

Title: 3 Critical Issues pt.1
Text: Luke 20.41-44
Theme: The Person of Christ
Series: Luke
Aim: I want my people to understand the nature and person of Jesus Christ and embrace him.

The Continental Congress voted on July 2, 1776 to declare independence from Great Britain. On July 4, 1776 the Continental Congress voted to formally adopt the Declaration of Independence, however, it was not actually signed until August 2 of that year and the last of the 56 signatures came in January of 1777. It was a bold, brave and costly act but not as difficult as to what would come. Most people can rally around what they are against. Look at the history of labor unions. It is easy to identify and unify around complaints. But how do you organize yourselves? How do you agree to work around common goals and who do you elect and appoint to get that done? It is not difficult to say what we are against, but the greater achievement in the history of our country is the Constitution that was written over the course of several months in 1787.

We are followers of Christ. Therefore, there are things that we do not believe in, nor practice. But we are defined by more than what we are against, but rather, what we are for. We are for Christ. We are for the gospel. We embrace the Scriptures. We are well along in our study of the gospel of Luke and in the final week of the life of Christ before his death on the cross. We believe that Christ died on the cross as the full and final payment for every single sin of every single person who would ever believe in him. We believe that Christ did this because his life fulfilled all righteousness. His life was the perfect payment. Therefore, his life was both payment and example. There is so much to learn about Christ as our Savior and King and so much to take to heart as our example.

Read Text: Luke 20.41-21.4

This section raises 3 critical issues. The Pharisees and Sadducees have failed to trap Jesus with their question, so Jesus questions them. He takes them back to the Scriptures again and asks them about another passage; the 110th Psalm. Jesus uses this Psalm to show his identity as God, as the Royal Davidic King and Priest who is enthroned by God and worshiped by David. So, our text this morning is addressing critical issue pt.1: Who is Jesus.

Next week (critical issue #2), Jesus warns his disciples (us) to beware of people who make much of themselves. Then in two weeks we will look at the 3rd part where Jesus points out the widow who places all of her hope in God. This is what following God looks like! Put these together. What do you get? 1) When you understand who Jesus is, 2) you will not be concerned with making much of yourself but will 3) instead rely completely upon him.

Here is the question that Jesus asks: How can the Messiah (Christ) be David's son, when David calls him Lord? The Pharisees believe that the Messiah will come from the line of David. So, Jesus is asking them how David's son (think heir) can be his heir and his Lord? Before we

examine that a bit more, notice how Jesus raises a question about the Scriptures. Jesus is questioning the Bible, not in the sense of is it true, but in the sense of how is this true. This is the approach we should have to the Bible. Here, Jesus shows us ...

1. **How to think about the Bible.** (41-42)

This is not the main point of this text, but it is a good point for us to see. Our faith comes from God's Word. Can we trust the Bible? Is the Bible from God or from man? Throughout his ministry, Jesus quoted from the Old Testament. Jesus is the Word of God. He is the perfect expression of God. He is God and when he quotes the Scripture, he is the Word quoting the written Word which is a clear statement of his endorsing the authenticity and integrity of the Scriptures. When Christ was tempted by Satan, Christ responded by quoting the Scriptures and said, "It is written." He was treating the Scriptures as the very words of God. But look at v.42. Here, Jesus attributes the authorship of Psalm 110 to David. So, Is the Bible from God or from man? The answer is both. How should we think about the Bible?

A. From God through Man (42)

God used men to write what God wanted recorded. Jesus views the Scriptures as coming from God through human agents. He called the 5th commandment, the word of God (Mark 7.12-13). In John 10 Jesus used the phrase, "the Word of God" and the word "Scripture" interchangeably. Therefore, the Scriptures are authoritative and Christ treats people as being accountable to the Scriptures. At the same time, Jesus regularly named the human author of the book that he was referencing. How should we think about the Bible? It is from God, through man, authoritative, and true. But go back to v.41. What is Jesus doing? He is asking a question about the Scriptures, isn't he? He is asking how Psalm 110.1 could actually be true? Here is another example of how we should view the Bible. You can question the Bible from a position of unbelief, looking for reasons not to believe, or you can look at the Bible from a position of faith and humility realizing that you have a lot to learn.

B. Faith seeking understanding. (41)

We are not perfectly neutral, nor un-biased. One example of this is called Conformity Bias. This is the tendency to believe or behave based on what everyone around you believes and does. We don't want to be rejected so we tend to repeat what people in our family are saying. As we get older, we tend to repeat what other kids our age are saying. If the other kids are saying something different than what our parents are saying, then we experience angst, or we learn to be chameleons or hypocrites. We are tempted to profess to believe what the group believes that we are with. Conformity Bias (peer pressure) is significant. So, it is common for parents to guard the influence of peers on their children so that the early influences are the same as the parents' belief. Children will often profess to believe something simply because they do not know any different. It is one of the reasons why I think it is wise to see if a profession of faith by a child is actually the child's faith, or simply an echo of the bubble they happen to be in.

