

He is Lord

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[0 : 00] Well, this evening I'd like us to continue the study that we've been doing which is called Flesh and Blood Jesus. And the aim of this series, as you know, has been to think through different ways in which Jesus's humanity is revealed to us in the New Testament. And as we do that, we're being reminded not only that Jesus is the Son of God, but also that He is the perfect human. In Jesus we see the glory of God being revealed, but we also see everything that humanity is meant to be. I want us to turn together in a little bit more detail to the passage that we read. And our title this evening is, He is Lord.

Let's look again at verses 38 to 39, but we'll really be looking at the section 31 to 39. We can read these words again at the end though. But I'm sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Throughout this series we've been thinking about some of the key emphasis that scripture highlights to teach us about Jesus's experience as a human. So we've looked at things like how He prayed, how He read His Bible, how He was tempted, how He got angry, and all of these combine to reveal the fullness of what Jesus experienced when He became a human.

And all of these different things that we've been looking at are pointing to the fact that when Jesus became flesh and blood, He began a remarkable journey. And that word journey is, in many ways, a key term, thinking about Jesus and His humanity. And it's a word that we're going to use for our two headings tonight. And our headings, as you can see, are His journey and our journey.

I want to just look at these together for a moment tonight. So first of all, His journey. The journey that Jesus took when He became flesh and blood is often described under two great headings. And you can see them there on the screen, humiliation and exaltation. These are the two big words that we use to describe Jesus's journey. Now when we say humiliation, we don't mean in the sense of being embattled, like we'll often use that term. What we mean is in terms of being made low. And exaltation, therefore, is the opposite of that. It speaks of being lifted high.

So in terms of Jesus's journey, you have a downward journey, which is humiliation. And then an upward journey, which is this exaltation. Just a wee reminder to mute yourself if you're not here. These two things, a downward journey and an upward journey, humiliation, exaltation.

[3 : 50] At the centre of that, of course, is the cross. The cross is the lowest point in Jesus's humiliation.

In fact, it's the destination that he reached in that humiliation. But it's also the starting point. From the cross, Jesus ascends upwards on a journey of exaltation. And all of that is described magnificently in the verses that we read at the start as our call to worship. Paul says, have this mind amongst yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself. There's the starting point of that downward humiliation, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form. He humbled himself. There's the language of humiliation by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And then from that point, something new happens. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. And the key result of this whole journey is that Jesus is Lord.

That means that he has authority. So that's really what the word Lord is speaking about. The word Lord means ruler or master. It also means that Jesus is sovereign. He now reigns as king and ruler over the whole universe. And it means that he is supreme. He is the name that is above every name.

And at his name, every other knee is going to bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus is utterly supreme. And that's the amazing journey that Jesus took. He did not hold onto the glory that he had here with the Father from all eternity, but he entered that journey of humiliation. He came down alongside us, born in poverty and obscurity, laid in a manger, growing up to experience all the struggles and difficulties of human life, going all the way to the agonizing depths of Gethsemane and the cross. But from there, he is now risen and ascended. And he is now at the right hand of God in a position of total supremacy. But the key point that I want us to highlight is that from here, all the way along this journey, at every point, Jesus takes his humanity with him. So he took the full reality of being a normal human. And in doing so, he came alongside us here as humans. But not only that, he took the responsibility of a failed humanity.

And he went to the cross in our place and died instead of us. And he rose again in resurrected humanity. And in doing so, he brings life to us all. And now he is exalted at the right hand of God, but still in his humanity. He is at the right hand of God as exalted humanity.

[7 : 53] Jesus is Lord and the Lord is flesh and blood. In other words, the Lord of the universe is one of us.

And that's the crucial point that Paul highlights in verse 34. It says in that verse, who's condemned? Christ Jesus is the one who died for us more than that who was raised. So there again, you have it, the language of humiliation, the language of exaltation. Now he is at the right hand of God. But what is he doing at the right hand of God? He is interceding for us.

Now that's something that we must never forget. That Jesus's work for you does not end at the cross.

