

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

Broadcast Date: 12 May 2002

No. T0213

Speaker: Mr. Peter Ollerhead

Double Calls: More Double Calls in Scripture: Lord, Lord

For the last twenty years or so, I have been associated with a fine art sale room in a market town near to my home. Every week we have a valuation day where furniture, paintings, books, coins, porcelain or objects of any kind can be valued free of charge. Many people come each week bringing granny's heirloom or something belonging to a neighbour. There seems a great reluctance on the part of many of the inquirers to actually admit that they are the owners of the piece in question. It is as if they do not wish to be embarrassed by the judgment of the expert. Sometimes someone will appear with a jug or bowl or even a picture and give a running commentary about its provenance to the expert being consulted. On rare occasions, the expert will oppose the given view and deny that the piece is by the potter, or the date claimed by the owner. Consequently the market value of the article is much less than was claimed by the person who brought it in. Some people are so crestfallen that the opinion of the auctioneer or relevant expert is decried or even derided. "I know it is 18th century," or "It's been in our family for 100 years or more so I know I am right," are some of the retorts that are given as an angry exit is made. They thought that their opinion would be validated and accepted by the expert.

Today's talk has overtones of this attitude though the implications are much more serious than a matter of hurt pride or monetary value. It concerns the words "Lord, Lord" that we can read in the Matthew 7:21. The context to the passage which includes these words is the conclusion of the so-called Sermon on the Mount.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

If I may digress to make the comment that this is one of the sayings that add another facet to the view that is often held, of the gentle Jesus meek and mild of the children's hymn. Obviously there is that aspect, that He is gentle and meek for He is the One who gathered the children in His arms and He is the One who uttered the famous invitation "Come unto Me ... for I am meek and lowly of heart". But, as our quoted passage makes plain, there are other views of the Lord Jesus and to retain only the understanding of the children's hymn stops a long way short of the biblical picture of the Man whom Christians revere as the Son of God.

Previous talks in this series have looked at those occasions when God has spoken to individuals, calling them by their names twice. In this final talk, we are looking at individuals speaking to God in this way. How we address God, and our relationship with Him is a very important matter.

If we examine the text we quickly see that the reason for the term "Lord, Lord" is part of a request to be granted the privilege of entry to the kingdom of heaven. That the kingdom is a crucial element of the preaching of Jesus none can deny if they read the Gospels. The mission of John the Baptist, which was to announce that the kingdom was at hand, is linked to the emergence of Jesus from the obscurity of Nazareth to the blazing light of His years of public ministry. In the mind of John, Jesus was the Messiah who would usher in the glorious years when God would rule in sovereign power.

In later times, John began to doubt his certainty regarding the mission of Jesus, because in Matthew 11:2-3 we read, "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

The answer which the Lord gives to John's inquiry is, I feel, deeply significant. In verse 5, the signs of the Messiah's work are indicated as the blind receiving their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Compare this with Isaiah 61:1, where the Messiah's work is prophesied: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound,"

It is obvious from these two passages that the Lord Jesus considered Himself to be the promised Messiah.

We cannot deduce from this passage though, that “Lord, Lord” carried more than the thought of teacher. In His earthly ministry, the Lord introduced ideas regarding Himself that gained greater significance after His resurrection. The title of Lord in the Gospels does not have the same resonance as it does in the Acts and the letters of the New Testament. I want now to try to show the full impact of this saying to the members of the early church and therefore to us today.

I am convinced that to accept and acknowledge Jesus as Lord is the very essence of the Christian Gospel. It is possible to reduce the evangelistic message of the church to a formula that incorporates the twin thoughts of myself being a sinner and the sacrifice at Calvary as a cleansing agent for sin. Undoubtedly, both of these elements are part of the Gospel message and for this we thank God. But if our experience stops there, we fall short of what I am convinced is the fundamental element of the evangelist’s message. According to Scripture we have to be initiated into an understanding of the identity of Jesus.

