

Stomped by David's Lord

Jesus' Last Days (Mark): Part 14
Mark 12:35-40 (Mt.22:41-46, 38-40, Lk.20:41-47) 4/10/2021

Hook: Do you take Jesus' warnings seriously?

Introduction.....	1
Greater than David.....	1
"Christ" = Son of David.....	2
The question is why do they make a point of it.....	2
The Conundrum: Who's the Greatest?.....	3
Son of God.....	4
Enemies Beware!.....	4
Who Are Jesus' Enemies?.....	4
Brutal Defeat.....	4
Which Side is the Crowd On?.....	5
What to Watch Out For.....	6
Deadly Influence.....	8
The Christ.....	8
Summary.....	9

Mark 12:35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? 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." ' 37 David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

38 As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, 39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

Introduction

Jesus has been in a verbal war with the Jewish authorities ever since he ransacked the Temple. They've been coming at him in waves, and each time he demolishes their arguments. The last passage ended with the statement in 12:34, **From then on no one dared ask him any more questions.** That's stated in a very decisive, final way, pointing to Jesus' victory over the Sanhedrin. He has bested the field and debate is now closed. Now with them aside, Jesus takes his rightful place as the supreme spiritual authority in Israel and now *he* takes a teaching posture and asks a question. But his question isn't a fighting question; it's a teaching question.

Greater than David

Mark 12:35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?"

“Christ” = Son of David

But don't misunderstand that question. He's not asking, "How is it that the scribes say the son of David and the Messiah are the same person? Of course both titles refer to the same person—"Messiah" (or the Christ—Messiah is the Hebrew word; Christ is the Greek translation) was the Jewish nickname for the son of David.¹ No one doubted they were the same person, least of all Jesus. Mark has already made it clear that both titles refer to the same person because they both refer to Jesus.² Everyone knew both titles referred to the same person.

The question is why do they make a point of it

His question isn't about whether they are the same person; his question is why do the scribes talk about it? Why do they make a point of it? What is their purpose in using that particular title—son of David? When blind Bart called Jesus son of David, what do you suppose his reason was for calling Jesus by that title?

It was to honor him. It was a term of exaltation. David was the greatest king Israel ever had. In fact, if we go by how much space in the OT is devoted to describing his life and how many times his name is mentioned in both Old and New Testaments, we would have to say David was by far the greatest human figure in the whole Bible prior to Jesus' time. Greater than Abraham, greater than Moses—David was the greatest of all.

When you read the second half of the OT, from David's time on, each king is graded by the Bible writers based on how he stacked up against David. This king was so-so, because he was kind of like David. This king was horrible because he was nothing like David. This king was great because he was a lot like David. It's how every king was measured.

¹ The OT promises a great, powerful future deliverer of Israel, but the OT doesn't call him the Messiah (1 Sam.2:35 is a possible exception, although that passage is most likely speaking about David). He's called by a bunch of other names though (the seed of the woman, the prophet like Moses, the son of David, the branch of Jesse, the servant of the Lord, the son of man, Son of God, etc.) In between the OT and NT times, the Jews said, "What shorthand could we come up with to describe that deliverer? What is one, single word we could use to describe all that? I know, how about 'Messiah'?"

"Messiah" was a good summary because it's the Hebrew word for anointed one. Kings were anointed and priests were anointed, and this figure would be both the ultimate king and the ultimate priest, so why not call him THE Anointed One? So the term caught on. They started referring to this figure as the anointed one, or messiah.

Messiah is the Hebrew word. The Greek translation of that word is "Christ." So if you say it in English it's "anointed one," if you say it in Hebrew it's "Messiah," and if you say it in Greek it's "Christ."

The word "messiah" is used frequently in the OT to refer to any anointed one. For example, Leviticus 4:5 says, **Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood** In the Hebrew that would sound like, **"Then the messiah priest shall take some** Or, in Greek, **Then the christ priest shall take some ...**). Whenever someone is anointed, it says, "They messiah-ed him" or "they christ-ed him."

It was about 100 years before Jesus' time when the Jews started using the nickname THE Messiah to refer to the coming son of David. So the terms son of David and Messiah had been used interchangeably for a century leading up to Jesus' time. And we know there's nothing wrong with using that term to refer to him because the NT writers pick up on it and Jesus himself affirms it here.

