

Jesus the Christ is Lord! Philippians 2:5-11, Acts 4:12

It was late in his ministry, Jesus had been training his disciples for some three-years. Wondering what they had come to believe about his person,

*he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.**"* And



Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock [on this confession of faith] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:13-18).

It took the disciples a while to fix this idea in their minds and to realize all the implications of declaring Jesus as the Messiah and God's son. even the last evening of his life, some of them were still asking where he was headed and if he would not show them God the Father.

Jesus said to them, "Have I been with you all this time, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ... Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. (John 14:9-11).

But when Jesus next presented himself to them once again fully alive after they had all witnessed his crucifixion. When he showed them the wounds in his hands and sat down once again with them to eat.



When he encouraged Thomas, "*Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.*" They no longer doubted. In reply, Thomas answered him, "**My Lord and my God!**" (John 20:27-28).

It's a shame that due to this one recorded event, Thomas would be branded throughout Church history as "Doubting Thomas," because with that confession, he became the first one – at least according to the gospel accounts – to publicly declare that **Jesus the Christ was also his Lord**; not in the sense of just being the disciples' master but in the final realization that, as God, this made Jesus, **Lord of all**;- "*very God of very God*" as we declare him to be in the Nicene creed.

It is his disciple's recognition of all the implications within this Christian confession that "**Jesus the Christ is Lord**," which made it the very first creed of the Church. **If Jesus Christ is Lord, then he is THE lord not "a Lord;"** there is no one else in heaven or on earth who can wear this title; which Peter boldly pointed out to a very hostile gathering of Jewish priests when he declared to them that

***there is salvation in no one else,
for there is no other name under heaven
given among mortals by which we must be saved."***
(Acts 4:12).



Thus, to know and understand the meaning behind this declaration, that **Jesus the Christ is Lord**, is still of vital importance to all who call themselves "Christian" to this day!

Why? Because aside from cults, like the Jehovah's Witnesses who reject Jesus as the personification of God, there is now also a large and growing minority (perhaps now even a majority) within our own and many other mainline denominations who no longer believe Jesus' claim to being THE LORD (the ONLY Lord). As various groups within the Christian church have grown more theologically liberal through the years - they like the term "progressive" - many who still call themselves "Christian," now reject Jesus' exclusive claims to being the only way back to reconciliation with God. Rather they believe that all religions can be roads back to God; that we are all - Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, etc. - all worshipping the same loving God, we just do so in different ways. And if this is the case, then why offend someone of another religion by trying to convert them to the Christian faith - since all roads eventually lead to heaven.

The Term for this progressive theological conviction is called **INCLUSIVISM**, but its not new; it's even older than the polytheistic religionists of Athens, Greece, who in their shrine filled city still built an alter "to the unknown God," lest they offend that forgotten deity by lack of worship. So it is not a new idea, but definitely a growing opinion within the modern Christian Church as it moves away from strictly Biblical teachings.

Now our own progressive theologians don't say this very loudly, knowing that officially the PCUSA still holds to the EXCLUSIVE claims of Christianity. But you see this inclusive idea being slyly inserted in a lot of denominational publications these days. Take for instance a proclamation coming out of this Summer's 223rd General Assembly, titled "For Such A Time as This," It opens with the assertion: *As confessing Christians, we trust in God. Whom we know through Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray as others pray in other names* Did you notice the inclusion? That others are praying to the same God, just *in other names*.

If you don't see a problem with this assertion, it is because you do not recognize how far away saying such has gotten from that which both Jesus and the Apostles have said about himself. Our Book of Order still opens with these very Biblically based assertions:

The good news of the Gospel is that the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—creates, redeems, sustains, rules, and transforms all things and all people. ... By the power of the Spirit, this one living God is incarnate in Jesus Christ, who came to live in the world, die for the world, and be raised again to new life. ... In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. (PCUSA Book of Order: F-1.01 GOD'S MISSION.[I added emphasis])

So the PCUSA Book of Order, agrees with the Bible that Christianity is an EXCLUSIVE faith. It is only through faith placed in Jesus Christ that anyone anywhere can be saved. As Paul would write to the Romans.