I do not believe that we can be called a Christian in the New Testament sense of the word if we do not believe that Jesus is Lord. I would go further than that and claim that, by the time of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on believers, the term “Lord” when applied to Jesus had implications of divinity. Thus I would claim, on the authority of the New Testament, that to call Jesus Lord means that you accept that He is the Son of God, not that we can ever explain that term in its fullness. To understand the full meaning of divine relationships is beyond a human mind, for the only concept we have of father and son is in terms of human relationships. The New Testament teaches that Jesus is God incarnate, the Son sent by the Father to be the Saviour of the World, the risen triumphant One, supreme in every age.

If I could illustrate this with one or two references it will, perhaps, confirm the claims I have just made. The letter to the Romans 10:9 says, and I quote from the authorised version, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

The Translation of JN Darby renders the first phrase of that verse as, “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord”, and the New International Version as, “if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord”. From this and similar passages, we can’t escape the conclusion that recognition of Him as the Lord is a constituent element of the Christian’s confession of faith.

You might be thinking that our verse said nothing about the divinity of Jesus, but if we look at Romans 1:1-3 we will see that the resurrection is linked with this claim. “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”

These verses teach us that the resurrection points to the fact that He is the Son of God. These might seem tremendous claims to make but I want to point out that these are the claims that the Bible makes regarding Jesus. If you do not believe the Bible has anything much to say to us today, then you will probably reject these statements about the divinity of Jesus. My point is simply that today when we call Jesus “Lord” in the New Testament sense of the word, it is an admission of His supremacy as the Son of God.

The people in Matthew 7 who called Him “Lord” were claiming entrance into the Kingdom because they had done many wonderful works in His name. The ground of entrance into the kingdom is not by doing works, however wonderful they may be. From our verses in Matthew 7 we can see that it is the Lord Himself who has the final say regarding entering into the kingdom and it is only those who do the will of the Father in heaven. From John 6:29 we can see what His will is. It is to believe on the One whom He sent, who is of course, Jesus of Nazareth.

This might cause confusion to some because, on the one hand, I state that the Christian confession of Jesus as Lord is the recognition that He is the Son of God. On the other hand, the supplicants in Matthew 7 were refused entrance into the Kingdom even when they used that very same title. This brings us to a very serious juncture. It is possible to approach very near to spiritual truth without encountering its true reality. We can be in the midst of religious activity and great spiritual fervour but still not be a participant. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:3 writes, “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.”

Obviously it is possible for anybody to say the word “Lord”. If we can speak the English language we can articulate the sounds that make the word “Lord”. What the scripture means when it says that no man can say Jesus is Lord is that we need to have the revelation, which only the Spirit of God can bring to us, of the great excellence of Christ as the Son of God.

To further demonstrate this truth from Scripture, I quote some more verses from Matthew’s Gospel, this time from 16:13-17: “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say

that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

Forgive me for quoting such a long passage, but I want to emphasise that the identity of the man who founded Christianity is crucial. I am convinced that the confession of Jesus as the Son of God is the foundation of Christian belief. Otherwise what does it mean to believe in Jesus? I say again that a believer in Jesus believes that He is the Lord, eternally supreme. I also claim, on the authority of the passages we have quoted, that such belief is the product of the activity of the Spirit of God in our lives. It is a revelation through grace and not intellectual effort.

There are some in the church who say that we can accept Jesus as our Saviour and then over a period of time we make Him our Lord. Making Him our Lord, I would judge, has more to do with discipleship. Believing in Jesus has to involve some recognition of the supremacy of Christ in the majesty of His person as the eternal Son. God, in His grace, has brought many of us to Himself whilst we were children when, perhaps, we had no understanding of the confession “Jesus is Lord”. This however, does not negate the claim, which I believe is true to Scripture, that an adult must recognise the divinity of Jesus before being a disciple in the New Testament sense of the word.

