

Bible Basics Conference 2011: “Christ the Lord, Christ the Head, Christ the King”

Part 6

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[00:00:01] ...which has been given to this session is the joy of willing recognition of his lordship. And what links the things that we're going to cover in this session together is that they demonstrate that every believer comes under the lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ upon conversion. This is something which should have substantive impacts on every believer's life. We've already noted some of these things. But in addition, there are very good reasons to place ourselves willingly under the authority of our Lord.

And also that being under his lordship is a matter of joy and of response to the grace that he has shown to us. Firstly on the cross and the grace that he continues to show to us and the grace that he will show to us in a future day. [00:01:01] And so to that end, we're going to consider the things that are summarised on this slide. We'll look at willing recognition of the Lord's lordship as demonstrated in some scenes from the Bible. Then we'll consider some applications from those scenes. We'll also look briefly at the role of the Holy Spirit in recognising and demonstrating the lordship of the Lord Jesus. And we will finish with some other reasons from the scriptures to recognise and rejoice in his lordship.

I trust it's evident to us already and that it was evident to us even before we came to this conference that lordship or Lord is more than a mere descriptive title that's given to the Lord Jesus.

And that learning about lordship is more than just coming to understand what lordship might mean as a matter of lifeless doctrine. [00:02:10] There's much more to it than that.

On our part, again as we've already noted, there is submission to the Lord's authority as Lord. But at the same time, there is also on the part of our Lord, great love and grace towards us. It's a very different relationship between a Lord and one under his authority than you would ever find in that sort of relationship on this earth.

Now our first scene from the Bible takes us somewhere that we've already been to and that is the

road to Damascus. And our characters in this scene are Saul and his companions and they are on the way to Damascus to arrest more Christians there [00:03:04] and to bring them back to Jerusalem. But we're focusing on Saul in particular. Saul, the one who was still breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples. Saul, the great persecutor of Christians. Saul, the one who hated the name of Jesus Christ.

Saul is on this mission but he is arrested partway along the road by a light that is brighter than the sun. And he hears these words, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?

His response, Acts 22 verse 10, what shall I do, Lord?

These two words teach us at least two things.

Firstly, that Lordship starts at the beginning, the very beginning of the Christian pathway for every repentant and convicted sinner.

[00:04:08] And we can look at that from various perspectives.

It means that we go from being slaves of sin and of Satan to being servants of our Lord.

It means that we go from doing our own thing to doing the thing that our Lord would have us to do. But it also teaches us that while we see from God's word that there is progression in the Christian pathway, that growing in an understanding and appreciation of God's counsels is a lifelong occupation for a Christian. That doesn't apply to Lordship.

There are no degrees of Lordship. It's not something that one gets initiated into. Lordship is something that applies from the very beginning of the Christian pathway, from the moment of conversion.

[00:05:11] So there's no probation period where we get used to the idea of having the Lord Jesus as our Lord and he is our Lord from conversion. At the same time, there's also no qualification period either. That's perhaps one of the lovely things that we see from this scene involving Saul, one who was literally the chief of sinners. Yet from the moment of his conversion, the Lord Jesus was pleased to have him under his authority. And that is something that applies to us as well.

The second thing we can take from these words of Saul, what shall I do, Lord, is that they represent the suitable and proper response to the grace that had been shown to him. [00:06:01] C.E. Stuart described it as being morally impossible for Paul to do aught else, to do anything else, in connection with the grace that had been shown to him, again, the chief of sinners. And grace that had been shown in such a miraculous way with the Lord's appearing on the road to Damascus. For him to submit to his Lord's authority and ask what he could do for his Lord was the proper response to what the Lord had demonstrated towards him. For our second scene, we are going to an upper room in Jerusalem.

The doors are shut and there is an atmosphere of fear. We're in this scene in the upper room where the disciples were assembled together in fear of the Jews who had just crucified the Lord Jesus. And this one, Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was to have redeemed Israel, has been taken away from them and been put to death. [00:07:10] What happens to them in this time of terror, this time of

loneliness, this time of hopelessness?

Suddenly, the Lord Jesus appears in the midst.

And their response? The disciples rejoiced, therefore, having seen the Lord.

Although rejected by the world and, in fact, put to death by the world, the Lord Jesus was the disciples' Lord. Something that I think has been remarked on already, but just to repeat the point, this applies to us today. Although in Western countries we don't live in the same fear that the disciples were under in the incident that we've been considering, yet we live in a world that has rejected Christ. [00:08:09] And while the general attitude of men and women that we come into contact with might be more indifference to Christ than open hostility, yet that indifference is a rejection of him. But the path for us is still to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as Lord.

But also wonderful to see from this incident that the Lord's presence has such a great effect. It can immediately turn the most despairing sorrow of the disciples into the sweetest joy when they see the Lord in their midst. Our third scene, I'll just mention briefly because time is already against us.

[00:09:01] This is the scene on the Sea of Tiberias.

