

JESUS IS LORD

Please read Philippians 2:5-11. Paul also wrote, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9, NIV). What does the Bible mean when it affirms that "Jesus is Lord"?

Consider the meaning of the word "lord."

There are at least four different uses of the word "lord" (Greek word kurios) in the New Testament.

1. **It's used to express respect as in the word "Sir";** for example, when the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well encountered Jesus who said He would give her living water if she would just ask, she responded by saying, "Sir (kurios), You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep..." (John 4:11).
2. **It's used to express possession as in the word "owner";** for example, when Jesus sent the disciples after the colt which would carry Him into Jerusalem, the disciples encountered the "owners (kurios) of it" (Luke 19:33).
3. **It's used to express submission as when a wife calls her husband "lord";** for example, Peter referred to Sarah calling her husband, Abraham, "lord" (kurios) (First Peter 3:6).
4. **It's used to express deity, whether true or false;** for example, Paul said that "even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords [kurios]), yet for us there is only one God" (First Corinthians 8:5-6a), and Peter referred to Yahweh as "the Lord (kurios) God" (Acts 3:22).

The way in which the disciples used the term "Lord" relative to Jesus seemed to take on a whole new meaning after His resurrection. As W. E. Vine stated, before His resurrection, many people, as well as the disciples, called Jesus "lord" as a title of courtesy, especially to a teacher; however, after His resurrection, the lordship of Jesus apparently took on a greater significance to the disciples. Jesus had proven the true extent of His power by His resurrection, because no one but God Himself could exert a power over death as He did. To the Romans, Paul began his letter by stating that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). Thomas, when he had encountered the risen Jesus, exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28)! All this reminds me of what Peter said in the first Gospel sermon: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). This, indeed, was a turning point in the lives of the disciples.

So what did the lordship of Jesus mean to them after His resurrection?

In reference to the risen Jesus, the term "Lord" came to signify authority. Jesus wasn't just an authority figure, nor just a prophet or respected rabbi anymore: He now possessed complete authority from God the Father. Some people speak of "making Jesus Lord" of their lives, but Jesus isn't Lord because we make Him Lord or because we give Him authority over our lives! No mortal man can "make" Jesus Lord; only One has the power to make Jesus Lord, and that's God the Father. Jesus has the authority of Lord because the Father made Him Lord (Acts 2:36); so, He prevails as Lord whether we choose to submit to Him as such or not.

In reference to the risen Jesus, the term "Lord" came to signify universal authority. The Lordship of Jesus is universal, reaching to all men of every race and every generation, for Jesus Himself affirmed that "'All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on Earth'" (Matthew 28:18). The only One not subject to Jesus is His Father, for Paul wrote that the Father "'has put all things under His feet.' But, when He (the Father) says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted" (First Corinthians 15:27).

In reference to the risen Jesus, the term "Lord" also came to signify exclusive authority.

Exclusive authority means that Jesus has the right to demand undivided devotion from His disciples; in other words, Jesus isn't One authority among many that the Christian must obey: He's the only Lord of their lives! This means that a disciple only obeys those in positions of authority because Jesus tells him to, not because they possess authority in and of themselves. Peter wrote, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good" (First Peter 2:13-14). Paul wrote, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22), and "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1), and "Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh...as to Christ" (Ephesians 6:5).

Consider the lord-servant relationship.

In Bible times, the lord owned the servant: he owned all the wealth of the servant and had complete control over the servant, including his family, time, activities, and life. (See Matthew 25:14-28.) The servant trusted in and rendered absolute obedience to his lord. Solomon wrote, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). Jesus once asked, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)?

We can't deny the issue of lordship: it's a thread throughout the entire New Testament and deals with who has the control over us. The lord-servant relationship to us, 20th Century American freemen, seems to be an extinct concept. Many people may acknowledge that Jesus claims to be Lord, but in the same breath may ask...

"Who Has the Right to Be My Lord?" This is a good question which deserves careful consideration. The lord-servant relationship isn't really extinct at all, as it might appear.

Anything is lord which has dominion over a person: whatever controls a person is his lord!

There are a multitude of compulsive addictions: alcoholism, drugs, gambling, obsession to work, eating, etc. Human behavior is also controlled by attitudes which aren't addictions: greed, hate, fears, tradition, and pride all control; in other words, in general...

Sin Controls: the previously mentioned addictions and attitudes are manifestations of sin, so although people may not be servants of other men, they're servants of sin! Paul wrote, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But, God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:16-18). People are controlled by sin because they have presented themselves to sin as servants, consciously or not, hating their lord, yet having no power to free themselves; so the lord-servant relationship does exist in 20th Century America! Sadly, though, many Christians as well find themselves caught in the bondage of sin, finding sin is their lord; but, on the other hand, many Christians are servants of righteousness.

