The Son is the promised Lord

Text: Mark 12:35-40

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**Scriptures:** 2 Samuel 7:11-16; Psalm 110; Mark 12:35-40

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 211, 51b, 110, 233,473

**Series:** The Gospel of Mark (#42)

**Theme:** Jesus quotes the words of David in Psalm 110, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to reveal that He is the promised messianic descendant who will sit on the prophesied eternal kingdom throne.

**Proposition:** Study the Scriptures with a humble heart and see Jesus!

**Introduction**

How much do you know and understand about the Bible? The Bible contains a huge amount of information, written by about 40 different authors over a period of approximately 1500 years. There was a period of 400 years leading up to the first century AD during which no Scripture was written. Before this four-century long gap, sometimes referred to as the ‘*400 years of silence*’ the Old Testament was written, afterwards, the New Testament was penned. (The word ‘testament’ comes from the Latin word for ‘covenant’).

All of Scripture is united together, not only because all 66 books of the Bible are ‘*breathed out by God*’ (2 Tim 3:16) who is the single divine Author, but also because of the many unfolding interconnections between the diverse portions of the Biblical texts. Three prominent pathways through the developing story of Scripture which unite the whole Word of God together are:

1. Promise and fulfilment
2. Covenants
3. Typology

Much could profitably be said about each of these, but in order to keep this to a brief introduction before we come to our text today, this is a short summary. The Bible reveals God’s promises and also His progressive fulfilments in the past, present and (yet-to-be) future. For example, Paul writes about God’s Old Testament covenant promise to the New Testament Galatians: ‘*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”*’ (Gal 3:8).

The promises of God unfold in Scripture primarily through a series of covenants. We can divide the Old and New Testaments approximately by referring to the old covenant mediated by Moses (2 Cor 3:14), and the new covenant inaugurated by Christ (Jer 31:31-34, Heb 8), but we need to be careful not to see the covenants of Scripture as being distinct and separate from one another. The ‘new covenant’ is clearly revealed in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah (31:31-34), but the hope of this promise goes back to Moses, where God promises to circumcise the heart (Deut 30:6 {see also Isa 53-55; Eze 36-37; Joel 2; Zech 9-14}). The new covenant comes into effect when Christ arrives on this earth as the Mediator of that covenant (e.g. Luke 22:20; Heb 9:15).

The word ‘typology’ derives from the Greek word ‘typos’ which is used in the New Testament to refer to patterns, types, shadows or examples from the Old Testament, for example: Adam is a ‘type’ of Christ (Rom 5:14); The Old Testament tabernacle was a ‘type’ of heaven, the dwelling place of God (Heb 8:5); Noah’s passage through the flood is a ‘type’ of Christian baptism (1 Pet 3:20-21). All of the promises of Scripture find their ultimate fulfilment in Christ (2 Cor 1:20). All of the covenants of Scripture point forward to Christ in whom people from ‘*every tribe and people and language and nation*’ (Rev 13:7) become God’s holy people. All the types, patterns and shadows of Scripture find their ultimate substance in Christ (e.g. Col 2:17).

As we come now to Mark chapter twelve, we see that after being challenged with testy questions about the payment of taxes, the bodily resurrection and the essence of God’s Law, Jesus then poses a question to all were listening in the temple where He was teaching. He asked, “*How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?*” (Mark 12:35).

In New Testament times, the scribes were professional interpreters of Scripture who were considered experts in cases where people were accused of breaking the law of Moses. The scribes, together with others who taught and practiced Judaism, understood from God’s promise to David through the prophet Nathan, that the Christ, the anointed One (Messiah) would be a descendant of David. This is clearly revealed in what is known as the ‘Davidic covenant’, which we heard earlier from 2 Samuel 7:11-16: “*I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom…I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*”. This promised king is later revealed in the psalms as a son of God (Ps 2:2,7) who would enjoy divine protection and favour (Ps 18:50; 20:6: 28:8).

