

“Jesus is Lord”  
by  
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1. Introduction
  - a. Remember when you proclaimed, “Jesus is Lord” at your baptism?
  - b. We cheer whenever one more soul makes that good confession!
  - c. But what exactly does it mean to proclaim “Jesus is Lord”?
  - d. What did the early church mean when they said, “Jesus is Lord”?
2. Definition of “Lord”
  - a. “Lord” = “kyrios” (Greek)
    - i. Basic meaning = “Master”.
    - ii. “kyrios” was originally used for everything from a polite title like “Sir” to a title for God in the Old Testament (Septuagint) .
    - iii. But after Jesus’ resurrection, this word was used almost exclusively by the early church as a title for Jesus.
      1. It emphasized his identity as the Son of God
      2. and his role as master of the universe, the church, and our individual lives.
3. Church historians tell us that “Jesus is Lord” was the very first Christian creed (summary of what we believe).
  - a. Professor of Theology, Dr. Terry A. Chrisope: “Such strong indications as these [Romans 10:9 and 1 Corinthians 12:3] leave little room to doubt that the confession “Jesus is Lord” occupied a prominent place as the central Christian confession of the New Testament era: it was that affirmation to which every Christian gave assent and which distinguished the Christian community from the unbelieving world.” (“Jesus is Lord”, by Terry Chrisope)
  - b. To proclaim “Jesus is Lord” at your baptism became known by the early church as “your good confession”.
    - i. 1 Timothy 6:12-13 = “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession...”
      1. Apparently, this “good confession” originated with Jesus himself.
        - a. Matthew 27:11 = “Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”  
“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.”

- i. Commentator David Guzik on this passage = "So when Timothy is told to live up to the good confession he made (1 Timothy 6:12), he is simply being told to do what Jesus did."
- 4. A key passage: Romans 10:9-13 = "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. 10For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
  - a. A controversial verse for our church today.
  - b. But a key verse to understanding what it means to confess Jesus as Lord.
  - c. So, let's:
    - i. First, seek to understand the original meaning of the verse in context.
    - ii. Then, seek to clear up the doctrinal misconceptions about it today.
    - iii. And then look more carefully about what it teaches us concerning making Jesus Lord of our lives.
  - d. The original meaning
    - i. Context
      - 1. Paul wrote Romans ~57A.D.
      - 2. The central "issues" of the church during that time are recorded for us in Acts 15 (the council at Jerusalem), and are summarized for us in this excerpt from "New Testament Survey", by Merrill C. Tenney:
        - a. "What was the place of the law in the plan of God? Was obedience to the law in addition to faith in Christ necessary for salvation? If the Gentiles did not need to keep the law, just what relation existed between salvation by faith and ethical behavior? What connection is there between faith and works? These and similar problems were reflected in many of the books of the New Testament that were written in the decade between A.D. 50 and 60."
    - ii. Let's read our passage in context with this background discussion in mind:

1. Romans 10:5-9 = "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them."
  - a. Paul is quoting Moses in Leviticus 18:5 here which emphasizes "...obedience and performance. The one who complies will live." (NIV Bible Commentary)
2. Now Paul is going to contrast righteousness by *works* of the law (vs. 5) to righteousness by *faith* in Jesus. (vs. 6-9).
3. "6But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down) 7"or 'Who will descend into the deep?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."
  - a. Paul is showing how Christ has done all the *work* already, and our part is simply to respond!
  - b. NIV Bible Commentary: "There is no need to try to ascend to heaven to gain spiritual knowledge or acceptance, for Christ has come from heaven to proclaim and effect salvation for the world."
4. Paul is combating the idea that we need to "*work*" for our salvation. *God in Christ has done the hard work*; we simply need to respond with biblical faith.
5. "8But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9That 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."
  - a. Commentator David Guzik: "Instead of having to go to great lengths to *achieve* righteousness by the law, we can... *receive* righteousness by faith..."
  - b. That was the fundamental difference between righteousness by the *Law* vs. righteousness by *faith*:
  - c. One we "*achieve*" (through obeying the Law);
  - d. The other we "*receive*" (by Faith in Jesus).
  - e. Of course, it was impossible to ever truly "*achieve*" righteousness by the Law anyway.
  - f. The Law simply made the Israelites conscious of their need for a Savior (Romans 3:19-20).
  - g. Paul says: the Savior has already come and done all the work of salvation! All we need to do is respond to him in faith!

