

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## What Christ is to us: Lord

Who is Jesus? That is a really important question. Jesus Himself tried to make sure that we knew we couldn't be indecisive about this crucial issue. In Mark 8:27, Jesus asked His disciples, "*Who do men say that I am?*" before asking the more personal question, "*But who do you say that I am?*" (Mark 8:29). On another occasion, Jesus forces the Pharisees to make a decision about who He was by asking them, "*What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?*" You can read that account in Matthew 22:41-46.

In this series we are considering some answers to this crucial question. Last week we considered the fact that Jesus is Saviour. This week we will consider the fact that Jesus is Lord. It's really instructive to think for a moment about the conversation between Jesus and His disciples that I mentioned in Mark 8:27-30. In that situation, Jesus made the disciples realize that He was not really interested in what everyone else thought about Him. He wanted to know what the disciples individually thought about Him. That's a useful attitude for us as we approach this series. The important thing is not just to learn that Jesus is Saviour to some people but to ask ourselves the question, "Is Jesus my Saviour?" Similarly this morning, I don't just want to tell you that Jesus is Lord; I want to ask you, "Is Jesus your Lord?"

A good place to start in considering the subject of Jesus the Lord is to ask what we mean when we say that Jesus is Lord. To say "Lord" in connection with Jesus would perhaps be no surprise to anyone. There are so many references in the New Testament to "the Lord Jesus Christ" or similar phrases that it is easy for this to become an expression that slips off our tongues with little consideration to its meaning. Maybe you are familiar with a verse in Romans 10: "*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*" (Romans 10:9). This verse is well known and has been instrumental in bringing many people to salvation. But what does it mean to "*confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus*", or, as the English Standard Version puts it, "*confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord*"? As I've already mentioned, the phrase "Lord Jesus" is so frequent in the Bible that we might begin to think that it was little more than a title for a man whose first name was Jesus and surname was Christ. In common usage the title 'Lord' has very little meaning and really acts as little more than an honorary title. We have a political system that involves many Lords. It's a title that bestows an honour upon some. But, although a Lord might have some power in England their power is limited. They may have some influence on what laws are passed but if I was to meet a Lord I would not be particularly obliged to do as they said. Their designation as Lord is largely symbolic and figurative.

Is that all that the Bible means when it assigns to Jesus the title "Lord"? Certainly not. The word most often translated "Lord" in the New Testament carries the meaning "supreme in authority" or "controller". Another word used for "Lord" that is applied to Jesus is often translated "Master" and is the word from which we get our English word "despot". A leader described as a despot is certainly anything but symbolic and figurative! That's not to say that when we describe Jesus as Lord we are likening Him to many of the past world leaders who could be described as having tyrannical reigns. We must counter this kind of thinking by reminding ourselves that Jesus is so often described in the Gospel accounts as loving and compassionate. I simply want to draw our attention this morning to the fact that when Jesus is described as Lord, we must understand that title to carry a meaning of authority and rule.

When the Bible calls Jesus 'Lord', it is clear that the implication is that He is the supreme Master, a source of authority and someone who has dominion over His subjects. This means that when we say that Jesus is Lord, we are saying that He is in supreme control. He is a Master to be obeyed. In what way then is Jesus Lord?

The fact that Jesus is Lord is a crucial part of the Bible's teaching. It's plainly stated in the Bible that Jesus is Lord of all. When Peter speaks to Cornelius in Acts 10:36, he describes the task God has given him as "*preaching peace through Jesus Christ - He is Lord of all.*" In Acts 10 the implication is that Jesus is Lord not only of the Jews, but of the Gentiles also. Paul has the same message. In Romans 10:12, he writes, "*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.*" Clearly a crucial part of the Bible's key message is that Jesus is Lord of all, no matter their religious background or nationality. This is an important truth. Jesus is not Master, or Lord, of a select group of people, perhaps those who have had some kind of 'Christian' upbringing. Rather the Bible teaches that Jesus is Lord of all people. There is no distinction.

In our introduction this morning, we saw that saying Jesus is Lord is really saying that Jesus is the Master, in supreme control. Even a casual glance at the world around us would cause us to question this statement. So much happens, even

within our own experiences, that is opposite to the instructions Jesus gave to us. How then is Jesus Lord? Is His Lordship limited or faulty because there is so much rebellion? We want to notice two important things this morning. The first thing we need to consider is that man's disobedience does not alter the fact that Jesus is Lord. The second thing we will think about is that it is actually a privilege for Christians now to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