Jesus was not contradicting the scribal interpretation that the Messiah, the Christ would be a descendant of David, but he questioned how this can be true if David calls one of his own offspring Lord. Jesus then quoted from Psalm 110 which was regarded by the scribes, together with broader Judaism, as speaking about the coming promised Messiah. Our text from Mark 12 focusses on Psalm 110 verse 2: “*The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet*.” Let’s carefully consider these words under three points:

1. The covenant God speaks
2. The earthly king writes
3. The promised Messiah comes
4. **The covenant God speaks**

One of the hallmarks of good Biblical preaching and teaching is that all the important questions which arise from the text of Scripture are clearly answered. Another evidence of sound Biblical preaching and teaching is that the interconnections between different Scriptures are identified and also explained. The teaching of the Scribes and the Pharisees was not good nor was it sound. These Old Testament Scripture scholars did not help the people to understand the true meaning of God’s Word, instead they obscured it with their own traditions and legal emphases. Jesus aptly referred to them as ‘*blind guides*’ (Matt 23:16, 24). A blind guide, one who cannot see the way, is no guide at all!

What are some of the main questions which arise from the text of Psalm 110 verse 2? They include: Who is the first Lord mentioned and who is the second Lord? Who is writing these words and why? Who are the enemies? What do the phrases ‘sit at my right hand’ and ‘under your feet’ mean? How is this relevant to every human being in the past, present and future?

In our English translations there are two ‘Lords’ mentioned. In Greek, in both cases the same word is translated ‘Lord’. However, in the Hebrew in which Psalm 110 was first written, the two words for ‘Lord’ are different. The first ‘Lord’ word is YHWH. This is the name that God revealed to Moses, describing Himself as '*The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*’ (Ex 3:15). Here the word LORD (in capital letters) stands in for YHWH, the holy covenant name of God - not pronounced by the Jews out of reverence, but rendered ‘Adonai’ (and later in latinised form as ‘Jehovah’).

So the first ‘Lord’ is the covenant God of Israel, the Living God who first made a covenant with Abraham and then later delivered his enslaved descendants from Egypt through His servant Moses. This is the covenant Lord who promised King David that he would establish one of David’s descendants on an eternal throne. That was why the scribes, rightly understood Psalm 110 to be revealing the person of the promised anointed One, the Messiah.

The second name translated ‘Lord’ in Psalm 110 verse 1 from the original Hebrew is not the covenant name of God, but is ‘Adonai’, simply meaning Lord, a person with power and authority over others. The covenant God of Israel speaks to this person of power and authority and says, “*sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet*”. To sit at the right hand of God is the highest position of honour (ref. Ps 45:9, 1 Kings 2:19). This Lord would receive the greatest status from God until all his enemies were made subject to him.

Back in the 1st century AD, the Jews were waiting for the promised Messiah who would conquer their enemies, liberate them from Roman rule and restore the land of Canaan to them as their possession. Today, the followers of Judaism are still waiting for the Messiah to come. Today, both religious and non-religious Jews strive to make national Israel their undisputed, unchallenged homeland. For many, it would seem, the complete removal of Palestinians from the Gaza strip is now part of this broader goal.

I used to regularly pick up hitchhikers when we were farming in the central North Island. At that time (back in the 1990’s) many were Israelis. Almost all were young men who had completed their compulsory military service and were travelling before taking up work back home. Most of these hitchhikers described themselves as ‘non-religious’. In one breath they would identify as atheist or agnostic, yet also paradoxically affirm that they were most certainly one of God’s chosen people. Most Jews and some evangelical Christians believe that the physical descendants of Abraham have a divine right to the ancient land of Israel. Didn’t God Himself promise to David that there would be an everlasting kingdom of Israel? As we look to answer that question, let’s focus now on David, the earthly author of Psalm 110.

1. **The earthly king writes**

In Psalm 110 these astounding words are revealed ‘*YHWH said to* ***my*** *Lord*’. Who is the person writing this psalm and referring to themselves by the first-person pronoun ‘my’? It is clearly the author of the psalm, as revealed in the original Hebrew title of the psalm ‘*A Psalm of David*’. Jesus confirms this in our text from Mark chapter twelve, prefacing the quote with the words ‘*David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared*’. The Apostle Peter later likewise confirmed David as the author.

We know much about David from the pages of Scripture. In many ways he was the ultimate king of Israel in the Old Testament, ruling from about 1005 to 965 BC. He had musical talent, courage, good looks, skill as a warrior, and most importantly an abiding trust in the covenant God of Israel. He united the twelve tribes of Israel and captured Jerusalem, making it his capital city. He stopped the advance of the Philistines so that they remained confined to the coastal area we now know as the Gaza strip. David subdued all the other nations who opposed him, eventually gaining control of all the land that God had originally promised to Abraham – ‘*all the land of Canaan*’ (Gen 17:8).

