3-19-1967

Who Is Your Lord?

John Allen Chalk

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/hot_docs

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/hot_docs/34

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Herald of Truth Records at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Herald of Truth Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU.
Who Is Your Lord?

A young lady approached a well-known gospel preacher following a stirring lesson. Knowing her life and seeing her visibly shaken, he asked, "Why don't you yield your life to Christ?" The young lady replied, "I can't," and named two things she was afraid the Lord would demand she refrain from doing. The preacher quickly turned in his Bible to Acts, chapter ten. There he reviewed the story of Peter's refusal with the words, "Not so, Lord," of God's command to eat the meat of animals that Peter, as a Jew, considered unclean. The preacher then wrote the words, "Not so, Lord," on a card. Handing the card to the young woman he said, "Circle the words that represent your response: 'Not so' or 'Lord'. If you say 'not so' to His sovereign control over your life, then you cannot call Him 'Lord'."

The Lordship of Jesus Christ is the Christian's central belief. Paul writes to Christians in the pagan town of Corinth, "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many, and lords many; yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him" (I Corinthians 8:5, 6). Today's world knows a thousand times more idols — vain, empty, powerless gods — than did Paul's world. Yet, no place in the ancient world allowed greater contact with the many foolish attempts at real life than Corinth. Paul says, "The false gods and the pagan idols are all around you." Now decide, "Who is your Lord?" The Christian, he explains, accepts "one God, the Father" who is the Creator and Sustainer of his life, and follows "one Lord, Jesus Christ," who provides counsel and direction for his conduct.

So important is this central affirmation of Christ's Lordship that the same apostle later in the same letter emphatically declares, "... that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:3). The truth of Christ's Lordship is from heaven, not from men, Paul explains. Those who rail against Jesus do so at their eternal jeopardy rather than His. To speak the truth about Jesus, that is, to believe, accept and proclaim His Lordly power and sway is to listen to God's revelation, the Bible.

At this point will you understand what I mean, when I say that the crucial issue between you and Jesus is your acceptance of His Lordship in your life! This is why we must ask the question, the question of our age, "Who is your Lord?"

The Greek word "lord" used so often in the New Testament in reference to Jesus Christ was first employed in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament several hundred years before Christ. In this Greek Old Testament the word "lord" translates what to the Jews was the unutterable name for God — Jehovah! "The mountains melted like wax at the presence of Jehovah, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth" (Psalm 97:5). This statement from the Psalms represents one of the dominant themes of the Old Testament. God, the Creator of the universe, holds sway and exercises complete authority over His creation. He is "Jehovah . . . the Lord of the whole earth."

The Lord God also exercises sovereign control over time, the ninetieth Psalm teaches. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years; yet is their pride but labor and sorrow; for it is soon gone, and we fly away," verse ten declares. This Psalm begins "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations" (Psalm 90:11).
Such authority is unlimited with the Lord God. He rules "time" and He also controls space. Psalm 139 is a powerful exclamation of God's continual presence. Jehovah is the Lord of "my path and my lying down . . . all my ways," the writer states. Whether heaven, earth, or sea; whether darkness and light; even to the days prior to the birth of God is there, this Psalm teaches Jehovah is Lord of all creation, of time and space, and His children!

The Jews were privileged to see God's sovereignty or Lordship expressed in His covenant with them. They speak of "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth" (Joshua 3:11). When crossing into their promised land, Joshua, the leader of God's people recounts how "the ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth" passed into the new land through the River Jordan (Joshua 3:13). The Ten Commandments, carried within "the ark of the covenant" revealed the substantial and all-pervading nature of the Lord God. Here were directions for the whole of life. These directions, along with the entire covenant of Moses found in the Old Testament books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, reveal the reason for the following statement from God. "I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God . . . showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:5, 6). As Lord and God, Jehovah provided the means for a personal relationship between Himself and His people. The covenant based on and arising out of the ten commandments offered Israel a divinely prescribed way to love and serve their Lord.

But everything said thus far has had direct reference to God the Father and the use of our word "lord" in the Old Testament. With this understanding of the Old Testament use of the term we are better prepared to see the same word "lord" become the most significant description of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

One authority recently wrote, "It would hardly be going too far to say that the word Lord became a synonym for the name of Jesus" (p. 408, William Barclay, Jesus as They Saw Him). Bound up in the secular, classical and Old Testament uses of the word prior to the time of Christ are such concepts as "the exercise of power," "the power of disposal," "authority or sway," "moral compulsion," "sovereignty," "ownership," and "possession." Quoting again from the scholar mentioned earlier, "The first thing that strikes us when we study this word in detail is the atmosphere of authority which it carries with it" (p. 409, Barclay, op. cit.).

