

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Jesus as King, Lord and Head: Lord

"The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 24:34) was the good news of that first Easter Day. It is still the good news today! The Lord is risen indeed!

Last week, we began the first of a series of three talks exploring the different offices, or roles, of our Lord Jesus Christ. We considered His role as King. It is striking that only shortly after His birth, the wise men asked the question, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2). Normally, a son born into a royal household is known first as prince. Our queen's eldest son is still Prince Charles. But so great is the Lord Jesus that He was actually *born* King. And He died a King too! So when He was crucified at Calvary, the inscription above His cross read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:37). There may appear to be little indication in the world today that He is King, but in a coming day, He will be seen to be not only King of the Jews but of the nations also (see Genesis 49:10; Psalm 72:8).

Next week, God willing, we shall consider Jesus' position as Head of His church. But today, on this Easter day, it is especially appropriate that we consider Jesus as Lord. In a very special way, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus marked Him out as Lord. In that great epistle of the Gospel, the epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul declares in the opening verses, "...the Gospel of God...concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh (note this reference to His royal birth), and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" (1:1-4).

These verses probably refer primarily to Jesus' personal resurrection from the dead. But His great power as Son of God was demonstrated also in those whom He raised from the dead – a young girl, Jairus' daughter, who had just died (Luke 8), a young man on his way to be buried (Luke 7) and Lazarus whose dead body had already started to decay (John 12).

Towards the end of his epistle to the Romans, Paul writes about the responsibility of Christians to lead Christ honouring lives. He writes, "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For 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" (14:7-9). Note these words of Paul: the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was so that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

So on this Easter Day, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus challenges us all to consider His Lordship. That was demonstrated in a very particular way in the events of that first Easter Day. We will look now at some of these.

John writes in his Gospel, "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Then Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you'" (20:19-21). As Jesus entered the room, so the fear of these disciples left it, to be replaced by great gladness. But it is as their Lord that Jesus stands before them and commissions these once-frightened disciples to go out into the world in His service, just as He had been sent into the world by His Father.

Luke tells us of two other despondent disciples who, on that same Easter Day, were travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a seven mile journey. "Jesus Himself drew near and went with them", we read. Those sad disciples, not yet recognising Jesus, pour out their distress at His recent death in Jerusalem. Luke continues, "Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?' So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread" (24:13-35).

Those two disciples were not too sad now to make that seven mile journey back to Jerusalem late at night. What a reunion of rejoicing followed! To the glad news of the disciples in Jerusalem that their Lord was risen, these two were able to add their own personal account of their meeting with the risen Lord.

But Thomas, one of the disciples, was not with the other disciples in Jerusalem on that Easter Day and refused to believe them when they later told him of the Lord's resurrection. John tells us, "And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, 'Peace to you!' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (20:19-29).

From doubt to devotion – Thomas' confession of faith in his risen Lord still challenges us today as to the totality of our commitment to Him!

There are two important consequences of the fact that Jesus is Lord. One has to do with the future and one with the present. We will deal first with the future consequences.

In a famous passage in his epistle to the Philippians, Paul writes, "...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 servant, 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. 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, of those in 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" (2:5-11).

At Calvary, men gave the Lord Jesus the very lowest place. They took His clothes off from Him and crucified Him between common criminals. But God has given Him the very highest place! Little has changed in the world today. Some still hate Him; others ignore Him; many use His name as a swear word. But God has decreed that, in a coming day, every knee will bow to Him and every tongue confess that He is Lord!

We should note that this Lordship of Christ will be acknowledged in three separate realms, or by three separate groups of people: "those in heaven...those on earth...those under the earth" or "of heavenly and earthly and infernal [beings]" as it has been translated. It is significant that Paul, describing the work of reconciliation effected by the Lord Jesus at Calvary, writes, "...by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20). Note that there is no reference here to "those under the earth" or "infernal beings".

