

The Impeccability of Christ

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If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn with me to the fourth chapter of the book of Hebrews. The message this morning is going to be doctrinal. It might be a little heavy doctrinally, so I want you to put on your horn-rimmed glasses and follow along as we speak, and from time-to-time turning to various passages of Scripture we give, and let's see what God has to say. It's very important what God has to say. It is not important what I have to say because what I have to say doesn't amount to a hill of beans; it's what God has to say, the word of God that liveth and abideth forever. Don't ever speak lightly of the Scriptures. They are our only rule of faith and practice and every preacher, whoever he may be, in whatever size church he may be pastoring, has a primary obligation to preach and teach the word of God to his congregation. We're living in a day when there are too many games being played in the pulpit and we need to see what God has to say.

In Hebrews 4:14-16,

“¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. ¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Note that part of verse 15 that says about Christ, *he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*. The subject this morning, and I'm using a 50 cent word, a 50 cent term, because it expresses fully the meaning of the doctrine, and that is the *impeccability* of Christ.

I grew up on the preaching of Oliver B. Greene back in Carolina and I used to love to go and hear him in his tent meetings and I also loved to hear him or have heard him on radio many, many times. One day he was preaching on a text and he said, “I believe in the peccability of Christ.” Now, at that time, I had no earthly idea what peccability was but because he said it, I thought it must be so. The very next day, I was listening to him on the radio and he said, “I have a profound apology to make.” He said, “Yesterday I was trying to impress you by being a big preacher, a fancy preacher. I used a fancy term and I said that I believed in the peccability of Christ.” He said, “That's not so and I'm sorry I said that. I do, however, believe in the impeccability of Christ.”

He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. There are five cardinal truths that are set forth about Jesus Christ in this text that I've just read for your hearing. What are they? **1.** We have a great high priest in heaven. There are many men on this earth religiously who call themselves priests and professionally fulfill the office of priest in certain churches but, dear friends, we as God's people today, supersede all of that. We have a high priest not on earth, we have a high priest in heaven. **2.** The name of that high priest is Jesus the Son of God. **3.** He can be touched with our weaknesses. In other words, he understands what we go through; he feels with us. Not only does he sympathize with our needs, he empathizes with our needs. **4.** He was completely tempted as a human being. **5.** He was without sin.

The impeccability of Christ is a very precious doctrine in the word of God. It means that Christ knew no sin but also that he could not sin. I proceed no further without making this clear that there is a great argument today among preachers about the impeccability of Christ that they believe he knew no sin but they will not go as far as saying that he could not sin. You may have some predisposed conclusions about that yourself. Christ said to the Pharisees in John 8:46, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* They couldn't convict him of sin because he knew no sin and 1 John 3:5 says, *You know he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin,* meaning "in him is no sin nature." Everybody you know has a sin nature. When you look in the mirror, the first person you see has a sin nature but in him was no sin nature. The reason for his sinlessness is twofold: first of all, he had no desire whatsoever to sin. Christ never had to wrestle around with whether he would commit sin or not commit sin. He had no desire for it, none whatsoever. Have you ever drunk pig slop before? I hope you don't raise your hand. I never have and by the grace of God, I never will because I don't have a nature for pig slop. Jesus Christ had no nature for sin. It was impossible, completely impossible for him to sin.

There are four levels of thought concerning Christ's impeccability. One, There are those who believe that he could have sinned and he did. This was the position of the Pharisees. In John 9, when Christ healed the man born blind and healed him on the Sabbath day, John 9:16 and 24, *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?* They believed that Christ was a sinner. *Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.* So there are those who have believed that Christ could have sinned and that he did. Secondly, there are those who believe he could have sinned but he chose not to. Now, you've got some mealy-mouthed Baptists in that group. He could have sinned but he chose not to. This is the position of the fundamentalists who love to use that verse in Philippians 2:7, *He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.* They say if he was made in the likeness of men, he could do what men do but chose not to. They would say as the Son of man he could have sinned but as a Son of God he chose not to.

Third, there are those who believe that he could not have sinned but he sure wanted to. He could not have sinned but he wanted to. This comes from the college of idiots. Matthew 26:39, Christ prayed, *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* I heard and International Bible teacher and evangelist make this statement when he read

that verse. He said, "Christ almost lost it in Gethsemane. He almost lost it. He got that close to losing it in Gethsemane."