It continues. In fact, it continues forever because he is interceding for us, for you at God's right hand. So that means that Jesus isn't just a high priest on the cross. He is a high priest forever. That means that if you are a Christian or if you become one, then today, tomorrow, and forever more, Jesus is standing at the right hand of God constantly declaring that his work on the cross is effective for you. Your debt has been paid. Your sins have been totally dealt with and no accusation whatsoever can threaten you because Jesus is interceding for you forever. And that of course is why if you want assurance for your salvation, you don't need to look back and think oh, I had an amazing experience a few years ago, or I had an amazing conversion that way back then, and I can hold on to that, or I've had some amazing experiences in my Christian life that I can hold on to because that shows me that I'm secure. It's so incredibly easy to think like that in terms of a Christian experience. If you think of this as you as a

Christian, we kind of think if you look back over time, that's your past there, we think oh, there was this great moment then when I was converted, or there was this great moment a few years after that when something incredible happened, and we think oh, if we can just hold on to the way we felt then, then you know, I know I'll be safe and I'll know I'll be secure, but you know you don't need big moments like that to hold on to, and most Christians don't have them, and you don't need them because if you want assurance, you just need to remember that right now you have a high priest, a great high priest interceding for you at the right hand of God.

[11 : 15] He is standing for you. He is advocating for you. He is guaranteeing that you are his, and he is doing that at every single second that the clock takes. So behind me there's a clock, I don't know if you can see it very well, but that is actually a clock, that silver thing, every single click of that clock, if you're a Christian, Jesus is interceding for you, and he will never stop. The exalted flesh and blood Jesus is interceding for you, and at one level we think of that and we think oh you know that's amazing, because we think of Jesus as exalted, and we think you know isn't it amazing that we can think of the exalted Jesus and say he is one of us? That is amazing, but the really amazing thing is that if you are a Christian or if you become one, the flesh and blood Jesus who is exalted at the right hand of God is looking at you and is saying she is one of nine.

When Jesus became flesh and blood he went on a journey. The climax of that journey is that now and forever more flesh and blood Jesus is Lord.

But what about our journey? How does this relate to your flesh and blood day to day life?

Well there's lots of things that we could say about that, but I want us to focus on the fact that at the end of Romans 8, the passage that you'll read for us, Paul speaks about many of the things that threaten our flesh and blood and there's two elements to this. The first group if you like is in verse 35 and here Paul talks about what we could call day to day threats to our flesh and blood. He says who shall save us from the love of Christ, shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword. Now there's a list of day to day threats to our flesh and blood. Now for us reading it today we can think well yeah that's probably not as relevant to us as it would have been in the days of Paul writing to the Romans and at first reading I can understand why you would maybe feel like that or we could think to ourselves well yeah that would be more relevant to some part of the church that's being you know much more persecuted than we are and at what level that is true because in our country we, it is the case that we enjoy many blessings and privileges and protections that make life a lot easier for us as Christians, but if we look at these words a little bit more closely I hope we can see that it's actually these words are actually a lot more relevant than we might think.

So let's just go through them one by one quite briefly so the first one we have here is tribulation. Now that can maybe seem a little bit of a strange word for our day to day lives just now.

[14 : 49] If I was to ask you you know were you under tribulation last week then I think you would probably say no but that word literally means pressure and if I was to ask you did you feel under pressure last week I think the answer is probably very likely to be yes.

Pressure is a huge issue for all of us and it can come from so many points from work from homeschooling from our peer group from money from studies that we're doing deadlines that we have to meet even from decisions that we have to make all these things can so often leave us feeling under huge pressure and our bodies our flesh and blood bodies our health can so easily buckle under that pressure. Next word is distress and now that word literally means naronesse and so it's kind of like we might describe that in terms of like feeling trapped or feeling forced into a corner and so often life does that to us and we can be forced into having to deal with a really difficult situation at work or we might be forced to face a bad diagnosis and or we might be trapped in circumstances or habits that can hurt us that kind of distress that naronesse can be a threat to us. Then we've got persecution now obviously for many Christians in the world and that's exactly what it means it's been oppressed by enemies of Christianity and as we said we are so blessed that in so many ways it's not like that for us that we have freedoms and privileges and that protect us but the word persecution literally means to be pursued or we might maybe say to be harassed and that is definitely something that we can often feel. It might not be directly because of our faith but it might be because of a difficult colleague that we've got to work with or maybe someone at school who's giving us a hard time or maybe even an abusive family member for some people day to day life can feel like you're being hounded. Then we have famine again we find ourselves thinking well you know that's maybe not so relevant to us and again that's true but at the same time we still know that we would be totally vulnerable if the food supply was interrupted or if the economy collapsed and things never got that bad during the lockdown but when people were going bananas at Tesco's and grabbing everything for themselves it did kind of make you think what would happen if this supply chain was to stop and and it's probably the case that even in Scotland there are far more people than we realise who are worrying about how to put food on the table. Next word is nakedness that again might seem a wee bit strange for us today which is that well that's not a problem any of us have but of course the key thing is that that word nakedness is really just speaking of being vulnerable or being unprepared or being exposed. Now maybe in Paul's time there was danger of being exposed and to the cold in winter particularly if you are traveling. Today we've got plenty clothes for a winter's day but it's definitely the case that we all feel hugely vulnerable to the threat of infection particularly in light of COVID and of course our naked faces are being covered all the time just now to protect our flesh and blood from a very real threat and then we have danger which just conveys

