

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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The Person of Christ: Jesus the LORD

Can you remember any names from the Queen's Birthday Honours list published last June? Unless you or your friends were involved in receiving an award, you probably will not recall very many. One name which did hit the headlines was that of Alex Ferguson, the manager of Manchester United. For the rest of his life, he will be known as Sir Alex because the monarch has knighted him for what he and his team have accomplished, especially during the season 1998/99. All of the honours in the list were given for services to one particular cause or another. The honours are earned though it is obvious that for every person so honoured there are many more who deserve recognition but, for various reasons, did not receive one

Today I want to focus our attention on a man who has been honoured above all men. "Who is this man?" you may be asking. He is, to use the Apostle Paul's words, the man Christ Jesus. I wish to speak about the worthiness of this unique man to carry the honours and title of "Lord". That Jesus Christ is Lord is the great confession of the Christian and the Church through the ages. This, then, is the main thrust of my talk this morning.

When sometime in the third century BC the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, the scholars often used the word "kyrios" for the divine name of Yahweh. It was an obvious choice for a divine person because this word has within it the meaning of power and authority, not the power of physical strength but rather of control. Thus the Greek speaking world, or at least that part of it that was familiar with the Jewish Scriptures, was already acquainted with the thought of "kyrios" having divine associations.

As the apostles began to write about their understanding of the man Christ Jesus, they also used the same word to describe Him. Of course, it was also used in every day speech to denote an owner or one to whom respect or service was due. An illustration of this type of usage is when the disciples went to fetch the colt used by Jesus to ride into Jerusalem on that day which has become known as Palm Sunday. Luke 19:33 states, "And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?" Or in the parable of the workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20:8 where it says, "So when even was come the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first."

In both of these cases we can see that the owners of the colt or the lord of the vineyard were every day words in common use. This does not negate the point I am making but rather emphasises it by showing that the word "kyrios" carries with it the meaning of authority or control. I ought also to make it clear at this juncture, that when the scriptures were translated into English, the word "Lord" was used for "kyrios".

To return to the New Testament, we note that on many occasions Jesus showed His authority and power over creation. In Luke 8:22-25, there is an account of Him calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee. When the disciples witnessed this, they were so amazed they exclaimed, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

A poet of a past generation used this incident as the basis for a children's hymn which contains the lines,

*"He to the storm says, 'Peace be still!'
The raging billows cease;
The mighty winds obey His will,
And all are hushed to peace."*

The point I am making in quoting this incident from Luke is that here Jesus is shown to be Lord of the elemental forces of nature in that He could exercise control over them. Many other incidents from the Gospels could be quoted to illustrate this point further but time does not allow.

Our understanding of the power and authority of Jesus is further expanded by reference to another miracle story. This time it is the so-called feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle to be recorded in each of the four Gospels. We will use the account in John 6:5-14. I do not wish to examine the story in detail but rather to notice its effects upon the

participants. Verse 14 of our passage states, "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world."

Again in verse 15 we see further effects of the miracle, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." Please notice here the impression which the miracle left upon the onlookers of the moral stature and authority of Jesus.

I want to extend this point by selecting from the pages of the Gospels more opinions about the man Jesus. Following the raising of the widow's son, which is recorded in Luke 7:11 to 16, the mourners who had witnessed the incident said in verse 16, "That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God has visited his people."

The opinion here, formed in awe and amazement, is that they had been witnesses to one who carried the authority and power of God. The healing of the centurion's servant in Matthew 8:5-13 makes the specific point that Jesus had the authority and power to effect a cure. John's account of Jesus making water into wine, which we can read in John 2:1-11 has the following statement in verse 11, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him".

Mark 2:1-12 contains the narrative of the healing of a paralytic man carried by four of his friends. Here Jesus utters words pregnant with meaning when, in verses 10 and 11, he says, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power (or authority) on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."

I might be labouring the point but we must be in no doubt that Jesus demonstrated by these miracles that He had divine power and authority. The Church has from the beginning understood that the man Jesus is God incarnate but that is the subject of another talk in this series so I must not digress. Suffice to say that the Lordship of Christ is evidenced by the power which He manifested during His public ministry.

To add a rider to this, I quote a further incident from the gospels which has nothing to do with miracles. This is from Matthew 7:29, "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes". It is obvious from this, that authority was as natural to Jesus as was His humility and lowliness.

