



# THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

“Therefore God has highly exalted him [Jesus] and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” [Philippians 2:9-11](#)

The message of the New Testament is not merely “Jesus is the answer,” but “Jesus is Lord.” In the Bible, the word “Savior” is found 37 times while the word “Lord” is used 7,736 times. Jesus Christ, God the Son, is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. In this session, we are going to look specifically at what it means for Jesus to be our Lord on a personal level, and how His rule (that is, His Kingdom) is advancing in the earth.

## JESUS CHRIST—MY LORD AND MY GOD

Most of us have been raised in free, democratic countries with either no monarch or, by comparison to biblical and other historic models, a token one. Subsequently, we are not conditioned to think in terms of sovereign rule and obedient submission. However, whether we realized it or not, before we were born again, we were in submission to Satan, sin having brought us under his control. The saving work of Jesus not only cleansed us from the pollution of sin but also freed us from the power of sin and Satan:

“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 1:13-14](#)

After Christ redeemed us (that is, bought us back), we were not left as “free agents” but were placed under a new authority—that of the Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul, whom God chose to be an example for all of us, described himself as “a bond-servant of Christ” ([Galatians 1:10 - NASB](#)).

## “JESUS IS LORD!”

The most striking characteristic of Christians, as distinct from unbelievers, is that by the working of the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to say (and mean), “**Jesus is Lord,**” both in turning to Him for salvation and as a lifelong confession:

“...no one can say ‘**Jesus is Lord**’ except in the Holy Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:3

“...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 10:9

As we saw from [Philippians 2:9-11](#) at the beginning of this session, one day every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. The Christian does it now!

Outside of the Church, *lord* is not commonly used, but in everyday language it means “boss or owner, the one who gives orders and expects to be obeyed.” When we come to Christ, we are in effect saying, “I no longer wish to be guided by Satan or by my own desires; I want to submit every thought, word, and action to you, Lord. If your command cuts across my feelings or natural inclinations, it is your command I will obey.”

“You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19b-20

So, Jesus is our Lord, our King. We are in a Kingdom, subjects of a King who loves us and is totally dedicated to our welfare.

### DOES KING JESUS GIVE ORDERS TO HIS SUBJECTS?

Yes! It is a mistake to think there is no requirement of obedience in the New Testament. As we considered in detail when looking at the grace of God in Session 8, we are now empowered to live in a righteousness that goes beyond the Law.

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them **to observe** all that I have **commanded** you.’” Matthew 28:18-20a

“...not being outside the law of God but **under the law of Christ...**” 1 Corinthians 9:21

Under the Law of Moses, fear of judgment and death was the primary motivation for obedience. But now, having been justified freely by God’s grace, our motive as believers for keeping the law of Christ is love and gratitude.

“We love because he first loved us.” 1 John 4:19

### WHO IS SERVING WHOM?

An incomplete message of the gospel says, “Come to Jesus and get joy, peace, all your problems solved, prosperity, excitement, and blessing.” The authentic gospel cries out, “Come to Jesus and submit your life to Him. Give yourself as a living sacrifice and seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (see [Matthew 6:25-34](#)). Under the incomplete message, I am Lord and Jesus is my servant. Whereas under the authentic gospel, Jesus is Lord and I am His servant.

“...**we serve** in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.” Romans 7:6

Of course, all of the promised benefits of the incomplete message are included in the authentic gospel, but it is important to understand that they come as a result of the Lordship of Jesus in our lives. If people have heard only the incomplete message, and Jesus doesn't respond like a "genie in a bottle," they get frustrated and quit when God wants them to grow up. If we submit to Jesus and allow Him to lead us, we won't be disappointed:

**"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."** Psalm 23:1

**"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,"** Psalm 103:2

## PRACTICAL LORDSHIP

If Jesus is truly Lord of our lives, then every area of our life must be submitted to His will. The instant we are born again, we are new creations. However, if we are to come into our inheritance as saints, we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the process of gradual transformation to the likeness of Christ. This includes the putting off of things that do not pertain to righteousness and the putting on of things that do (Ephesians 4:22-24). Even though many experience dramatic release from particular patterns of sin at their conversion, there will still be areas that will require the challenge of making good, but difficult, choices if they are to mature.

