

# The Gospel – The Message of Jesus Christ

## The Lordship of Christ – Jesus is Lord

### The Lordship Controversy

In discussing the Gospel it is important to recognize the recent controversy that has taken place in Evangelical Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Certain so called “*Evangelicals*” sought to uphold the form of the Gospel which emphasizes faith in Christ apart from works, but in so doing redefined the role of works in salvation to a degree which was very unhealthy and led to a corrupted form of the Gospel. This “*watered down*” version of the Gospel has come to be known as “*easy-believism*.” It emphasizes the fact that all one must do to be saved is to “*believe*” upon the person and work of Christ, acknowledging the facts about Him and His Gospel. Although this is a true part of the Gospel, when it is overemphasized to the exclusion of the teaching that true “*saving faith*” is a faith that repents of sin and pursues love for Christ and God by obedience to their commandments, it corrupts the Gospel and turns it into a kind of “*fire insurance*” for people wanting the benefits of eternal life, but who are unwilling to turn from sin and obey God’s commandments. This is a serious error, one that has no doubt led thousands of people astray from the true Gospel and saving faith. The teaching of Jesus and the Apostles is crystal clear on this topic. They taught that when one truly believes upon Christ, they have done this by the power and work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and that the fruit of the Spirit which flows from this true belief produces a life of repentance, faith and ongoing pattern of obedience to Christ for the rest of one’s life. They affirmed that people were deceived if they thought they knew Christ but did not obey Him.

**Matt 7:21** - 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only he who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. NASB

**Titus 1:15-16** - 15 To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. 16 **They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient,** and worthless for any good deed. NASB

**James 1:22** - 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and **not merely hearers who delude themselves.** NASB

This controversy was really well defended by John MacArthur in his book “**The Gospel According to Jesus.**” In this book He focuses on the Gospel which Jesus proclaimed and evaluated this doctrine in light of clear biblical texts. He was primarily refuting certain Evangelical teachers who were teaching this “*watered down*” version of the Gospel at Dallas Theological Seminary. The primary teachers he was refuting were Lewis Sperry Chafer, Zane Hodges, and Charles Ryrie (although there were others). These teachers were responsible for training many thousands of Evangelical pastors and church leaders in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In his book, MacArthur documents these teachings and refutes them with clear biblical teaching. This corrupting of the true biblical Gospel has indeed led to a serious state of affairs in the modern Evangelical Church and needs to be corrected for each successive generation. The true biblical Gospel needs to be proclaimed and upheld in each generation so that we do not lose sight of the fundamental message of Christianity, that is, the person and work of Jesus Christ and how one is saved by repentance and faith in Him. I mention this controversy in order to bring into focus a very important matter in defining the Gospel. This has come to be known as the “**Lordship of Christ**” and explains the relation of the believer to Jesus as their Master and King. Obedience to Christ is a Gospel mandate and a major theme in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles.

**Luke 6:46** - 46 "And **why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?** NASB

**John 3:36** - 6 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but **he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**" NASB

## Jesus is Lord

As the Scriptures speak of Jesus Christ there is no mistaking the clear portrait of His person. He is Lord! Without apology He is lifted up and proclaimed as the Lord of all. (Matt 28:18, Acts 10:36)

**Romans 14:9** - 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that **He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.** NASB

The word “*Lord*” implies His Deity and authority. Being God very God, Jesus is the supreme authority. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is described as the Creator of everything, the very God of Providence and sustainer of all that is, the reigning King of History, as well as the Judge of the living and the dead. If that were not enough to convince us of His authority to rule us, we are blind at the very least.

**Colossians 1:16-17** - 16 For **by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible,** whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — **all things have been created by Him and for Him.** 17 And He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together.** NASB

**Ephesians 1:19-22** - 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things** to the church, NASB

**Acts 10:42** - 42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that **this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.** NASB

**2 Timothy 4:1-2** - 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, **who is to judge the living and the dead,** and by His appearing and His kingdom: NASB

The fact of the matter is, Jesus is Lord whether one recognizes it or not. Just because one has not submitted their life to Him, does not mean that one is not accountable to Him. For He will come to judge every person for the deeds done in the body, as the Gospel declares. And He alone possesses the authority to determine one’s eternal destiny. Ultimately every person that has ever lived will bow their knee before Jesus Christ and acknowledge Him as the Lord.

**Philippians 2:9-11** - 9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,** of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and **that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,** to the glory of God the Father. NASB

Jesus is not only Lord, but His Gospel calls us to willing submission to His Lordship. More than this, the Bible clearly teaches that obedience to Christ cannot be separated from “**saving faith**” and that love for God and repentance from sin are equated with “**saving faith.**” Jesus is frequently heard *asserting* His right to rule us and calling people to obedience to Himself.

