

Christ Is Our Victorious Lord
Mark 12:35-44
Key Verse: 12:36

“David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: ‘The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’”

Today’s passage concludes the debates between the Jewish religious leaders and Jesus. Each time the Jewish leaders asked a difficult question, Jesus answered with divine wisdom and power that left them speechless. Jesus won each debate by a score of 100-0. Jesus’ intention, however, was not to win debates. With a broken shepherd’s heart, Jesus tried to help them realize who he truly was, for it was a matter of their eternal destiny. Those who oppose Jesus will be destroyed. Those who see Jesus as God will worship him and share his victory. We can learn from the widow in this passage. Let’s accept victorious Christ and worship him from our hearts.

I. The Christ is David’s Lord (35-40)

Look at verse 35. A healthy fear of God began to settle over the people gathered in the temple courts, and a welcome peace prevailed. Now Jesus had a chance to teach what he really wanted to teach. Jesus wanted to clarify who the Christ really was. Jesus began by asking, “How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?” To Jesus, the teachers of the law were in the midst of a glaring error. They did not teach the identity of the Christ as he truly was according to the Scriptures. They distorted his identity by emphasizing his human nature without mentioning his divine nature. It was a serious matter. Their error was not in regard to some obscure element of the dietary law, but about the identity of the central figure in God’s history. This was so shocking that Jesus lamented, “How is it?” The teachers of the law were not stupid. They were brilliant and well educated. However, they were spiritually blind. Those who are totally engrossed with the things of the world care nothing about unseen spiritual realities. Those who are satisfied with worldly goods do not crave spiritual treasure. The teachers of the law enjoyed money and human honor excessively. So they had no burning passion to study the Bible. They did not pray fervently for the help of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, in their limited human understanding, they held a reductionist view of the Christ which made him out to be only a political, military and economic deliverer. Their bad influence caused great damage to the spiritual lives of their people.

It might have been hard for ordinary people to understand why the teachers of the law were such a bad influence. Their teaching about the Christ was from the Scriptures. The Christ is the son of David. He was promised to David and he came through David’s line. He would be given the throne of David. Yet there is much more to his identity than being the son of David. To have a right concept of the Christ we must have a comprehensive Biblical view of who he is. We must have a sound theology of the Christ, just as we must have a sound theology of God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the great doctrines of the Christian faith. For example, the Bible says that God is love (1 Jn 4:16) and that God is holy (Lev 19:2). If we only stress the love of God, we can ignore the holiness of God. This can create an atmosphere where sin is taken lightly. On the other hand, if we only stress the holiness of God, we can ignore the love of God. This can create a cold and legalistic atmosphere. So we must teach both the love of God and the holiness of God as the Bible does. The human ancestry of Christ as the son of David is only part of who he really is. Jesus wanted to give people a full understanding of the Christ. Jesus did so by explaining David’s right concept of the Christ.

Look at verses 36-37a. “David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.”’ David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” Jesus’ point is clear. If the Christ were a mere human being, David would not call him Lord. He would call him, “great...great...great grandson.” He might pat the Christ on the head and say he was proud of him. He would certainly not call him “Lord,” just as we would not expect Missionary Joseph Ahn to call his grandson Abraham, “Lord.” Yet David, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, called the Christ “Lord.” Therefore, the Christ is more than a mere human being. The Christ has a divine nature as well as a human nature.

Jesus teaches this from Psalm 110, where it seems that David was listening in on a conversation in heaven. The speaker is the LORD (capital letters, see Psalm 110), that is YHWH, the God of Israel. The one spoken to is the Lord (small letters), that is the Christ. God directly appoints the Christ to sit at his right hand. There was no intermediary. God promises to put the Christ’s enemies under his feet. The Christ shares God’s power and authority

and everlasting victory. So David acknowledges this Christ as his Lord. David saw the Christ as King of kings, Lord of lords. David submitted to this Christ.