The truth is ... you have a lord. The questions are, "Who is it?" "Who or what controls you?" And "DOES YOUR LORD HAVE THE RIGHT TO CONTROL YOU?"

Since Jesus is the only perfect Lord, it's obvious that He alone has the perfect right to rule our lives.

The qualities of a perfect lord are (1) the authority to rule, (2) the right to rule, (3) the knowledge to rule, and (4) the character to rule. Any lord who lacks any of these qualities in any measure will be an inferior lord at best. If he has the authority to rule but not the right, he'd be considered a usurper. If he has the right to rule but not the authority, he'd be a deficient ruler. If he has the authority and right to rule but lacks the knowledge to rule, he'd be ineffective. If he has the authority, the right, and the knowledge to rule but lacks the character, he'd be a tyrant.

Jesus alone is the perfect Lord because He alone possesses all four attributes of leadership in full...

1. Jesus has the authority to rule...

- *All authority was given to Him by the Father, the absolute source of authority.* Jesus once stated, "All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on Earth" (Matthew 28:18). He also said that even "the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son, just as they honor the Father" (John 5:22b-23a).
- *Jesus demonstrated His authority through His teaching:* "They were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22).
- *Jesus demonstrated His authority through His miracles.* He showed His authority over nature (Mark 4:35-41). He showed His authority over sickness: "Simon Peter's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him (Jesus) about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her; and she served them" (Mark 1:30-31). He showed His authority over Satan (Matthew 12:22-26).
- *Jesus demonstrated His authority the most through His resurrection:* "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Romans 14:8-9). No man has conquered death but Jesus alone! Would you follow a man who had the authority of resurrection? Sure you would; yet many people today whole-heartedly devote themselves to men, mere men who have not demonstrated such power. Jesus arose from the dead, and it was this fact which convinced the apostles of His supreme authority and of His deity!

2. **Jesus has the right to rule.**

- *Jesus has the right to rule by virtue of His divine sonship and His divine origin* (John 3:31-35). The context of this passage shows that John debased himself before his disciples that Jesus might increase (verse 30). The reasons for which John exalted Jesus are the very reasons for which Jesus has the right to rule. God made Him Lord (verse 35). Jesus wields this right by divine origin (verse 31).
- *Jesus has the right to rule by virtue of the price He paid.* Jesus died to become our Lord: "None of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.... For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Romans 14:7 & 9). We belong to Him because He bought us: Paul referred to "the church of God which He (Jesus) purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

3. **Jesus has the knowledge to rule.**

- *Jesus is the source of knowledge which leads to life:* He once said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).
- *Jesus has absolute personal knowledge of his followers, and so can appeal to the Father on their behalf.* He has intimate knowledge of all men. John once wrote of Jesus that He "did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25). The Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well said to her fellow citizens, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did" (John 4:29a). His knowledge of His followers empowers the Lord to benefit them. In Nahum 1:7, the Bible reads, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who trust in Him." Jesus said of Himself, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My sheep" (John 10:14a).

4. Jesus has the character to rule.

- *Jesus can empathize with man because He has experienced submission to its fullest extent;* Jesus knows what submission is all about, for “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Jesus learned what it really is to obey, suffering being the true test of submissiveness. We understand better that Jesus is Lord of our lives after we have had to suffer in order to obey Him. If we’ve never suffered in order to remain obedient to Jesus, then we may not really know that Jesus is Lord of our lives. It’s in times of suffering when we’re faced with what we really want to do and be. It’s in times of suffering, when we have to pay the cost, that we learn who is Lord in our lives.
- *Jesus is perfect in character because of His sinless nature:* He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). There’s no moral deficiency in Him: He’s perfectly just and perfectly merciful, expressing perfect compassion and perfect forgiveness. These are the qualities necessary for a perfect Lord.
- *Jesus has the perfect character to rule because He’s our friend* (John 15:13-15). When we consider submitting to someone as lord, we have to be convinced that he has our best interests at heart. Jesus has proven His love and care for us by dying on the cross to save us from our sin and its consequences. There can be no doubt that He had our best interest at heart as He died. What assurance we have to know that our best friend is our Lord!

Conclusion

No one is free: everyone is controlled by someone or something. The question is, “Who is lord of my life?” Does your lord deserve your service?

I hope we see that there’s but one Lord who has the right to rule in our lives—the Lord Jesus Christ! Do you wish to submit to the lordship of Christ today?

[Leland Byars, 1995.]

[Adapted/Revised by Tony Denton, July 1995.]