² Mark calls Jesus the Christ in the very first verse of the book.

Mark 1:1 The beginning the gospel about Jesus Christ.

And the climax of the whole book, right in the center, is where Peter confesses, "You are the Christ." (Mark 8:29) And you skip to the end at Jesus' trial and Jesus affirms it directly.

Mark 14:61 ... high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ ...? 62 "I am," said Jesus.

Jesus is the Christ, and Jesus is the son of David. Remember blind Bart, when Jesus was making his approach to Jerusalem a few days before? What was he shouting? "Son of David, have mercy on me." And we found that even though he was blind, Bartimaeus had the clearest spiritual eyesight of anyone there.

When the gospel writers make their case that Jesus is the Christ, they go out of their way to prove that he was descended from David (that's what the genealogies at the beginning of Matthew and Luke are all about).

So when you want to talk about how great the Messiah would be, you talk about his association with David. Just like today if you want to talk about how great a modern President is so you compare him to Abraham Lincoln or George Washington. Just by mentioning a modern President in the same breath with Abraham Lincoln, you're really elevating him. So much so that no matter which modern President you're talking about, if you compare him to Lincoln people will roll their eyes and say, "Oh come on. Give me a break." That's the kind of respect we have for President Lincoln. Multiply that by thousands and you've got David in the minds of the Jews of Jesus' day. David was far greater in their minds than Lincoln is in ours. So to associate Jesus with David is the highest honor possible. That's why they called the Christ the son of David.

The Conundrum: Who's the Greatest?

But Jesus presents the question as a riddle. And the riddle is this: how do you square all that with Psalm 110? Jesus quotes the first line of Psalm 110, which is a conversation between Yahweh God and the son of David. How did David know about that conversation? 36 David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit. It's not something David overheard or figured out—the Holy Spirit simply revealed to David that this conversation took place. And what Jesus wants to call their attention to is the way David refers to his future descendent.

36 David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "The Lord said to my Lord.

So it's a conversation between two Lord's. *The Lord* is speaking to someone David calls *my Lord*. Who is *the Lord*? That's easy—that's Yahweh God.³ But who is Yahweh talking to? David's Lord. "My Lord" means "my superior." So David begins the psalm by saying, "The Lord God said this to my superior."

It's not a big deal that a descendent would become greater than his ancestor. That happened all the time. What never happened was for a father to call his son Lord. Or for the king, and the greatest man ever to call anyone Lord, except God.

Why would David refer to his descendent as his superior? That's an easy question to answer if you just read the rest of psalm 110. Look what the Lord God says to David's superior. 36 ... 'The Lord said to my superior: "Sit at my right hand That's all we need to know. Why did David call his descendant "my superior"? Because that descendant will be elevated to the right hand of God. The right hand is the #1 spot. A man's right hand at his table would be the most honored position in that household. A king's right hand would be the most honored position in that kingdom. God's right hand is the most honored position in the universe. It's the most exalted position imaginable.

So, as soon as David hears that much he's like, "Yeah, ok. We're definitely talking about someone who is my superior ... by a lot. I've never even been to heaven, much less elevated to the right hand of Almighty God."

And David was right. Who can compete with that? Not even the greatest of the angels are in that ballpark.

Hebrews 1:13 To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

This person is not only David's superior; he's above even the most glorious of the heavenly beings. So do you see what Jesus is doing here? He asks, "Why do they always want to talk about the Messiah being the son of David?" Answer: to honor the Messiah. And Jesus' point here is, *that doesn't honor the Messiah*. They're right in saying he's the son of David, but they're wrong in thinking that

³ In Psalm 110, the first "LORD" is in all caps, which indicates it's the Hebrew name Yahweh. The second "Lord" is the normal Hebrew word for lord (*adonai*). So it's, "Yahweh said to my *adonai* ..." Mark writes in Greek and uses the same Greek word (*kurios*) for both, which is how it appears in the Greek version of the Old Testament.

honors him. Mentioning the Messiah in the same breath as King David doesn't honor the Messiah; it honors David. Bartimaeus probably thought he was paying Jesus a compliment by calling him "son of David," but in reality he was paying David a compliment, not Jesus.

What Jesus is doing is revolutionizing their whole conception of the Messiah. They thought the Messiah would be super-great because he would return Israel to her glory days under David, and Jesus says, "You know what? If you think that, your Messiah is way too small."