The true identity of the Christ was not hidden, even in the Old Testament. It was explicitly revealed in Psalm 110. It was also revealed in Isaiah 9:6, which calls him, "Mighty God," and "Everlasting Father." The Scriptures clearly teach that the Christ is in very nature God. Then how could the religious leaders miss this? Jesus gives us the clue when he emphasizes that David spoke by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual insight into the Scriptures. The teachers of the law did not rely on the Holy Spirit when they studied the Scriptures. They understood only what appealed to their carnal nature, which was a human Christ. On the other hand, an old man Simeon, who was full of the Holy Spirit understood that the Christ was God's salvation for all mankind and the righteous Judge (Lk 2:30-32,34). John the Baptist, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, knew that Jesus was the Son of God who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:34).

We must have a balanced view of the Christ based on the Scriptures. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to grasp who the Christ really is. The Christ is fully human and also fully divine. St. Paul said in Romans 1:3-4, "...regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." Jesus Christ is many-sided and many dimensional, just as the holy God is. That is why Isaiah used so many names to try to describe the Christ (9:6). On the one hand, Jesus is the friend of sinners (Mt 11:19). At the same time Christ is the holy God (Lk 5:8). On the one hand, Jesus is our great high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb 4:15). On the other hand, Christ is also the Righteous Judge who determines each person's eternal destiny (Jn 5:22). The Christ is King of kings and the one who serves (Mk 10:45).

To truly know Christ and to have a right relationship with him, we must study the Bible deeply by the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 16:14, "He (the Holy Spirit) will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." The Holy Spirit connects us with the Christ who sits at God's right hand. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us for his own glory and to be glorified through us. Of course, we cannot control the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is pleased to speak to us as we meditate on the word of God deeply, obey it, and pray.

The Holy Spirit revealed to David that the Christ has eternal victory at God's right hand. Look at verse 36b again. "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" The first enemy is Satan, who works hard day and night to frustrate God's purposes and lead people astray. This enemy led the first family into disobedience. This enemy is the ultimate cause of all our pain and sorrow. However, when Jesus suffered, died and rose again, he crushed Satan under his feet. Since then, through his church, Christ has been winning victory after victory according to his divine plan. In the future, Christ will have Satan thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur for everlasting punishment and torment (Rev 20:10). Another enemy is sin, which separated God and man. Christ's death paid the price of sin and opened the way back to God for all who believe in him. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Through Christ's resurrection, death has been swallowed up in victory. Our Christ is a victorious Christ.

The Christ could win these victories because he is in very nature God. However, since he is also fully human, he won these victories on behalf of mankind. He shares his victory with all who believe in him. We are everlasting victors in Christ Jesus our Lord. Christ reigns over us with love. We, in turn, can reign over God's world with love, joy and peace. Christ gives us eternal life now. Christ gives us the promise that we will inherit his everlasting kingdom when we leave this world. We are going to a place where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain. While living in this world, we suffer from real pain. We are attacked by real enemies. But we have access to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. When we study the Bible deeply and pray earnestly, we can go to the throne of grace and taste the real victory of Christ. This theology study is not for the sake of academic advancement. It is the way to eternal victory in our Lord Jesus Christ. I have many burdens and troubles in serving the work of God. Left to myself, I would be utterly defeated. But when I study the word of God deeply, the Holy Spirit takes me to the presence of Christ. Christ forgives all my sins, lifts all my burdens and gives me peace and victory. He wants to share his everlasting victory with all of us.

The large crowd listened to Jesus with delight. The hope of victory touched their souls, even if they could not fully understand Jesus. They were also happy to see the teachers of the law, who had burdened them with many rules and regulations, being subdued by Jesus.

Then Jesus issued a strong warning against the teachers of the law. They really enjoyed walking around in their flowing robes, attracting the attention of people. They acted like fashion models. They craved the praise of men through greetings and places of honor. But their hearts were completely corrupted. They devoured widow's houses in their wretched greed. They had the image of Satan, not the image of God. Still they made lengthy prayers as a show. When they did not know God, they became sheer hypocrites. Jesus warned them of the most severe punishment.

