

God Hath Made Him Lord (*from Acts 2:36*)

And Jesus came and spake unto [His disciples], saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matt. 28:16,17)

...he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:15-23)

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 5:31)

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Dan. 7:13, 14)

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:36)

What does it mean, to call Jesus “Lord”? Although the disciples recognized His authority during His earthly ministry, and were willing to honor and even worship Him as Lord, the full implications of His lordship were only made clear at His ascension.

This term of nobility is peculiarly outmoded in today’s English, and especially in American use. We have no lords here, other than landlords, who receive no homage other than a monthly rent check. England retains the title, but I suspect that it carries far less weight than when it was in common use as a rank within medieval hierarchy.

The word “lord” is a translation of the Greek “kirios”, a title of respect such as “sir”, and can be used to denote a great range of authority and dignity. When it is associated with the ascended Jesus, raised from the dead and now reigning at the Father’s right hand, having “overcome the sharpness of death” as the *Te Deum* expresses it, it is truly a form of address of the greatest honor. *God hath made him both Lord and Christ* (from Acts 2:36) cried St. Peter to a gathered crowd on Pentecost, a mere matter of days following Christ’s departure from earth to heaven.

But, once again, what does it mean for the Christian to call Him Lord? This can be a very easy term to fling around in an almost flattering fashion. Think of Jesus’ own warning in the Sermon on the Mount:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many won-

derful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matt. 7:21-13)

It follows that to claim Him as Lord carries with it a price of such magnitude that few, if they really understood the implications, would dare consider paying it. I want to focus upon three aspects of that price.

First, if He is Lord, then He is Master, Owner, and Ruler. To defy Him is to invite ill consequences. *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...* (1 Sam. 15:23) were the prophet Samuel's stern words to King Saul, who had disobeyed divine direction. The Lord expects more of the mature believer than He does of the beginner: *For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more* (Luke 12:48). If a child remains a child well into adulthood, he become a tremendous liability to everyone. Whereas the Lord may have permitted much from me by way of digression, and willfulness, and impertinence — and believe me, those attitudes are resident within me— there comes a time for my sake, as well as His, that He will put up with it no more. Over and over again have I returned to the words of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews:

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. (12:5b-10)

Have you ever seen the displeased face of Christ? A lord deserves allegiance, fealty, loyalty, homage. If we have submitted to His lordship, we must labor continually to remain under His rule. For this duty we need the Spirit's continual enablement.

Secondly, to make Jesus Lord is to abdicate one's own right to that position. Each life has one throne of rulership, and there is no room for two to share it. This can be tremendously embarrassing and humiliating, whether or not we wish to admit it. As Christ assumes more and more control, we may fight to save for ourselves some last vestige of "private property", some ragged bit of unconquered territory that we desperately cling to as "Mine!", with a capital "M". On some level we may fear that yielding control to Him will cause us to go completely out of control. But imagine the absurd sight of a vehicle proceeding along with two people fighting to drive it. It stops. It starts. It lurches to and fro. It is a shame and a laughingstock. No, we must concede to His loving mastery as soon as possible, to our own good. There is no area of life in

which He does not excel us. And if we are refusing His claim to anything, we dare not call Him “Lord”, for ultimately it is either all, or nothing.

Thirdly, if He is Lord, then we as His subjects are responsible for His reputation. Although the Lord of whom we speak is all-wise, all-loving, all-knowing, He is yet beset by numerous enemies:

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. (Ps. 2:1-3)

The name “devil”, from *diabolos*, means “slanderer, accuser”. Satan seeks to defame the character of God by His attacks upon the Church. Our defeats are his victories. *The whole world lieth in wickedness...* (1 Jn. 5:19b), declared St. John. It is incredibly easy for Christ to be mistreated. We live in the midst of an amazing paradox: the world longs to know Him, but they are desperately afraid to draw near Him. They love Him, and hate Him. Knowing how confused and blinded men are when it comes to the Person of Christ, we dare not afford ourselves the luxury of doing our Lords great injustice through the slovenliness of our Christian lives. *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee* counseled King Solomon (Prov. 4:25). *Adorn the doctrine of God in all things* advised St. Paul: “Embellish the faith”, in other words, “by your behavior”.

We as citizens of the of the Kingdom of the ascended Lord Jesus must demonstrate to the world the character of that kingdom by the manner in which we inhabit it. Since we indeed dwell in the happiest of lands, our rectitude, peace, and harmony should reflect it. We are so generously supplied by Him who, at the Father’s right hand, has poured out upon us the Spirit of grace, granting us every spiritual gift, surrounded us with divine promises from His Word, and providing us every heavenly kindness we could require. Though He be Lord indeed — sovereign over all— to His people He is the source of all benevolence, forgiving our sins, leading us onward, and even calling us *friends* (John 15:15) and *joint-heirs* (Romans 8:17) of all He possesses.

Wherefore I give you to understand, wrote St. Paul to the Corinthians, *that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost* (1 Cor. 12:3). For the unbeliever, Jesus Christ is a mere historic figure who cannot possibly lay claims to a life, because He is dead. He might be a source of inspiration, a role-model, or a religious phenomenon, but to claim Him as *Lord* would be utterly irrational. For the believer, to call Him Lord is to proclaim to the world in the most solemn terms that one loves Him, owns Him, is unashamed of Him, and intends to lead a life marked by obedience to Him.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.