Their concept of the Messiah was too small and consequently, their concept of the kingdom of God was way off. They fantasized about someday returning to the glory days of David. Jesus says, "We're not going back to that. We're moving ahead to something far greater." (That's always true, by the way. The glory days of the past aren't as glorious as the ones that are coming.)

So once again Jesus goes to a famous passage they could all quote in their sleep and points out something that's plain as day that none of them had ever noticed.

Son of God

It was plain as day, but it was hard for them to hear because how could anyone possibly be greater than David? David was the greatest ever! Answer: the son of David could be greater than David because he wouldn't just be David's son; he would also be God's Son. And they could have known that from another super-famous passage—the passage where God first revealed that the Messiah would be David's descendant.

2 Samuel 7:12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your seed to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 ... I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. Now get this ... 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son.

God tells David, "You're going to have a son who will also be my son." And that's exactly the point Jesus just got done making in the parable of the vineyard, where the landowner sent all his servants, and then finally his own son, who represents Jesus. Jesus says, "Son of David? That's accurate, but it's not the half of it. How about Son of God, exalted to the highest conceivable place and elevated to the very right hand of the Almighty."

Enemies Beware!

Who Are Jesus' Enemies?

So Jesus is re-calibrating their whole conception of how great the Messiah is, but why is he doing that here in this context? Think about what had just happened. Jesus had just fended off waves of attacks from the Jewish religious leaders, and right there, right after they attacked him, he quotes a psalm about how God will punish the Messiah's enemies. Every Jew would read Psalm 110 and think, "Oh, the Messiah's enemies—that's the Gentiles. The Romans who are oppressing us." But Jesus quotes this psalm not at the steps of King Herod's palace, but in the Temple where he had just been attacked by the spiritual leaders of Israel who are trying to kill him. Jesus is saying, "You think Rome is the enemy? You're the enemy."

Brutal Defeat

And what happens to the Messiah's enemies isn't pretty. Just keep reading in Psalm 110 and it talks about their bodies being heaped up in a pile. The enemies of David's Lord are going to be absolutely decimated. And at the top of the pile of those dead bodies will be the men who were considered the holiest, most devout people in Israel. Jesus wasn't quite as mild as most people imagine him.

After Jesus quoted this psalm here, the Apostles never forgot it. Psalm 110 ended up being the most often quoted OT passage in the whole NT. It's either quoted or alluded to 33 times by NT writers so evidently it's the Holy Spirit's favorite psalm—which tells us something. The Holy Spirit's favorite way of informing us about Jesus from the OT, it's a psalm that says, 'God will exalt his Son to the highest place imaginable and massacre his enemies.'

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem and said, "Okay, no more fence-sitting. You're on my side or your on the other side. And if side with those men, you're doomed." And if you doubt whether that's Jesus' point here, just look at what he says in verse 40, "**Such men will be punished most severely.**" You don't want to be standing too close to Jesus' enemies when Psalm 110 is fulfilled.

Which Side is the Crowd On?

In many ways, this whole encounter in the Temple with the Jewish authorities has been a contest for the hearts of the people. They are saying, "Don't listen to Jesus; follow us." And Jesus says, "No, don't follow them. Follow me." So which side does the crowd take?

37 ... The large crowd listened to him with delight.

The crowd has been on Jesus' side the whole time. That's why the Sanhedrin was afraid to take action against Jesus—they were afraid of the crowd. The people have been siding with Jesus more and more, and this is the strongest statement yet. They took *delight* in what Jesus was saying. They loved it.

And that's what made the authorities so jealous of Jesus, because that's what they wanted more than anything. They wanted the people to listen to *them* with delight. They wanted the people to be amazed and them and honor them. We see that in the very next verse, where we see them for parading around in robes and seeking to be greeted with honor and given seats of honor and all the rest. That's all an expression of their craving for the approval of the people.

But the crowd gave that approval to Jesus, not them. Which was good. Loving the Word of God is a sign of a heart that is going in the right direction. Jesus just said that in the previous paragraph, when he told the receptive scribe, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." It's good to love the words of the Lord.

So in the battle for the hearts of the people, Jesus won. The crowd sides with him. So, does Jesus celebrate? Does he tell the crowd, "Congratulations, you made it into the kingdom of God. You're in like Flynn. Well done."? No, he doesn't say that. What does he say? He said what would become two of the most neglected words in the whole Bible.