II. Jesus recognized a widow's pure worship (41-44).

Jesus sat down opposite the offering box and watched the crowd put their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts, with extended arm motions. They dropped their bills in one at a time, slowly, to make sure everyone had time to count them. Each succeeding person wanted to offer a little more than the previous person. An audience began to keep score. Then a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. People began to shake their heads and to despise the widow. But not Jesus. Jesus began to rejoice. Jesus was greatly encouraged by this widow's offering. He called his disciples and said to them, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on" (43-44).

Why did Jesus value the widow's offering so highly? It was because Jesus was looking at the heart, not at the offering amount. Jesus knew that this widow was very poor. When she put her offering into the basket, she was putting in everything she had. She was literally offering her heart to God. This tells us that God was everything to her. She was willing to give everything to the one who was everything to her. She could have been discouraged by the corruption of the religious leaders and thought it useless to contribute. She could have thought her small offering was nothing compared to the large amounts that others gave. But she did not. She offered before the eyes of God. She knew that her offering mattered to God. She offered to God to honor God out of her faith in God.

Someone was asked, "Why do we make an offering every Sunday?" He answered, "To support the church." It sounds like he thinks that God needs his money. This was not the attitude of the widow in this passage. She offered her money to God to honor God. Malachi 3:8-10 teaches us a right attitude in offering to God. God says, "'Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'" God is the Creator and Owner of all things, including all material things. One-tenth of all of our income belongs to God; it is not ours. In the early church, Barnabas sold a field he owned, took the proceeds and put it at the apostles' feet, entrusting them to do what was best (Ac 4:37). St. Paul urged the Gentile churches to make a generous offering to the Jerusalem church (Ro 15:26,27). It was a sign of gratitude for the spiritual blessing they received. Our father of faith Abraham offered a tenth of the spoils of war to God's priest Melchizedek after winning the battle with the kings (Gen 14:20). Abraham did so to recognize God as the source of his victory. Material offering honors God as God and is part of worshiping God.

God blesses abundantly those who do this. In Elijah's time there was a widow who had only enough food for one final meal. She was planning to eat with her son and then die of starvation together with him. The prophet Elijah challenged her to honor the word of God by making a cake for him first. He promised her, "For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land'" (1 Ki 17:14). The widow offered her last bit of food to God's servant Elijah. Then, by God's divine providence, she experienced a continuous supply of flour and oil. She was able to feed Elijah and her family throughout the duration of the famine. When she honored God in her giving, God blessed her abundantly.

One mother in Korea named Sook Nyu Lee was very poor. She raised four sons under an unbelieving husband who drank a lot after Korean war. She could hardly cook regular rice for the family. But she kept her tithe of rice in the kitchen for her Sunday offering even when they had no grain to eat. She overcame temptations to use it feed her hungry children. Sometimes she gathered residue trash of rice from a rice wine factory to feed her family. Then they walked to the church half drunken. However God accepted her sincere worship to God through her tithe offering and

blessed her four sons to be prominent pastors in Korea today. Moreover, her husband became a Christian through her influence.

One godly American woman faced a difficult financial challenge after her husband left her. She had to get a job and support her five boys without receiving regular child support payments. In that difficult situation, she offered a tithe to God no matter what. And God opened his storehouse of blessing. She prospered in her job and found God's provision in various ways. She was able to buy a van, and even a house and provide for her sons, who are growing in the knowledge of God. As we hear these stories, they sound like love stories between godly women and their generous God.

In this passage we learn that we must truly know the Christ through deep Bible study and prayer, by the help of the Holy Spirit. The Christ shares his everlasting victory with us. Those who know Christ truly are happy to give everything they have to God because God has given everything he has to us. No matter how difficult life may seem, we have glorious inner victory in our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you to enjoy this victory and offer your lives and materials to God with reverence and gratitude.