the idea of being at risk of something. Again it's for us we're not in danger from maybe from enemies or from wild animals that people might have been in earlier periods of history and other parts of the world but at the same time we all have aspects of our lives that put us at risk that might be our diet, it might be our stress levels, it might be our habits, it might be our dependence on a medication or something like that and the fact that our workplaces are kind of overflowing with risk assessments is because risk and danger is still very real. And then last of all we've got sword which of course is in many ways serving as a metaphor for violence and although we do live in a society that's full that's got a good level of law and order at the same time violent crime still happens and if you were to walk through the streets of Edinburgh at two in the morning on your own would you feel totally safe? All these things, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword they're all threats to our flesh and blood and as we said these are kind of day-to-day threats. Then though in verse 35 and 36, oh sorry rather 38 to 39, we have what we could maybe call cosmic threats. Paul talks about other things and so he talks about life and death, angels, rulers, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth and here he's really talking about big big things so whether it's in the physical realm of space and time and geography or the spiritual realm of principalities and powers there are many many cosmic forces that can threaten us and so that means that on our journey, our day-to-day flesh and blood on our flesh and blood journey both at a day-to-day level and at a cosmic level we are all facing threats. That might be physical challenges, it might be mental distress, it might be spiritual conflict, it's probably going to be a combination of them all and over all of that we all face the the brutal reality of death and in the face of that our flesh and blood is very vulnerable and Paul captures that really powerfully in an image he uses in verse 36 where he says um for your sake we've been killed all the day long we're regarded as sheep to be slaughtered and if we think of um all the chaos in the world we think of the pressures that we face around us if we think of the struggles that are within us it's so easy to feel as vulnerable and as exposed as a sheep waiting to be slaughtered.

So if we try and bring all this together um in these verses Paul is giving us two great images uh on the one hand we have Jesus here risen and exalted as the supreme lord of all he is up here exalted at the right hand of god uh over uh over everything and then we have us and we're down here like a little sheep and um i think i'm a wee bit of a blackface there we go and we're like a sheep down at the bottom exposed and vulnerable and we are facing all these threats uh danger and nakedness famine sword pressure distress and we're facing the dangers of of heights and depths and time and eternity and powers and forces and all sorts of things we have all these threats and pressing in on us and the result is that we can feel so exposed so threatened and so vulnerable and perhaps a good way of diagnosing whether that applies to you is to ask yourself the question do you worry about stuff because our worrying is a symptom of the fact that we feel exposed we're all too aware that there's threats around us so the result is that we've got Jesus up here and we are down here and then we've got all these threats pushing in on us all around us but the absolutely amazing thing about these verses is that Paul is seeing that nothing can separate you from him and that means that there is an impenetrable defense uniting you to Jesus and protecting you from all these threats and whether these are day to day ones like what we have in verse 35 or whether they are cosmic ones as we have in verses 38 to 39 they've all got one thing in common they are all powerless when it comes to separating you from Jesus in fact the only thing that these threats can ever do the closer and closer they get and the harder and harder they push there's only one thing that they can do and you know what it is the only thing they can do is push you closer to Jesus because ultimately the biggest thing that these threats can do to you is to take your life and they will ultimately but when they do they are just sending you straight into the arms of Jesus and the reason that nothing can separate us from Jesus as Paul is saying here is because his journey reaches us right where we are and his journey takes us right to where he wants us to be if we go back to that diagram we've got Jesus in his humiliation and in his exaltation at the