37 ... The large crowd listened to him with delight. 38 As he taught, Jesus said, "*Watch out ...*"

I don't know of any two words more ignored by God's people than those two. It seems like every time Jesus warns us to watch out, a hundred preachers pop up and say, "Oh, no, don't worry. That warning isn't for you. It's only for phony, fake Christians, not you."

Preachers say this because they don't want you to ever feel insecure or uncomfortable. Warnings, if taken seriously, are unsettling. And people don't like being unsettled, so there isn't much market for preachers who take the warnings seriously. And so many preachers will assure you, if you're genuine, you don't have anything to worry about—you'll never fall. Beware of teachers who tell you you don't have to beware.

If you were in the Boulder King Soopers last month and you heard the gunfire and they came over the PA and said, "There's a shooter running loose, watch out," you would take that seriously, right? If you were at the zoo and someone said, "The lions all escaped their enclosure! Watch out!" that would get your attention. But Jesus says, "Your soul is in danger, WATCH OUT!" and we're all like, "Yeah, whatever Jesus." But Jesus knows the spiritual dangers that lurk out there, and he knows how vulnerable we are despite our inflated ideas of how we we'll be able to handle what's coming.

And Mark also wants to warn us of the danger, so he throws in some ominous, scary music in verse 37. "I don't hear any ominous scary music in that verse." Look again. Do you see that phrase, "**they**

listened to him with delight”? That word “delight” was used one other time in Mark. And it was this exact same phrase (in the Greek), speaking of someone who delighted to listen to a preacher. It was back in ch.6 when it said Herod listened to John the Baptist with delight. He loved listening to John, but then an anti-John influence came along and Herod caved to that influence and ended up putting John to death. In a matter of hours Herod went from loving John’s preaching to cutting off John’s head.

So by using that exact same phrase here, John is playing some ominous, scary music. He’s reminding us about what can happen when someone takes delight in hearing a preacher but isn’t prepared to stand up against opposing influences. It can go really bad.

Does it go bad? What happens with this crowd? A couple days later when Pilate offers to set Jesus free, they will all join in the mob screaming, “Crucify him! Give us Barabbas!” How did that happen? Who influenced them?

Mark 15:11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

Now again, so many preachers will point to that and say, “See, this crowd was never genuine to begin with. Otherwise they never would have turned against Jesus. Because we know there’s never a time when someone is on the right track but then goes bad, right?” Wrong.

If you see this crowd turn on Jesus at the crucifixion and conclude that they never truly loved Jesus’ teaching, you’re reading the book backwards. That’s not the conclusion Mark draws. In fact, it’s exactly the opposite of the way Mark wants us to think about this.

The way Mark presents it, the reason it went bad wasn’t because they were phonies, but because they didn’t do what Jesus told them to do, namely, watch out. The crowd chooses Jesus over the Sanhedrin; that’s good. The crowd loves Jesus’ teaching; that’s good. It’s good, but it’s fragile. Jesus knows how vulnerable people can be to influence, so he warns them, “Watch out. Watch out for the influence of those men.” And then a few chapters later those men win the crowd over—it must be that they failed to watch out. If the issue were the crowd faking it or something along that line, then Jesus wouldn’t have told them to watch out; he would have told them to stop faking it. The fact that Jesus offers something to protect them, but they end up failing, means they must not have done what Jesus told them to do. They didn’t take precautions against the deadly influence of those religious leaders. They didn’t take Jesus’ warning seriously, and to this day, most of them, if not all are in hell regretting their failure to take Jesus’ warning seriously.

What to Watch Out For

So how can we avoid making the same mistake? What does watching out looking like—watch out for what? At first you might think, *Well, these men are teachers and theologians, so maybe watch out for their doctrine?* No. Jesus points out six characteristics that make them so dangerous and none of them are about doctrine. They are behaviors that are so wicked that at the end of v.40 Jesus says, “**Such men will be punished most severely.**” The word translated “punished” is the word for condemnation. You could translate it, “Theirs will be the greater damnation.” So these six behaviors are very, very serious. Let’s look at them.

38 ... They like to walk around in flowing robes

What? They’re going to the hottest hell because they wear robes? There must be something else—what’s the next one?

... and be greeted in the marketplaces

They get the worst damnation because they want people to say, “hi”? What else? There’s got to be more.