What's interesting about this scene is that the disciples have been out all night fishing, doing their best to earn their livelihood, but they've been able to catch absolutely nothing. But yet there's someone on the shore who directs them as to where they should cast their net. And when they follow his instructions, immediately the nets are full. Now John, the disciple who it would seem loved the Lord the most, immediately recognises who this man on the shore is and he can say, it is the Lord. One of the things I think this scene teaches us is that when we try to do things in our own efforts, the result of our work is going to be nothing. But when the Lord directs the work, then it will be blessed.

The next scene from Acts chapter 11 is perhaps one that at least those of us who have been speaking today and who will be speaking over the next day as well can identify with. [00:10:09] Barnabas has been sent to Antioch to help the great number of newly converted Christians there.

What is the best instruction that he can give to them?

Acts 11.23 gives us the answer, that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord.

I think this perhaps encapsulates what lordship should be in practice, in reality, in a day-by-day and moment-by-moment sense.

As I said before, the relationship between the Lord Jesus and us as his subjects is very different from the relationship of a lord and subject in this world. [00:11:02] It is a relationship of closeness and so we can cleave to the Lord. To use perhaps a slightly clearer word in today's language, we can cling to the Lord.

This is something that we should do in every aspect of our lives. This is something that will help us, just as it helped these newly converted Christians at Antioch, to be sustained amidst all of the disbelief and persecution of their hour. It was also how they were going to grow in the Lord by abiding in him.

It's perhaps worth noting also that the instruction was to cleave to the Lord, to cling to him, to abide in him. The instruction was not to keep the law.

The relationship of lordship that we enter into is something very different from legality.

[00:12:06] Considering these scenes, for me they give rise to serious and searching questions as to whether I truly acknowledge the Lord Jesus as Lord and place myself under his lordship.

The next few slides are intended to reinforce that again the lordship of our Lord Jesus is something which should have meaning for us and should be a reality for us, not a mere theory or a form.

I don't want to be prescriptive in the applications that we can take from the scriptures that we've looked at, but these are just some ones that occurred to me. Firstly, to take Acts 22.10 again and the scene on the road to Damascus.

The words of Saul, what shall I do, Lord, are equally applicable to us and the appropriate response for each of us to make to the grace that has been shown to us. [00:13:15] Have you said this to your Lord? What shall I do, Lord? Or are you too afraid to say it? Or if you have said it, have you been faithful to your word?

At the end of his life, Paul could honestly say, and this was to King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Paul was someone who knew what lordship was and submitted himself to it.

And again, as has already been noted, lordship is not a half-hearted thing. It's not something that we can choose to apply at times that appeal to us and not at other times. [00:14:01] It's a full and complete submission to his lordship.

And it's not just in connection with what we do either. It's connection with what we think, our whole beings, everything about us.

I thought the verse in Romans chapter 12 was quite appropriate because it sets the standard really. Paul says that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Our bodies, there's nothing that we can exclude from the application of that verse and there's nothing that we can exclude from the authority of our Lord Jesus as Lord. If this suggests that lordship is a whole of life thing, then the verse that we looked at from Acts chapter 11 perhaps reminds us that it is a daily thing also. And we can ask similar questions of ourselves in connection with this verse. [00:15:02] Can I honestly say that I cleave to the Lord Jesus and do I really abide in him?

I have every reason to do so. The Lord is my shepherd, as it says in Psalm 23. I think we can legitimately apply that to the Lord Jesus. Every reason to submit to his lordship and to cling to him day by day.

And again, this is something about our whole beings with purpose of heart.

I think that's really what that expression is getting at. It's not just talking about affections or emotions, but our whole being is dedicated to cleaving to the Lord Jesus. Psalm 21.7, just mention briefly again, because I think I touched on the main points. The Lord is always with us and the Lord is the one who blesses our service when we submit to his direction.

[00:16:09] We shouldn't just think about doing something for the Lord. We should think instead of doing what the Lord directs us to do.

When we do that, there will be a blessing from it. And we should also acknowledge the source of that blessing, that it's not from ourselves, but it is the Lord. And perhaps an application for our meetings from John chapter 20, because that scene in the upper room does give us a picture of sorts of an assembly meeting, because the disciples were gathered there and the Lord Jesus was in their midst. We often talk about gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus, and I hope that's something that we don't use simply as a mere form of words, but it is something that we genuinely mean. [00:17:02] And that we also do appreciate the consequence of gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus, which is that the Lord Jesus is in the midst. And what that means is that every meeting where we are gathered to the Lord's name should be special, because he is in the midst.

And just as the immediate response of the disciples when the Lord Jesus appeared in their midst was to rejoice, that should be the character of our meetings as well. The authorised version in rendering John 20, verse 20 says, then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. I'm not sure if that really captures the full force of their reaction, because one can be glad about something and merely smile. But the way that the JN Darby translation puts it is that the disciples rejoiced. [00:18:02] Rejoicing is something that has an outward manifestation. It's not simply a matter of sitting in one seat with a smile on one's face. One can't imagine the disciples doing that in the upper room. I'm sure their joy had an outward manifestation and particularly a verbal manifestation in praise and worship. And we can and probably should ask the question as to whether this is reflected in our meetings.

