

## THE LORD JESUS CHRIST—PART ONE

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The apostle Paul wrote, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (I Cor. 8:6). In one grand thought, Paul declares the equality of the Father and the Son. Both were instrumental in bringing about the physical creation (*of whom are all things and by whom are all things*). Both were instrumental in bringing about the spiritual creation—the church (and *we in him, and we by him*)—through the work of redemption. This is a truly remarkable passage of Scripture. The focus of this study will be the phrase, “Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul uses the phrase, “Lord Jesus Christ” sixty-seven times in his epistles. The only exceptions are II Timothy where the alternate title, “Christ Jesus our Lord” is found and the book of Hebrews where the phrase is totally missing. He uses it as a title for Jesus. In doing so, he elevates the status of Jesus and places Him in a position that is supra-human and supra-angelic. With this phrase, Paul expresses the absolute deity of Jesus Christ!

Let’s examine each part of this title. The word *Lord* comes from the Greek word *kyrios* which is predominantly used by Paul to refer to Jesus. Hurtado remarks, “If (simply to avoid becoming entangled in another issue) we exclude the Pauline writings widely regarded as pseudepigraphical, there are a little more than 200 occurrences of *kyrios* to reckon with (and the following observations would not be altered if the excluded letters were included). In the overwhelming majority of these occurrences (about 180) Paul uses *kyrios* as an appellation for Christ...” (Larry Hurtado, article on Lord, in *the Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 563). Paul uses the Greek word *kyrios* three hundred and six times (including references in Hebrews) out of a total of seven hundred forty-nine occurrences in the New Testament (J. B. Smith, *Greek-*

*English Concordance*, 211). The certain passages where Paul refers to God as *kurios* are all in citations of the Old Testament where God is mentioned in the Old Testament text (Hurtado, 563). In these passages, Paul's Greek substitute for the Hebrew Yahweh is the word *kurios*. There are seven examples of this usage: (Rom. 4:8 (Psalms 32:1-2); 9:28-29 (Isaiah 28:22; 1:9); 10:16 (Isaiah 53:1); 11:34 (Isaiah 40:13); 15:11 (Psalms 117:1); I Corinthians 3:20 (Psalms 94:11); and II Corinthians 6:17-18 (Isaiah 52:11; II Sam. 7:14). In several places, where Paul cites Old Testament references that mention Yahweh, he clearly applies the Old Testament citation to Christ. There are four examples of this usage: Romans 10:13 (Joel 2:32); I Corinthians 1:31 (Jer. 9:23-24); 10:26 (Psalms 24:1); II Corinthians 10:17 (Jer. 9:23-24). There are several passages that mention Yahweh where the *kurios* Paul refers to is clearly Christ. There are nine examples of this usage: I Cor. 10:21 (Mal. 1:7; 12); 10:22 (Deut. 32:21); II Cor. 3:16 (Ex. 34:34); I Thess. 3:13 (Zech. 14:5); 4:6 (Psalms 94:2); II Thess. 1:7-8 (Isaiah 65:15); 1:9 (Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21); 1:12 (Isaiah 66:5); Phil. 2:10-22 (Isaiah 45:23-25) (see Hurtado, 563). This evidence clearly shows that Paul directly and uniquely associated Jesus Christ with Yahweh. The use of the word Lord, which was commonly used as a substitute for the name Yahweh, to identify Jesus is a remarkable testimony to the association of Jesus with the Yahweh of the Old Testament. Paul states in Philippians 2:5-11 that God has given to Jesus "a name which is above every name." This passage declares a status for Christ that is equal to that of God and establishes beyond doubt the deity of Jesus Christ.

The title, *Lord*, with reference to Jesus, also indicates the possession of absolute authority (Matt. 28:18). When Jesus speaks, men should listen! Jesus is Lord of all. In the Great Commission, Jesus exercised His Lordship over all men by demanding that they obey Him (Matt. 28:18-20). All men are amenable to the Law of Christ! They must obey His

commandments in order to participate in the blessings of the redemptive work He accomplished on the cross. Failure to obey Him will result in judgment by the same words Jesus spoke (John 12:48). In a very special sense, Jesus is Lord of those who follow Him. As a master to his servant, so Jesus rules over the hearts of them that choose to follow Him as His disciples. Before one can enter into covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, he/she must confess Him as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). The acceptance and recognition of Jesus as Lord of one's life will have a profound impact upon it. It will affect: spiritual status with God; every day behavior including words, attitudes and actions; worship; service rendered to God and to one's fellowman; discipline; and beliefs about end-time events—the Second Coming of Christ and the Judgment.

The second term in the title *Lord Jesus Christ* is the name *Jesus*. Jesus is a proper name given to the son born to Mary, who was with child by the Holy Spirit of God (Matt. 1:18). In Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20-21). The name Jesus occurs in the New Testament nine hundred seventy-five times. It is used by Paul two hundred thirty-three times of Jesus of Nazareth (this count includes Hebrews) (Smith, 179). Twice, Paul uses the name to refer to someone other than Jesus of Nazareth. The name means "savior." The name relates to the mission and work of Jesus Christ in the redemption of mankind. The special circumstances of the birth of Jesus reveal His relationship to the Father. When the angel appeared to Mary, he said, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the

throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:30-33). The name *Jesus* is closely associated with God the Father. This identifies Jesus, as to His origin, with the Father. Also, He would be called *Immanuel* which means “God with us” (Matt. 1:23; Isaiah 7:14). The names *Son of the Highest* and *Immanuel* point to the deity of Jesus. The circumstances of His conception and the significance of these names clearly indicate His deity. John adds the fact of His preexistence. He writes, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, we have the perfect union of God and man. Jesus was fully God and fully man at the same time (Col. 2:9). The **fact** of the incarnation is undeniable. The **how** of it remains a mystery.

The third term in the title *Lord Jesus Christ* is the word *Christ*. The word Christ is found five hundred sixty-nine times in the New Testament. Paul uses the word four hundred nineteen times (including Hebrews) (Smith, 375). Jesus used it only one time of Himself in John 17:3, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Jesus approved the appellation, Christ, three times: Matt. 16:17 (in His response to Peter); Mark 14:61-62 (in response to the high priest); and John 4:26 (in response to the woman of Samaria). The Greek word *Christos* means *anointed*. Jesus is the anointed one of God. He is the one selected, appointed, qualified and commissioned by God for the specific task of delivering mankind from sin and its consequences. He alone possesses the credentials (has the exalted position and power) to act in behalf of God to save man. He is the Messiah who was foretold by the prophets of God in the Old Testament. In Jesus’ earthly life, He fulfills more than three hundred Messianic prophecies. This fact can be affirmed of no one else!

Consequently, He conclusively demonstrates that He is the Christ, the Messiah. W. E. Vine relates that the word *Christ* is added as an appellative to the name “Jesus” and that it is used as a proper name with or without the article. He states, “As to the use or absence of the article, the title with the article specifies the Lord Jesus as “the Christ,” the title without the article stresses His character and His relationship with believers. Again, speaking generally, when the title is the subject of the sentence it has the article; when it forms part of the predicate the article is absent” (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, I, 190).

When the words *Lord*, *Jesus*, and *Christ* are combined by Paul to form one title, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the expression is rich with meaning. By this title, Paul exalts Jesus and puts Him into a class by Himself. No one else, indeed, no other being, is so described! Each of the three terms: Lord, Jesus and Christ connect the person of Jesus with God, the Father, in regards to identity, essential being, mission and divine purpose.

(To Be Continued)