3-26-1967

My Lord and My God

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Herald of Truth

Number 791

TRANSCRIPT OF THE
radio programs

"My Lord and My God"
A Christian is one who accepts the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This means surrendering to His complete control of one's life. Most of us living in the most competitive and materialistic age of human history find this very difficult to accept. To say that Jesus is Lord of my life is to say that I allow Him to guide and govern every activity of my life. It is here, at the point of believing that Jesus Christ is Lord, that most of us make the fateful decision not to become a Christian.

An early follower of Christ named Thomas Didymus experienced some of the same difficulty. The New Testament Gospels are unanimous in describing the grief and sorrow experienced by Jesus' disciples at His death. Mark says "they mourned and wept" (Mark 16:10). So deep was the apostles' bereavement that when first told by Mary Magdalene and the other women that Jesus was alive again, Luke recounts that "these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them" (Luke 24:11).

On the evening of the resurrection day the disciples huddled together behind locked doors "for fear of the Jews." Suddenly, "Jesus came and stood in their midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (John 20:19). John, a few verses later in his Gospel, says that "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came" (John 20:24). His fellow apostles excitedly described their visit with Jesus. "But he saith unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

I have heard similar remarks from all kinds of people with whom I have talked in the last twelve years. A college girl said, "I have a good mind and I think I ought to make my own decisions about what I should and should not do." A business executive said, "I give orders to many people, and things have worked out successfully. Why shouldn't I be the Lord of my own life?" A young secretary said, "I have to have more evidence than you have given me before I'll let my life be governed by anyone else." Thomas spoke for many moderns when he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

Eight days later Jesus again appeared to His followers, this time including Thomas, as they met behind closed doors. "Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:26-28).

He had often been called "Son of man." Even the phrase "Son of God" had infrequently been used to describe Jesus before His death. But the crucifixion put another color on everything. Thomas thought. Was Jesus or was Jesus not the Messiah, the One God had promised to send in fulfillment of His redemptive plan for man?

But the questions are now settled for Thomas. All doubt disappears before the personal presence of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Thomas' confession has ever been the confession of all who have come to obedient, saving faith in Christ as "Lord and God" since that day, even to this very moment. Jesus said to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: ..." (John 20:29). He then offered this blessing to each of us who will accept His divine authority. "Blessed are thy that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).
The Christian, that is the person who today receives the blessing Christ offers in John 20:29, is the one who accepts His Lordship. Paul instructs us, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9, 10). The apostle cannot make the matter any plainer or more imperative. Unless I “confess with my mouth Jesus as Lord” and unless I believe in God’s resurrection of Him I cannot be saved!

Our modern world strongly resembles the world of the New Testament. In one major area, that of idolatry, the first and the twentieth centuries may be the most similar. The names of the idols have changed. The paganism is more materialistic and humanistic but idol worship continues to grip and damn millions of lives. To Christians living in the midst of an idolatrous, wicked, pagan city, Paul wrote, “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” (1 Corinthians 8:5, 6). Paul says here that the basic distinction, along with other points of difference, between the pagan and the Christian is the Christian’s conviction of faith in one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. To be a Christian, in the apostle Paul’s words, is to accept the Lordship of Jesus!

So important a matter as our acceptance of Jesus as Lord is not left in an undefined state by the inspired New Testament writers. Thomas’ confession is called an act of faith by Jesus (John 20:29). One must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and therefore Lord of all men. When the Greeks at Antioch heard “the preaching of the Lord Jesus,” Luke tells us in Acts that “a great number that believed turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:20, 21). This turning obviously followed their initial belief in this new Lord proclaimed. The New Testament concept of repentance, required by Jesus of all who would come to Him, is summarized in the word “turn.” Those who heard about the Lord Jesus in Antioch decided that He was in fact God’s Son and their Lord, whereupon they repented of their former conflict and beliefs accepting Christ as the one Lord. One cannot Biblically accept the Lordship of Jesus without repentance, a thorough-going repudiation of all former gods, idols, masters, and sins in favor of total surrender to the one Lord, Jesus Christ!

We have already read Paul’s urgent plea that we confess with our mouths “Jesus as Lord” (Romans 10:9). Jesus Himself promised to confess to God, His Father, all who would confess Him before men (Matthew 10:32). This is obviously why the gospel preacher Philip responded as he did on one occasion an urgent request for baptism. “Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37).