I conclude this section in which I have dealt with the public ministry of the Lord Jesus by quoting at length from the book "*Knowing God*" by JI Packer. On page 29 we read, "The impression of Jesus which the Gospels give is not that He was wholly bereft of divine knowledge and power, but that He drew on both intermittently, while being content for much of the time not to do so. The impression, in other words, is not so much one of deity reduced as one of divine capacities restrained".

We must now move on to consider how the death of Jesus extends our understanding of His Lordship. That His sufferings at Calvary are a major constituent of the Christian message is obvious to anyone with a working knowledge of the New Testament. That it is a positive element is due to the resurrection. Indeed, it almost goes without saying that, without the resurrection, there is no Christian faith. This is apparent in the story of the couple journeying to Emmaus, recorded in Luke 24:13-35. As they walked away from Jerusalem on that first Easter, verse 17 tells us that they were sad. When the risen Christ revealed Himself to them their whole attitude changed. This change from gloomy sadness to vibrant joy is common to all the disciples as they realised that the crucified Jesus was alive again. Of course, almost two thousand years later, we can say that we do not believe in the resurrection but, if we say this, then we must admit that we do not believe in New Testament Christianity. The resurrection from amongst the dead of the man called Jesus is at the very heart of the Christian Gospel.

The New Testament writings also make clear that the resurrection proved that He is Lord. The climax of Peter's first sermon announces this. Acts 2:36 states, "Therefore let all of the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ".

The apostle Paul writing to the Philippian Church makes what is possibly the definitive statement about the exaltation of Jesus following His sufferings. Time does not allow me to read the whole of the passage but I urge you to read it carefully at a convenient time, especially if you are not familiar with it. You will find it in Philippians 2:5-11. I am quoting verses 9-11 only. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".

Again there are other scriptures which we could quote but surely these make it plain that His death and resurrection resulted in a company of people who believed that Jesus was Lord. Some of these would never even have seen His miracles.

Finally, the apostles made it clear that belief in Jesus as Lord is a critical and vital part of the Christian gospel. Romans 10:9 makes this clear, "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." Paul and Silas in Acts 16:31 gave to the keeper of the prison at Philippi the same advice when they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

It is the sincere acceptance and belief of this truth that Jesus is Lord which brings us into Christianity though perhaps it ought to be made clear at this point that true belief in Jesus is a revelation of the Holy Spirit. This is apparent from many scriptures as well as from human experience. 1 Corinthians 12:3 indicates this, "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 Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Of course we can articulate the words "Jesus is Lord" but I emphasise again that true belief in Jesus is a work of the Spirit of God.

As a final point may I bring to your notice that most of the New Testament letters end with a calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Thus I say again that there can never be any doubt of the supreme greatness of the man Christ Jesus. Whether we believe it or not, He is the Lord in time and in eternity. Let us view again John's vision of Him in Revelation 19:16 where John saw Him as King of kings and Lord of lords.

I must, at the conclusion of this consideration of the truth that "Jesus is Lord", ask what difference does it make to our lives? Truth that does not affect our behaviour, thoughts and attitude is merely theoretical speculation. We need to turn again to the New Testament to grasp what it meant to the apostle Paul. In Philippians 3:8 he writes, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ." Notice now it is not Jesus the Lord but rather Jesus my Lord. Paul had recognised the personal glory, greatness and moral authority of the Man who was crucified at Calvary yet who had been raised from amongst the dead. Nothing in the whole world compared with the knowledge of Christ and to Him Paul surrendered everything. He had crowned Him, Lord of all. Our practical response to this great revelation is the measure of our belief in and commitment to the Lord Jesus. Let us wonder in worship before the eternal God who made it possible for men and women to have this knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

We began this morning with the honour granted to the manager of Manchester United. It is obvious that this team generates great enthusiasm and fierce, almost tribal, loyalty in its supporters. They follow the team around at great expense of time and money. Surely we, who claim to believe that Jesus is Lord, can be marked by no less loyalty and commitment to Him. May all who are listening this morning be enabled, through the sovereign grace of God, to believe that wonderful statement that Jesus is Lord, and by reading God's word and taught of the Spirit appreciate the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ to a deeper degree each day.

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