- iii. Summary: Paul is joining the most pertinent discussion of his day and arguing against requiring the Gentiles to obey the Mosaic Law in order to be saved. "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (Romans 10:4)."
  - e. Doctrinal misconception today
    - i. To jump into this first century discussion and read it like a modern day newspaper, saying that Paul means *all we need to do is believe and say a phrase with our mouth in order to be saved, so therefore baptism is unnecessary for salvation since it is "a work"*, is absurd.
    - ii. Baptism is not a "work".
      - 1. As we've seen in context, Paul is talking about *the works of the Mosaic Law*.
      - 2. Q: Was baptism ever commanded in the Old Testament Law?
      - 3. A: No.
      - 4. Q: Is baptism really even "work" at all?
      - 5. A: Repentance is more "work" than baptism. Yet, no one teaches that repentance is a "work".
    - iii. Here's the confusion:
      - 1. People confuse:
        - a. *Works of the Law*
        - b. *With Deeds of Faith*
      - 2. Repentance and baptism are not "*works*" required by the Old Testament Law.
      - 3. They are "*deeds*" of faith required by the New Testament for salvation.
    - iv. Acts 26:20 = "First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their *deeds*."
    - v. James 2:14-17, 20-24, 26 = "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."  
 "20You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22You see that his faith and his actions were working

together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.  
 23And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24You see that a person is justified by what he *does* and *not by faith alone*."

"As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without *deeds* is dead."

- vi. This same Paul wrote frequently about the necessity of baptism for salvation in:
  1. Romans 6:1-4 = "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."
  2. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 = "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body..."
  3. Galatians 3:26-27 = "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."
  4. Colossians 2:12 = "In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."
    - a. *God does the "work" in baptism – not us!*
- vii. Other New Testament writers also wrote about the necessity of baptism for salvation:
  1. Mark 16:16 = "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."
  2. John 3:5 = "Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."
  3. 1 Peter 3:21 = "and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also..."
  4. Acts 2:38, 8:12-13; 8:38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 22:16
- viii. Three additional reasons it would be incorrect to use Romans 10:9-10 to exclude repentance and baptism from the salvation process:

1. One: Confessing Jesus as Lord (vs. 9) means making Jesus Lord (Master) of your life, which involves repentance:
  - a. 2 Timothy 2:19 = "Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."
2. Two: Calling on the name of the Lord (vs. 13) goes along with baptism.
  - a. Acts 22:16 = "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."
    - i. "The confession of [Jesus'] Lordship--probably at baptism--made up the earliest Christian confession." (A.M. Hunter, "New Testament Theology", p. 79.)
      1. So, we "confess that Jesus is Lord" in conjunction with our baptism, not instead of it.
3. Three: The very first and most complete gospel sermon in Acts 2 combines all of the essential steps to salvation:
  - a. Faith
  - b. Confession
  - c. Repentance
  - d. Baptism
  - a. Acts 2:36-38 = "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus [faith], whom you crucified, both Lord [confession] and Christ."
 

37When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38Peter replied, "Repent [repentance] and be baptized [baptism], every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit [salvation]."
4. Main Point: Confessing *Jesus as Lord* is only one important part of the salvation process, *not* "all you need to do to be saved", as some people claim today. Our faith in Jesus must be seen in "deeds of faith", such as repentance and baptism in order to be saved.

- f. Transition: now that we've hopefully cleared up the doctrinal confusion about this verse, we can look more carefully at what this passage teaches us about our subject: the Lordship of Jesus.
- g. Romans 10:9 = "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."
- h. Q: What does the word, "confess" mean here?
- i. A: Dr. Douglas Jacoby on this word "confess" ("homologia" in the Greek) = "Homologia [confess] means more than an intellectual position, though this is also implied. It refers to a stand taken, a conviction, a lifestyle which will follow the fundamental conviction. There is also a public aspect. We are not secret Christians. Yes, discretion may require us at times to be prudent, but we are very different from other members of society, and this cannot be hidden. It insists on being made known!"
- j. To "confess" that Jesus is Lord is to take a stand against the world! It is to proclaim your deep conviction that Jesus is the one and only master of the universe, the church and your life!
- k. This is so important in our "Postmodern" world!
- l. What is Postmodernism? (taken from "Beyond Belief to Convictions", by Josh McDowell, via Marcus B. Overstreet)
  - i. Truth does not exist in any objective sense.
  - ii. Truth is created by a specific culture or community and is "true" only in and for that culture.
  - iii. Any system or statement that claims to be absolute truth is only a power play to dominate other cultures and people.
  - iv. Implications:
    - 1. Everyone is wrong who claims absolute truth.
      - a. (Note: But this is an absolute statement! Contradictory.)
    - 2. It doesn't matter what you believe since all roads lead to heaven.
    - 3. You can believe in Jesus, but don't say he's "the only way to God".
      - a. 94% of all American teenagers do NOT believe in John 14:6 as absolute truth.
        - i. John 14:6 = "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- v. Dr. Ralph Blair = "These first Christians were surrounded with a world every bit as multicultural and pluralist as our own. It was a world of many languages and dialects, many gods and goddesses, many customs and conventions. Latin and Greek

were read and spoken by the educated throughout the Empire - and some elementary Greek-of-the-streets was known for managing in the marketplace. But if you got much beyond the boundaries of your own home district, it would be difficult to converse with the natives and you'd run into the ethnocentrism of tribal traditions that could seem quite strange and even scary. Yet what they all had in common under the Pax Romana - the Peace of Rome - was the recognition that, no matter how many lords were allowed, Caesar was Lord. Among the Christians, though, it wasn't Caesar who was sovereign. No. Among the Christians, it was the Lord Jesus Christ who was sovereign. And they were willing to suffer and die rather than save their skin by substituting Caesar for Christ. ...If Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not, every Caesar-substitute is dethroned. It's the most profound statement that can be said about anyone. And it's a statement, then, about everything. No one and nothing can be a realistic rival."

