



Who is the Christ?

How you answer this question depends on where you will spend eternity.

Matthew 22:41-46 & 16:13-11

Who where the Pharisees?

The Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders in the First Century. They held the Bible (Old Testament) in high regard and taught it to the people. They were very zealous in insisting that all people obey God's Law.

Why was Jesus always coming into conflict with the Pharisees?

- They had the wrong view of God's Law thinking that if they could be diligent in following the Law, they could earn God's favor.
 - Their pride kept them from realizing that it is humanly impossible to be saved by following the Law, that the purpose of the Law was to turn men to God for salvation.
- They added their own laws as human interpretations of God's Law thus enslaving people to the letter of the law while ignoring the Spirit of the Law...

Romans 7:6 - But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.
- The Pharisees were the stereotypical religious hypocrites imposing their interpretations of God's Law on others without obeying them themselves.

It seems like Jesus went out of His way to confront the Pharisees about their beliefs. For example, there were seven occasions where He did things on the Sabbath that Pharisees thought were unlawful. Jesus used these occasions to point out the error and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees often asked Jesus questions to try and trip Him up. And Jesus asked them questions that forced them to confront the truth. One of these questions was in Matthew 22...

Matthew 22:41-42 - While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"

Why is this an important question?

What you think of Christ is a matter of eternal life or death...

- Recall the two criminals who died next to Jesus in Luke 23:39-43. The one who had the wrong view of Christ died in condemnation, the other who recognized Jesus as the Christ (or Messiah) was saved and promised eternal life.

What you think of Christ will condition your understanding of the Bible.

- If Christ is Almighty God manifest in the flesh as the Bible proclaims, you will believe the Bible. If Christ is not Almighty God manifest in the flesh, then you forced to apply your own human interpretation to the Bible as the Pharisees did (if you pay it any attention at all).

What you think of Him will condition whether or not you live forever...

John 8:23-24 – "I am from above... I am not of this world... if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

- If Jesus is who He says He is, you better believe Him or you are lost.

What are some alternatives to believing that Jesus is the Son of God who came to us from heaven?

That He was simply a good teacher as the rich young ruler called Him in Matthew 19.

- Jesus challenged the man to consider what he was calling Him...

Matt 19:17 - So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."
- Jesus knew the rich young ruler's heart and while he was correct in calling Jesus good, he was doing it for the wrong reasons because he did not know who Jesus really was.

That Jesus was a fine moral example for us.

- Jesus certainly was that but that is not why He came. In His own words:

Luke 19:10 - "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
- Following a fine moral example does not save us. We can only be saved by God Himself and this is why Jesus came, to save us.

In response to the miracles Jesus performed, the Pharisees rationalized that He was demon-possessed.

- But Jesus showed them the flaw in their logic:

Matt 12:25-26 - "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?"

- Note that the Pharisees did not dispute that the miracles took place, they just were refusing to believe what the miracles proved.
 - The types of miracles Jesus performed were what was foretold that the Messiah would do: Isa 35:5-6 - ...the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing.

The Jewish religious leaders thought Jesus was a blasphemer because He claimed to be God.

Matt 26:63-65 - But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!"

- The Jewish religious leaders knew that the term "Son of God" meant "same as God" and thought of Jesus as merely a man so His claim to be God manifest in the flesh made Him a blasphemer. But they should have known that the Messiah would be God Himself...

Isaiah 9:6 - For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Some have said that Jesus was a demented genius.

- Jesus is the only founder of a religion who claimed to be Almighty God.
- Demented charismatic leaders are followed but rarely after they die and certainly not to the extent that Jesus has been followed (the difference is that Jesus was resurrected and is living still).

Some have claimed that Jesus never actually existed.

- But you'd have to be an anti-intellectual and totally disregard history to suggest such a ridiculous thing.

Let's get back to the question Jesus asked the Pharisees...

Matt 22:41-46

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David."

43 He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying:

44 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool" '?

45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"

46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

Who did the Pharisees say that Christ is?

