

## He is Lord!

### If Christ is not Lord of All, He cannot be Lord at all.

Luke 7:1-10

John 7: 25-52

In John 6 we are encouraged to see Jesus as Bread of Life, in John 7 its all about whether He is truly Lord of our lives. John tells us of the tension in the air as some in Judea threatened Jesus' life. The Festival of Tabernacles was looming and that would necessitate a trip to that very region. Jesus' own brothers (Mark 6:3) thought that a public relations tour would be a good idea (v4). Jesus refused, insisting that the right time had not yet come - but then, after they had left for the feast, He went up in 'secret' (v10). So what is going on here?

Well I think Jesus wanted to do exactly what was right - and at the right time. The fact that His family had suggested an action made it neither right nor wrong. All that mattered to Jesus was that He kept in perfect synchronisation with the unfolding plan of His Father. Once in Jerusalem, Jesus again bided His time, waiting until the tension had built and many words about Him had been exchanged (v11-13) before making His public pronouncements in the Temple Courts. John goes to great lengths to record what Jesus says about his relationship with the Father (5:19,30, 8:29, 12:49): the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees His Father doing because what the Father does the Son also does... I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me... For I do not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. ***We would do well to remember and live by those same principles!***

John paints Jesus as totally stunning, overwhelming even those who came to arrest Him - not with violence but with the sense of authority that rested upon His words. His skill made even His

critics wonder how he could be so learned without special training. Of course, His education was not of this earth.

His brilliance is also shown in His sense of timing. It's possible to do the right thing at the wrong time. The importance of timing is shown regularly in John's gospel: Jesus went to the cross knowing that His time had come (13:1). Timing *is* everything but so also is submission to the Father.

**So John sets out to convince us that we need to choose to live our lives under Christ's authority just as He lived under the Fathers authority**

So what does it take to make you accept someone else's authority and to do so gladly? For me, the answer has a lot to do with the person's character and ability to relate to me. It is not just a matter of whether or not the one in authority has greater expertise and experience, although I do look for that and the fact that the person has been given authority by some other individual or group does not do much to bring about my support if authority is being used in a domineering or uncaring way. There has to be mutual respect.

We are sometimes heard deploring the way 'people today don't want to accept anybody's authority over them'. Is it, I wonder, because people have too often seen authority mishandled?

However much children want to 'do their own thing', they really need the security of knowing how far they can go. They want someone to take charge and set limits for them.

The Roman Army, as with any such force today, had to have clear lines of authority. A centurion had charge of a 100 men. There was a limit to his authority and he knew it, but he also expected obedience when he was using his authority correctly. When the Centurion of whom we read in Luke 7:1-10 faced the imminent death of his servant, he knew he had no authority over pain and disease. Amazingly, he - a gentile - recognised a greater authority in Jesus, a village carpenter and wandering preacher. The

Centurion did not consider himself worthy to come to Jesus with his need for help, but such was the respect given to him locally that the Jewish elders from the Synagogue were prepared to speak on his behalf.

How different this is from the way the Jewish Council in Jerusalem used their positions of leadership!! One of them, Nicodemus (Nick the Priest), did protest about their disregard for justice (John 7:50-51), but was brushed aside. They were unable to accept that a Galilean could be a prophet, let alone the Messiah. When people in authority wear blinkers of pride and jealousy, they will not be able to acknowledge the truth. The Centurion called Jesus: 'Lord'. Although some of those gathered in the Temple for the Feast of Tabernacles were prepared to say of Jesus, 'He is the Christ', nobody is recorded in John 7 as calling him - 'Lord'. In our reading the crowd didn't recognise Jesus' authority because they thought he came from Galilee. Similarly the Jewish Authorities because they thought he was going to Greece. The Pharisees didn't recognise it because none of their colleagues did. But they were all wrong! He came from Bethlehem. He was going to His Father in Heaven. And Nick the Priest was trying to defend him! Jesus made it clear that His authority didn't lie in the approval of people like these, but in the approval of God. He demonstrated His authority by His offer of 'living water'. Living under the Lordship of Christ opens up a rich channel of Living Water that flows to and through us out to the World.