Did you know that the Bible teaches that one day all people will acknowledge the authority of Jesus and will recognize that He is Lord? This is a statement that might bother some listeners this morning. Most of us like to think that we have control over our lives and the idea of submitting to authority is something we are instinctively wary of. Obviously we all submit to some level of authority. All children, to varying degrees, submit to the instruction of their parents. All people, to varying levels, submit to the authority of the government and more or less abide by the rules they make. For most of us, there will be times when this authority over us is frustrating to us. We might feel the government laws impinge too much upon our freedom, or we may feel our parents' rules are too restrictive and make little sense. As I was growing up, I remember often being at odds with my parents' decisions! Everything was so clear to me and I wondered why they couldn't see things the same way I did. I resented some of their rulings and in my arrogance assumed I knew far better. Any obedience to their instructions was often at best grudging obedience! It just goes to show that I don't like authority! Incidentally, having recently become a parent myself, it's striking, and particularly humbling, to notice that I find myself thinking that a lot of those instructions from my parents that I thought were so ignorant when I was a teenager, now seem to make a lot more sense. Perhaps that's why the Bible instructs us to honour our parents (see Ephesians 6:2, Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16).

Maybe some people have a similar distaste for any notion that God has authority in our lives. Why should we listen to what Jesus has to say? Why should we follow His commands? Why should I accept that Jesus is Lord? The simple answer is that He is and one day we will have no choice but to accept it. To explore this fact further let's consider together some of Philippians 2 and start by considering Philippians 2:9-11, *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

Here we have it clearly. God has highly exalted Jesus. He has given Him the name above all names Philippians 2:9. Every knee will bow before Him and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10). Paul writes that one day everybody will recognise God's glory. God will be seen to be supremely glorious and everyone will admit Christ's right to reign as Lord. No one will be able to resist it.

Perhaps the reason why Philippians 2 is so striking is because of the reasons Paul gives as to why all will one day acknowledge Jesus as Lord. We find them in Philippians 2:5-8. Let's read them together and consider them this morning. *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."*

Did you catch some of the significance of the description of Jesus in these verses? He was in the form of God. In fact He was equal with God. He was the only person who could claim this without robbing God of His unique greatness and glory. Paul highlights the fact that Jesus was God and puts emphasis on the great position Jesus occupied. How much more staggering then, when we read that this same Jesus, *"made Himself of no reputation"*? (Philippians 2:7)

Isn't that the opposite of what most of us like to do today? Most of us like to build up our own reputation and make a name for ourselves. We work so hard at keeping up a good appearance and gaining a reputation. Yet the Lord Jesus, who had such a glorious reputation by right, made Himself of no reputation.

As we continue through Philippians 2:5-8, each phrase increases our wonder. Jesus took on Himself the form of a bondservant. This great person, who was God, took the place of a servant. It's said that the best leaders are servants but there can't be too many leaders through the course of history at whatever level of life we could consider who haven't enjoyed at least some of the perks of positions of leadership. All the more remarkable, then, that the Lord of all took on Himself the form of a servant!

We also read that He came in the likeness of man. Imagine that. Jesus, in all of His perfection and greatness and glory, came in the likeness of man. The Son of God came as a man! That was despite seeing all of our problems and sinfulness. What a remarkable truth! We don't preach about a God who is uninterested in us and doesn't care about our problems. Instead we preach about a God who cared so deeply about us that His own Son became a man to suffer in our place!

That's why Philippians 2:8 goes on to say *"and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."* Jesus Christ humbled Himself even to the extent of enduring

the shame and suffering of dying by being crucified on a cross. Pause for a moment, and consider the significance of that statement. Jesus, the Son of God, died on a cross! Jesus, who didn't consider it robbery to be equal with God, died on a cross!

As we read the rest of the New Testament we are reminded that when Jesus died on the cross, He was dying to take the punishment for our sins. He was facing the wrath of God, so that I wouldn't have to. He was dying so that I could be made new. So that I could be forgiven. So that I could be freed. No wonder, then, Paul could go on to write that God has highly exalted Jesus and that every knee will bow to Him. Jesus is not only great because He is the ruler of all things, but because He died to bear our sins. How deserving He is of our admiration and reverence!

The sad fact is that many people will hear this message, or read Paul's account in Philippians 2, and reject the truth it contains. Many will not, at this present time acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Don't be one of those people! If as you listen to this broadcast this morning and know you are not a Christian, why not for the first time bow before Jesus and in the words of Romans 10:9 confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. If you were to do that this morning, even as you listen, you would be assured, just like the Apostle Paul, that *"you will be saved"*. Don't wait until the point when you will be forced to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. By then it will be too late. If God has revealed to you this morning something of the truth and wonder of what Jesus Christ has done for you then why not trust Him for forgiveness and salvation?

I want us to spend the rest of our time together this morning considering the implications of the truth that Jesus is Lord. I said in my introduction that I'm not so much interested in speaking about Jesus being Lord in some kind of abstract sense but rather in asking the more penetrating question, "Is Jesus my Lord?" or "Is Jesus your Lord?"