We also know that whilst David was a godly man in many ways, he was also a sinner. He spied on Bathsheba whilst she was bathing, desired her, and after committing adultery with her, engineered the death of her faithful warrior husband Uriah. When later confronted by the prophet Nathan, David humbly confessed his sin. Towards the end of his life David conducted a census which confirmed the vast extent of his kingdom. However this was a sin against the Lord, which David then acknowledged and sought forgiveness for (2 Sam 24:10).

David was a great man, but a flawed one. He was a man of repentance and faithfully committed to following the covenant God of Israel. He is highly commended in Scripture as a man after God’s own heart who did His Lord’s will (Acts 13:22). So this great David, writing Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says, ‘*YHWH said to* ***my*** *Lord*’.

This second Lord is the promised Messiah, the descendant of David; a truth that the 1st century scribes agreed with. So, Jesus asked, how is it possible for one of David’s own descendants to be his Lord, the promised eternal king on the throne? This could only be true if David’s Lord was greater than Him; more courageous, more attractive to God, more faithful, more godly. This could only be true if the kingdom of David’s Lord was more extensive than the vast area that David conquered during his lifetime. This could only be true if the kingdom of David’s Lord was longer lasting than his, continuing forever.

The throne of Israel passed from David to his second son by Bathsheba. Solomon consolidated peace and prosperity within the kingdom of Israel and gained economic control of further territory to the north, but never conquered Philistia. We know that having built a great temple in Jerusalem, Solomon turned away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:1-8) and the kingdom was divided under his faltering rule. Solomon was not the ‘Lord’ that David referred to in Psalm 110.

For the next 1000 years no greater king than David had come to fulfil the promise the covenant God of Israel had made to establish an everlasting kingdom from one of David’s descendants. There was no king more commendable to God than David, in fact the line of Davidic kings generally became weaker, less godly, and less powerful as the kingdom of Israel shrank in size and influence.

Finally, in Jesus, the people saw the evidence of David’s Lord, the Messiah long promised in the Old Testament. In His gospel, Mark carefully records the attractiveness of Jesus to God the Father; “*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased*” (1:11). Mark writes of the sinlessness of Jesus, even when sorely tempted by Satan in the wilderness (1:12-13). Jesus did the promised, and therefore expected, work of the Messiah, healing many, commanding unclean spirits, and performing many other miraculous signs and wonders and teaching with an authority unmatched by anyone else.

These are at least some of the reasons why the crowds in Jerusalem welcomed Jesus as the promised Messiah, the fulfilment of God’s many Old Testament promises, covenants, shadows and types. As He entered the city, Mark records, they were shouting: “*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!*” (Mark 11:9-10).

Jesus is the promised ‘Lord’ of David and all others who are people of repentance and faith fully committed to following the covenant God of Israel. Is He your Lord?

So let’s now focus on the Messiah, the long-awaited Lord who would receive the highest honour from the covenant God of Israel, who would conquer all of his enemies and who would rule over an everlasting kingdom.

1. **The promised Messiah comes**

When we started this preaching series in Mark’s 42 sermons ago, we saw in the first verse: “*The beginning of the gospel of* ***Jesus Christ, the Son of God***” that the key question that Mark answers in his gospel ‘who is Jesus?’ This is the question that Jesus effectively answers in our text. In the parallel account in Matthew, we read that “*no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions*” (Matt 22:46). None of the scribes were willing or able to explain how the Messiah could be both the descendant of great David but also David’s Lord who would inherit an everlasting kingdom, be seated in the highest position of honour at God’s right hand and subdue all His enemies.

Mark records that ‘*the great throng heard him gladly*’ (v37b). The Greek word translated ‘gladly’ literally means ‘sweetly’. It is used of those who listen with friendly indifference to a speaker, like the Corinthians who put up with fools (2 Cor 11:19). It is also used of those who enjoy listening to the truth, like Herod hearing John the Baptist (Mark 6:20). So what was the large crowd listening to Jesus teaching in the temple glad about? What did they find ‘sweet’ about the words of Christ?

Almost certainly there was a range of responses in the audience that day. Some likely relished the way in which Jesus had wisely responded to the previous testy questions about taxes, the resurrection of the body and the greatest commandment and now how He had completely silenced the scribes with his own question about David’s promised Lord. Some may have understood, at least in part, that Jesus was confirming His own identity as the promised Messiah.