Christ had no desire for sin. He would not sin and, ladies and gentlemen, he could not sin. Impeccability. If he could have sinned on this earth, then he could sin today in heaven. "Why do you say that, Preacher?" Because he's the same yesterday, today and forever. If he could have sinned on this earth, he could sin today in heaven and, my dear friends, if he did, we have no Savior and we have no absolute certainty of salvation.

Having said that by way of introduction, let's talk about the meaning of temptation. I feel like this is an interesting subject because it's something that all of us are affected with. The meaning of temptation. What is the definition? The noun "temptation" is the Greek word "peirasmos" and it means "trial; proof; or temptation". The verb "tempted" is the Greek word "peirazo" and it means "to test; to try; or to tempt." Both words may be used in either a good or a bad sense. For instance, temptation or trial or tempted can mean subjected to solicitation to do wrong or it could be a trial of our faith but it is the same Greek word. For instance, take a moment to turn to James 1:2. Have you ever wondered about this verse before? *My brethren*, and he's talking to God's people here, *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations*. The word is "peirasmos" but there it means "trials." God knows, my dear friends, that Christians ought not to go around rejoicing over the fact that the devil is after them all the time to get them to do wrong, or to solicit them to do evil. He's talking about the word "peirasmos" as it means "a trial of our faith" because verse 3 makes that clear, *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience*. However, verse 14 says, *But every man is tempted, peirazo, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*. That's what we normally think of temptation but there it is used differently because the word "peirazo" and "peirasmos" can mean "trying" someone or "proving" someone as well as "tempting" someone.

In Hebrews 11:17, the Scripture says, *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac*. Now, if you go over to Genesis 22:1 the translation is a little different. It says there *that God did tempt Abraham*. Hebrews said that he was tried; Abraham was tried. Genesis said God did tempt Abraham. A better translation for Genesis 22:1 is "that God tried Abraham." How do we know that God did not solicit Abraham to do evil? Because, my dear friends, God cannot be tempted, neither tempteth he any man. God is not in the tempting business, he is in the trying business and if you doubt my word on it, read the book of Job. That's what it's all about: God was trying Job. He tries his children. The context determines the text and how it is used.

Now, the nature of temptation. The nature of temptation. In James 1, since we're there, let's read verses 13-15: *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*. I want to give you temptation in slow-motion; it usually never happens in slow-motion. Sometimes it's so quick you don't even recognize it until it is too late, but I'd like to give you a picture of temptation this morning in slow-motion. There are about six ingredients in temptation. 1) There is Presentation. (You ought to write these down.) 2) There is Realization. 3)

There is Desire. 4) There is Debate, "Should I? Or should I not?" 5) Decision
6) Consummation, that's the very act itself.

Presentation: There it is: you hadn't planned on it but there it is and it is a temptation. It is presented as something for you to do and Satan is behind every temptation but as a believer, when you are confronted with it, you immediately realize something's not right here and the reason you realize that is because somebody lives in you that's smarter than you are and that's the Holy Spirit of God, and he's saying to you, "Leave it alone." It's a part of temptation. Then there is the desire, "Well, I just can't help it. I like it. I can't help it." Then there is the debate, "Should I? Or shouldn't I? If I do, will I get caught? And what will people think if they find out I did this?" this momentary debate that goes on over temptation. Then there is the decision, "I'm going to," followed by the consummation, the act itself.

The Bible says that Christ was *in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*. How far into this slow-motion did our Lord get without defiling himself and without committing sin? Was he the victim of presentation? You'd better believe it. He saw much evil. Satan said, *Command the stones be made bread*. He could see that. It was presented but he being God, my dear friends, realized that, "I did not come to do that." He knew it was wrong and he knew who the author of it was. I believe that's as far as it went. I do not believe there was any desire whatsoever in the heart of Christ to participate in what the devil tempted him with, therefore, there was no debate about it, there was no decision concerning it other than "I'll not do it," and there was no act, therefore, he was without sin. Never get the idea that being tempted means you have sinned. Temptation is not a sin. It is the yielding to the temptation that is sin.