If you confess with your lips that **Jesus is Lord** and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ... Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:9-13

Do you see the declaration? "**Jesus is Lord.**" This is an exclusive declaration of an exclusive faith. If Jesus Christ is Lord, then no one else is.

But just because Christianity is narrow minded in this way, that does not mean it is narrow hearted: this exclusive faith is to be freely and lovingly offered to everyone. Everyone is invited. Christianity makes no distinctions between caste, class, color, language, sex, sinner or saint; all are invited to come to God through Christ. All are only saved by grace through faith in Jesus the Christ. Our Bible closes with these words "

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."
And let everyone who hears say, "Come."
let everyone who is thirsty come.
Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. Revelation 22:17

And this is of course why, as Christians, Jesus ordered us to go out into the world to share this good news; *for how can they believe in one of whom they have never heard? (Romans 10:14).*

So let's take a moment to break open this declaration to see why it is so powerful and so exclusive.

Of course we know that the name "**Jesus**" identifies a particular person who lived in a particular place and time – Roman occupied Galilee in the first century. This Jesus claimed to be God-in-the-flesh backing up those claims by giving sight to the blind, healing the sick, raising the dead, walking on water, feeding thousands from a sack lunch, and himself coming back to life after death.

This same Jesus intentionally surrounded himself with a group of people who observed his life, death, and then return to life, who he then sent out into the world as "witnesses" to share the good news that everyone who calls upon him will be saved. And they did. You know that Peter and Paul went to Roman Europe, but also Peter's brother Andrew went to Greece, Mark founded churches in Egypt, Matthew was martyred in Ethiopia, Doubting Thomas planted Churches in India and is now their patron saint. Every single Apostle was accredited by the early church as having gone to the ends of the earth – as they knew it – carrying this good news with them.

So while "Jesus" names a specific person. The interchangeable title of "**Messiah**" (Hebrew) or "**Christ**" (Greek) literally means "**the Anointed One**" this is the title first given by the Hebrews and later by Christians, to that particular person whom God had promised throughout the entirety of their Hebrew Bible would one day be the savior of all mankind

- Eve's seed to crush the serpent
- Abraham's descendant to bless the nations
- Moses' future prophet to lead the people
- David's heir who would rule forever
- Isaiah's "arm of the Lord" to take away our sin
- Daniel's "son of man" to rule the world
- Zechariah's "Lord, king over all the earth"

- He would be the seed of Eve, who crushes the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).
- He would be Abraham's descendant through whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).
- He would be Moses' promised future prophet to lead Israel (Deuteronomy 18:15).
- He would be David's heir who would reign forever (2 Samuel 7:11-13)
- He would be Isaiah's "arm of the Lord," and "suffering servant" who would carry our sins away (Isaiah 53).

- He would be Daniel's "Son of Man" who would rule the world (Daniel 7:13-14).
- HE would be Zechariah's "Lord" who would be "king over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9)

All these specific promises from God are wrapped up that single person wearing the title "Messiah" or "Christ." So you can see why as Jesus was walking around everyone kept asking "are you the messiah." Which by necessity, he could not admit to until the last, for their expectations of the messiah as their immediate political liberator from Rome were far different from his current purpose as the Lamb of God taking away our sins.



Jesus Christ God's son our Savior, as another ancient creed names him is the one person in all of time, in all of the world, who can claim to have done and still be doing all that the title "Messiah" has promised us. So when you say "I believe in Jesus Christ" this is what you are saying that you believe about him.

And finally we come to **lord**. In its generic sense we can use it to mean anyone who has authority over us; such as "the lord of the manner," or "*who made you lord over me?*". But when Thomas declared "*my Lord and my God,*" and when Paul wrote that whoever confesses "*Jesus is Lord*" will be saved, they meant it in the universal sense; that Jesus and the God of the universe were one and the same. There is no other means offered by God by which anyone can be saved.

As C.S. Lewis once famously remarked.

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about [Jesus]: "*I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.*" That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Nor does Jesus intend to share his name or his work with any others who may claim to be a god. Jesus was not an Inclusivist. As Paul would write to one church who was

struggling with issues of inclusivism. *"Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth ...*

yet for us **there is one God, the Father,**
from whom are all things and for whom we exist,
and **one Lord, Jesus Christ,** through whom are all things
and through whom we exist.