Embedded in Jesus’ question is the truth that the role of the promised Messiah was not to restore on earth the geographically located Davidic kingdom, or the sovereignty of national Israel. The promised Davidic king’s role was not simply to extend the work of David, but rather to establish a completely new spiritual Kingdom, which at the end of this age would be realised also as a physical realm. The conquest over the enemies of God, sin, Satan and death, would occur at the cross from which Jesus was but a few days away.

How much of this did the crowd who heard Jesus ‘gladly’ comprehend? We do not know. It is clear from the words of Christ in verses 38-40 that the motivation of the scribes was not to understand the revelation of God in His Word, but to preserve for themselves positions of privilege, societal honour and religious authority. It seems that the scribes were in the habit of taking advantage of the hospitality of others, especially vulnerable widows. Jesus said of these scribes ‘*they will receive the greater condemnation*’.

Why would these learned teachers of the law be judged severely? Because they cared more about their own honour, public piety and privilege than they did about the God whose Word they scrupulously studied – yes that is part of it. But also, they knew the ‘*promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the Passover lamb, and other types and ordinances given to the Jewish people… all of which foreshadowed Christ to come*’ (WCF 7:5).

They knew that the Messiah would be a faithful servant of the Lord who would be despised and rejected by men (Isa 53:4). They knew that the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf (Isa 35:8). They knew about the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34). They had ‘more Bible’ to read than King David had had 1,000 years before and yet they did not share His faith as he, like other Old Testament saints ‘*died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them from afar*’ (Heb 11:13).

We are more privileged than the 1st century scribes because we have even more Bible than they had. We have not only the Old Testament, but the New Testament too. These scribes were not looking for the Messiah, for the Christ, in the Scriptures, they were looking for self-justification and for ways to be respected, honoured and glorified by others. The reason that they did not see Jesus for who He is was because they were not looking for Him. Some people never find Jesus because they do not want to be ruled by anyone. They resist and rebel against calling anyone ‘my Lord’. God says through his prophet Jeremiah “*You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart*” (Jer 29:13). Earnestly look for King Jesus and you will find Him. So how should you and I respond to the teaching of Jesus as we have studied it in Mark 12:35-37?

**Firstly**, carefully read and study Psalm 110 for yourself. Of all the 150 psalms the one most quoted and referred to in the New Testament. Why? Because Jesus confirms what had long been understood by the Jews, that Psalm 110 is a Messianic psalm. The significance of this for the gospel is confirmed by Peter (Acts 2:34-35), Paul (1 Cor 15:25) and by the author of Hebrews (1:13; cf 10:13)”.

**Secondly** consistently, regularly and progressively read and study the Bible, the whole Bible! Study the Scriptures with a humble heart and see Jesus! Do not do as the scribes did, reading Scripture looking for ways to justify yourself and your pious practices. Do not believe that this kind of false religion will excuse you on the Day of Judgement.

Instead, read the Bible actively seeking to see Jesus. Specifically: look for the unfolding promises of God in Scripture and for their fulfilment in Christ. Look at the progressive covenants of Scripture, different in their administration at successive stages of history, but having the same ultimate substance in Christ. Look for patterns, types, and examples from the Old Testament which foreshadow Christ. Understand that by God’s grace it is possible for people like you and me to be like King David. Not rulers of national Israel and not the human authors of psalms like 110, but it is possible to be a person, man, woman or child after God’s own heart who gladly does His will. It is possible to be a person, man, woman or child, of repentance and faith fully committed to following the covenant God of Israel. It is possible, for people like you and me, like King David, to call Christ Jesus ‘my Lord’.

How can all this be? By faith in the promised Messiah. By faith that believes Christ to be who He is.

1. The Keeper and Fulfiller of all the covenants of Scripture.
2. The Ultimate Sacrifice to which all the Old Testament sacrifices pointed.
3. The conquering King who has risen from the dead, overcoming sin and death and who will return again for the final conquest of Satan.
4. The ascended Lord who is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places (Eph 1:20, Heb 1:3).
5. The Messiah who, when all God’s enemies are placed His feet, will be Lord over all and every human being descended from Adam will confess that ‘*Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*’ (Phil 2:11).
6. The divine Teacher who alone has the words of eternal life (John 6:68).
7. The Good Shepherd who invites you again today to come to Him in humble repentance and faith, to follow Him, to trust Him, to love Him and to see his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

For it is most certainly true brothers and sisters in our Lord that ‘*from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace*’ (John 1:16).

AMEN.