The book of Acts also clearly reveals the role that baptism plays in one’s surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. The inhabitants of the town of Samaria also heard about Jesus through Philip’s preaching. They were “baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus,” Luke informs us (Acts 8:16). This same interesting phrase is used to describe the actions of disciples at Ephesus who had known only the baptism of John. Upon hearing Paul preach the full gospel, “they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). We cannot stress too greatly the importance of this phrase “into the name of the Lord Jesus.” Its common usage in New Testament times was in a “commercial context, where some property is transferred or paid ‘into the name of someone’…” “Baptize them, ‘into the name of the Lord Jesus,’” Paul wrote, “hears public witness that he (the baptized one) has become the property of Jesus and that Jesus is his Lord and Owner.” (p. 181, Commentary on the Book of Acts, N. I. C.)

“To accept Jesus as Lord in my life I come to a decision of faith about His identity — He is God’s Son, and my Savior and Lord. I renounce all past loyalties in favor of a singular attachment to Jesus as my Master or Lord. This is Biblical repentance. I then publicly commit myself to this One in whom I believe and to whom I have turned in repentance, confessing with my mouth “Jesus as Lord” with Him becoming God’s Son through baptism “into the name of the Lord Jesus.”

How important is all this? Why must I come to faith in Him and accept His Lordship? To answer in a word, “Because Christ Jesus is God.” The Jews who believed in Him often and properly referred to Him as the son of David. But Jesus, on one occasion, reminded them of a statement in Psalm 110, where David refers to the Messiah as “my Lord.” Jesus then asked, “David himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he his son?” (Mark 12:35-37). Our Lord here says that nothing about Him must obscure the fact that He is the Son of God.

This was Peter’s major emphasis in the first sermon he preached after Christ’s ascension. “You killed him,” Peter fearlessly charged the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2:22, 23). “But God raised him from the dead,” he continued (Acts 2:24). Not only did God raise Him up, Peter continued, but “being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear” (Acts 2:32, 33). At this point he concluded the sermon with the following statement. “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified” (Acts 2:36). The resurrection proclaimed Him God! His return to heaven forty days later shouted His divinity! God had raised Him up in vindication of His power and sway as the Lord Jesus Christ. The divinity of Jesus Christ and the authority of His Lordship are the repeated and central concerns of the New Testament.

So today, in our fast-moving, rapid-changing, highly-confused age, the Lord Jesus Christ possesses all authority. This He claimed following the resurrection; “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:19). His power is of such magnitude that Paul states, “for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all have been created through him, and unto him: and he is before all things, and in him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16, 17).

Such spiritual, material, and cosmic power is His because “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:9, 10). This authority creates and explains His position as “the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18). In Ephesians 1 the power of Christ over “all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” arises out of God’s action in putting “all things in subjection under his (Christ’s, jace) feet,” thus making “him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:19-23).

Those who claim to be His disciples and those who will come in surrender today, do so in obedient trust. We come, like Paul, counting “all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him” (Philippians 3:8, 9). We accept His sway over us in total service to Him. “The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” Corinthian Christians were told (1 Corinthians 6:13). This complete authority over every aspect of the Christian’s life is clearly
explained by Paul in the closing verses of I Corinthians 6.

"Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy
Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye
are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify
God therefore in your body" (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).

There is but one acceptable relationship with a sover­
eign ruler, that of obedience and submission. James there­
fore writes, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,
and he shall exalt you" (James 4:10). Paul explains in a
detailed passage in Ephesians 6 that the Christian sustains
a relationship to the Lord Jesus like that between the ser­
vant and his master (verses 5-8). Jesus is not your Lord
if you have not obeyed Him. He is the Lord of any life
that will submit to Him and to His teachings found in the
Bible. He calls for our faith (Mark 16:16). He requires
our repentance (Luke 13:3). He promises to confess every
person to His Father who confesses Him to their fellow
men (Matthew 10:32). He instructs us to be baptized for
the remission of our sins and a new relationship with His
Father and Him (John 14:6; Galatians 3:26, 27).

Make Him your Lord today by obeying His com­
mands and living as He directs.

John Allen Chalk, dynamic evan·
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