

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST—PART TWO

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In a previous article, we considered the basic meaning of each of the words that comprise one of the most significant titles for Jesus in Paul's writings, --*the Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul exalts Jesus and places Him in a class by Himself. Jesus possesses a "name that is above every name." Jesus is deity! He is *theos* (God) (John 1:1).

Paul uses the title, *Lord Jesus Christ*, sixty-seven times in the New Testament. An analysis of these passages produces the following results.

Salutations

First, Paul uses this title for Jesus in every epistle he writes except II Timothy where we have the alternate title, "Christ, Jesus our Lord" and Hebrews where the title is completely missing. Consider the following passages: Rom 1:7; I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1, II Tim. 1:2 (with variation); Titus 1:4 and Philemon 1:3. The title with the article stresses identity. Paul is making a statement that elevates Jesus to the same status as the Father. He writes, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." One purpose of this emphasis on Jesus is to impress upon his readers that Jesus has equal status with the Father. While holding to a strict monotheism, Paul reveals the essence of the Godhead which is comprised of three distinct persons who are united in one divine essence (essential being). Jesus belongs to the Godhead (Col. 2:9). He shares in the divine essence of the Godhead. This elevates Jesus from a mere man to deity. The practical aspect of this upon Paul's readers is that they are dependent upon and subordinate to Jesus who is their master or ruler (Lord), savior (Jesus), and deliverer in whom they hope (Christ).

Closing Statements

Second, Paul uses this title for Jesus in nearly every epistle in the closing statements. Consider the following passages: Rom. 16:24; I Cor. 16:23; II Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; I Thess. 5:28; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 6:14; II Tim. 4:22 and Philemon 1:25. The fact that Paul opens and closes nearly every epistle with the title, the Lord Jesus Christ, frames all that is revealed within as being from the Lord and part of the new covenant terms that bind together Jesus Christ and His people. Paul is eager for his readers to enjoy all of the spiritual blessings that flow from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He mentions grace in particular. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Grace is the divine favor of God and Jesus Christ freely bestowed as an act of divine love for the redeemed. It captures the loving-kindness of God and Christ and their desire to act in behalf of our spiritual and temporal well-being. God and Christ truly love us and care for us.

Christian Conduct

Third, Paul uses the phrase “Lord Jesus Christ” in connection with Christian conduct. Twelve times when Paul uses the phrase, Lord Jesus Christ, he refers to the conduct of the Christian in everyday life. The Christian must live every minute consciously aware of his relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus must rule in his heart. Paul enjoins, “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ” in contrast to the “lusts of the flesh” (Rom. 13:14). We must not serve our belly instead of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:18). He pleads for unity, stating that Christians must have “one mind” and “one mouth” in glorifying God and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:6). This unity extends even to their prayers (Rom. 15:30). Division is forbidden, while unity is enjoined in I Cor. 1:10. This unity concerns the thinking and judgment of Christians. Christians are to love the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 16:22). Under the rule of Christ, every Christian should have a strong work ethic (II Thess. 3:12). Finally, Christians are not to show

partiality (I Tim. 5:21). Every aspect of the Christian's life should be brought under the control of Christ as a testimony to His lordship, His ownership, and His kingship.

Salvation

Fourth, Paul is keenly aware of the source of man's salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ is the source of peace (Rom. 5:1); the atonement for sin (Rom. 5:11); all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3); peace and love (Eph. 6:23); and glory (II Thess. 2:14). Jesus became poor that we might be rich (II Cor. 8:9). In the cross, we make our boast (Gal. 6:14). Salvation is made possible through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thess. 5:9). When facing the strongholds of Satan, it is indeed comforting to know that we have the Lord Jesus Christ who will fight for us and deliver us. In His person and His power, victory is assured!

Church Discipline

Fifth, Paul especially uses this phrase when discussing the important matter of church discipline. Paul appeals to the highest authority possible to charge the church to exercise discipline when necessary to protect the purity of the church. In I Cor. 5, Paul deals with a problem of fornication within the church at Corinth. In I Cor. 5:4, 5, Paul invokes the name of the Lord Jesus Christ when ordering the church at Corinth to "deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Paul performs a similar action in his letter to the church at Thessalonica. He writes, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (II Thess. 3:6 and 12). Paul commands withdrawal of fellowship from the brother who departs from the truth. In I Tim. 6:3-5, Paul states that if any man does not consent unto the words of the Lord

Jesus Christ...from such withdraw thyself. The doctrinal and moral purity of the Lord's church is sustained by withdrawing fellowship from those who persist in these sinful actions.

Worship

Sixth, Paul endorses giving of thanks "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The personal relationship between Christians and Jesus Christ is the basis of invoking His name in prayer. He is their mediator and intercessor. He is their high priest. Paul makes appeal to God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ to direct him to the brethren at Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:11). In a similar way, Paul asks for our Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, to comfort and strengthen the brethren at Thessalonica in every good word and work (II Thess. 2:16-17). The last two passages serve as examples of prayer wishes that are addressed to both God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is worthy of our worship. The phrase, Lord Jesus Christ, is specifically used by Paul to show the exalted position of Jesus Christ and His equality with the Father. The Godhead is comprised of three distinct persons who share one undivided essence of being. There is no Scriptural basis for denying an act of worship to true deity.

The Second Coming

Seventh, Paul uses the phrase Lord Jesus Christ to emphasize the Second Coming of Jesus. There are eleven texts that relate to this usage: I Cor. 1:7, 8; I Cor. 16:22 (*marana tha*, Lord, come!); Phil. 3:20; I Thess. 2:19; I Thess. 3:13; I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 1:8; II Thess. 2:1; I Tim. 6:14 and II Tim. 4:1. The fact of Jesus' coming again is indisputable. This fact must alter man's behavior now (in the present). While we have opportunity, afforded to us by the longsuffering of God, we must love the Lord Jesus Christ and obey His Words in order for all to be well with our souls in that last great day! Paul desires that Christians be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:7-8; I Tim. 6:14). He prays for the Lord to come by addressing

Him directly (I Cor. 16:22). He desires that Christians look for that day and long for that day (Phil. 3:20). Vengeance will be served on that great day (II Thess. 1:7-9). The Lord Jesus Christ will judge the quick (living) and the dead (II Tim. 4:1).

Essential Characteristics of Jesus

Finally, Paul relates some general characteristics of Jesus Christ by the phrase Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is co-creator with God, the Father (I Cor. 8:6). The victory over sin and death is secured through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:57). The Father and the Son are equal in all aspects of deity (II Cor. 1:3, 11:31; Eph. 3:14). The words of the Lord Jesus Christ are truth (I Tim. 6:3). They judge us now. They will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

In summary, Paul's use of the phrase Lord Jesus Christ exalts Jesus and places Him in a class by Himself. The phrase denotes, in every part, the deity of Jesus Christ. Paul uses this phrase to emphasize the authority and power of Jesus in man's redemption and in final judgment. The phrase is often used in a personal sense, with the word *our* placed before it, indicating the spiritual, covenantal relationship between Jesus and His disciples. The phrase is used to appeal to the highest standard of authority for purity of morality and doctrine in the church of Jesus Christ. It denotes the exalted position of Jesus Christ and underscores that He is worthy of praise and worship. The phrase denotes the creator, redeemer and judge of all men. It is truly the most remarkable title for Jesus in the writings of the apostle Paul.