The solemn and serious lesson is that reconciliation to God through the blood of Jesus' cross is only possible for those who have trusted Christ as Saviour and for those Old Testament believers whose faith moved them to live for God. Christian believers in their lifetimes have gladly confessed Jesus as Lord and bowed the knee to Him. Many have died and are already in heaven. Many are alive and on earth still. But down through the ages, many have died without coming to faith in Christ, refusing to bow the knee to Him. They are amongst those of whom John writes in the book of the Revelation: "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and the books were opened. And another book was opened which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (20:12-15).

All those who have refused to accept Jesus as Saviour will in that day be compelled to acknowledge Him as Lord but it will be, too, to acknowledge Him as Judge to their eternal condemnation. Dear listener, accept Christ now as your Saviour and Lord and do not find yourself among that terrible company!

It is noteworthy that Paul is not alone in his insistence on the Lordship of Christ resulting from His resurrection. Peter, preaching to the multitudes in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, seven weeks after that first Easter Day, tells them, "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses...Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:32 and 36). Later, speaking to the centurion, Cornelius, Peter says, "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ – He is Lord of all..." (Acts 10:36).

But there are also very important present day consequences attaching to the Lordship of Christ. We need now to think about these. We noticed earlier Paul's insistence that "Christ died and rose again that He might be Lord of both the dead *and the living*". If the Lordship of Christ is to be seen anywhere it must be in the lives of those who belong to

Him. Paul reminds us that it is through the confession of the Lordship of Christ that we first come into salvation: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus (or, Jesus as Lord) and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). What a wonderful promise!

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us to such a confession: "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). In passing, it is worth noticing that it is the work of that same Holy Spirit to bring us to know God as our Father: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" (Galatians 4:4-6).

But confession of Jesus as Lord must go further than mere lip service. Jesus Himself reminds us, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and *do not do* the things which I say?" (Matthew 6:46). Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount still challenge us: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Confession of Jesus as Lord must be accompanied by obedience to Him. That obedience flows from a sense of His great love in giving Himself for our sins at Calvary. As the chorus puts it,

*I will not work my soul to save –  
That work my Lord has done.  
But I will work like any slave  
For love of God's dear Son.*

It also flows from a sense of a personal relationship with Him and the sense of personal commitment which that brings.

That sense of personal commitment is seen very strongly in the followers of the Lord Jesus, particularly in the events of that first Easter. Mary Magdalene came early on that first Easter morning to the tomb, expecting still to find the body of Jesus. To her amazement and consternation, she found that the tomb was empty. John tells us, "But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him'" (John 20:11-13). Note that lovely expression, 'my Lord'. For Mary, there could be no other! He completely filled her life!

Earlier, we noticed Thomas' great declaration of faith on that Sunday after Easter, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Does the Lord Jesus mean so much to each one of us that we can only think of Him in this way, 'My Lord!?' It is striking that, in the New Testament, this word 'Lord' occurs more frequently in the Acts of the Apostles than in any other book. That perhaps highlights the fact of the importance of the Lordship of Christ in the lives of those early Christians. As soon as he was converted on the road to Damascus, the prayer of Saul of Tarsus was, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Each of us would do well to make that our prayer today!

You might ask, "But how can I know what my Lord wants me to do?" The first answer has to be to keep on praying Saul's prayer. The old rhyme is very relevant:

*If you do not crown him Lord of all  
You do not really crown Him Lord at all.*

Donald Coggan, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, has written, "If Jesus isn't the Lord of your life, someone else will be". Someone, or something, else we might add. The Lordship of Christ has to be seen in every department of life – in our personal lives, in our family lives, in our church life, in our work-a-day lives.

Secondly, in reading the Bible, and especially the New Testament Gospels and epistles, we will find out the kind of people the Lord wants us to be. Just before the cross, after the Lord had washed His disciples' feet, He said to them, "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am". He then went on to say, "If you know these things, happy are you *if you do them*" (John 13:1-17).

On this Easter Day, let us indeed rejoice, then, in the good news, "The Lord is risen indeed!" But let our lives display the good news that "Jesus is Lord"!

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