Another bias type is Attribution Bias. This is a fancy word for pride. When I make a mistake, it is because the odds were stacked against me, the test was unfair, someone was looking to trip me up. I attribute the failure to something outside of me. However, when someone else makes the same mistake, they are just an idiot, lazy, incompetent, etc.

Affinity Bias (another manifestation of pride) is our tendency to like people who are like us and distrust people who are not like us. I joke about our respective college football allegiances, but that is no joke for some. A friend of mine was being interviewed for a pastoral position at a church in Texas. One of the members of the interview team asked him about his professional football loyalty and he told them that he followed the Patriots. Well, he was neck deep in Dallas Cowboy country, and this person was literally bothered by him being a fan of the Patriots and made a deal about it and was seriously not sure if he would be a good fit at their church because of it. We see some of this playing out here between the Sadducees and Pharisees, but in particular between these men in the Sanhedrin and Christ. Jesus was not from Jerusalem. He did not go to their schools, wear their clothes, belong to their clubs, hang out at their parties. He was from Galilee. He was an outsider and they were threatened by that.

But the 4th kind of bias, is what I want to press in on. It is called Confirmation Bias. Confirmation Bias is our tendency to filter, interpret, or even search for information that confirms a pre-existing belief. We all want our beliefs to be validated so we are validated. Therefore, we tend to look for things, or hear things in a way that confirms what we already believe. You have a confirmation bias. You have a set of beliefs and values that you have adopted and you look for ways for those to be confirmed. That is fine. What is not fine is if you are believing something that is not true and you are unwilling to examine the obvious evidence that disproves your belief. Should I have a confirmation bias of faith when I approach the Scriptures, or a confirmation bias of unbelief? There is no neutrality. If I claim to be neutral, then I don't believe that the Scriptures come from God. I cannot make you believe in the Bible. That is a work of God. But the evidence for it is overwhelming. If one was without a sin nature and was perfectly neutral, he/she would come to the conclusion that the Scriptures are from God. Here, Jesus gives us a great example in how to view the Scriptures.

How does Jesus approach the Scriptures? He approaches them with a confirmation bias that assumes the truthfulness and integrity of the Bible. I.e., Since the Scriptures are true, then how can it be that David calls his Son, the Messiah, Lord? Assuming that the text is true, how are we to understand this? That is our posture to God's Word. When there is something that at first glance does not make perfect sense to us, we do not assume that something is wrong with the text, we assume that something is incomplete or wrong with our understanding.

On Woodward Ave in Detroit is the Museum of Illusions. It is just that. There are all sorts of displays that appear to be one thing, but in reality, are something else. It is a bit humbling because over and over your eyes are telling you one thing, only to find out that you cannot always trust your eyes. For example, there is a walkway with rails in a tunnel. The walkway does not move, but the tunnel you are in appears to be spinning, giving you the feeling like the walkway is tipping over and dumping you off. If you are prone to vertigo, you do not try that. By

the time you get halfway through the museum, you just assume that what you see is not correct. Jesus approaches the Scriptures assuming that the text is correct.

I do not fully understand how God created the universe out of nothing. I do not fully understand how God has existed eternally. I do not fully understand God is one God eternally existing in 3 persons. I do not fully understand how Jesus is truly God and truly man. I do not fully understand how the Bible was from God through man. I do not fully understand how we exercise our wills under the sovereign plan of God. I don't fully understand how prayer works. I don't understand the world of angels and demons. I do know that I am finite, human, and mortal. Therefore, I cannot fully understand all of that. I also know that God is infinite, supernatural and immortal. He is Creator and I am creation. So, I am under him. I believe him. I trust him. I have faith that seeks understanding. That is the question that Jesus wants these Pharisees to ask. Think about what the Scriptures say. How can they say that the Christ (Messiah) is David's son?"

2. Why does Jesus select this Psalm?

Turn to Psalm 110. There are several related reasons Jesus selects Psalm 110: 1) These men knew this Psalm. 2) It was a royal Psalm that was likely sung at the coronation of the king and perhaps other times as well. 3) David is calling the King, my Lord. 4) God, Yahweh (LORD) is speaking to this king who is identified as David's Lord. 5) This King also functions as a priest (v.4) which means that he is a king that is actually not like the regular kings who could not usurp the office of a priest. 6) This King is described in supernatural terms. He will reign until his enemies are his footstool. He will rule over the entire earth (v.6). He will be exalted over all (v.7). Here Jesus does it again. The Sadducees and Pharisees spend all of this effort coming up with these elaborate attempts to trap Jesus and he simply turns them on them. Now that they have nothing left to say, he asks them a simple question of interpretation of one verse. Let's look at it.