***This Authority is from God (v28/9)*** The greatest concern of the crowd was that Jesus was only a Galilean. They had expected the Messiah to come from Bethlehem, so they wouldn't accept his authority. No one took the time to check out where He was actually born! In "The Cost of Discipleship", Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "From now on the baptised can know themselves only as dead men, in whom everything necessary for salvation has been

accomplished. The baptised live, not by a literal repetition of this death, but by the constant renewal of their faith in the death of Christ, in His act of grace for us. The source of their faith lies in the once-for-allness of Christ's death, which they experienced in baptism." It was this recognition of God's authority as superior to the authority of the State, which led Bonhoeffer to offer up his own life to oppose the Nazis in 1945. See how crucial it is that we own/confirm our baptism for ourselves. ***Do we reflect Gods authority in our lives? Is Jesus Lord: of my life, marriage, family, job, etc?***

***Authority in all things (v33/4)*** The Jewish leaders assumed he was bound for Greece. They knew that the Messiah would not base His ministry there. No one took the time to check out what He meant when He said He was going back to the one who had sent Him! Jesus made it clear that the source of His authority did not depend on whether He was recognised in Israel or Greece; His authority was in all places and over all things! We obey Jesus not because of His power in Israel 2000 years ago. We obey Him because He is the Ruler of heaven and earth, and King of Kings!

***So do we allow God's authority to be pre-eminent in all things? What evidence is there in my life that this is so?***

***Authority for Life (v38/9)***

The Feast of Tabernacles was not just a celebration of God's provision in the past days of the wilderness, or just a thanksgiving for His provision in the harvest. It looked forward to what God would do in the future (Zechariah 14:8/9). On this, the last and most important day of the festival when the torah was read, Jesus made it clear that they didn't have to wait until the end of time to drink from the 'river of life' (described in Ezekiel 47). He would make the Holy Spirit available to anyone who would come and drink. We obey Jesus because of prophecies fulfilled and promises kept. We obey him because through Him we drink of the 'river of life' itself! The religious Jews were

deceived by equating the knowledge of scripture and their association with the religious community, with the knowledge of God. Yet, truthfully, they were stubbornly refusing to enter into a personal relationship with God through His personal representative Jesus. They boasted in their knowledge of the scriptures whilst rejecting the author of the Scriptures.

So have you received that life, that hope...? Have you received Christ.....? Have you opened your soul up to the refreshing living waters of the Holy Spirit? **Let that living water flow into your life as you live under His Lordship.**

#### **Authority over me.**

The greatest concern of the Pharisees was that Jesus wasn't accredited by the other members of their group (not kosher). The Pharisees saw themselves as the guardians of religious matters, and did not recognise His authority as genuine. However, one of their number, Nick the Pharisee, had been to see Jesus by night and discovered that he could be 'born again'. He was the 'secret disciple' who anointed Jesus after His death and buried Him in the tomb (19:30). Nick the Pharisee was defending Jesus at the festival. The greatest irony is when the Pharisees send soldiers to arrest Jesus (v32); they are so intrigued by what He says that they return empty handed (v45/6). Was He so compelling that they mutinied or so engrossing that they forgot why they went!?

We do not obey Jesus because of the authority of humans or institutions or even Pastors! Like, Nicodemus, we give Him authority over our lives because of the new Life He brings us: because when we make Jesus our Lord we know for ourselves that His authority works in our lives and sets us free!

It's interesting to consider how the beleaguered Pharisees, incensed at the stunning ministry of Jesus, argued their case. They were enraged that the Temple Guards had returned to base without a prisoner. First they resorted to accusation, suggesting

that Jesus was a deceiver. Of course, as Nicodemus, one of their number, was to point out, it would have been helpful if they had actually taken time to listen to Him. But He was already guilty as charged in their sight - why bother with evidence when you can accuse and bluster? Then the chief priests and Pharisees moved onto superiority and arrogance, suggesting that a curse was on the crowd, and haughtily insisting that none of their grand little group believed in Jesus. This was a notion that was not only pompous, but also quite wrong, as the presence of Nicodemus illustrates (3:1-10). He had quietly affirmed that Jesus was 'a teacher who had come from God.' Finally they descended into rudeness, briskly rebuking Nicodemus with their jibe about him coming from Galilee, which was despised as an area that did not keep the law with the scrupulousness of Judea. John writes here with a good dose of irony, showing the events at the festival as being like a trial - but a trial where rumour, falsehood and hypocrisy are rife.

One night the famous evangelical Bishop Gore was preaching to the young ordinands who he was going to ordain the following day. He said, "Tomorrow I will ask you: Will you, Will You, Will You? But some day you must stand before one who will look at you and ask, Have You, Have You, Have You? In John 8 the religious would delight in stoning a woman caught in adultery & Jesus, on the Father's authority, like you and me, brings God's mercy and compassion to bear: now that's authority I sit comfortably under! Is there some area of your life where you need to recognise Jesus' authority today?

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Pastor David

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