

Attitude to Jesus Christ

The Most Important Question of All

If someone asks, 'What do you think of President Clinton?' there will probably be some who have an opinion either way, and some may simply shrug their shoulders. He is the head of the most powerful country in the world at the present time. But some take the attitude: Such men come and go, and there is little different when someone else replaces them.

But with the question: 'What do you think of Jesus Christ?' shrugging the shoulders and saying 'So what?' is a different thing. Some Roman emperors claimed to be divine, but no one really took them seriously, though it was part of a display of loyalty to the state to offer a pinch of incense to them as an act of sacrifice to a divine personage. But the claims for Jesus Christ are so great that either they are true, and that the salvation of every person depends on acknowledging Him, in view of His resurrection from the dead and in view of His promise to come again as Judge and Redeemer of His people; or He was a deluded maniac, who claimed to be God, and whose death put an end to His claims. If this last comment was true, then let us be quite honest about it: we would be wasting our time as Christians.;

When Jesus had been confronted with a series of questions by His opponents, about tax to Caesar, about the resurrection of the body, and about the most important commandment, He indicated His full authority by the way He dealt with the questions. But then He asked a question: 'Whose Son is the Messiah?' His question forced the Pharisees to try to reconcile two conflicting strands in their expectation of the Messiah, one a human being, a descendant of David, a king like David, a political and military figure. Son of David, of course!

But there was another strand in the tradition. When Nathan the prophet told David, when David was contemplating building a house for the Lord, that the Lord would build him a house, meaning a royal family, he said that his descendant would reign on his throne forever (2 Sm 7). David acknowledged, in astonishment, that this kind of language went beyond the way human beings are described. Then there was the Jewish apocalyptic literature, like Daniel chapter 7, which spoke of the Son of Man as a divine being, a pre-existent being, who would come to the Ancient of Days and receive everlasting glory and dominion. So whose son would the Messiah be?

Jesus was challenging His opponents to come to terms with the essential question: 'Who is Jesus Christ?' In quoting the first part of Psalm 110: 1, Jesus pointed out that David called His descendant his Lord, who would sit at God's right hand until God put his enemies under his feet. So David was going to have a descendant whom he acknowledged was his lord! David acknowledged that he was subject to his descendant and served him. The one who sits as lord at the Father's right has the place of God's son. That is whose son He is. And when we are speaking of God, we remember that He permits no one to sit as equal with Him. He gives His honour to no one else.

True man, yet very God, Jesus Christ is our Saviour. He is a true human being, able to take our place, in sin and punishment, able to suffer and die on our behalf. Yet as true God, His change of places with us means that what He has done for us is good enough to free us from His enemies and ours, and put sin and death under His feet for ever. So what the Jews had great difficulty accepting, we find our great comfort and assurance. We accept in faith the things Jesus came to be and to do for us.