

As Americans, we are not used to calling someone of higher rank in society “our lord.” Since we do not have kings, aristocrats, or slaveholders, the only common way we use the word “lord” in our society outside of the church is in reference to landlords. Jesus is often referred to as the Lord in the Bible, and because it is such a prominent title for Jesus, it is important that we know what is meant by it.

What is a lord? A lord is someone who has authority and power over something or someone. In a lord’s relationship with others, it is his will that is obeyed. A close synonym to “lord” is the word “master.” We often use the word “master” to describe a dog-owner or the owner of servants or slaves. In the Bible, the term “lord” is also closely related to the term for a husband, who is the head of the household. Also, someone in the Bible might address an honorable person as “my lord,” showing a humble attitude of service or submission, similarly to how you might address an elder as “sir” or “ma’am.” So, we can see that a lord is someone whom people respect and obey because of his authority and character. At times, this is what certain biblical characters in the Gospels mean when they call Jesus “Lord.” These characters are recognizing him as a great teacher, healer, godly man, prophet, or master of his disciples.

God himself is also called Lord. Think of the Old Testament where God reveals himself as the LORD to Israel. You are probably familiar with the common phrases in the Old Testament: “the LORD your God” and “thus says the LORD.” Truly, the word “Lord” is most fittingly applied to God himself. He is the one with ultimate authority, ownership, and power over all things. He created and provides for all things. All things happen according to his will and plan. No one is more powerful than him. It is good and right that we understand God as *the* Lord.

The pagan nations outside of Israel (think of Egypt, Canaan, and Babylon) instead called their own gods “lords,” usually naming one god as the lord of storms, one as the lord of the sea, another as the lord of livestock, and so forth. They thought that their idols had control over certain things in the world. In fact, the name “Baal,” a famous false god in the Old Testament, means “lord.”

Let us take a look at how Paul mentions this in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6: “Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there

are many “gods” and many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

Paul begins by affirming what the whole Bible teaches, namely that there is only one true God, and that all other so-called gods do not exist. He continues by saying that there are many false gods that are worshipped throughout the world. Notice how he treats “gods” and “lords” as synonymous in verse five. He then says that we worship only one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. Here, when Paul calls Jesus the Lord, he is saying that he is divine. Throughout their history, the Jews called God “the Lord” over and over again. As I said before, you can see this throughout the Old Testament. However, when you get to the New Testament, *Jesus* is called “the Lord” over and over again, especially in the book of Luke and Acts. The name that is designated for God in the Old Testament is used for Jesus in the New Testament. This is further evidence that the believers in the New Testament saw Jesus as God. Therefore, we can see that when Jesus is called Lord, it is often a way of calling him God.

So then, why does Paul say that we worship one God, the Father, *and* one Lord, Jesus Christ? Are there two separate beings to be worshipped? Remember what we have learned about the Trinity. Here, in verse 6, Paul pointing out the distinctions between two persons of the triune God, the Father and the Son. He is saying that there is only one God, who is the Lord, but there is also a distinction between the persons of the Father and the Son.

We often can associate a lord with an iron-fisted tyrant who oppresses those under him. Jesus is not that kind of Lord. Listen to what he says in Mark 10:42-45, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Our Lord humbled himself so much that he offered up his life in order to serve us. He gave his life so that we might be forgiven of our sins. He died so that we might live.

As the Lord, Jesus demands obedience from everyone, which includes foremostly his command to repent and believe. If you are a believer, then Jesus is your Lord, and as such, he is deserving of all your praise, service, and obedience. He has bought you with his blood; you are not your own. You are the servant of the Lord, who calls you to serve others with all humility.