

“Jesus: Christ the Lord”

We are finishing three messages where we are looking at some of the prominent names and titles of Jesus. We’ve looked at “Son of God” and last week “Savior”. Today we turn to a familiar part of the Christmas story for two more words that describe Jesus. Do you remember what the angel said to the shepherds in announcing the birth of Jesus: “Be not afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people, for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). To you is born a Savior, who is **Christ the Lord**. Let’s consider these two words used to describe Jesus.

Jesus is the Christ. When we say Jesus Christ, many assume these are the first and last names of Jesus. He is “Mr. Christ.” Like He got mail addressed to “Mr. J. Christ”! I don’t think so! Christ is a title. It’s actually more accurate to say Jesus **the** Christ.

What does the title Christ mean? The Greek word “christos” is similar to a Hebrew word that means “Messiah”. Messiah is not a word that we use in ordinary conversation today, but it had a rich tradition and packed meaning for ancient Hebrews. It means “anointed one”. In the Old Testament, Hebrew **kings and priests** were *anointed with oil* as they began their time of leadership. Gradually, the term Messiah or Anointed One came to be applied to the *king of Israel*, and especially to a king who would come from the line of *King David*, Israel’s greatest king.

As Israel got bounced around and defeated by more powerful nations, the expectation grew that God would send an anointed king, a Messiah, who would bring in a golden era of peace and prosperity and justice (similar to what it was like when King David ruled). God Himself would rule the world when Messiah comes. The belief that Messiah would be a descendant of David was fueled by promise in 2 Samuel 7, where it says that a descendant of David would occupy the throne of Israel *forever*.

Two aspects of this burning hope for a Messiah or Christ should be noted. First, like David, Messiah would establish His rule with *military* and *political* force. And, second, this was largely a *nationalistic* hope. God would defeat Israel’s enemies and Israel would be top dog! Some Jews believed when Messiah came, the rest of the world (i.e. Gentiles) would be cut off and destroyed. Others felt that even the Gentiles would be blessed when Messiah ruled (although Israel would be at the center of things and benefit the most).

So when the writers of the New Testament proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, they are saying He is this anointed King from the line of David for whom the Hebrew people were longing. The New Testament writers make it clear that Jesus is *descended from David*. For instance, the first words of the New Testament are these: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*” (Matthew 1:1).

But here’s where things take a totally different turn: Jesus was not the kind of Christ or Messiah the Jews were wanting and expecting! He didn’t come as a military commander to strong arm people into submission. He did not come to establish a new world government with Israel at its head. His kingdom would be different!

This explains why Jesus didn't go around openly saying He was the Christ. In fact, He went out of His way to keep it hidden. At the time of Jesus, Palestine was occupied by Roman troops. Jesus didn't want people jumping on the bandwagon, grabbing swords and spears thinking He was going to lead a revolt against Rome. Rather than trying to change the world through brute force and coercion, Jesus chose to limit His power and be humble and vulnerable. He was born in a stable; He hung limp on a cross.

This blew everybody's mind! A Messiah who would suffer, be rejected and killed? *How are you ever going to overcome evil and oppression that way?*

Now you may be wondering, "What's all this have to do with me, and the real world of today? In this way: ***To say I am a believer in Jesus the Christ means I live by the values of a different world and a different kingdom.***

This world is all about power and control, me first, climbing to the top; Jesus' kingdom is all about serving others and putting others before yourself.

This world is all about receiving recognition and applause; Jesus' kingdom is all about being humble and giving the glory to God.

This world is all about getting in the last word, getting even; Jesus' kingdom is all about forgiving, turning the other cheek, blessing those who hate you and hurt you.

This world is all about money and material things; Jesus' kingdom is all about intangible values like faith, and hope, and love, the lasting things.

So. You're a follower of Jesus? Then you live by standards of different realm. This is the only way your ***school and work place*** will be happy and harmonious. This is the only way your ***marriage and family living*** will be joyful and satisfying. This is the only way our ***communities*** will be safe and wholesome places. This is the only way ***different races and ethnic groups*** will get along. This is the only way ***nations of the world*** will find lasting peace.

A hymn writer said it well:

"Lead on, O King eternal, till sin's fierce war shall cease,
And holiness shall whisper the sweet amen of peace.
For not with swords loud clashing, nor roll of stirring drums,
With deeds of love and mercy, the heavenly kingdom comes."