I would suggest that the confession of “Lord, Lord”, from our passage, more than hints of its critical importance. There are some who are denied entrance into the Kingdom when they repeat the words as a saving formula. But within the words of the Lord, “Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord,” is the thought that some who do repeat the words in sincerity will gain entrance.

I hope I have not emphasised the doctrine of the confession of faith at the expense of discipleship. I am convinced that we can only confess that Jesus is Lord through divine action and I am also convinced that such a confession must lead us into true discipleship. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and the proof that we really believe that Jesus is Lord is that we follow Him and let His word be our guide and His people our travelling companions.

Let us return now to our passage to consider the closing verses. They pertain to a subject that many of us skirt around. Matthew 7:23 says, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Within this verse is the thought of judgment. We must refer back to verse 22 to find when the judgment will be exercised. It is, of course, “in that day.” Other scriptures make clear the nature of “that day”. Malachi 3:17-18 state, “And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”

This verse could be supplemented by many passages from the New Testament but we only have time for one. This is from 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe...in that day.”

I think these two scriptures will be sufficient to correctly identify the features of “that Day”. We can see quite plainly that it is the day of discernment when a balanced judgment is made. That day will bring the moment when the motives and beliefs that energise our actions will be known. Those who are found wanting will be banished from the presence of God.

If we do not believe that such a day will arrive, then we do not believe what the Bible teaches. If we look at our passage in Matthew 7 again, we have no reason to judge that the people who claimed to have done many wonderful works in the name of the Lord were telling barefaced lies. As one expositor has written, “their claims are not false but insufficient”. If we are seeking to enter the Kingdom then we should follow the advice of the King in order to gain entrance. According to verse 23 of our passage, the criteria are that we should know the King and also be known of Him.

If we sum up what we have learned from the passage in Matthew 7:21-23, we must acknowledge two main, unchangeable truths:

- the Lordship of Christ
- the Day of Judgment

There must be in a declaration of the Lordship of Christ a real and distinct revelation of who He is. No mere lip service is sufficient. As the apostle James wrote in the letter which bears his name, "faith without works is dead". Equally so, we have seen that works, even in the name of the Lord, are insufficient as Paul demonstrates in his letter to the Romans. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Both aspects have to be true. True belief in Jesus will lead us into doing His will. If we truly confess Him as Lord we will be led of the Spirit to a mode of living which is obviously Christian.

The second important truth that we must acknowledge in our passage is that of the Day of Judgment. We can deceive one another with our words and actions. I suppose it is possible even to deceive ourselves for a little while. We can never deceive God! Ultimately it is God to whom we answer. Some listening to this talk will have listened to a minister repeating the words of the marriage service. This contains the charge to the couple to declare any impediment to them being lawfully married. At that time, it also has the warning that they will "answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed". Some take as much notice of that statement as they do of the vows which they make to each other. The fact remains that that phrase regarding the Day of Judgment reflects the teaching of Scripture. It has never been a popular doctrine but we have got to admit that it is Biblical. If we reject it, we must realise that we reject what the Bible teaches. At the same time, we must be careful to keep such doctrines within the bounds of what the Scripture teaches and not to embellish them with fancy ideas of our own.

Many years ago, when I was a centre lathe turner in a large factory, I had to have all my work inspected immediately I had finished it. It would then be passed as acceptable or rejected according to the inspector's reading of the blueprint. Later, when I left engineering and became a teacher, after four years training may I say, there was no immediate check on my work of educating the young. There were examinations at the end of the term and also at the end of the academic year but it was possible to wriggle out of any blame if the results were not too bad.

When it comes to matters of faith, the check on our attitudes, beliefs and general manner of life might seem to be indefinitely deferred. This passage, along with many others, would tell us that the day will come when the pretence will end. It might be in the distant future but the time will come. For the Christian, the Day of Judgment will not bring ruin but rather the words "enter in to the joy of the Lord, for you are a good and faithful servant." May all who are listening this morning have, through God's grace, that glorious prospect in focus as we seek to follow the Lord.

Please Note:

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1. Large Print copies of this document are also available upon request.