ⁴⁴ "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I defeat your enemies" ⁴⁵ If David calls him Lord, how can He be David's son?'

⁴⁶ *No one could say anything in reply, and from that day onwards, no-one dared to ask him any more questions.*

Review

Matthew brings Jesus' disputes with the religious authorities to a close with an amazing twist which bears all the hallmarks of a distinct personal memory of the words of Jesus in Jerusalem, just before His death. Instead of standing by and answering the questions of His accusers, Jesus boldly presented them with his own! Jesus' question and His subsequent quote from Psalm 110 were a trap, and the Pharisees fell headlong into it! The fact was that they had no real interest in discovering the truth about whether Jesus was the Messiah. They were only interested in silencing Jesus for living a life which despite all its good works and godly teaching had become an embarrassment and an affront to them.

The question Jesus began by asking the Pharisees the question 'what do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?' (22:41) Jesus had asked people about what they thought of Him on a number of previous occasions, and on each occasion, Jesus sought to draw out of His listeners their true beliefs about Him. In Matthew 16:13, Peter replied to almost the same question with a great confession of faith (16:16). The question is also reminiscent of when the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked Him whether He was 'the one to come, or are we to wait for another?' (11:3). On that occasion, Jesus had pointed to His preaching ministry and deeds of healing and deliverance as evidence of His being the Messiah. Now that Jesus was in Jerusalem, the Pharisees had all this evidence but they would not entertain the idea that He was the Messiah.

The question about Jesus' identity remained important right up to the time of His death, lying at the heart of the accusations brought against Him in His trial before Caiaphas (26:57ff). This suggests to us that the identity of Jesus is the key theme of Matthew's Gospel, and it was written to challenge all its readers with this question.

The answer All the Pharisees could do was to answer Jesus' question simply and according to their tradition, so they said that the Messiah was indeed 'the Son of David'. However, they were undoubtedly cautious, for they knew that Jesus had been greeted into Jerusalem as the 'Son of David' only days previously, and it is hardly likely that the Pharisees had forgotten this. They were well aware of the promise God made to David that one of His generation would rule Israel (2 Samuel 7:12ff), and that this had developed through the teaching of the prophets into a hope for the liberation of Israel (see Isaiah 11:1ff, for example). They were also aware that in their recent history several people had claimed to be the Messiah and led the people in revolt against ruling authorities, each time leading to the military defeat of God's people and the slaughter of many thousands (in particular the Maccabean revolt of 150 years previously).

We should not set aside too quickly the Pharisees' concern to dismiss those who claimed to be the Messiah, because they probably acted from the motive of trying to protect not just themselves, but all God's people, from the Romans. Their fundamental problem was that in the face of the evidence, they were wrong about Jesus and everything He had done. Jesus presented them with the evidence that He was the Messiah, and although common people understood this, the Pharisees rigidly refused to bend their minds.

David and the 'Lord' Jesus sought one last time to present the Pharisees with the evidence of the truth. He did so by quoting a well known passage of the Psalms that connected people's Messianic hopes with the 'Son of David'. Psalm 110 says; 'the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I defeat your enemies' (110:1), with very few translational differences between the Greek of the New Testament and the Hebrew of the Old Testament. By giving this quote, Jesus pointed out that David had recognised the

Messiah was superior to him even though he was the founding monarch of the people of Judah. How then, said Jesus, could someone who was a son of David become greater than David? It was a conundrum no one could answer, of course, because by trying to work out who the Messiah was from such intellectual debates was bound to end in failure. Jesus thereby mocked the Pharisees who were quite unable to handle what He said. In addition, Jesus said that the Spirit of God inspired David when he wrote the Psalm (22:43). This would have been controversial because the Pharisees regarded the Law as the supreme inspiration of God, not the other parts of scripture or the psalms.

In truth, I suspect that the Pharisees were not ignorant of the claims of scriptures about the Messiah. They simply could not accept Jesus' challenge, lose face in front of the crowds, or be moved from their denial of Jesus' ministry, power and authority. That is why they said no more, and they left Jesus alone. They were probably more convinced than ever that Jesus was a man to be dispensed with, if possible.

This climactic passage of Matthew's Gospel represented a last chance for the Pharisees to respond to Jesus and accept Him as Messiah. All the way through Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is called 'Son of David' by crowds who clearly thought He was God's Messiah (9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30;31 etc) because of what He did. This title is close to the other great title of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel which is 'Son of God' (4:3ff, 8:29, 14:33), and this is itself echoed by God's own spoken words to Jesus at His baptism and His transfiguration; 'This is my Son' (3:17 and 17:5). These titles of Jesus and the evidence of His deeds all lead us to the conclusion that Matthew wanted us all to know that Jesus was God's Messiah. This is the purpose of his Gospel.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. In your group, ask each other how you would define God's Messiah. What do we expect of God's Messiah today?
2. Make a list of the 'titles' of Jesus you know from the Gospels. Discuss how they help us know more about who Jesus was.
3. Read through Psalm 110 and discuss what it says about the Messiah. What does verse 1 suggest to you?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

It is tempting to forget (like the Pharisees) that there is a connection between what we believe and what we do, particularly in the service of others. Many people do good things for other people, and we naturally say 'they are good people' without questioning their faith. This may be the right thing to do, but it should not blind us to the fact that the more people come to know Jesus as Messiah and Lord, the more they are motivated to do good in this world through His example and also His commands. Any lack of generous neighbourliness in society today is surely an indicator of lack of faith in the God who shows us what true neighbourliness and love is all about.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Pray for any individuals you know who stubbornly refuse to believe that Jesus is God's chosen Saviour of the World. Pray for that spiritual enlightenment which alone can change the heart of someone utterly opposed to God's Word.*