39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.

Okay, what else?

40 They devour widows' houses

Ah, there we go. There's something we can all agree is really evil—stealing money from helpless widows.

What did I just do there? I reversed the 1st and 2nd commandment. Four counts of stealing God's glory for themselves? That's no big deal. But one count of stealing from human beings? That's serious.

We're so prone to demote the first commandment. Seeking earthly greatness just doesn't feel as evil to us as taking advantage of helpless widows. But think about the last several chapters in Mark. What topic has Jesus pressed with the disciples for chapter after chapter? *Don't seek earthly greatness.*

Back in ch.9 he caught them arguing about which of them was the greatest. And ever since then, Jesus has been giving them one lesson after another after another about the first being last and the last first, and the greatest must be the servant of all,, , and you have to be like little children to even enter the kingdom, and this lowly, blind beggar is greater than the rich young ruler, and on and on. So much of the gospel of Mark is devoted to that because it's a matter of salvation.

Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

If you seek human greatness and don't repent of that, you're lost. Why? Because seeking earthly glory instead of honor from God is a mark of unbelief.

John 5:44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

If you care more about human applause than God's approval it shows you don't even really believe in God.

Seeking human greatness breaks the first commandment because it steals glory from God—instead of pointing people's attention to God you point to yourself. And that shatters the second commandment because the most unloving thing you could ever do to a person is divert their attention away from God's glory.

And on top of all that, it's idolatry. God is the only source of true honor, so if we seek it from some other source, we're elevating that other person in the place of God. On top of that, it's selfish. Seeking glory from God is not self-seeking, but seeking glory from man is self-seeking.

Romans 2:7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking ... there will be wrath and anger.

Seeking earthly greatness makes you an enemy of Christ, which means if you don't repent you will be crushed by the wrath of God. But seeking honor from God glorifies him. When you would rather hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" that have all the accolades and approval of man, that shows God to be greater than man. If the whole world thinks you're a moron, but God says well-done—if that's enough for you, that means you love God above all.

Not only should we be content to be thought fools by the world, but we should actively seek to become fools in their eyes.

1 Corinthians 3:18 Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise.

If you're not a fool in the eyes of people who hate God, something's wrong.

How it would change our lives if we thought of God's "Well done, good and faithful servant" not as some far-off thing we might hear on Judgment Day, but as something that God may be saying here and now. Suppose you get some peer pressure to join in some gossip or complaining or some sort of ungodly conversation. If you don't join in people will look at you funny, and you'll lose your place in the crowd that you care about. Or you're tempted to lie so you'll look better in the eyes of people. How much easier it would be if in that moment to resist the temptation if you thought about God up in heaven ready

to whisper those words, “well done” if you choose his way? I’m tempted to cut some corners at work, and I know it isn’t right, but no one will know, and ... then suddenly I remember, “If I do what’s pleasing to God right now, God will look down and smile and nod and whisper, “Well done, Darrell.” How much honor would God receive from our lives is 20 times a day we did something because we cared more about his “well done” than whatever earthly honor we might get?

Jesus gives six examples of the self-important pride that we need to watch out for.

We could label them:

Pride of appearance

Pride of importance

Pride of place

Pride of privilege

Pride of pretense

We’re out of time now so I’ll have to cover those in a separate message.

Deadly Influence

For now, let me just give you two takeaways from this passage. First, the obvious one: watch out. Beware of the influence of prideful people. They are dangerous because few sins are more contagious than the sin of seeking earthly greatness.

You can be going along just fine, human greatness is the farthest thing from your mind, but then you notice someone trying to rise above you or get ahead of you, and suddenly now it’s a contest. And you find yourself drawn in—you can’t let them surpass you. You weren’t even thinking about whether you were above or below them before, but now that you see them trying to get ahead of you, suddenly now you want to stay ahead of them.

