

The Apostles' Creed

Our Lord

Selected Texts

Rev. Freddy Fritz

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Our Lord

Introduction

As we continue our series in *The Apostles' Creed* I would like to examine today what it means to believe in Jesus Christ as **our Lord**. Please listen as I recite the Apostles' Creed:

*I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, **our Lord**,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father Almighty.
From there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

The preacher had just finished his message. It was a powerful message. Many in the congregation were moved by his message about Christ. He had explained who Christ was, why he had come to earth, and why he died. Everyone sat quietly, expectantly. After a pregnant pause, the preacher invited people to respond to his message.

“First,” he said, “If you are not a Christian, but you want to become a Christian tonight, I want you to raise your hand now.”

After a few moments and similar statements, the preacher thanked the people who raised their hands, and then asked them to pray the “sinner’s prayer” with him.

As soon as he finished the “sinner’s prayer,” the preacher then said, “Now, many of you are Christians, but you have never made Christ Lord of your life. You believe you are saved, but you have never made Christ Lord of your life. I want you to raise your hand now.”

After a few more moments and similar statements, the preacher thanked those people who raised their hands, and then asked them to pray the “lordship prayer” with him.

This scenario unfortunately is the theology of a large segment of American evangelicalism. Salvation is viewed as a two-step process: first, you accept Christ as Savior, and then, subsequently, you make him Lord of your life.

Opponents to this view are branded as believing in “lordship salvation.” This term was coined by those who believe that Jesus’ lordship is a false addition to the gospel.

But, “lordship salvation” (a term that I do not personally like) is simply the biblical and historic doctrine of salvation.

In 1988 Pastor John MacArthur wrote a book titled *The Gospel According to Jesus*. John MacArthur, with his characteristic courage, dared to tackle the issue of “lordship salvation” that many evangelical churches would have preferred left untouched.

Lordship salvation, defined by one who labels it a heresy, is “the view that for salvation a person must trust Jesus Christ as his Savior from sin and must also commit himself to Christ as Lord of his life, submitting to His sovereign authority.”¹

It is astonishing that anyone would characterize that truth as unbiblical or heretical. The implication is that acknowledging Christ’s lordship is a human work. That is a mistaken notion, but it

¹ Livingston Blauvelt, Jr., “Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salvation?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January - March 1986), p. 37.

is backed by volumes of literature that speaks of people “making Christ Lord of their lives.”²

Now, right at the outset of this message, we need to note that we do not “make” Christ Lord. He *is* Lord! Anyone who supposedly receives Jesus as Savior but does not receive him as Lord is in reality guilty of rejecting him. Christ cannot be split. One *cannot* receive Christ as Savior but not as Lord.

The two clearest statements regarding salvation in all of Scripture both emphasize Jesus' lordship.

The first text is found in the book of Acts. Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi. There was a mighty earthquake, and all the doors of the prison flew open. The jailor thought that the prisoners had escaped, but after realizing that they were still there, he fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He asked them what he should do to be saved. Paul and Silas replied, “Believe in the *Lord* Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household” (Acts 16:31, emphasis added).

The other text is found in Romans, where Paul wrote to the church at Rome, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is *Lord*,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9, emphasis added).

Peter's sermon at Pentecost concluded with this declaration: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, *both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36, emphasis added).

No promise of salvation is ever extended to those who refuse to bow to Christ's Lordship. Thus there is no salvation except “lordship salvation.”

Lesson

In our discussion on the *Apostles' Creed* we come now to the statement where we affirm that Jesus Christ is *our Lord*. Let us

² Ibid., p. 38.

look today and learn what it means to affirm Jesus Christ as *our Lord*.

I. Why Is Jesus Christ Our Lord?

First, why is Jesus Christ our Lord?

Jesus said, “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am” (John 13:13).

The person who trusts in Jesus joins with Thomas in saying to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

And, in accordance with Scripture, every true Christian confesses “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).

But why is Jesus our Lord? There are a number of reasons why Jesus Christ is Lord, but let me mention just two reasons.

A. Because He Is God

First, Jesus is our Lord because he is God.

Scripture is very clear that Jesus is God, that is, the second person of the Trinity (cf. Matthew 28:19; John 20:28). Because Jesus is God, he is for that reason alone Lord.

The word *Lord*, by the way, comes from the Greek word “kurios” (**kurios**) which signifies *a person having authority and power*. Jesus Christ, as God, has the same ontological—or essential—authority and power as the Father, simply because he is God.

Further, as God, Jesus created all things. The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians and said, “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Colossians 1:16).

Jesus Christ is therefore Lord over all creation. All people, then, are to subject to the Lordship of Christ simply because he is God and the creator of all.

B. Because He Is Mediator

And second, Jesus is our Lord because he is Mediator.

God the Father appointed Christ the Mediator between God and man. In this sense Christ is Lord over the elect, who are his peculiar property and inheritance.

Christ's lordship over the elect was given in three distinct stages. First, Christ's authority over the elect was given to him in the eternal decree of the Father. Before the foundation of the world the Father chose the elect to be his own. He gave them to the Son so that they might be saved.

In his High Priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus prayed to the Father: "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word" (John 17:6). Jesus recognized that the elect had been given to him by his Father.

Second, Christ's authority over the elect was more fully acquired by actual purchase, when he died on the cross. Christ paid the price required, namely his blood, to purchase our salvation. He gave his life so that we might have life.

The apostle Peter said, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19). And because Christ bought us with his blood, he has authority over his elect.

And third, Christ's authority over the elect was sealed in the sending of the Holy Spirit to apply salvation and its benefits to the elect.