So how far did Joseph get? Now, Joseph had a time of it because he was sold into slavery. He became a slave and a servant in Potiphar's household and there came a time on a certain day that Potiphar had to go out of town and his wife didn't much care for Potiphar because he had a beer-belly gut and he was getting old and he tried to be the head of the house. She didn't want to have anything to do with him but oh, Joseph, ah, he was a good looking kid and she set her eyes on him and made herself available to him. He was tempted. Was it presented to him? You had better believe it was. Did he realize something wasn't right about it? You'd better believe he did. Did he desire? I'm not going to judge him. I don't know what was in his mind but if he was a human being, he probably did. Did he debate about it? He probably did that too. God is greater than this temptation. What was his decision? "I will not do it," as a matter of fact, he ran so fast to get away from her, he ran out of his coat. So there was no sin. Joseph did not sin.

What about Achan? Achan went all the way. In the book of Joshua 7:19-21, *And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me*. Joshua told Achan and the rest of the people and the men who were taking the city, *When you go in to take the city, don't take anything that belongs to the people because it's accursed. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and I saw two hundred shekels of silver, and I saw a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth*

in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.” If you're reading verse 21 of Joshua 7, he said, “When I saw, I coveted and I took”. You need to circle that. That's slow-motion in sin, isn't it? I saw it, I wanted it and I took it. Jesus Christ was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

There are three ingredients in temptation. I believe probably in every temptation you can find out what those three ingredients are by looking to 1 John 2:15-17, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, put it down, 1) **the lust of the flesh**, and 2) **the lust of the eyes**, and 3) **the pride of life**.* These ingredients are in temptation. The lust of the flesh does not necessarily mean adultery or rape or the wrong kind of thoughts toward the opposite sex, nor in our day and time, in our generation, even toward the same sex, but it is that which satisfies the body whether it's eating too much, drinking too much, whether it is sex, whatever it is, it's to satisfy the gnawings of the flesh. The lust of the eyes is to covet and want everything you see to make it your own. Thirdly, there's the pride of life, “I succeeded. Everybody ought to give me a hand.” Those three areas are in temptation.

Let me give you quickly two examples of that. In the Garden of Eden, there was a lady by the name of Eve who was married to Adam. Satan came onto the scene and he tempted Eve to go ahead and eat the fruit that God said “*thou shalt not eat of it.*” Now, listen carefully to this: in Genesis 3:6, this is her response and her observation to that, *She saw that the tree was good for food.* That's the **lust of the flesh**. Secondly, she saw it “was pleasant to the eyes,” that's the **lust of the eyes**. The first one being the lust of the flesh, “the tree was good for food,” now “pleasant to the eyes,” that's the lust of the eyes and it was “a tree desired to make one wise,” that's **the pride of life**.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was presented with these same three ingredients in the wilderness when he was led by the Spirit to be tempted of Satan. In Matthew 4:2 and 3, the Bible says, “And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.” You say, “Well, wasn't he God?” He was God but he was also man, the God-man, he was Incarnate. “And when the tempter came to him, he said, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* That is the lust of the flesh. Verse 6 has to do with the pride of life, *And saith unto him, If you be the Son of God, cast yourself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Boy, wouldn't you like to be able to say, “All I've got to do is snap my finger and the angels come and fight my battles for me”? Pride of life. Then, my dear friends, we find the lust of the eyes in verses 8 and 9, *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* “You worship me and I'll give you all of this.” That, my dear friends, is the lust of the eyes. He was in all points tempted as we are. That does not mean that Christ faced every little single individual temptation that you and I face. Somebody has said, “Do you think he was tempted to commit adultery? Do you think he was tempted to steal?” No, I believe it pertained to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life and he was tempted in all three areas, yet he sinned not. He sinned not.

I want to establish something in this message, it's very important, and that is Jesus Christ was tempted. He was tempted, not tried. Sure, his Father tried him but tempted by the devil to do something wrong, to sin. He was tempted. Hebrews 4:15 makes that clear, *He was in all points tempted*. You say, "I've got some preachers, well, they have trouble with that. They want to take that word and say that doesn't mean he was really tempted, he was just kind of tried a little bit." No, he was tempted. If he wasn't tempted, we've got the wrong word there.