All 12 Apostles were arguing about who was the greatest. I doubt it started with all 12 at the same time. More likely it started with just one of them and that provoked the same sin in the others. This sin is more contagious than COVID-19, and infinitely more deadly. Look what it did to this crowd. They went from siding with Jesus to screaming for his death in a couple days. When the chief priests went to stir up the crowd against Jesus, why did that work? Why didn’t the crowd say, “What? We’re not turning against Jesus to follow your lead. He totally discredited you guys in the Temple. Get lost.” They didn’t say that because the people revered those leaders. When a scribe walked by, the people would rise to their feet. They had the chief seats, greetings of honor, lots of ooh’s and ah’s. And so when the time came to stir up the crowd against Jesus, it wasn’t hard. The crowd wanted earthly greatness too, and what better way to get it than to win the favor of such important men? When you seek honor from men, who do you seek it from the most? Famous people, if you can get it. The men with the flowing robes. The chief priests held sway over the crowds for the same reason the crowds held sway over the chief priests. They craved each other’s approval. So beware of the influence of proud people. Guard your heart.

The Christ

Second takeaway: contemplate the greatness of Christ. Let’s go back to Jesus’ original point—the fact that the Messiah is greater than King David. That’s a bigger theme than you might realize in the Old Testament.

Right from the very beginning, Scripture has pointed ahead to a special individual who will come and restore what’s broken and bring about the fulfillment of God’s promises. Immediately after the Fall, God cursed the serpent and spoke of the future seed of the woman who would crush the serpent’s head (Gn.3:15). In Deuteronomy 18:15 God promised he would raise up a prophet like Moses someday. God promised David that he would raise up one of David’s descendants to sit on his throne and reign forever at the right hand of God (2 Samuel 7:13; Psalm 110:1). Isaiah described a suffering servant of the Lord who would come and bear the sins of God’s people (Isaiah 53). Daniel prophesied about one like a son

of man who would approach the Ancient of Days and receive authority, glory and sovereign power and be worshiped by all peoples (Dan.7:14).

There's an interesting phenomenon that happens over and over throughout the Old Testament. A new leader arises, and the Bible writers will describe that new leader in terms that make it sound like he just might be the Messiah. They use terminology that makes you think, *Oh, is Samuel the one?* Then you find out it's not Samuel. Then, *Is King Saul the one?* Nope, definitely not Saul. *Ooh, David-he really seems like he's the one.* No, not David. After the exile, Zerubbabel comes and starts rebuilding the Temple and he's presented in a way that makes you think, *He's got to be the one!* Nope, not Zerubbabel.

Why do you suppose the Bible writers do that? I believe there are at least 2 reasons. First, I think God is showing us that to the degree that a leader approximates what the Messiah is supposed to be, to that degree God will indeed bring about the fulfillment of his promises through that leader. King Saul wasn't very much like what this Messiah was supposed to be, and so he wasn't the tool God used to bring about very many fulfillments of his promises. David, on the other hand, was a lot closer to what the Messiah was supposed to be, and so God used him to bring about a lot of fulfillments of his promises. So by structuring Scripture this way, God is teaching spiritual leaders that the more they are like the Messiah, the more God will use them.

I think that's one reason. A 2nd reason, and probably a bigger reason, is that by setting up one potential Messiah after another, and then showing us how they fall short, God was filling out the picture of how glorious the real Messiah would be. The New Testament doesn't just present us with a perfect Messiah. It shows us that perfect Messiah in contrast with all the imperfect ones that came before. Every failure of a would-be messiah fills out our understanding of the real Messiah. We appreciate Jesus more when we see that he didn't fail in the way Abraham failed, he didn't fail in the way Moses failed, he didn't fail in the way Saul and David failed, he went way beyond what Zerubbabel accomplished, and so on.

I believe it's that theme Jesus is calling our attention to when he makes this point about how the Messiah is far greater than David. So one of the ways we can see the brilliance of Jesus' multifaceted glory is by studying the failures of those great leaders who prefigured him. When you read of David and Bathsheba, instead of being disappointed because an otherwise great hero lets us down, we should be encouraged because it's designed to show us a facet of Christ's glory—that he will never have a moral failure.

In every area where the greatest of human leaders fail, Jesus' glory shines. And the more we see that glory, the more we will be on our guard against the influence of those who would turn us into Christ's enemies by infecting us with the deadly disease of seeking earthly greatness.

Summary

Jesus asks why the scribes emphasize Messiah as son of David. (It's to honor the Messiah.) Jesus points out that it doesn't honor him; it honors David because the Messiah is greater. The enemies of the Messiah (the scribes) will be destroyed. So watch out for them. They seek human greatness, which is contagious. The people sided with Jesus and loved his words (which was good), but they didn't heed Jesus' warning and were influenced to turn against Jesus by the men they were supposed to watch out for.