

## The Proof

Luke 6:46-49

Up to this point, most of the things Jesus had taught in His Sermon on the Level Place, especially the severe things, were uttered with the Pharisees, or at least, their influence, squarely in His sites. But, I urge you to consider who Jesus was really addressing when He said:

<sup>46</sup>"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

Play *Everybody Else But Me* by Don Francisco...

When you call Jesus, "Lord," it means something. What proof do you offer that you mean it?

Jesus was not addressing the Pharisees. They would never have called Him, "Lord." They thought Jesus was, at best, Nazareth's village crackpot and, at worst, a dangerous heretic. They conceded His status as a rabbi, but that just acknowledged that He was a teacher with a following. This is not a verse that in our day could apply to some wild man swinging through the jungles of the Amazon. It cannot apply to the skeptic who snickers at all matters religious. Obviously, the "Lord, Lord" crowd was a friendly crowd, but according to Jesus, to call Him, "Lord," but to fail to do as He says means that somebody is not listening to his own words.

There are a variety of things that "Lord" could have meant to individuals in the crowds that were drawn to Jesus. But, whatever it meant, it followed that His words were worthy of their attention.

### I. The Profession of Jesus' Lordship

#### A. Who Did this Crowd Think Jesus Was?

Names don't have the same meaning for everyone. When the librarian noticed the college lineman rummaging the shelves frantically, she offered to assist. He said, "I can't play Saturday unless I do a report on a play by Shakespeare."

"Which one," she asked politely.

He answered, "William."

The designation, "Lord," probably did not mean the same thing to all the people that had gathered to hear Jesus. "Lord" or *kurios* could address any person in authority. It was the way a slave addressed his master. It is doubtful that most of those who called Jesus "Lord" on this day were identifying Him with God's *Messiah*. Some thought He was Elijah or one of the other prophets returned from the dead. Only those closest to Him were beginning to see that He was the "*Christ*" or *Messiah*. Still, to address Jesus as "Lord" in any sense of the word was to concede that obeying whatever He had to say was the logical follow-up to such a profession.

In some Gospel contexts, "Lord" does imply more than just the authority of a superior. Since the Jews also applied this name to God, when Jesus called Himself "Lord of the Sabbath" He was clearly hinting that He was more divinity than mere prophet or teacher. The awareness of Who Jesus really was continued to grow. Finally, Thomas' exclamation, "My Lord and my God!" upon seeing the resurrected Jesus became at least one man's affirmation of His true identity.

Of course, Acts and the balance of the New Testament leave no doubt as to what the early Christians meant when they called Jesus, "Lord." After the Resurrection, the significance of "Lord" became obvious. Jesus emptied Himself of His deity to work the Father's plan to rescue fallen humanity. "Lord" came to mean that He is worthy of the universal praise due His deity.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. – Philippians 2:9-11

So, here is a point that should not be lost on any of us. It was bizarre that those who called Jesus "Lord" during His earthly ministry did not see the need to obey Him. "Lord," in any sense of the word, demands obedience. Now, if that was bizarre, then, it is exponentially more bizarre that anyone who calls Jesus "Lord" today, from this side of the empty tomb, and who knows all that the designation entails would fail to connect the dots and see that Lordship demands obedience.

## **B. What Does this Fuller Grasp of Jesus' Lordship Imply?**

**Jesus is the Lord of the Universe!** To call Jesus "Lord" is to confess that He wields "all authority in heaven and earth" just as He said. Paul writes that Jesus is seated at God's right hand, the place of authority, "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:21). Peter echoes Paul's sense of Christ's authority as one "who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him" (1 Peter 3:33).

**Jesus is the Lord of our Circumstances!** Anyone who names Jesus as "Lord" is compelled to trust Him and to act rightly even in the throes of persecution, ridicule and suffering. It is not our place to set aside His words because our reflex is one of self-vindication and self-preservation. Because Jesus is Lord in this sovereign sense, we remain confident that He will oversee our circumstances and work them out according to His good plan. Our burden is to trust and obey.

**Lord Implies that Jesus has Ultimate Authority!** This truth will be manifested at the end of the age when He appears a second time to judge the world and to restore a fallen creation.