What does it mean to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord? Clearly the answer to this question is important. If confessing Jesus as Lord is one part of being saved as Romans 10:9 reminded us, then we need to be clear about what this means. Perhaps you remember that Thomas, in John 20:28, when he sees the risen Jesus, exclaims, *"My Lord and my God."* He is expressing His belief in the risen Jesus and, I think, all of the significance of what had been accomplished by Jesus' death. May that be the genuine response of all of us this morning.

But the sobering truth of the biblical record is that acknowledging Jesus as Lord is about more than just saying the right words. Consider the words of Jesus in Luke 6:46-49: *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."*

This makes it clear that it is possible to say that Jesus is Lord and not mean it. Jesus asks those people the striking question, "Why do you call me Lord?" The way they acted denied the fact that they claimed to believe. Their claim to believe that Jesus is Lord was called into question by the fact that they didn't bother to do what Jesus had told them to do. Jesus then explains His point with a parable about two houses. The point of this parable is to show that claiming Jesus is Lord is similar to digging down deep into a rock to build foundations for a house. Confessing Jesus as Lord means clinging to Him so strongly, immersing ourselves so deeply in His instruction like building foundations for our lives. Building a strong foundation is the way to build a house that survives and doesn't suffer great ruin. Similarly faith in Christ and obedience to His instruction avoids ruin in our lives.

So we have learnt from this parable that confessing Jesus as Lord involves obeying Christ's commands. Now clearly this does not mean that all Christians are sinless for the rest of their lives. No one is. The Bible never teaches this. I'm simply saying that none of the New Testament writers consider the possibility of someone who claimed to be a Christian but had no interest at all in following Christ's instruction. It was a contradiction to them and should be to us too.

If we read further into Luke's Gospel we can learn more about the meaning of confessing Christ as Lord. Let's read at the end of Luke 9. Someone had come to Jesus and said *"Lord, I will follow You wherever You go"* (Luke 9:57) and Jesus goes on to explain the consequences of following Him and calling Him Lord. Listen to Luke 9:59-62, *"Then He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.' And another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'"*

The point of this section is to show us that acknowledging Christ as Lord involves allowing Him to direct our lives. I don't think the point of this passage is to teach us to ignore family responsibilities. That would be a contradiction of much of New Testament teaching. Instead, the point is to highlight that if we say Jesus is our Lord, He, as our Master and Ruler has the right to direct our lives. We don't.

That's certainly the way Paul viewed his life when he writes in 2 Corinthians 4:5 *"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake."* He viewed Himself as a servant of God. Is that how I view myself? How it cuts against my pride and independence! I want to be in charge of my life. I want to decide what and do and how I do it. But by confessing Christ as Lord I am giving my life over to His direction. Are we prepared to do that?

I want us to finish this morning by considering an Old Testament example. When God had given the ten commandments and Moses read the book of the covenant to the people of Israel, the people responded in Exodus 24:7 and said *"All that the LORD has said we will do and be obedient."* What a good response! Will that be our response this morning? As we go into a new week, with whatever challenges it brings will we go into it with the attitude, *"All that the Lord says I will do and be obedient"*? Will I read my Bible each day and see God's instruction and say I will do that because God says it?

This phrase crops up again in the book of Jeremiah. There the prophet relays the word of God and says in Jeremiah 42:20-22: *"For you were hypocrites in your hearts when you sent me to the LORD your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the LORD our God, and according to all that the LORD your God says, so declare to us and we will do it.' And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, or anything which He has sent you by me. Now therefore, know certainly that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to dwell."*

Here is the striking reminder that God knows our hearts. He sees through the emptiness of our words and discerns our true motives. In Jeremiah's day, people were claiming to be obedient to the Lord's word but were only than hypocrites and would face God's judgment. Let's avoid that bad example!

I want us to end this morning on a more positive note. I've challenged you as to whether Jesus is your Lord. I've pointed out that acknowledging Jesus as Lord involves obeying His commands. I've said that by confessing Jesus as Lord we admit He is our Master and Ruler. Perhaps this seems a worrying burden. Don't let it be. Remember the great truths we considered in Philippians 2. Isn't Jesus worthy of being Lord? Let me finish with the words of David Mansell's hymn, "Jesus is Lord".

*Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,  
For by His power each tree and flower  
Was planned and made.  
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it,  
Sun, moon and stars in heaven  
Cry, "Jesus is Lord!"*

*Jesus is Lord! Yet from His throne eternal  
In flesh He came to die in pain  
On Calvary's tree.  
Jesus is Lord! From Him all life proceeding,  
Yet gave His life a ransom  
Thus setting us free.*

*Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,  
From death He rose, and all His foes  
Shall own His Name.  
Jesus is Lord! God sends His Holy Spirit  
To show by works of power  
That Jesus is Lord.*

*Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!  
Praise Him with hallelujahs  
For Jesus is Lord!*

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