

## **Jesus as Lord**

### ***The move from Dualistic living to the Infusion of His Lordship in all of Life***

**By Robin J. Dugall**

A. "Lord" – there is no modern equivalent – no cultural image that denotes the ultimate authority that the "Lord" (kurios) had in the time of Jesus/New Testament (synonyms – ruler, master, overlord, majesty)

- To say we understand Lordship would assume we have lived under the rulership of one who had ultimate sway over our lives to act within his own whim without regard for our feelings, thoughts, insights, complaints or traditions
- Imagine saying to someone, "you will be the boss of me for a hour"; how would you feel as someone's slave? Would you eventually rationalize, succumb to it? "Slavery" pulls the life out of life...relationships where obligation intrudes get burdened and eventually killed.
- Kurios – greek; YHWH/Adonia – Hebrew; Ba'al (semetic religions); Bel (in reference to Marduk in Babylonian religions); dominus (latin/roman)

B. Lords in history/ancient times – Scene from Braveheart which depicts the lord of the manor claiming rights to the consummation of a marriage at a wedding ceremony

There are also historical indicators that rulers in the biblical world demanded the "lord" title:

- Ezra – Artaxerxes – Persia
- Ezekiel – Nebuchadnezzar – Babylon
- Daniel – Nebuchadnezzar – Babylon
- Jesus time – Emperor worship

C. Kings being deified has a long history:

1. In Asia Minor, Kings had titles like, "Soter" (Savior) and "Epiphanes" (God Manifested)

- They were worshipped regularly on their birthday
- Worship rites/rubrics included statuary, festivals, offerings, temples, sacrifices
- Each declared self as god – no one argued since who could argue with the divine?

2. Roman History

- Julius Caesar – murdered in 44 BC
- Octavian to Augustus (43 BC to 14 AD) – Augustus actually began the long history of roman emperors being declared as divine – Augustus claimed on the day that his father was killed, a comet appeared that could be seen in daylight for over 7 days; that heavenly "sign" authenticated his divinity
- Tiberius (15-36 AD)

- Caligula (37-41 AD) – first to enforce emperor worship for all Roman citizens AND non-citizens – setting up massive persecution
- Claudius (42-53 AD)
- Nero (54-68 AD)
- Vespasian and Titus (through 80 AD)
- Domitian (81-96 AD) – obsessed with his own deity – insisted on being called “Lord and god”, claimed to be the only mediator between the gods and humans; Christ-followers were slaughtered because they refused to worship him

### 3. Worship of gods of the Roman Empire

- Worship Regularly on their birthday
- Worship statues, festivals, offerings, and sacrifices
- Declared self as god – who would argue with a god?
- Enter a city – incense offering (“Caesar is god alone”)
- Offerings demanded
- Could not buy or sell in market without acknowledging authority of emperor
- Could not walk through city without stopping at altars to acknowledge “Lordship”
- Could not travel – every town, same thing
- Drink from fountain? Had to acknowledge the emperor as the provider of life itself
- Visitors entered the cities set apart of emperor worship (“neokorus”) to spend significant time bathing, “brotheling”, going to theater and arena
- Eat meat and food sacrificed as a means of “communing” with the divine” (1 Corinthians issue)
- Purchasing of religious items were the mainstay of local economies...public decay of emperor worship was demanded and expected. If somebody didn’t participate, the economic benefits of hosting the festivities could be lost
- **Understand – people were not always persecuted for worshipping Jesus Christ – it didn’t matter how many gods you had as long as you worshipped the emperor as “lord of lords”. The Ultimate issue had to do with Lordship – if you proclaimed, “Jesus is Lord”, then persecution followed**

D. Lord of Lords – King of Kings Biblically (not only Kingdom language but also has eschatological importance):

- Revelation 17:14ff
- Psalm 136:3
- 1 Timothy 6:15
- Revelation 19:16
- Philippians 2:11
- 605 references in the New Testament using the word, “Lord”
- Gospels and Pauline writings subversively “highjacked” Lordship language as a means of proclaiming Jesus is Lord – a declaration that placed the Proclaimer squarely in conflict with the dominant culture

## E. Implications for you and me - Vast implications of the Lordship Issue

1. Can't say "Jesus is Lord" without the Holy Spirit – Holy Spirit's power and presence inspires, leads, and guides us into a new allegiance

2. No dualistic Lordship –

- All other gods are not gods at all (Acts 19:23ff)
- Who leads, directs, guides, and holds you accountable for your life? Not just ultimately but day by day?