Now, if Lordship means all of this in a universal, sovereign and eternal sense, what must it mean in a more intimate sense; within the community of faith called a church, under the roof of a Christian home and in the heart of a professed believer? Logically, it pretty well ought to mean everything. Does it? In his book, *Jesus, Mean and Wild*, Mark Galli quotes Stephen Prothero:

“Christians traditionally, as they’ve shaped Jesus, have been worried about getting it wrong, including the Puritans. Americans today are not so worried. There isn’t the sense that this is a life-and-death matter, that you don’t want to mess with divinity. There’s a freedom and even a playfulness that Americans have ...

“The flexibility our Jesus exhibits is unprecedented. There’s a Gumby-like quality to Jesus in the United States ... – Stephen Prothero

So, as searching a question as it was two millennia ago on a level place in Galilee, the question remains more penetrating to modern believers with a lot more information with which to work:

<sup>46</sup>"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

Then, in a parable we have known from childhood, Jesus makes a claim to incredible authority:

... <sup>47</sup>I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. <sup>48</sup>He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. <sup>49</sup>But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

## **II. The Practice of Jesus' Lordship**

### **A. Authentic Faith Digs Deeply**

I ran across a story about foolish builders. It was a bit insensitive ... but I fixed it!

Two builders were working on a house (it doesn't matter that they both had the same hair color.) One builder was on a ladder nailing. She'd reach into her nail pouch, pull out a nail, look at it, and either throw it away or proceed to nail it into the wood.

The other builder (of undetermined hair color) finally yelled, "Why are you throwing those nails away?"

The first builder (she could have any hair color) explained, "When I pull it out of my nail pouch, if it's pointed toward me I throw it away. If it's pointed toward the house, then I can use it!"

The second builder was compelled to correct her and explained, "Don't throw away the nails that are pointed toward you! They're for the other side of the house!!"

Palestine had a dry season and a rainy season. During the rainy season, the streams that flowed from the mountains overran their banks and left deposits of sand and other sediments on the ground above the riverbed. The subsiding waters left a smooth, flat surface. Now, if someone wanted to build a house, he might look for a smooth, flat surface, but if he was from around those parts, he would have to be a complete moron to build his house on such a surface at the river's edge during the dry season. Everyone knew that as soon as the autumn rains returned, the river would overflow, and that house would go down. But, if a man with even half a brain liked the site, he knew that he would have to dig, perhaps, deeply to get down to a solid surface.

It was a simple enough picture. To apply this to Jesus' audience, a thoughtful man would have been compelled to look around at the form of religion that was being modeled by the Pharisees and conclude, "There has got to be more. I cannot be assured about eternity by keeping all these rituals that do not in any way connect with my heart. My souls longs for God. Knowing the minimal amount water for ritualistically washing my hands or finagling how far I can walk or how much I can work on a Sabbath Day without violating it is not filling that yearning."

Today, I think Jesus is saying that a man still has to look around at how religion is often modeled and think, “There has to be more.” Any heart that longs for God is not going to be satisfied in some legalistic system that provides answers for every gray-area question in life and that sanctimoniously condemns those who come up with different answers. His heart is not going to be filled in some liberal church that has so deconstructed the simple meaning of the Bible that it is no longer even reliable. His yearning is not going to be satisfied by a prosperity gospel that, in the final analysis, is just a cover for materialism. His emptiness will never be filled in some formal setting where rituals are mindlessly repeated without their meanings ever being explained. Following a gospel obsessed over the end time won’t do it. A gospel that narcissistically pursues “God’s wonderful plan for your life” will come up short as well.

But, the quest for God will also not be satisfied by casting off every connection to any church.

## **B. Authentic Faith Builds on the Rock**

Beneath the clutter that so easily distracts us from what is important, there is a rock that is suitable as a foundation for our lives. Jesus did not identify Himself as that rock, at least not here. He left that for the “Lord, Lord” crowd to figure out. When Peter set himself apart from the pack and confessed, “You are the Christ,” Jesus affirmed him, saying, “... on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Paul expanded on the theme:

<sup>11</sup>For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.  
– 1 Corinthians 3:11

What does it mean to build your life on this Rock, who is Jesus? We don’t have to think deeply or theologically to arrive at a good answer. All we have to do is review the content of this very sermon for which this parable serves as a conclusion. What has the Lord been saying to us?