1 Corinthians 8:5-6

There is only one God the Father, one Lord Jesus, and one way to be saved; this is a completely exclusive statement leaving no room for the inclusion of other religions. And why the Christian faith must be so warm hearted but theologically exclusive is explained in that ancient Christian hymn which Paul included in his letter to the Philippians (2:5-11). Paul Wrote ...

live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ ...
standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind
for the faith of the gospel Philippians 1:27

Thus Paul urged and also urges us to *"have the mind of Christ"* to think of our life the way Christ thought of his; as a servant on a mission to save the world.

For the sake of our salvation, Christ who was God, emptied himself of his Godly status, taking the form of a servant to live and then die in order to purchase us back to God. And because he was faithful to his task, God the Father raised him back to life, seated him in heaven and gave him a name that is above all names: *"King of kings and Lord of lords"* (Revelation 19:16). Jesus gave his life to save us. We are to give our lives to sharing this message of his salvation offered freely to all This is how the hymn concludes:

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.

Philippians 2:10-11

So now you know the theological weight and exclusiveness of the very first Christian creed: **Jesus the Christ is Lord.** To call yourself "Christian" implies that you are in

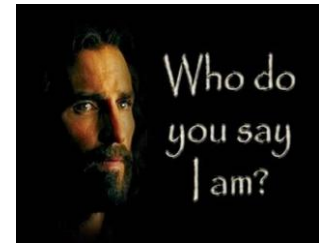
agreement with this creed and that you understand your responsibility to share this belief, this Good News of God's offered salvation to the world.

To declare **Jesus the Christ is Lord** leaves no room for inclusive theology.

To declare **Jesus the Christ is Lord** also means you understand your purpose in God's Kingdom to be sharing this message with all people, to be baptizing, discipling, and teaching all nations all that which Jesus Christ taught us.

Your take home for today is very simple.

You now know what the Bible clearly says about "Jesus the Christ is Lord," but Who do you say he is?



How then should you now live?

Your answer should and will direct both the rest of your life and your life to come.

Let's pray about this.

Small Group Study for Sunday, September 2nd

Sermon: Majoring on the Majors: "Jesus the Christ is Lord!"

1. The early Christians declared "***Jesus the Christ is Lord***" as the very essence of their faith and boldly proclaimed that there was salvation in no one else (Romans 10: 9-12, Acts 4:12). How can these Biblical claims be reconciled with modern "progressive" Christian ideas of **Inclusivism**: that all faiths can lead a person back to God.
2. What do you think that Peter understood about Jesus when he declared, "*you are the messiah, the son of the Living God.*" (Matthew 16:13-18)
Additionally: It is interesting to note that the Roman Catholic Church believes Jesus was referring to Peter as a person when he said "*on this rock, I will build my church.*" But the account of Peter's life in the gospels and Acts never showed Peter to be much of a "rock" for Christ. So what "rock" might Jesus have been referring to?
3. What was Thomas declaring when he said, "my Lord and my God." (John 20:28)
4. The Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament) loaded many prophetic titles, many hopes on to the one who they began to call the "Messiah" (The "Anointed One"). Why don't you explore some of these ideas to see who if anyone other than Jesus could fulfill any of these prophecies.
 - a. He would be the seed of Eve, who crushes the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).
 - b. He would be Abraham's descendant through whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).
 - c. He would be Moses' promised future prophet to lead Israel (Deuteronomy 18:15).
 - d. He would be David's heir who would reign forever (2 Samuel 7:11-13)
 - e. He would be Isaiah's "arm of the Lord," and "suffering servant" who would carry our sins away (Isaiah 53).
 - f. He would be Daniel's "Son of Man" who would rule the world (Daniel 7:13-14).
 - g. HE would be Zechariah's "*Lord*" who would be "*king over all the earth*" (Zechariah 14:9)
5. Finally in view of both Jesus' and the Bible's exclusive claim that "***there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved***" (John 14:6, Acts 4:12), How and with whom should you as a professing Christian be sharing this Good News?