

STUDY TEN

The Person of Christ—5

JESUS IS LORD

If we wish to trace the use of ‘Lord’ in the New Testament from that of the Old Testament we see that in the Septuagint there are uses of ‘Lord’ for both *JHWH* and *Adonai*. By the time of our Lord this use had become established, particularly what we might call ‘Adonai-Jehovah’. The Aramaic word *MAR*—the equivalent of ‘Jehovah’ or ‘Lord’—is reproduced in 1 Corinthians 16:22, ‘Our Lord, come!’ that is, *MAR-ANATHA!* Of the ‘LORD’, or the ‘Lord GOD’ in the Old Testament there is no doubt. The question is: ‘How does this title come to be used of Jesus, and what is its full significance?’ The English translation of ‘lord’ in the Old Testament and New Testament is often referring to men, as using a title of honour.

Probably the best point to see our answer is in Mark 12:35–37 (and parallels) where Jesus clearly lifts the idea of Messiah to that of ‘Lord’. How does he do this? He retains the concept of ‘my Lord’ being the son of David (i.e. Messiah), but extends it. If David had not written Psalm 110 then the ‘my Lord’ would not necessarily be ‘greater than David’. However Jesus says David calls him

‘my Lord’. This settles it then. If he is ‘son of David’ (v. 35) then he is not *only* ‘son of David’ but ‘my Lord’ (cf. v. 37). Cullman says:

Jesus uses here the method of proof of his time. He cites the familiar Ps. 110 . . . The psalm glorifies the king. King David traditionally composed all the Psalms, and this tradition is the foundation of Jesus’ argument. According to the original intention of the Psalmist, the *Kyrios* in the nominative case designates God; the *Kyrios* in the dative, the king—‘my Lord’. Thus the psalm originally meant, ‘God spoke to my king: sit at my right hand . . .’ The meaning of the psalm changes, however, as soon as one is convinced that it was not written in honour of the king, but was composed by him, by David himself. The *Kyrios* in the nominative remains God, but the *Kyrios* in the dative can no longer be the king, since he himself is speaking. The words ‘my Lord’ then come to mean the Messiah.¹

Our conclusion therefore is that Jesus lifts the title of Messiah to ‘Lord’. At the same time, he educates his hearers (no less his disciples) for the coming concept of his lordship. It is consistent with the fact that the title ‘Lord’ with its implications of deity, is more a post-resurrection than a pre-resurrection concept. At the same time, whilst undoubtedly the term ‘Lord’ may equate with ‘Rabbi’ or ‘Master’ it has, for example, a full content in Peter’s utterance in Luke 5:8 where Peter uses the word ‘Lord!’ (*Kurie*), although he has almost casually used the word ‘Master’ (*Epistata*) in verse 5. The transformation of address has come through understanding the supernatural and moral nature of the One who executes the miracle of the fishes. Again in Matthew 7:21–23 Jesus portrays himself as the

¹ Oscar Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament*, SCM Press, London, 1977, p. 131.

Lord (of judgement) and the use of the word 'Lord' must not be careless. In Mark 11:3 ('the Lord has need of it') and Luke 6:46 (cf. Matt. 7:21) the same level is maintained. In Luke we have the use of the word 'Lord' some 15 times and 2 of these in the nativity accounts (1:76; 2:11). These two are of a particularly lofty nature and leave no doubt as to deity being involved. Matthew 8:25 is an involuntary cry, 'Lord, save us', and may spring from an almost unconscious recognition of him as Lord. However, it is the thrust of the synoptics that Jesus is Lord. His authority, his action and teaching all combine to make him Lord. What a man does shows what he is.

In John's Gospel the use of 'Lord' is somewhat debatable. John 13:13 (AV), 'Master and Lord', may mean varying degrees of significance in the words. It is true that the post-resurrection use gives greatest significance—for example, Thomas' affirmation, 'My Lord and my God' (John 20:28). It is natural however, as with the word 'Messiah', that the use of 'Lord' will follow the events of the cross, resurrection and ascension. Particularly important is the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, by whom he is truly proclaimed Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3).

The Acts of the Apostles brings out the proclamation of lordship (cf. 2:36). It is based on the event of the resurrection which leads to the exaltation at the right hand of God (Ps. 16 and 110 are both used here), and this is the place of lordship. Such can only be understood in terms of Luke 1:71, 74 (cf. Isa. 26:12–14), that the Lord delivers from the lords (the enemies of man) who dominate man. He, in pouring out the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:33) and so inaugurating the new era which will climax in *His* Day—the Day of the Lord (Acts 2:16–21, esp. v. 20; 3:20–21)—is undoubtedly Lord. This theme persists in

the book of Acts. So see Acts 10:36, 'Lord of all'; 9:5, 'Who are you, Lord?'; 9:17, 'the Lord [even] Jesus'; 9:27, 'on the road he had seen the Lord'; and 16:31, 'the Lord Jesus'. Innumerable references show that 'Jesus' has now become 'the Lord Jesus'. It is not however the use of the *title* so much as the *action* of the Person which shows his lordship. This is profuse in Acts.