Furthermore, we have an enemy who is working against us in this. Despite the fact that, at the point of our salvation, Satan lost his hold on our lives, he remains committed to inhibiting our relationship with God. He wants to render us ineffective and fruitless, particularly with regard to the mission of reaching others. As long as we are in our physical body, Satan will be looking for an opportunity to establish a stronghold in us. He is able to do this in areas where we are unwilling to yield to Christ. Whether the problem is merely our own reluctance to change or Satan's direct influence, we will refer to such areas as "Lordship issues."

We are not so much referring to occasional tripping and falling, but rather the decision to live with a recurring pattern of sin and refusing to truly repent. It is also important to understand that a Lordship issue may not necessarily be something that is obviously "bad"; it can simply be anything that we put before God and are unwilling to submit to Him. The Lordship of Christ can be challenged in any and all areas of life, including our relationships, careers, finances, time, habits, and recreation.

Let's look at some of the typical areas where many struggle with Lordship:

**MONEY & POSSESSIONS** — Jesus confronted the god of money, "mammon," more frequently than any other idol. As this is such a major potential challenge to the Lordship of Christ, we will cover it more thoroughly in a later session, but for now let's consider the following verses:

**"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."** Matthew 6:24

**"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."** 1 Timothy 6:10

**ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS** — The desire and expectation of finding fulfillment in a partner can be very intense, and the enemy has had great success in manipulating the emotions of many individuals in this area. More than any other issue, this has led single men and women who were once zealous for God to abandon or compromise their faith. Failing to trust in the timing and provision of God with matters of the heart has doomed many to a tragic, fruitless existence.

**EDUCATION & CAREERS** — To study and become qualified for meaningful work is a good thing. However, God does not intend for our work to be our Lord or our life! Work is a means of productively serving Him. At times, He will challenge us to make decisions that are seemingly not the best for our careers, but are based on higher Kingdom priorities like family or church.

**SEXUAL PURITY** — Sex is given for our pleasure and fulfillment within the right context of marriage. However, we live in a culture that is saturated with sexual impurity of every kind. In [Philippians 2:15](#), we are exhorted to live a life where we “**shine as lights**” in a “**crooked and twisted generation.**”

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” [Ephesians 5:3 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;” [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#)

**ADDICTIONS** – There are many things in life that are good and given to us by God but can become addictions through excess. For example, food, rest, and exercise are all spoken of positively in Scripture, if taken in moderation, but can become controlling factors if we let them.

However, we specifically want to address addictions to substances and practices that are harmful, even in moderation. For example, drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, opiates, etc. are used by Satan to entrap and destroy people. The pleasure of these drugs is primarily derived from the fulfilling of a self-induced craving, but the underlying effect is devastation of physical, mental, and spiritual health. The same can be said of the use of pornography, which has grown to epidemic proportions with the development of modern technology.

When we submit to the Lordship of Christ, we find a freedom and liberty that cannot be found in any other way. Consider the following verses:

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” [Galatians 5:1](#)

“‘Everything is permissible for me’—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible for me’—but I will not be mastered by anything.” [1 Corinthians 6:12 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

## ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING CHRIST’S LORDSHIP IN LIFE

We must remember that our transformation is not the product of us “trying harder” but rather the renewing of our minds ([Romans 12:1-2](#)). God has done a magnificent work in us so that now we are “**more than conquerors**” ([Romans 8:37](#)). He won the battle for us before we struck a blow; He qualified us before the test began. Far from being disappointing and displeasing to God, as so many Christians feel, the truth is that we are His delight and He has fashioned us for victory:

“...he rescued me, because he delighted in me.” [Psalm 18:19](#)

“...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” [Jeremiah 31:33](#)

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.” [1 John 5:3-4a](#)

We must set out to discover, from the Scriptures and from the promptings of the Holy Spirit, what the Lord wants of us. Having found it, we must deliberately do it, regardless of how we feel. Right actions will be followed by right feelings.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” [John 14:15](#)



## LORDSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

Every individual Christian has the means of receiving orders directly from King Jesus—through the indwelling Holy Spirit, prayer as a direct two-way communication with Him, and His written Word, the Bible.