Notice the heading: A PSALM OF DAVID. This is part of the Hebrew text. This is not something that Bible translators added such as the line above it which says, *Sit at my right hand*. Next look at how verse 1 begins. "The LORD says to my Lord." Notice how the capitalization of the two words "Lord" is different. That is because there are two different Hebrew words used here for God. When you see LORD in all caps, that is the translator's way of informing you that the name Yahweh (Jehovah) appears here in the original Hebrew text. The Hebrew name Adonai is also translated Lord and has the idea of king. When that word appears, then only the first letter is capitalized. By the way, the Hebrew word Elohim is translated as God.

Here, David is quoting God. Yahweh says to my Adonai (my king). David identifies Adonai as belonging to him and Yahweh speaks to him. In this Psalm Yahweh speaks to, speaks about, makes promises to and makes promises about Adonai; a king that David calls my king. Since Yahweh was the covenant name for God and since Adonai was the Kingly name for God, this sounds like God is talking to God, which is exactly what it is. The Jews believed that there was one God, and they were right about that. But they also believed that God was a one-person God and they were wrong about that. The true God is Triune. ("Let us make man in our image.") He

is Father, Son and Spirit. While this is not developed in the Old Testament as much as it is in the New, it is there. In fact, here is a clear statement about the deity of a Son of David, whom the Pharisees rightly view as the Messiah. They believe that this Psalm refers to David's son (my Lord) and that this is the Messiah. Keep in mind that this was a patriarchal society where the sons were subject to the father and viewed as having less honor than the head of the family. So, this Psalm of David about what is viewed as David's son, is very puzzling. And Jesus asks that question. If David calls him Lord, how can this king (Messiah) be David's son? When God established his covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, God promised that David would have an offspring whose throne would be established forever (v.16). Psalm 132.11 repeats this. "The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne." The Pharisees rightly believed that the Messiah would come from David's line. So...

If David uses a term of deity, divinity for this king that you believe is the Messiah, then how can the Messiah be a son of David. So, why does Jesus select this Psalm? Because this Psalm is teaching that the one who is to come, the son of David, the Messiah, is God. There is no other way to understand this text. Jesus embraced this Psalm as talking about himself. He accepted this title and said so in when he was on trial before the Sanhedrin (Luke 22.69). The early church clearly understood it that way as we see in Acts 2.30-36; 13.33-39 and Hebrews 1.4-13.

Before we go to the last point, there are a few things we need to take to heart.

- We need to know our Bibles and we need to know the proper meaning

These men knew content, but they did not interpret it correctly. Bible knowledge is dangerous without proper interpretation. Knowing the words of your Bible without really knowing the meaning of them gives someone a false sense of authority. Oh, I know the Bible. But if you do not interpret it correctly, then you really don't know it. These Pharisees knew Psalm 110, but did not really know what it meant. Think about this. They crucified the King that David called, my Lord. They crucified the Lord that Yahweh said to, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."

- In order to use our Bible correctly, we have to be under it.

I do not stand in judgment of God's Word. I do not give it meaning. I do not determine the meaning; I seek to understand what it already means so I can align my life according to it. Let the Bible correct you where you need correcting. And we all need correcting.

- In order to properly relate to God's Word, I am to be captured by it.

This question was intended to help these guys reexamine their assumptions. Look at the text and look at your position. What do you do when your position is at odds with the text?

Paul Tripp said, *“Satan is glad to give us our Bible knowledge and formal Christianity so long as he can control our hearts. Bible literacy does not equal a heart captured by God.”*

3. **Revelation and Accountability** (43)

Back to Luke 20. Jesus only quotes the first verse of Psalm 110 to them. The last line of that verse is v.43. Yahweh says, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” God makes a promise to this king that he is going to be installed at his right hand until Yahweh takes every one of his enemies and turns them into his footstool. The imagery is clear. This king who is reigning will step on and crush his enemies. Therefore, whatever you do, you do not want to be against this king.

Jesus quoted this Psalm to these men. They knew the Psalm. They knew that it was from God. This means that they are accountable for it. But they refused to believe it. They had no answer to the question of its meaning that Jesus asked because they did not want to believe that Jesus could be the Son of God. In two chapters we will come to the actual trial of Jesus. Luke 22.69. Jesus warns them at his trial that they are going to see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power of God. They are so far in over their heads it is terrifying to watch. They had God’s written Word. They had God in flesh. The Son of God spoke the Word of God to them and interpreted it for them. They refused to believe. They who had seen so much were now accountable for so much.

This is the final conversation that Luke records Jesus having with the religious leaders before his trial. One last time Jesus shows from the Scriptures the very truth they have been rejecting, but the very thing they need. God is remarkably patient, but not forever. The window of opportunity for them to believe in him is closing and the consequences of that were and are dire. How did this turn out for them? If you put off embracing Christ as your Savior and King, then do you really believe that you are capable of saving yourself on that final day? You may have years ahead of you, or hours. If you cannot give a reasonable answer as to why you should not trust Christ, it is because there isn’t one.