



In this series, Christology, we began looking at the Lordship of Jesus with Rev. Oboya Ochalla. In our last entry, he provided us with the root of some of the modern-day interpretations of what it means to say, “Jesus is Lord”. In today’s *Conversation*, the Director of Communications (Dr. T) explores further, with Rev. Ochalla, the concept of ‘Lord’ from a New Testament point-of-view:

Dr. T: **What does it mean to say “Jesus is Lord” today?**

Rev. Ochalla: The term “Lord” in the New Testament needs to be understood in relationship to the Jewish context that the New Testament writers were using. The Jewish people, since the destruction of Israel & Judah (Old Testament) started building a practice that, when reading the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), they would not say the Old Testament Name of God. This is sometimes translated as Jehovah or Yahweh – both refer back to the same Name by which God was known among His people. The theory was that if the Commandments taught that we were not to misuse God’s Name, it was perhaps even better if people didn’t actually say it – because saying it, they might say it carelessly and so sin against Him. So, instead, they developed the practice of saying either “Hashem” which means “the Name” or “Adonai” which means “my Lord” whenever the Name of God appeared in the biblical text or within their prayers.

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We see this in the way in which the Greek Translation of the Old Testament—that was prepared before the time of Jesus—followed this practice. So when quoting from Isaiah 40:3 (where the Hebrew has the Name Yahweh) in each of the four Gospels, referring to John the Baptist's Call & Mission, the New Testament follows the custom of simply using the title Lord in its place. It is clear who John the Baptist is preparing the way for. It's for Jesus. The Isaiah quote makes it clear that the Gospel writers understood the connection – that Jesus is Yahweh born into our human flesh – or the way that both Matthew and Isaiah call Him “Immanuel” – which means, literally, God-with-us.

As a result, the Biblical meaning behind the expression “Jesus is Lord” is not this more recent idea of ‘Lordship’ theology. Lords and Ladies as political titles did not exist in biblical times. The expression, as St. Paul and the other New Testament writers use it, as a Creed and Confession of faith about Who Jesus is. Jesus is Yahweh who has come into the world, who by His death & resurrection has won salvation for us. That Jesus is not just another ‘prophet’ or ‘rabbi’ – but that He is the same God who created the heaven & the earth together with His Father & the Holy Spirit (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16) – so that through our Baptism into Him (1 Corinthians 12: Romans 6) we are spiritually joined into His Body & Humanity so that everything that Jesus has done to work out our salvation is given to us in exchange. Our faith is built on that belief (about Jesus & the gift of our salvation) and our life of discipleship grows out of it.

So, in addressing the question, we need to set aside the common understanding that some preachers have adopted and return to the Biblical significance of the phrase. It is a Creed that Jesus is truly the Almighty God in human flesh.

Rev. Oboya Ochalla was ordained in 2019 and serves as the Associate Pastor at St. James Lutheran Church.

Thanks to Rev. Ochalla, we understand the root of some of the modern misinterpretations of ‘Lord’ and are provided with a New Testament guide for understanding the Lordship of Jesus. In our next *Conversation*, we take a closer look at Jesus in relation to God, as we continue our journey back to basics. If you have questions that you would like to put to our pastors, send them here, and get the answers you need in the *Conversations*.