However, the New Testament does not conceive of Christians normally living in spiritual isolation; they are part of a community of believers, the local church. Because of the widely varying degrees of spiritual maturity and experience among Christians, there is in the church a structure of delegated authority under Christ. Leaders share an element of Christ’s authority in order to lead Christians in the right ways. Compare these verses:

“Submit yourselves therefore to God.” James 4:7a

“Obey your leaders and submit to them...” Hebrews 13:17

It is the elders of the church who are given this delegated authority by the Lord. In later sessions, we will look in more detail at the subject of leadership in the church. The most important thing for us to grasp at this point is that leadership in the church is given to us by God and is always to represent His heart towards us.

The New Testament gives at least two word pictures of the kind of leadership Christ has in the Church:

### SHEPHERD

The word *leader* in Hebrews 13:17 is the same Greek word (*hegeomai*) used for Joseph as “governor” over Egypt in Acts 7:10. Joseph’s was a real rule, though exercised in the people’s interests. The word is used also of Jesus in Matthew 2:6b, where it says of Bethlehem, “for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

The job of the shepherd is to feed, guide, and protect. And it is interesting to bear in mind that the Eastern shepherd walks in front of the sheep, not behind. Church leaders lead people forward by example. They feed them on the nourishing food of God’s Word, guide their lives in accordance with God’s pattern, and protect them from harmful pressures and influences. Such was Paul’s advice to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-30.

### PARENT

“The elders **who direct** the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.” 1 Timothy 5:17 (NIV 1984)

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you **and are over** you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.” 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13a

The Greek word translated by the emboldened phrases above (*proistemi*) is explained in 1 Timothy 3:4 (NIV 1984), where it is used of the elder who “**must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.**” So, the church leader must have a parental kind of concern for the people. Accordingly, he will give commands at times:

“Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” Titus 2:15

The Greek word translated “**authority**” here (*epitage*) means “authoritative command.” Like Paul, the local church elder will embody the care of both a father and a nursing mother in self-sacrificial concern—exhorting, encouraging, and charging the people of God to lead a life worthy of God (1 Thessalonians 2:7-12).



## THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

In the previous session, we marveled at the wonders of the gospel of God’s grace—and rightly so, as His grace is indeed good news. However, it is also important for us to see that the gospel is also the good news of His Kingdom. The Kingdom rule of God means ongoing freedom from sin’s consequence and control.

“Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you.’” [Luke 17:20-21 \(NIV 1984\)](#)

Every time we determine to repent and make the right choice regarding sin, we establish the Kingdom of God internally. However, the effect of our internal transformation is anything but private.

One of the things Jesus taught us to pray was this: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” ([Matthew 6:10](#)).

The strategic plan of God has always been to have a people who are inwardly transformed to His likeness and collectively fill the entire earth with the knowledge of His glory.

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”  
[Habakkuk 2:14](#)

## THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

“according to the working of his [God’s] great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” [Ephesians 1:19b-23](#)

The true Church that Jesus is building is the primary means of displaying His glory in the earth. Rather than some beaten down and defensive remnant, the Scripture depicts the Church rising to become the indomitable force that even hell cannot withstand.

“...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” [Matthew 16:18](#)

We must respond personally to the challenge of the Lordship of Christ, but what is at stake is far more than personal gain. As believers, we are members of His body, a part of His advancing Kingdom. As such, we urge you to address the Lordship issues in your life. Allow the Holy Spirit to bring conviction over things that need to be submitted to Christ, and by faith, receive God’s transforming grace.

## RECOMMENDED READING

1. *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* by George Eldon Ladd
2. *The Unshakeable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person* by E. Stanley Jones
3. *The Kingdom and the Power: Rediscovering the Centrality of the Church* by Peter Leithart
4. *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges
5. *Victory Over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ* by Neil T. Anderson