**John 13:13-17** - 13 **"You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.** 14 "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 16 "Truly, truly, I say to you, **a slave is not greater than his master;** neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. 17 "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. NASB

**Matthew 10:24** - 24 **"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.** 25 "It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. NASB

**2 Timothy 2:19-21** - 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, **"Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."** 20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. 21 **Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.** NASB

**James 2:14** - 14 What use is it, my brethren, **if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?** NASB

When Jesus asserts Himself as Lord, He makes it clear that those who reject His claim on them, are destined to perish because of it!

**Matthew 7:21-25** - 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. NASB

**Matthew 24:48-51** - 48 "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' 49 and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, 51 and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth. NASB

And so Jesus is Lord and in His Gospel He calls us to willing submission and obedience to His commands. The New Testament speaks of this calling in many ways in order to express the nature of a right response to Him. This response is a major theme in the Gospel because people's eternal destiny is at stake in it, as it shows the true nature of our faith, whether or not we have been truly called and chosen of God for salvation.

### **The summons to repentance is a call to obedience**

Jesus is often heard calling people to repentance from sin and warning them of the consequences of sin. At the same time His message called people to "believe" or to trust in or rely upon Him in order to be right with God.

**Mark 1:14-15** -14 And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." NASB

**Luke 13:3-5** - 3 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." NASB

**John 5:14-15** - 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you." NASB

In this repentance He was calling people to turn away from sin and to obedience to God's commandments. This is what repentance is. It is to stop sinning and start doing what is right. Repentance is not ONLY feeling sorry for sin, but doing what is right from the heart with *positive* and *active* steps as Paul taught us, to "perform deeds appropriate to repentance." Repentance is proven real when the deeds show it to be real.

**Acts 26:20-21** - 20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. NASB

Repentance is not a one time act but life long obedience. The New Testament explains this nature of repentance over and over again.

**Luke 3:8-14** - 8 "Therefore bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance. .... 10 And the multitudes were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "Let the man who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise." 12

And some tax-gatherers also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 And some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages." NASB

**Ephesians 4:20-24** - 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. NASB

**Titus 2:11-14** - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14

who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, **zealous for good deeds.** NASB

This lifelong obedience or “**perseverance**” is spoken of by Jesus and the Apostles as a mark of those who will be saved. Perseverance cannot be separated from true repentance because it proves repentance to be real.

**Matthew 24:12-14** - 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But **the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.** NASB

**Hebrews 3:13-15** - 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For **we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;** 15 while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." NASB

## The Nature of Saving Faith

The nature of true “**saving faith**” is a major theme in the teaching of both Jesus and the Apostles. They are frequently laboring to be sure that we are aware of the nature of “**saving faith**” so that we can be sure we possess it and not some *mere profession* or apostate form of faith. This can be seen in many different allegories and *forms* of expression in the New Testament. Here are a few clear examples of these forms of the nature of true faith:

- Jesus calls us to a Master and slave relationship of lifelong perseverance and service
- Jesus calls us to be “**born again**” and to be recreated by God through faith
- Jesus calls us to bear fruit and produce the marks of true faith
- Jesus calls us to humility, brokenness and to deny self reliance
- Jesus calls us to lose our life to follow Him
- Jesus calls us to love Him supremely above all other things and worship Him

When Jesus and the Apostles teach us about the faith, they frequently use the allegory of a **master and slave**. Jesus tells us parables of how true faith is demonstrated by the faithful obedience of a good slave. Paul tells us that we are slaves of righteousness and a

**Matthew 20:26-28** - 26 "It is not so among you, **but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;** 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. NASB

**Luke 12:37, 42-43** - 37 "**Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes;** truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them..... 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? 43 "Blessed is that **slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.** NASB

**Romans 6:17-18** - 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, **you became obedient from the heart** to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and **having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.** NASB

They teach that true “**saving faith**” is brought about by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and call us to be “**born again.**”

**John 3:3** - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" NASB

**2 Corinthians 5:17** - 17 Therefore **if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature;** the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. NASB

This regeneration is a fundamental change in the nature of man and is a work that only God can do. Because salvation is the work of God in regeneration, and the believer has been given a new nature and is indwelt with the Holy Spirit, the believer therefore desires to please God and to keep His commandments. It is the chief goal of one who worships and esteems God to live a life which imitates God and conforms to His character. This is reverberated throughout the Scripture with exhortations and commands which continually call us to become like Christ in our character and behavior.