- vi. To proclaim that Jesus is Lord is to proclaim that he is your only Lord!
  - vii. 1 Corinthians 8:6 = "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."
    - 1. Are you willing to publicly proclaim your exclusive faith in the one Lord, Jesus Christ?
      - a. Our first century brothers and sisters risked their lives; are we willing to risk our reputation?
5. Let's ask another question of this passage:
- a. Q: What's the significance of the highlighted phrase below?
    - i. "Romans 10:9 = "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.
  - b. The resurrection proved once and for all that Jesus was the Son of God (John 2:19; 1 Corinthians 15).
    - i. To say, "Jesus is Lord" is to proclaim our steadfast conviction that Jesus is divine, by virtue of his resurrection from the dead.
      - 1. Romans 1:1-4 = "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to

be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead:  
Jesus Christ our Lord.”

2. Romans 14:9 = “For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.”
6. Putting it all together: to proclaim that “Jesus is Lord” is to proclaim at least these four things:
7. One: I believe that Jesus is God!
  - a. Professor of Theology, Dr. Terry A. Chrisope: “New Testament scholars commonly recognize that the ascription of Lordship to Jesus implies acknowledgment of his essential deity.”
  - b. Paul stated it clearly in Colossians 2:9 = “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...”
8. Two: I acknowledge Jesus as the Supreme Authority over all creation
  - a. “The confession [Jesus is Lord] involves the acknowledgment of the universal sovereignty of Jesus.” (“New Testament Theology”, by Donald Guthrie)
  - b. Acts 10:36 = “You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.”
  - c. Matthew 28:18 = “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”
9. Three: I willingly submit to Jesus as the Supreme Authority in my life
  - a. John 20:26-28 = “A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” 28Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”
  - b. Luke 6:46 = “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”
    - i. “3 Thrones analogy”
      1. Q: Where is Jesus in your life?
      2. (Take a piece of paper and draw a circle with a chair in the middle of it; Then place the letter “J”[for Jesus] somewhere in relation.)
        - a. Is Jesus outside of your life? (“J” outside of circle)
        - b. Is Jesus in your life? (“J” inside of circle)
        - c. Is Jesus on the throne of your life? (“J” on the chair in the circle)
10. Four: I belong to the Lord and am a part of his church.
  - a. First part: I belong to the Lord

- i. Romans 14:8 = "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 7:39 = "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord."
  - b. Second part: I am a part of Jesus' church.
    - i. "Jesus is Lord" was a corporate confession of the entire church.
      - 1. 72 times the New Testament uses the phrase "Our Lord".
      - 2. 1 Corinthians 1:2 = "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours..."
        - a. Here Paul virtually defines disciples as:
          - i. "those sanctified in Christ Jesus"
          - ii. "called to be holy"
          - iii. "who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours"
      - 3. Main Point = to make Jesus Lord is to become a part of Jesus' church (the "ecclesia" – "assembly" – made up of those who have made Jesus Lord of their lives, i.e. become disciples of Jesus Christ.)
        - a. According to one Bible scholar: "They [the first century disciples] grasped that the oneness of the Church was based on this confession, and they were persuaded that God had ordained that "every tongue confess that Jesus the Christ is Lord". In brief, they saw Jesus the Christ as lord of their lives, as Lord of the Church, as Lord of All. To see and embody this was to be the Church of God." (James K. Mathews)
11. Summary: When you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord," you are saying:
- a. I believe that Jesus is God.
  - b. I acknowledge Jesus as the supreme authority over all creation.
  - c. I submit to Jesus as the supreme authority in my life.
  - d. I belong to the Lord and am a part of his church.
12. Challenge:
- a. Let's personally and corporately recommit to the Lordship of Jesus.
  - b. Let's boldly *confess our faith in Jesus* to the world!
13. Sources
- a. Article: "Jesus is Lord", by Dr. Terry Chrisope
  - b. Article: "Jesus is Lord! So What?", by Dr. Ralph Blair

- c. Article: "Jesus is Lord! Christianity's Life-Changing Confession of Faith", by FR. John M. Reeves
- d. Article: "Jesus is Lord", by James K. Mathews
- e. Article: "Jesus is Lord", by Arthur L. Farstad
- f. Article: "Beyond Belief to Convictions", by Josh McDowell
- g. Sermon on Romans 10:9, by Rev. Adrian Dieleman
- h. Website: douglasjacoby.com, "Linguistic Insight: Homologeo"
- i. Website: letusreason.org, "Christ is Lord of all or He is not Lord At All"
- j. Website: churchesofchrist.net, "Let the Bible Speak about Confession"
- k. Baker's Evangelical Dictionary
- l. Easton's Bible Dictionary
- m. Fausset's Bible Dictionary
- n. Holman Bible Dictionary
- o. Bible Commentary: David Guzik