Rejoicing because the Lord is in the midst. We're going to move to something a bit different now, which is the role of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Lordship of the Lord Jesus. First Corinthians 12, verse 3 says in part that no one can say Lord Jesus unless in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[00:19:09] The immediate context of this verse is manifestations of spiritual power.

In the time when Paul was writing, there might have been manifestations in quite a variety of forms.

But when there is such a manifestation, there's an important question to be asked, which is what is the source of that spiritual manifestation or that spiritual power?

And the answer is found, the answer as to whether it is a manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, is found by asking whether that manifestation acknowledges the Lordship of Christ and the Lord Jesus' proper place.

[00:20:03] Someone who accepts the Lord Jesus as Lord will want to acknowledge these things. And the Holy Spirit, whose role is to glorify Christ, will make Christ's Lordship manifest where he is operative.

Now, probably the most immediate circumstance where this is going to apply to us today is in connection with meetings and the preaching of the word during those meetings.

And so there is an important question to ask, which is whether the message that is being given acknowledges the Lord Jesus as Lord or is consistent with his Lordship. And if it's not, then there are serious concerns about it.

But something which is according to the Spirit will acknowledge Christ's Lordship and the things which are consistent with that. [00:21:06] I think more generally, we can take from this verse that the Holy Spirit, in addition to speaking of the Lord Jesus, would seek that his proper place as Lord is acknowledged and that we submit to his authority.

We're going to finish with some other reasons to rejoice in the Lordship of our Lord Jesus. Some of the things that we enjoy because he is Lord.

The first one comes from 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, where it says, The Lord himself, with an assembling shout, shall descend from heaven, and then we shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Not sure that I really need to add much to these lovely words that we have, but they bring before us the fact that the Lord himself is coming for us, coming for every believer, not his angels. [00:22:06] He is coming in real and bodily form. He is coming personally. Interestingly, the way in which this event of the Lord's coming or the rapture is presented in these verses is, I think, quite unique because it is making use of this concept of the Lord as Lord.

The word that is translated shout is a word that means the call of a commander to the people who are under his authority, and in the context that is to us.

I think that's important because it emphasises a point that I made earlier, that Lordship isn't just a matter of a lifeless doctrine, but it's something that is very real [00:23:02] and something that is very unique and demonstrates the Lord's love for us.

He is going to come for us as Lord. As we well know, this event is going to be very wonderful for us. Verse 17 of the same chapter says that we will be ever with the Lord. Philippians chapter 3 verse 21 says that our bodies will be transformed into bodies like his body of glory. Luke chapter 12, the verses mentioned there, state that the Lord will serve us after we are taken to be with him. So we have wonderful encouragement to watch for the coming of our Lord.

And following this, there is that time when we will be rewarded at his appearing. Second Timothy chapter 4 states that there is laid up for me, as Paul is speaking, a crown of righteousness which the Lord shall give me at that day. [00:24:05] That's something that applies to all of us. As we maintain the interests of our Lord now, he will reward us with this crown at his appearing. And wonderfully, there's great reward from our Lord for even the smallest service. It says in Matthew 25, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. It's the prerogative of Christ as Lord to assign rewards.

And he will have the true measure of what has been done for him. There's a positive and a negative to that.

The positive side is that we don't have to worry about whether men see what we are doing because the Lord sees what we do for him. And really that's all that should matter. The negative side is though that the Lord will see perhaps how little we have done for him.

[00:25:05] But in any event, the reward that we will receive will be great. He will be sharing his joy with us.

Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

So there are great reasons to serve our Lord. Further in the same passage, Paul could say, the Lord stood with me and gave me power. The Lord shall deliver me and shall preserve me for his heavenly kingdom. No matter what the difficulty we face in this world now, the Lord stands with those who are under his lordship.

He's not a distant Lord, but a Lord who stands with his own. And the greater the difficulty that we go through, the greater the evidence of the Lord's care for us. So great encouragement to be faithful to him. [00:26:01] And lastly, association and recognition.

Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints. That's referring to us there, that expression, ten thousands of his saints. Our Lord loves us and values us so much that in the day of his appearing, the day of his glory, he will share that with us. He will publicly associate us with himself.

And while, again, we may suffer ridicule and difficulty now, in that future day, we will be associated with our Lord in his day of triumph. So to conclude, again, Lord is not a mere title.

It's something much more than that. The Lord Jesus is our Lord from the moment of our conversion. And recognition of his lordship is essential to every single part of our pathways, individually and collectively. [00:27:05] The Holy Spirit wants us to acknowledge his lordship and will draw us to do that. And where we submit to the Spirit's leading, then the lordship of the Lord Jesus will be manifest. But lastly, none of this is legality. There are many reasons to own with joy the Lord Jesus as Lord.

And so in finishing this topic of lordship, I trust that these things, together with what we've heard before, will encourage us and help us to give the Lord Jesus his due place in our lives as we await his assembling shout.