- Woe to you if you trust wealth, so don’t. If you have nothing, lift up your eyes.
- Woe to you if you trust comfort, so don’t. But, if you’re hungry, come to Me.
- Woe to you if you trust your good name, so don’t. Suffer for My cause and be blessed.
- Die to your need for retaliation. I’ll vindicate you later if that’s necessary.
- Die to your inclination toward tightfistedness. I will provide everything you need.
- Die to your habit of judging others. I see things in their lives that you can never see.
- Don’t be blind to your own faults. I will help you overcome them.
- Be discerning about who you follow. Make sure they follow Me.

That was a jet tour through a sermon we have spent weeks studying. But, it all comes together with this simple little parable. In the pursuit of God-pleasing religion, many things get in the way. Can you muddle through them? Can you dig deeply? Can you see that Jesus – listening to Him, trusting Him and obeying Him – provides the only Foundation for any life worth living?

## **III. The Prize of Jesus’ Lordship**

### **A. Authentic Faith Can Withstand the Storms of Life**

There are any number of reasons that can compel a person to cry out to Jesus, “Lord, Lord.” We need look no farther than Luke’s introductory paragraph that sets the stage for this sermon:

<sup>17</sup>He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, <sup>18</sup>who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, <sup>19</sup>and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. – Luke 6:17-19

What brought this "Lord, Lord" crowd together? Many came just to listen. There were certainly some in that crowd who felt that Jesus held promise as a possible *Messiah*. Others may have simply been those types always on the lookout for the next popular rabbi's take on matters. Simply hearing Jesus was enough to enrapture hearts and electrify a crowd. Some were there because of illnesses in their bodies. Others were there because of the desperate mental anguish brought on by demonic oppression. They wanted to be healed. Who could blame them?

People still come to Jesus because of desperate needs. Sometimes, an overly-intellectual approach to faith tends to dismiss the validity of them coming to Jesus in such ways, but these are perfectly valid ways for coming to Him. However, they are not particularly useful ways for abiding in Him. At some point, a person must see that his most desperate need is the sin that estranges him from God. Eventually, he must conclude that if he is going to live as a true follower of Jesus and not just as a member of the "Lord, Lord" crowd, he must obey.

Jesus is kind. That's a given. But what can cause us to stand through life's storms? I've known many people who have received remarkable gifts, healings and blessings that they rightly attribute to God's goodness. They still put in a good word for Jesus regularly. They are firmly entrenched in the "Lord, Lord" camp. But, they remain determined to serve Him on their own terms, and only time will tell how they will stand up under the next calamity they face.

Sacred convictions about Jesus give rise to trust and obedience. So, even in the midst of storms we will stand, not because we expect some sunny deliverance, but because the Lord Jesus is still on His throne and His eternal opinion of us frankly means more than any temporal benefit.

## **B. Authentic Faith Will Stand the Test of Eternity**

*"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."*

When Paul wrote these words, he was addressing people in the Corinthian church who were dividing into camps that claimed allegiance to their favorite teachers. Some liked Paul. Some preferred Peter. Some favored Apollos. Paul assured his readers that each of these teachers was building on the same foundation of Jesus. But, he added that every teacher of God's people must pay attention to how he builds. Will he use precious materials of pure, rightly-divided teaching that can equip Christ's servants and enable them to stand through anything? Or, will they use cheap, frivolous materials that enthuse and amuse, but do not strengthen anyone's faith?

The fact is we are all builders. We each participate in strengthening the church and we each build lives that we will one day present to Jesus for His approval. People today find it invigorating to be a part of some grandiose enterprise, but Jesus tells us what to expect on the Day of Judgment. "Did you feed Me when I was hungry? Did you care for Me when I was sick? Did you visit Me in prison?" On those occasions when you could touch a life in some tangible way, did you?

It's easy to get sanctimonious when there are Pharisees and hypocrites and other groups out there that miss the mark with whom to compare ourselves. "I'm not legalistic like those fundamentalists." "I'm truer to the book than those liberals." Don't you see just how much like a Pharisee that makes you? Bottom line, what is *YOUR* foundation? On what, or on Whom are you building?

This *Sermon on the Level Place* was not only targeted to the "hypocrites and Pharisees" or to "people back then." It is for all of us who have the option of being just a part of some "Lord, Lord" crowd or of following Jesus in true, life-altering and life-saving discipleship. What's the difference? Obedience, first and last, is the proof that we mean it when we say, "Jesus is Lord."