When we come to the Epistles there is abundant use of the word 'Lord'. The apostles preach 'Jesus Christ as Lord' (2 Cor. 4:5). One must confess him as Lord (Rom. 10:9) for salvation. The body is for the *Lord* and this *Lord* has God raised up (1 Cor. 6:13–14). Indeed he has died and risen—to be Lord both of the dead and living (Rom. 14:8–11). In this context, and Philippians 2:10–11, Isaiah 45:23 is quoted as to all who will submit to him—the Lord. Whilst there are 'many gods and many lords', there is only one God (the Father) and one Lord—Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:5–6). One may say he is Lord only by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). His lordship, not always linked with the appellation 'Lord', is over all the evil powers (Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 2:6–9; 8:5; 15:24f.) and he is the 'Lord of glory'. He is prayed to (2 Cor. 12:8; 1 Thess. 3:12; 2 Thess. 3:2ff.) or through (Rom. 1:8; 7:25; 2 Cor. 1:20; Col. 3:17), and these facts are significant. The fact that he is Lord of all (over all principalities and powers) is significant for the church of which, also, he is Lord (cf. Eph. 1:19–21), for he thus may give gifts (Eph. 4:7–11) and also subdue the principalities and powers and the kingdoms of this world (1 Cor. 15:24f.). The enemies of 1 Cor. 15:25 include Satan (Heb. 2:14–15; cf. John 12:31), the world (Gal. 6:14; cf. 1:4), death (1 Cor. 15:24; cf. vv. 55–56)—indeed any enemy which dominates man and opposes the kingdom of God. This 'blessed and only

Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords' (1 Tim. 6:15) is the one recognised by the Apostolic church as reigning over all history with all its powers—both good and evil.

In the book of the Revelation (see 17:14; 19:16) he is King of kings and Lord of lords. The whole theme of this book is the outworking of this lordship.

It is now time for us to turn again to Psalm 110 (cf. Ps. 2), out of which this concept of lordship springs. At least 21 times in the New Testament it is quoted. 'The LORD says to my Lord', with its related elements is quoted in Matthew 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42f.; 22:69; Acts 2:34f.; 5:31; 7:55; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12f.; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 3:21. A study of these passages will show that the early church saw Christ through this lens.

We conclude then that his lordship is complete and utter, morally and otherwise, over the entire universe. There is no conflict here with God being 'King of all the earth' (Ps. 47:7–8) since the Father has committed all things to the Son (Matt. 11:27; John 3:35), and the Father is still 'Lord of heaven and earth' (Matt. 11:25; cf. Acts 17:24), for when the Son is confessed 'that Jesus Christ is Lord' it will be to the glory of the Father, because he will himself 'be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one' (1 Cor. 15:28).

The lordship of Christ, then, is one of pre-incarnate existence when he is the Word 'upholding all things' and by whom the creation subsists. As the incarnate man Jesus, he manifests authority, but by the triumph of the cross and

resurrection, becomes, through his moral victory, 'a Prince and a Saviour' (Acts 5:31, AV), and in fulfilment of the prophecies is seated at the right hand of God. His lordship is finally eschatological in that he is coming in the clouds with glory, to judge the earth. Through the cross he has the moral right of judgement. His present session at the right hand of God is a lordship over all principalities and powers, and the judgement of all things will constitute the sealing off of all evil and the final subduing of all things.

THE SERVANT OF GOD

We have already touched on this theme, but need to develop it more. In the Old Testament, especially in Isaiah, we have the figure of the Servant (42:1-4; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). This Servant is so outstanding as to demand attention. The servant concept has been variously applied to the whole of Israel ('You are my servant, Israel, in whom I am glorified', Isa. 49:3), but this might easily mean part of Israel, the holy remnant or seed. It could be one man even as Israel is one man (i.e. Jacob). In Judaism, the function of the Messiah is to lead God's people into restoration. This is also the function of the Servant. However, in Judaism we do not see a Suffering Messiah, which is probably why the concept of suffering which Jesus identifies with his servanthip (Mark 10:45) is not understood by the disciples. Isaiah 53 is clearly a description of terrible suffering and Jesus says 'the Son of man *must suffer many things*' (8:31). Matthew 12:18-21 identifies Jesus with the Servant, being a direct quote of Isaiah 42:1-4. Mark 10:45 is also a general identification with the servant concept. Isaiah 42:1 is partly quoted in

connection with the baptism (Matt. 3:17). John 1:29 is almost certainly linked with Isaiah 53:6–7. Luke 22:27 is a clear claim to be the Servant of all. Isaiah 53:12 is quoted concerning the cross (Luke 22:37; cf. 18:31), making a further identification with the Servant of that passage. Mark 10:45 clearly equates the *Son of man* with *the Servant*. Thus *all the teaching* of the Son of man equals that of the Servant.

The Hebrew word for ‘servant’ (*EBED*) in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is translated *pais* (servant or child) in the LXX Greek translation of the Old Testament. This is the same word used of Jesus in Acts 3:13, 26, and 4:27, 30. In Acts 8:32–35, Philip identifies the servant passage of Isaiah 53 with Jesus. Romans 4:25, ‘put to death’, equates with the teaching of Isaiah 53, and Romans 5:19 speaks of the same obedience as Philippians 2:8, which with 2 Corinthians 5:21 accord with the same passage in Isaiah. In Paul (as in Mark 10:45, where the servant concept is best expressed) Christ’s Servantship is related not statically to a state of *being* but dynamically to his *work*, that is, of atonement for man’s sin. Even the subduing of the kingdoms (1 Cor. 15:24f.) is with a view to the exaltation of God. Whilst there is a sense in which there is humiliation in the incarnation, yet the actual humiliation lies in the death of the cross, ‘to serve [be a servant], and to give his life as a ransom for many’.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST