

## Reign of Christ – Acts 2.14-39

*The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

### INTRODUCTION

The resurrected, ascended and exalted Lord Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and all the angels, authorities, and powers are subjected to him (cp. Hebrews 1.13; 1 Peter 3.22). The eternal Son of God has completed his work of redemption (Hebrews 9.12) and now reigns in heaven where he intercedes for believers (Romans 8.34). The concept that salvation embraces **Jesus as Lord and Savior** is inherent in the sinner's confession: *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved* (Romans 8.9). However, the notion that the Messiah is Sovereign (Lord) is not restricted to the post-resurrection narratives. A thorough examination of soteriological doctrines (teachings about salvation through Jesus Christ) will amply demonstrate the necessity of Jesus being both Lord and Messiah (Savior). **The eternal reign of the Christ is intrinsic to Scripture.**

The Greek word **kyrios**, which translated Lord, has a variety of meanings. It may mean 'sir' when it is used as a polite form of address with a stranger. It may be used as a courteous way of addressing an older person deserving respect. It was a **common form of addressed** used by anyone in a position of servitude or slavery for his or her 'master' (cp. Mark 12.9; Luke 19.33; 1 Peter 3.6). It was **used of political leaders** (Acts 25.26). Lastly, it was frequently used as a **means to identify the authority of the gods** (pagan), or of **God's authority**: *For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords" – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist* (1 Corinthians 8.5-6). (cp. I. Howard Marshall, *Jesus The Saviour*, p. 198).

With respect to Jesus the term Lord was sometimes used as a polite form of address, particularly when people acknowledged his unusual giftedness as a rabbi (teacher). However, **a survey of the New Testament reveals that it was the last usage of kyrios that was the most distinctive title ascribed to Jesus.** While there were many gods worshipped by people in the ancient world, the Jews and the Christians worshipped only one. So **the application of the title "Lord" to Jesus was an obvious carryover from the Old Testament use of kyrios to refer to God.** "Passages of Scripture that originally applied to God are reapplied to Jesus, thereby showing a tacit identification of Jesus with the Lord spoken of in the Old Testament. So much so is this the case that it is true to say that the word 'Lord' in a religious sense is applied to Jesus more often than to God the Father in the New Testament" (Marshall, p.

200). From the church's confession that Jesus is Lord and Savior in his incarnation, it is easy to deduce that he was Lord in his pre-incarnational state as the eternal Son.

**The question that has dogged the evangelical church in recent years is the “lordship salvation” debate; that is, must Jesus be both Lord and savior in order to be one's Savior?** This theological battle was popularized in the evangelical coliseum by two evangelical scholars, Zane Hodges and John MacArthur.

“Lordship salvation” advocates say that in order to be saved, one must not only believe and acknowledge that Christ is Lord, but also submit to His lordship. In other words, there must be — at the moment one trusts in Christ for salvation — a willingness to commit one's life absolutely to the Lord, even though the actual practice of a committed life may not follow immediately or completely. Non-lordship proponents argue that such a pre-salvation commitment to Christ's lordship compromises salvation by grace. (*Understanding the Lordship Salvation Controversy* – Christian Research Institute CRI)

Hodges initiated the “debate” with his book *The Gospel Under Siege* and John MacArthur's responded with his critique *The Gospel According to Jesus*. Shortly thereafter Hodges wrote yet another book *Absolutely Free*. Others have joined in the “discussion” and no doubt it will continue. What is absolutely certain is that faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is not alone. Jesus said if you love me you will obey me (cf. John 14.15, 21, 23; 15.10; 1 John 5.3). Jesus said: *why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I tell you?* (Luke 6.46).

#### REIGN OF YAHWEH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The concept of God's kingdom is rooted in the Old Testament. Though one rightly thinks of God being in a covenantal relationship with his people (Genesis 12.1-4), the idea of Israel as a nation was established even before the day when Samuel anointed Saul as the first king. For example, **when God spoke to Moses in Exodus 19.6 he described Israel as a holy nation. “In this kingdom the pre-incarnate Christ ruled as king, for from the earliest days it existed by virtue of a covenant that God made with His chosen people, and Christ as the mediator of the covenant ruled over and governed them.** In this way Christ ruled over all of Israel's life” (*ISBE*, Vol. 1, p. 656). However, from the days of Samuel onward Israel either had a king, or was looking for the coming of one who would reestablish a theocratic kingdom.