Some years ago we purchased a second-hand car to replace the one that had been totaled in an accident. Although we paid for the car on a Saturday, the transaction was not complete until the following Monday when we transferred the title. Only then could we take possession of the vehicle.

In the same way, Christ purchased our salvation when he died on the cross, but the transaction is not completed until the Holy Spirit applies salvation to the elect.

In the person of the Holy Spirit, Jesus comes to take possession of the elect, when he effectually calls, regenerates, and blesses them with saving faith. Although, in point of *right*, the elect were long before the property of Christ, in point of *fact*, they only became his peculiar property when they were freed from the shackles of sin and Satan, and surrendered to Christ alone as their only lawful Teacher and Lord.

So, we affirm that Jesus Christ is our Lord because he is God and also because he is Mediator.

II. How Is Jesus Christ's Lordship Acknowledged?

But how, then, is Jesus Christ's Lordship acknowledged?

It is one thing to agree that Jesus Christ is our Lord because he is our God and he is our Mediator. How does Christ's lordship get fleshed out in our lives? How do we, who claim to be Christians, acknowledge Christ's lordship?

We do so in a number of ways. Let me mention three ways.

A. When We Become Christians

First, Jesus Christ's Lordship is acknowledged when we become Christians.

Let me make it clear again, lest I be misunderstood, that Jesus Christ *is already* Lord over all. We don't make Jesus Christ Lord in any sense at all. Jesus Christ is Lord of the universe and he rules over all.

And yet, in his Mediatorial role, Jesus Christ is Lord over the elect in a peculiar way. So, when a person becomes a Christian he is simply affirming that Jesus Christ is Lord over his life.

I came across a remarkable discourse that was addressed to baptismal candidates in the Early Church by the Bishop. As the

The Apostles' Creed

new Christians were being prepared for their baptism, the Bishop would address them in the following way:

You intend to show this day the hand-writing of your faith to Christ. Your conscience will be the pen, ink, and paper; your tongue, the form. Attend then to the manner in which you subscribe this profession. Beware of committing a mistake, lest, peradventure, you should be deceived. Men that are about to die make a testament, and appoint another to inherit their possessions. Tomorrow night you, too, are going to die to sin; and now your renunciation is a testament; you make the devil the heir of your sins, and you leave them to him as an inheritance. If any of you then retains in his mind any thing which belongs to the devil, let him renounce it as one that is about to die, who is no longer master of his own possessions. Let none amongst you, therefore, retain in his heart any thing that pertains to the devil. Cast in the devil's face all the remainders of filthiness and wickedness, and be joined with Christ. See that none of you be negligent, or high-minded; stand with trembling. The whole transaction in which you are now engaged is awful and tremendous. All the powers of heaven are present in this place; all the angels and archangels, though invisible, are recording your words; the Cherubim and Seraphim are bending from heaven in order to receive your engagements and promises, and represent them to the Lord. Take heed, therefore, how you resist the devil, and adhere to the Creator of the universe.

The Bishop then asked the candidates several questions. He asked: "Do you now renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his service, and all his angels, and all his pomp?"

After a few follow up questions, the Bishop asked, "Are you now joined with Christ?"

And after they answered in the affirmative, he led in a short prayer, and then exhorted them in the following way:

Behold you have renounced the devil, and are joined with Christ. The records are completed, and Christ confirms them in heaven. Be faithful to your engagements. Preserve these records

for yourselves, for they are to be publicly produced in the Day of Judgment.

What a remarkable service! Would to God that we would never forget the day in which we renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, in order to submit our allegiance to Christ.

Friend, is this a description of your allegiance?

B. When We Submit to His Revealed Will

Second, Jesus Christ's Lordship is acknowledged when we submit to his revealed will.

There are many, unfortunately, who make a false profession of faith. Jesus himself reminded us of that in Luke 6:46: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Jesus Christ's lordship is acknowledged by those who do what Christ says. Christians are people who submit to the revealed will of Christ, that is, to the Word of God.

There is a very real sense in which a true Christian, when confronted with the command of Christ his Lord, does not ask, "Why should I obey this command?" but rather, "How can I obey this command?"

Some of you are going through difficult times and you may be questioning the Lord's presence and work in your life. Let me remind you of God's principle for blessing in your life: Obedience to his word! James says in James 1:22-25: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. *Do what it says.* Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he *will be blessed in what he does.*"

Some of you come to church, you hear the sermon, and you say, "Wonderful sermon!" But it never gets beyond that!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as Christ's ambassador let me remind you that because Jesus Christ is Lord we are called to obey every single one of his commands! Every one! So, when you hear or read a command of Christ, understand that it is not optional for the Christian.

C. When We Submit to His Secret Will

And third, Jesus Christ's Lordship is acknowledged when we submit to his secret will.

Christ's secret will is not revealed in Scripture. This secret will is his will for each individual Christian, and it may include pain, suffering, trial, temptation, tribulation, or whatever.

If Christ is Lord (and he is), and if we are his peculiar property (and we are), then who can hinder Christ from doing what he wills with his own?

The Scripture says, "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" (Romans 9:20-21).

We need to be firmly persuaded that Christ's will is far better for us than our own. We need to learn to say with our Lord, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 6:39).

Conclusion

So, Jesus Christ is Lord because he is God and also because he is Mediator.

And we acknowledge Jesus Christ's Lordship when we become Christians, when we submit to his revealed will, and when we submit to his secret will.

This, then, is what we affirm when we say that Jesus Christ is *our Lord*. Is this what you mean when you say, "*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord?*" Amen.

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.

Tampa, FL 33647

Office: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org