Jesus is the *Christ*, the *Messiah*, the anointed King of an eternal kingdom.

"To you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ ***the Lord***" (Luke 2:11).

Then too, Jesus is Lord.

We use this term often, don't we, to refer to Jesus. We say, "She loves *the Lord*..." or we pray, "*Lord*, we lift up this request..." What are we saying when we call Jesus "Lord"? In both the Old Testament and the New Testament sometimes a person was called "lord" simply to show respect to that person. It's similar to how we use the word "sir" today. Also, words translated "lord" could mean a "ruler" or "commander", or "one having authority." It was a title a slave would use to address his or her master.

But here's one of the most important things about the word "Lord": In the Old Testament, it was *one of the titles used for God!* So, when we call Jesus "Lord" we are saying Jesus is Ruler, One with authority, but even more: We are saying Jesus is God!

It was the conviction of the early Christian community that Jesus of Nazareth, and no one else, is Lord. Probably the earliest confession of faith at Christian baptisms was the simple formula: "Jesus is Lord". Simon Peter, in a sermon on the day of Pentecost, said, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). 1 Corinthians 8:6 says, "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but *one Lord*, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

Jesus wasn't just a learned teacher, a great prophet, a charismatic founder of a new world religion – He is Lord! He is God! There was one Oprah Winfrey show where the guest was her "spiritual mother". This lady did some reading, and referred to Jesus as He is received among all the world's religions. But see, Christians are not saying Jesus is *one religious figure among many religious figures*. We're claiming that He alone is Lord! He is God! (The irony in the Oprah Winfrey program was that as this lady was reading, the background music playing was, "Joy to the world, *the Lord* is come., let earth receive her *king*"). That's what the claim of Christianity is!

Scripture says Jesus is Lord of all creation. Matthew 28:18, Jesus' words just before He ascends to heaven, are: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Those who lived with Jesus saw Him exercise His Lordship by calming the stormy sea, casting out demons, healing the sick, even raising dead people, and by Himself being raised from the dead. He is Lord of this world and of all creation!

But sometimes isn't it hard to believe that Jesus is Supreme Commander in control of whole world? When terrorists blow themselves and others up. When children and young adults die prematurely of cancer. Or an accident claims the life of someone we dearly love. When so often, evil and evil people seem to triumph over the good. People of faith have always wrestled with these haunting enigmas of life. But faith in Jesus as "Lord" means we acknowledge Him to be (as one has said) "*the present though invisible ruler of the universe.*"

When Jesus returns, His Lordship will be openly evident. For now, it is mostly hidden. Only through eyes of faith do we see patches and pieces of life where His hidden sovereignty peeps through: someone is miraculously healed...enemies are reconciled to one another...nations lay

down their weapons and reach a peace accord. These are just a foretaste, a preview, a sampling of what life will be like when Jesus' hidden lordship becomes open and evident to all creation!

But also, to confess Jesus as "Lord", means that *we seek to make Him Lord of our lives*. If you've ever joined a church you probably answered the question: "Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?" If you said yes, you've said publicly, "I want Him to be in control of my life." Realistically, this is a *process – a lifelong process* – where we attempt to submit every aspect of our life to His authority and control.

Take a moment to think: What areas of my life are now under control of Christ? What part of my life do I find difficult to submit to Him? For each of us, it is different. Parts of *your life* that are under control of Christ may be areas of *my life* where He is not yet fully in charge, and vice versa. *Christian growth, and spiritual maturity*, means that more and more of our lives are under the control of the Lord Jesus! The words we speak...how we act at work or how we treat family members...how we spend our money...how we act at a party...our thought life...our driving habits (oooooh!)...what we read and what watch on TV....and so on.

Scripture boldly proclaims that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the anointed One from God who brings in a different kingdom and a different way of life. And, the New Testament with certainty testifies that this Jesus is Lord of all! Every one of us, confronted with the claims of Christ, has to decide whether we will acknowledge Jesus' authority and sovereignty over our public and private life.

But you know, sooner or later, everyone will confess Him as Lord! Check out what it says in Philippians 2:5-11: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Some day, *every* knee shall bow, and *every* tongue confess, that Jesus is Lord! It is ***so much better*** to begin to do that now!

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