What staggers those of us who study the New Testament records is the vision that slowly grows within the heart and mind that this Lord Jesus Christ was a real, live, flesh and blood person just like the man who works in the next office or the woman just down the assembly line. Nothing is more pertinent for Christianity than the fact of a definite historical figure — Jesus of Nazareth — who was accepted and identified as "the Lord" by those who knew Him in the flesh. Somehow He remains a dim, misty figure for most of us. There are those who find Him so incomprehensible to their materialistic and naturalistic way of looking at things that they uncritically and dishonestly dismiss Him as an unreal and mythical figure. I say to you today that this man Jesus was the Lord God in the flesh!

As His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee one day a storm arose with such a fury that they awoke Jesus sleeping in the bow, with these words, "Save, Lord; we perish." Whereupon He rebuked them for their lack of faith and then "rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matthew 8:25-27). They had already answered their own question with the plea, "Save, Lord; we perish."

This point is, this man who slept in the ship that day was God in the flesh, the Lord Jesus!

On the night of His betrayal, at the famed last supper, Jesus demonstrated His humility by washing the feet of the disciples. Following this startling action, Jesus questioned His followers, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Teacher, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:13, 14). Here is a direct, bold claim on His last night on the earth of His sovereignty and authority over all men.

When Peter reports to Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem church about the conversion of the Gentiles at Cornelius' house, he says, "And I remembered the word of the Lord, . . ." (Acts 11:16). Here, within a very few years after Christ's death, an apostle calls Jesus "the Lord" with no reservations.

Paul speaks more often of "the Lord" in reference to Jesus Christ than any other New Testament writer. It has been estimated that Jesus is designated by the sole word "Lord" more than one hundred thirty times in Paul's Epistles. The men and women who knew Him in the flesh recognized Him as "God's only Son" and surrendered their lives into His control as "the Lord." When we speak of "the Lord Jesus Christ," we refer to a definite historical person who lived among men in the flesh.

When one reads in the first four books of the New Testament, however, he finds very few direct references to the Lordship of Jesus. His human life is so much on center stage that His spiritual power is not specified often. And when His death by crucifixion occurred there were many, including some of His own followers, who were certain that the last had been heard from this impostor! But three days later the world knew the truth about Jesus! The angel at the empty tomb cried, "He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew 28:6). Already the angelic word for the resurrected Christ is "Lord." Someone has said that "Lord" is the resurrection word for Jesus. With the resurrection, the Lordship of Jesus became a certainty.

As supreme ruler or Lord of our lives, He first suffered. In the Epistles to the Hebrews we read, "But we beheld him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering" (Hebrews 2:9, 10). The Lord Jesus was crowned with suffering, all for you and me!

His sovereign power over mankind was established in His resurrection. Paul talks of Christ's total sway or Lordship over the lives of Christians and concludes, "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Romans 14:9). As "the Son of God" He came to full power "by the resurrection from the dead" and was pronounced by Paul "Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:4).

But the resurrection was not the last word for Jesus, our Lord. Forty days later He ascended to His Father's right hand to continue performing His high priestly functions until this very day, and until His return. Mark uses the description "Lord" very sparingly in His Gospel until the ascension, when he says, "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

Just as He surrendered all right and power in heaven in order to assume the fleshly form and live the servant's life, so God has highly exalted Him to that position He occupies this day as the head and savior of His body, the church, and as such, priest, advocate, and intercessor for all Christians. This means, Paul says in Philippians 2, "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and
that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10, 11).

But "the day of the Lord" as Paul explains it in I Thessalonians 5 is that description of the day that Jesus Christ comes the second time to usher in the final judgment and the consummation of this age! James urges in his Epistle, "Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord... Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 4:7, 8).

"Who is your Lord?" The power or person that shapes your thinking, motivates your conduct, receives your attention, time, energy and money. "Who is your Lord?" That which gives you reason for living.

But no man can serve two "lords," Jesus says (Matthew 6:24). To surrender your life into the control and power of a false god, a materialistic god, or a fetish of yourself, is to miss the beauty of holiness, the happiness of forgiveness, the meaning of real life, and the hope of heaven. Make Jesus "your Lord" by fully surrendering to Him. This you do by obeying His commands and by living the life described in God's word. Remember it is the Lord Jesus just moments before His ascension who said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Let Him be your Lord as you this very day accept His sovereign rule over you, responding in trusting obedience to His call.

John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program.

He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series.

A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville's Young Man of the Year in 1963.