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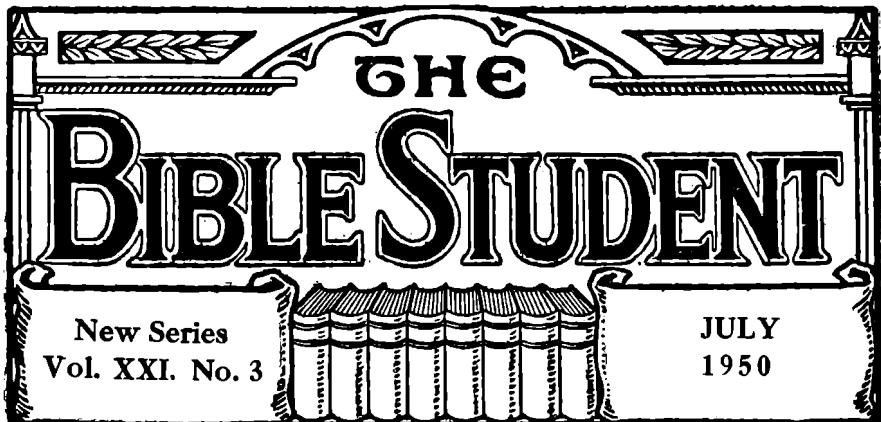
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THE SERVANT AND HIS LORD

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The Greek word *KURIOS* is translated as Master, Sir, or Lord. Without the article it generally refers to God, but with the article *ho Kurios*, the Lord, it usually refers to Jesus, and implies that He is Divine. It also has the additional meaning that the Divine Lord is our Master and that we are His subjects.

Such a use is not confined to the New Testament. The language of New Testament Greek is the common vernacular of the first century, and as such was used by the ordinary people. The Egyptians spoke of the table of the Lord Serapis. Nero was acknowledged as the Lord. The early Roman Emperors were deified by their friends who spoke of them as Lord. Polycarp, in the middle years of the second century, refused to say "Lord Caesar", even though it meant martyrdom to refuse. Festus said unto King Agrippa, "I have no certain thing to write unto my Lord". As a result the early disciples must have been very careful, and their use of the word Lord to describe Jesus Christ was not only an ascription of Deity but was also a challenge to the common worship of the Caesars.

It is, therefore, noteworthy that Paul stresses the use of Lord in Romans and Corinthians, which were written to churches in lands under direct Roman rule. In Rom. 10:9 the confession of faith is that Jesus is Lord, whilst to the Corinthians he wrote that no man can say, "Jesus is Lord", but in the Holy Spirit. Philippi was a Roman colony, so that the Christians there would readily understand the greatness of the confession by every tongue "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Trench's *Synonyms* (p. 90) distinguishes the word *kurios* from *despotēs*. The *kurios* is one who wields his power for good, whereas the *despotēs* is one with unrestricted power and absolute domination. This may account for the relative infrequency of the word *despotēs* in the New Testament.

Naturally, we at once turn our minds to the titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remembering that "Jesus" speaks of His humanity, and that "Christ" speaks of His Messiahship and exaltation, we see that "Lord" tells us of His Deity and His Mastership. The three words are used singly or conjointly in different ways, and epistles like Ephesians or Colossians have many usages which well repay time spent on their study. The titles which a believer uses concerning Christ will often give a deep insight into the position which Christ has in the heart of the believer.

Servant

To the word *Lord* there belongs the corresponding word *servant*. The word used in Acts 4 for Christ as the Servant of Jehovah is the Greek word *pais*. Another Greek word used in the New Testament is *misthios*, as in the story of the Prodigal Son. The essential idea in the phrase "hired servant" is that the servant works for reward. Whilst it is true that God will reward His servants, it is noticeable that the Christian is not regarded as a hireling. Another word, *hupēretēs*, used of John Mark, indicates subservience or subordination to others.

The most important word for servant is the Greek word *doulos*. The essential thought is of slavery, of one who is bound, of a bond-man or a bond-slave. Nearly every Pauline epistle begins with the phrase, "Paul a bonds slave of Jesus Christ". Here we note the economy of words, for the full title, Lord Jesus Christ, is not used; to have used it would have been tautologous, for a bonds slave must, of necessity, have a Lord. Paul recognised clearly that the greatest thing in life was to be a bonds slave of Jesus Christ. As such he must do what his Lord commanded, even though it led him to death.

The Christian is not a bonds slave to a despot. Our Lord is not a ruthless tyrant demanding absolute subjection. The Lord Jesus Christ knew what it was to be a bonds slave, for in the description of His self-humiliation we find that He took upon Himself the form of a bondservant.

It is interesting to notice that the Apostle John does not describe himself as a bondservant. Was this because he remembered the words of the Lord Himself: "No longer do I call you bondservants: . . . but I have called you friends"?

The most beautiful description of the attitude of the servant to his Lord is found in Ex. 21:2-6, and its parallel in Deut. 15:12. The full bondservant was one who plainly said, "I love my master; I will not go out free". His bored ears were a symbol of this devotion to his master. The same thoughts centre around our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only was He the true Servant of Jehovah, but He took the servant's form. He could say, "Lo, I delight to do thy will, O my God". The Hebrew rendering of Ps. 40:6 may be translated, "Mine ears hast thou digged or pierced". As the obedient servant He did all for love of His Father, and the pierced hands are ever a symbol of the devotion that led Him to Calvary's cross.

The Lord Jesus Christ was not only the Servant but also the only begotten Son. We also are not only sons but servants. We have been redeemed from thralldom under Satan, who was truly a despot. Writing to the Corinthians the Apostle declared, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in the body". We have been saved to serve, and the service of Jesus Christ is perfect freedom. Paul could say, "None of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord".

One of the most striking parables of our Lord is recorded in Luke 17:7-10, which He concludes with the words, "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable bondservants; we have done that which it was our duty do to". This, surely, is the spirit in which we are to serve.

Salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast. In point of fact, an attempt to obtain salvation by good works prevents many from seeing that salvation is by grace. The Christian, once he or she is saved, ought, however, to realise that the Lord ought to have our best. To the Philippians Paul wrote, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling". The Lord wants us to serve Him. As soon as Paul, arrested by Christ on the road to Damascus, saw the risen Lord, he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" It is the all-important question after salvation. Too often we try to side-track as Peter did, and we say, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" To those who ask such a question, the words of the Lord come in full force, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me".

The natural touchstone is that no matter what we do, it must be "if the Lord will". If the Lord is our Master, then we are His servants who ought to be willing to do just what He wills. Our wills are no longer ours; they are surrendered unto Him. What He wills is sufficient for us.

The last chapter of John's gospel brings before us seven of the disciples on the Sea of Tiberias. As they look towards the shore they see a figure, and soon they realise that it is the Lord. Earthly toil is transformed by His renewing power, and the Risen Lord takes the foremost place. So, we too, as we see our Risen Master ought to realise that He should be the Lord of our lives and of our service. Then we shall be able to say of ourselves, as did Paul—"a bondservant of Jesus Christ".—*Service*