Though the image of God as King is rare in the Old Testament, when it is present, it is significant. For example, the well-known vision of Isaiah depicts the Lord as King: “*Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!*” (Isaiah 6.5). This image is further expanded in later sections of Isaiah where God is viewed as the *King of Jacob* (Isaiah 41.21) or again in Isaiah 44.6, *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel.* Isaiah's description of Israel's deliverance is a picture framed by the image of

God's sovereign reign: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns" (Isaiah 52.7). That this passage introduces the suffering servant of chapter 53 only accentuates the New Testament's emphasis on Jesus as both Lord and savior.*

In their collaborative book, *Two Kingdoms: The Church and Culture Through the Ages* Clouse, Pierard and Yamauchi carefully developed the idea that **there are two histories being lived out in juxtaposition to one another**. The idea is not new; the idea was set forth by Augustine in his book *The City of God*. But even then the idea was not original with Augustine; it had been even more dramatically stated by the prophet Daniel. He described four earthly empires that would be brought under the rule of the Most High: *I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed* (Daniel 7.13-14). Indeed, it is a theme that is clearly evident in Scripture; for example, the promise given to Moses in Exodus 19.4-6 (kingdom of priests) or Paul's comments in Ephesians 2.18-22 (fellow citizens of the household of God) and Philippians 3.17-21 (citizen of heaven); and of course, Hebrews 11.8-10 (Abraham looking forward to a heavenly city).

#### INAUGURATION OF THE KINGDOM

The Gospel of Matthew opens with a detailed account of Jesus' genealogy. Not only was Jesus heir of the Abrahamic covenant but also he was the "son of David." Along with being described as the **son of David** (heir to the Davidic throne), Jesus is described as the **King of the Jews** (Mark 15.12) and the King of Israel (John 12.13). These are all messianic titles. The **concept of the kingdom of God figures prominently in the Synoptic gospels** (cp. Matthew 4.17 [kingdom of heaven]; 12.28; Mark 1.15 [kingdom of God is at hand]; Luke 6.20 [kingdom of God]). The gospels promise the believer that one day he will inhabit a heavenly kingdom (Matthew 25.34; Luke 16.9). Likewise, they warn unbelievers that their unbelief will consign them to an eternal damnation in a realm of darkness (Matthew 8.12 – centurion's faith). **The kingdom of God is both present and future and Jesus is Lord of all**. Images of the future kingdom are associated with the **Parousia** (return of Christ; e.g., Matthew 16.28 – following Jesus' admonition of Peter for being Satan's voice, Jesus says **take up your cross and follow me and in doing so contrasts the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of heaven**), just as the present kingdom is related to his Lordship (Matthew 19.25-30).

In the New Testament God alone, or the Messiah reigns as king. **Earthly kings are invariably contrasted in a negative or subservient way to the sovereignty of God** (cp. Matthew 2.1; 14.8; Acts 12.1; 1 Peter 2.13; Revelation 17.9). Whether they are *kings of the earth* (Matthew 17.25), or *kings of the Gentiles* (Luke 22.25), or *kings of the whole world* (Revelation 16.14), they are all subject to the sovereign rule of the great King of heaven (Revelation 1.5; 17.14; 19.16).

#### REIGN OF THE EXALTED SON

The eternal Son reigns as Lord of all creation because he made it and sustains it (Colossians 1.15-20). **Redemption is accomplished through the work of Christ and he reigns as Sovereign over his kingdom.** The only inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom are those who have been redeemed from their sin. Paul prays for the church asking God that *they may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins* (Colossians 1.9-14; cp. Hebrews 1.3).

After the ascension it became clearer to the disciples that the exalted Christ's rule over his church was being exercised from his position at the right hand of God (Ephesians 1.20ff; Philippians 2.9ff; Colossians 2.13; 1 Timothy 6.15). **This world is influenced by the sanctified lives of believers who willingly serve the King.**

**John's apocalyptic comment** on the Lord's future work is arresting: *They* [i.e., God's enemies] *will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called chosen and faithful* (Revelation 17.14). When Jesus returns to the earth there will be a final demonstration of his glory. He will bring all creation into judgment, the living and the dead (Matthew 25; John 5.28; 1 Thessalonians 4.16). It will then be apparent to everyone that Jesus is Lord over all creation (Philippians 2.9-11). At that time the redeemed will be ushered into their eternal rest (Romans 8.18-25; 2 Peter 3.10-13; Revelation 21) and the condemned will be confined to the eternal darkness (Matthew 10.28). At the very end Jesus will subject himself to God the Father: *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all* (1 Corinthians 15.24-28).

## CONCLUSION – JESUS IS SAVIOR AND LORD

Mankind was created for this one purpose: to declare the glory of God. All creation declares the glory of God; the psalmist writes: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge* (Psalm 19.1-2) Mankind alone was created to have fellowship with God; he has the ability to know him and the capacity to enjoy knowing him. However, he can do this only by confessing Jesus as Lord and trusting in his redemptive work as Messiah.

This, then, is the gospel we are to proclaim: That Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate, humbled Himself to die on our behalf. Thus He became the sinless sacrifice to pay the penalty of our guilt. He rose from the dead to declare with power that He is Lord over all, and He offers eternal life freely to sinners who will surrender to Him in humble, repentant faith. This gospel promises nothing to the haughty rebel, but for broken, penitent sinners, it graciously offers everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). (MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 210).