center of it is the cross in his humiliation jesus reaches right down to where we are exactly where you are in all your brokenness and mistakes and regrets no matter how deep you feel you've gone jesus comes low enough he comes right down to reach you where you are but in his exaltation he takes you right where he wants you to be and that reaches the full reality of being brought into jesus's eternal kingdom where he reigns where death is crushed and where we have eternal life in him and so he reaches us right here and he takes us all the way up here to where he wants us to be and all of that is because by faith we are united to jesus on this journey we are united to him in his humiliation so that means that that he's come alongside us he's taken the same flesh and blood that we have but he didn't stop there he's taken his our sin onto his flesh and blood body he's died in our place his flesh was broken his blood was shed to make atonement for our sin and we are then also united to him in his exaltation so that he is raised to life so are we he is established in his kingdom we are part of it he is lord and we are his the flesh and blood jesus is exalted here and he is interceding on your behalf because you are united to him the flesh and blood jesus is interceding for his flesh and blood brothers and sisters he's doing it on behalf of you and that of course means that the the eternal life that jesus offers us and gives us is eternal flesh and blood life so that means that the great goal of christianity is not that we're going to be floating around in kind of spiritual a spiritual haze in heaven as kind of floaty spirits in heaven that's not the goal the goal of the gospel is that we will be walking tall and running free in our resurrected flesh and blood bodies in a new creation in a beautiful community in a beautiful new world but i think the most amazing thing of all is that we've got this great journey jesus humiliated you have the cross exaltation we are united to him in it all and at the heart of that union is love more than anything else the thing that you cannot be separated from is the love of god in christ jesus and that's because at the core of the christian gospel is the eternal immeasurable incredible love of god we look at jesus's journey we've got his journey on the screen there before you why why did he go on this journey why humiliation because he loves you why the cross because he loves you why exaltation because he loves you

[30 : 56] why intercession because he loves you why no separation because he loves you why did jesus become flesh and blood because he utterly utterly loves you so let me conclude and and as we conclude i just want to highlight four implications that i hope we can take away with us number one all of this should shape our perspective on jesus we must never forget that jesus is flesh and blood and we must never forget that jesus is the exalted lord and that means two crucial things it means that your view of jesus can never be too high jesus is the exalted king of kings and lord of lords he is utterly supreme your view of jesus can never ever ever be too high but at the same time your view of jesus can never be too near your view of jesus can never be too near to you because he is utterly with you he's utterly committed to you jesus is lord jesus is one of us and you are his so it should shape our perspective on jesus number two all of this should shape a perspective on rubbish things that happen in our lives if you're a christian um or if you become a christian when we face rubbish things in life we must never forget that jesus knows exactly how that feels but at the same time um when we face rubbish stuff in our lives we must never forget that ultimately all these threats are actually bringing you closer to jesus often um often when things are are tough in life and and when we're having a terrible week or we feel like just we feel so flat or we feel that everything is just going wrong and everything seems so confusing and when when we have a really rubbish week it's so easy to find ourselves asking the question where is jesus because sometimes it just feels like he's just miles away and and when things are hard and and if that's when jesus feels further away and follow all of us it's so easy to feel like that and you know if you do feel like that that you've had a tough week and you think well where is jesus is that's how every pretty much every christian feels when they have a bad week but if you think about a really difficult rubbish thing happening into your life what is the theological answer to that question if you ask where is jesus what is the theological answer to that question the theological answer is that jesus is another step closer because all these pressures are just bringing you closer and closer to him. Number three this should shape a perspective on each other there's an awful lot of important words in roman's chapter eight it's one of the richest chapters in the whole bible and but one of the most important words of all in these verses that we've been looking at is the second last one the word hour

the humiliated exalted lord jesus christ is our lord and that's a great reminder of the fact that the hope and the security that we have in jesus are collective so yes they are personal they're so beautifully personal but they're never ever individualistic in other words the fact that it's impossible for us to be separated from jesus also means that as christians it's impossible for us to be separated from each other and that's a powerful sort of comfort when we think of people that we love but christians any separation that death brings is only ever brief and it's also a powerful source of healing when we think of people who let us down we still belong together as christians and that's why we always need to stick with each other even when we let each other down so we need to have a this needs to shape our perspective on jesus it needs to shape our perspective on rubbish things it needs to shape our perspective on one another and last of all it needs to shape our perspective on this week so i hope that the week ahead is going to be a good week for you but i'm pretty sure that for all of us and this week is going to bring pressures threats and things that are going to make us worry but if you're a christian is there a single moment this week in the week ahead when jesus isn't lord is there a single moment when you are not united to him is there a single moment when he is not interceding for you is there a single moment when you aren't his the answer to all those questions is never never if you are trusting in jesus or if you put your trust in jesus tonight your flesh and blood life has been totally eternally transformed by the humiliated exalted flesh and blood jesus amen let's pray father we thank you so so much that you sent your son and gave him to be our saviour and lord jesus we thank you for that journey that you undertook a journey of humiliation and exaltation all so that we might be saved and now we just rejoice and marvel in the fact that you are lord and we pray that that would shape the way that we think and the way that we go into the week ahead we thank you so much for your extraordinary unfailing love and for the hope and healing that you give us in the gospel we pray that these truths would be written on our hearts and that it would shape the way that we think and that it would shape all that we do in the week ahead in jesus name amen