The son of David

Why would the Pharisees say that the Christ would be the son of David?

It was prophesied that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David...

2 Chr 13:5 - Should you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt?

Psa 89:35-37 - Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky." Selah

Isa 9:6-7 - For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

How does Jesus use David as a witness to the truth?

He quotes David's words from Psalm 110:1 to challenge the idea that the Messiah would be a mere human descendant of King David...

Psa 110:1-7

1 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

2 The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

3 Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, you have the dew of Your youth.

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

5 The Lord is at Your right hand; he shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.

6 He shall judge among the nations, he shall fill the places with dead bodies, he shall execute the heads of many countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; therefore He shall lift up the head.

How does Psalm 110 show that David knew the Messiah to be the Son of God?

He refers to the Son of God who sits at the right hand of God as "my Lord". Only the Son of God sits at the right hand of God.

How do we know that Psalm 110 is talking about the Messiah?

Verse 4 refers to Him being a priest forever and verse 6 speaks of Him judging among the nations. Biblical references to these traits are always in regard to the Messiah (Psalm 2 for example).

Jesus asked His disciples who the people thought He was...

Matt 16:13-17

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven

Why did some of the people have Jesus confused with John the Baptist?

They certainly had the same message,

Matt 3:1-2 - In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Matt 4:12, 17 - Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee... ...From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Why did some of the people think Jesus was Elijah?

It was prophesied that Elijah would come just prior to the Messiah establishing His kingdom on earth...

Mal 4:5 - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

If the kingdom of heaven was at hand, the Jews expected Elijah the prophet to be among those preaching repentance.

When will Elijah come?

- Revelation 11:3-12 speaks of two prophets who will be witnesses for God during the coming 7-year period of tribulation just prior to the Lord coming to set up His Kingdom on earth.
- Note that Elijah was one of the two prophets who did not die, both Enoch and Elijah were taken directly to heaven.

What did John the Baptist and Jesus mean that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, it has been 2,000 years and God's kingdom on earth is yet future?

Jesus explained:

John 18:36 – "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

So does this mean that a literal kingdom on earth will not happen?

Many people believe this but the Bible speaks of two kingdoms, a spiritual kingdom in this age of grace and a physical kingdom on earth when the Lord returns. God has made many promises to the nation of Israel about this. Certainly one of the reasons the Jews missed their Messiah was that they expected a political deliverer like Moses instead of a Suffering Servant. The Jews should have been able to tell from their own Scriptures that the Messiah is both, He came the first time as a Suffering Servant, and He will return as the conquering King of kings and Revelation 19 & 20 gives the details.

What is the other category that the people rationalized to dismiss the idea that Jesus was the Messiah?

That He was just another prophet that God had raised up. While prophets were rare during this period of Israel's history, they certainly had a strong heritage of them. And Jesus was a prophet, He made many prophecies about the times when He would return.

How was Jesus different from the prophets?

Because the types of miracles He performed were Messianic in nature...

Isa 35:5-6 - Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

He was also different from the prophets because He spoke with authority...

Luke 4:18-22

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed;

19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

How did Peter answer Jesus?

That Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

How did Peter know that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God?

Jesus said Peter knew this because God the Father revealed it to Him.

How do we come to know who Jesus is?

The same way Peter did, God reveals it to us.

Many people have come to know Jesus who did not have the amount of exposure to Him as Peter.

Even the centurion who presided over the execution of Jesus came to the conclusion that He had to be the Son of God...

Matt 27:54 - So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Jesus spoke about those of us who would not have the benefit of seeing Him and yet we are able to believe because God gives us the faith we need:

John 20:29 - Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Since it is God who reveals Himself to us, does this take people off the hook, putting the burden on God to make Himself known?

God has already done His part by revealing Himself in Jesus the Messiah. To have a relationship it takes the participation of both parties. The ball is now in our court to respond to Jesus and let Him into our life.

If you have never responded to Jesus before, He is reaching out to you right now.