

Christ – Who Is He?

THE students were unhappy. “Well, I thought he was the lecturer!” one snorted. “You only asked him about that paragraph in the textbook and he was flummoxed. Talk about ‘the blind leading the blind’: he hadn’t a clue.”

This critical phrase ‘blind leading the blind’ comes from the graphic words of Jesus about religious leaders in Israel (principally the Pharisees).

Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch (Matthew 15:14).

Later, in Matthew chapter 23, Jesus uses the word ‘blind’ five times when warning about such people. This is because, tragically, they refused to believe the stark evidence of their own eyes about who Jesus was. Moreover, despite supposedly being experts in the Jewish scriptures, they too were unable to answer the questions which Jesus asked them. One question was about this verse:

The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool” (Psalm 110:1).

Son of David

Psalm 110 was written by king David, about his descendant Jesus, hundreds of years before Jesus was born. It is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament, which indicates its significance.

In using this verse Jesus confirmed two things: that the words were penned by David, and that they refer to the Christ – the Messiah (i.e. to Jesus himself). Clearly then, in this verse ‘The

LORD’ is Almighty God and ‘my Lord’ is Jesus, the Christ.

Jesus’ question to them is recorded in three of the four gospels (Matthew 22:41–45; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44), and afterwards we read:

No one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question him anymore (Matthew 22:46).

Great King

Through the words of this psalm, even great king David acknowledged the complete supremacy of his descendant who would be the Christ king (Psalm 110:2; Luke 1:32). This was contrary to Jewish custom, where ancestors were always superior to their descendants. So the verse was a problem for the Pharisees, whose prejudices made them antagonistic to Jesus of Nazareth.

The apostle Peter quoted the exact same verse in his speech at Pentecost (Acts 2:34–35). He made a strong and conclusive case to the people and to their leaders that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the Messiah’s brief in every detail (Acts 2:22–36).

Psalm 110 is quoted again in the letter to the Hebrews in support of the same teaching (Hebrews 1:5–14; see verse 13). This shows very clearly that Jesus is superior to every other human being and also to the angels. No other human being has either been given divine nature (1 Corinthians 15:22–23) or ascended to heaven (John 3:13). As evidence of this, even the dead body of David, a man ‘after God’s

own heart' (Acts 13:22), was in Jerusalem (Acts 2:29).

The fact that Jesus was exalted to God's right hand is so awesome and important that it is referred to in a further 12 passages in the New Testament.

Great Priest

This verse is also quoted extensively.

The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4).

This occurs word-for-word in Hebrews (5:6; 7:17–21) and is also alluded to (Hebrews 5:10; 6:20), proving the unique role of Jesus as priest. He is a priest for ever and, like Melchizedek (a character from Genesis 14), was different from the priests under the Law of Moses (Hebrews 7:19–27). This fact about Jesus is so crucial that God 'swears and will not relent' as Psalm 110 has it. Jesus is superior to and supersedes all other priests because his sacrifice has opened up the way for believers to be saved from eternal death. No one else did or could do this.

These are awesome truths about Jesus Christ, and they show how the New Testament gospel is inextricably based on the Old Testament writings. We cannot fully comprehend the inspired words of Jesus or the apostles without turning to the scriptures to which they are referring.

We Can See the Christ – Now and When He Comes

Given its importance in the New Testament, it is therefore important to read this whole psalm. In addition to the words about the supremacy of the Christ it contains very clear

language about him. He has God's authority to exercise unassailable power. There is no hope for the enemies of this triumphant ruler when he returns – all his enemies are subdued. This fact is also referred to several times in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20–22 and Hebrews 10:13).

A common image of Jesus is of a 'meek and mild' man who would not 'hurt a fly'. This does not agree with this psalm's picture of an immortal supreme Christ ruling with great power, putting down opposition with the full authority of God.

Of course, everything he will do will be right and completely just, but we do well to be ready, ensuring that we are his friends, not his enemies. This means doing what he asked of us (John 15:14). We can only see and obey Jesus properly by reading the whole Bible for ourselves, avoiding the teaching of 'blind leaders'. We then need to believe what it says and to prepare for his coming.

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