*"A Jesus fanatic is not someone who is always going to church or at meetings but rather someone in whom the Live Truth dwells" Len Sweet*

- a. Dualistic Lordship = disconnect between what we SAY we believe and who we follow and our actual ACTIONS – separation between real world, real living and professed faith and alliance – we say "Jesus is Lord" but live our lives as we desire –hypocrisy (two faced, play acting).
- b. We can no longer be adherents to dualistic discipleship. In spite of all the talk about Christ's Lordship, everyone knows that the expectations of the culture come first. That is the unspoken façade of modern Christianity. Christ followers tend to make decisions like everyone else – based on income, professions and social status. Modern Culture shapes our lives leading to dualistic living.
- c. Following Jesus can no longer be trivialized as little more than a devotional lubricant to keep us from stripping our gears when pursuing our own lives. Following Jesus has become an exercise in "reductionism" ...it has been reduced to "quiet times", "Sunday morning worship experiences", "committee meetings", and religious activity separated from real living. For many, following Jesus highly privatized, spiritualized and disconnected. Modern culture still, in most cases, defines the good life.
- d. Dualistic Lordship/Discipleship becomes clearer as we examine our issue with Empire
- e. The Biblical Cultural Context is the context of "Empire".
  - Culture of Empire – always guaranteed the status quo privilege and power through the means of oppression
  - Culture of Empire was promoted by value marketing – In ancient Rome, "Pax Romana" was a prevailing value that was "marketed" across the empire. Though rooted in military oppression, it was promoted as a means of experiencing peace and prosperity. There are many parallels between ancient Rome and contemporary American politics/culture.

- Culture of Empire is grounded in image. In ancient Rome, public and private spaces were invaded with images of Caesar. Now, compare this with images of American culture (logos, brands, etc.) that permeate the globe and have a profound influence on each of our lives.
- Culture of Empire is maintained by establishing political structures, overwhelming military might and the possession of the “imagination” of the Empire’s subjects. As long as the conquered people have memories of life before Empire or are aligned with a Kingdom that is “in the world but not of it” (Kingdom of God) and as long as they harbor dreams of a reality that is contrary to Empire, these people will be perceived as a threat. That is why “non-dualistic” discipleship is inherently subversive.
- Culture of Empire depends on bread and entertainment. In ancient times, the Empire engaged in feeding and anestitizing the masses through mindless entertainment that demonstrated the values of empire and the power and ruthlessness and image of Caesar. Think about the many parallels that are occurring in our age.

### 3. Our antidote – Non-dualistic Discipleship:

- a. We need to reimagining of world with Jesus as Lord
- b. This challenges us to no longer hold on to a split-vision worldview that divides faith from life, church from culture, theology from economics, prayer from politics and worship from everyday work. As long as Empire can keep us engaged in pietistic individualism, we will never impact the world. As long as we are convinced that “religion is a private matter” we essentially leave the shaping of public and dominant imagination to Empire. Often this takes shape in the dichotomy of the distinction between “secular and sacred”. In biblical theology, there is NOT a categorization of creation...everything is God-soaked...there is NO secular space.
- c. Having Jesus as Lord forces us to reexamine and change our worldview. A worldview is a vision FOR life (not just a vision OF life). It gives a lens to interpret the world and is prescriptive for the world in that it provides the community with its most foundational values and norms. Jesus as Lord reshapes everything.
- d. Christ followers must succeed from one order in order to join another.
- e. Christ followers must bear no other IMAGE but the image of God.

*“Paul follows his secessionist ethic of “putting to death” the vestiges of empire and “stripping off” the old self that was deformed by that empire, with a call to the resurrection life of the new self that is clothed in a different set of virtues. If the story of the empire no longer has a hold on you, then all the narrative of Jesus to shape your character as a community that is alternative to empire”.*  
*Brian Walsh*

f. Kingdom in contrast to Empire:

Image of God	Images-Idolatry
Renewal of the mind	Lies of violence and power
Community where Jesus is all in all	Divisiveness and marginalization
New Humanity	Controlled humanity
Immanuel - Incarnation	Powerful myths

- g. The Gospel is revelation – an ultimate source of reference wherein we find ourselves revealed. The Gospel is a response to the questions of who we are, what we may hope for, how we may aspire to act, what endures, what is important, what is of true value.
- h. Following Jesus, if it is real and true, does not merely change the way you worship...it changes the way we play, work, buy, sell, love, do life.
- i. The first community of followers turned the world upside down. They were constantly challenging the dominant values of their culture AND paying the price. The contemporary church often is one of the strongest apologists for protecting the dominant values of the world. The church should be a counter-cultural community.
- j. Being a Christ-follower is not something that you work around the edges of an already overcommitted life. It is a whole-life proposition...it challenges us to reorder our entire existence. Instead of trying to excuse what Jesus actually said, followers act on what the Lord commands.