

“Behold the man!”

The titles and descriptions of Jesus of Nazareth

20. The ruler of the ecclesia

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THESE TITLES will impress upon our minds the position which Jesus Christ holds as the ruler of the ecclesia and ultimately of the world. The position is clear: if we will not have him reign over us then we will not be there when he reigns. Our wish will be granted, and when the Kingdom is established we will not be subject to him because we will have been destroyed. It is much more pleasant to contemplate this: if Christ reigns over us now, we will reign with him then.

Master (overseer)

The word means to be a supervisor or an overseer. Jesus is called this seven times in the New Testament, all of them in Luke's Gospel. Recognition is given by the disciples that Jesus is in charge, that what he says they will do. There is in some of the references an expectation that Jesus is in control and knows what to do, as in “Master, master, we perish” (Lk. 8:24) and “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (17:13).

That the disciples obeyed the instructions of Jesus, even when they evidently thought that they were questionable, demonstrates the position of authority that he had. Consider in this regard the fishermen who had caught nothing: “And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net” (5:5). Peter evidently thought that the instruction of Jesus to cast the net out again was futile, yet because it was Jesus who requested it he obeyed. When the net became so full that it broke, Peter repented of his doubt and said, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (v. 8).

Does Jesus occupy that kind of place in our hearts? Would we obey in the face of our ‘better and more experienced’ (or so we might think) judgement? It is to his credit, and tells us of the authority of Jesus, that Peter obeyed.

Bishop of your souls

This title is found in 1 Peter 2:25. The word ‘shepherd’ is considered elsewhere. The word ‘bishop’ is the Greek *episkopos* and means an overseer (*epi*, over; *skopos*, to see). The overseer is the one who has the duty to see that things are done correctly, and the authority to make changes and carry them out. The word is used only this once of Jesus; the other times it is used of the elders of the ecclesia.

Head

This title is used several times of Christ in the New Testament. The word in the Greek is *kephalē*. We may see that it is very similar to the medical prefix ‘cephalo-’, which indicates the head. The head is used as a metaphor, both in Greek and English, for that which is in control. In this way Jesus is said to be the head of the ecclesia: “. . . and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19). Here Jesus is described as “the Head”, that is, in control of and giving direction and nourishment to the entire body.

Elsewhere the Apostle Paul makes it clear that the headship of Jesus Christ is an authority to direct the members of the body: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). There is a Divinely appointed order of rulership. Not only is Christ the head of the body, he is the head of all the men and women who constitute that body. It is improper for us to be acting in any way contrary to our ruler, or even a way that would suggest to others that Christ is not our Head. Many of us will have the plaques in our homes that commence with the words, “Christ is the Head of this house”. Let us see to it that we submit to his instructions and follow his example.

Governor

This title is found in Matthew 2:6, where we read, "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel". Here "Governor" means to be a leader, one who rules or has authority. We ask, For what purpose was Jesus to be such a Governor? The answer is given in the verse: that he might rule Israel.

The word "rule" here is also interesting, meaning 'to feed or shepherd animals'. Mostly it is used in the New Testament in this way. The usage of this word in Revelation as applied to Christ is worth investigating: "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them [the redeemed]" (7:17); "he shall rule them [the nations] with a rod of iron" (19:15). Clearly there is a twofold aspect to the work of shepherding. Jesus Christ will be both the gentle feeder of his sheep and the strong leader of the wayward.

This introduces us to the kind of governor Jesus Christ will be. In the Kingdom, those of his flock who desire to be fed will be lovingly cared for; those who desire to rebel will find a strong and powerful ruler who will discipline them into submission with an iron rod.

In Hebrews 13:17 we are exhorted to be obedient to such men: "Obey them that have the rule [same word as 'Governor'] over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you". How much more should we submit to the Governor who rules our lives! The consequences of a lack of submission to his directives will be disastrous.

Chief ruler

1 Chronicles 5:2. This equates to the meaning of the title 'governor' found in the New Testament.

[\(To be continued\)](#)