Now stay with me and if you're worried about what you're going to do for lunch, we already have it cooking and normally I preach two hours but I'm going to cut it down to an hour today, I don't want to run you off. W. E. Best, for many, many, many years was a Bible teacher in Houston, Texas and Mr. Best wrote a whole lot of books. One night, my phone rang about 9:30 or 10:00 and I answered it and he said, "Is this Dan Cozart?" I said, "Yes sir." He said, "My name is Will Best. I'm from Houston, Texas." I said, "Brother Best, I know a little bit about you." Brother Best published I know at least anywhere from 23, I have 23 books of his, (incidentally, around 23-25 books). He's gone on to be with the Lord. Many years ago, Will Best wrote a booklet entitled "Studies in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ." I have it in my study. One chapter of that booklet deals with Christ's temptation. On page 75, Best states, "The Incarnation made the reality of Christ's temptation possible. The Incarnate Christ was tempted." You see, I don't have a problem with that. I believe he was tempted. I do. I believe he was tempted; the Bible says he was tempted. On page 76, the author states, "The Incarnate Son of God was tempted but there was not the struggle of the two natures." I agree with that but, dear friends, 20 years later, Best wrote another book entitled "Christ Could Not Be Tempted." I have that in my study. On page 1, Mr. Best states, "The study of the noun 'peirasmos' and the verb 'peirazo' will prove there is no justification for translating these words as 'temptation' or 'to tempt' when they are used in reference to Jesus Christ. The idea that Jesus Christ could be tempted is unfounded in the biblical concept of Christ's person, therefore," Best said, "he could not be tempted."

Have you got a couple of ears? Listen carefully: Jesus Christ was tempted. He was tried but he was tempted by the devil. May I say, it was not God being tempted. You see, Best uses the verse that "God cannot be tempted" and since Jesus is God, he was not tempted as God, he was tempted as the Son of man. When Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary, it's erroneous to say God died. The Son of God died but God did not die so we're not doing damage to that verse that says "God cannot be tempted." Therefore, could Christ be tempted or could he not? I believe not only was he capable of being tempted but I believe he was actually tempted; *he was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*.

The reality of temptation, this is DWC, okay? The reality of temptation is not necessarily (I wish you'd listen to me) the reality of temptation; it is not necessarily limited to the response of the one being tempted but it is also determined by the purpose of the tempter. There was no inherent weakness in Christ for lust to be stirred up when he was tempted by Satan, still he was nonetheless tempted by Satan. It was a real temptation as far as the tempter was concerned. Satan was not playing games with the Son of God, it was a bona fide temptation not merely a test or trial. Satan didn't come to test the Son of God, he came to tempt the Son of God.

Hebrews 4:15, the Scripture teaches Christ was tempted. I'll run through these quickly. *He was in all points tempted as we are.* In Hebrew 2:18, *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to suffer them that are tempted.* If temptation in that context does not mean temptation, how can he succor you who are tempted if he was never tempted? It is because he was tempted and, therefore, he can succor us who are tempted. Matthew 4:1, very clear, *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* In Hebrews 5:7 and 8, *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.* I believe that Christ was tempted because the Scripture teaches it. I believe that Christ was tempted because the scholars who have forgotten more than I will ever learn believe that he was tempted.

Charles Spurgeon, perhaps one of the greatest preachers since the day of Paul the Apostle, on Hebrews 4:15, Mr. Spurgeon says, "I must now notice very briefly in the third place that our Lord had a tender training." Hear what he says of it, "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Spurgeon says, "Beloved, our Lord was tried as we are, we know that. He was tried to the manner of his bodily ills; he was tried mentally; he was tried in spiritual distress. He was tried like as we are but who are meant by the 'we'? That, again, like the 'our' it means he was tempted like you and me." Then he says this, "Jesus Christ passed through a training similar to ours. The discipline of life for all the children is much the same. The first-born is tried as the rest of the household are tried but the text says 'tempted' and that bears a darker meaning than 'tried.' Our Lord could never have fallen the victim to temptation but throughout his life, he was the object of it. He could never have been so tempted as that the sin of temptation could spot his soul, far from it, yet remember that in the wilderness he was tempted to unbelief." Mr. Spurgeon came to the conclusion that Christ was tempted.

John Gill on Hebrews 2:18. Sometimes when you're bored, don't have anything to do, come by my study and I'll let you borrow a book by John Gill and you'll read a while. You will be reading a while. He takes chapter 2 of Hebrews, verse 18, *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted.* Mr. Gill said, "The devil solicited to one thing and to another but in vain through these temptations. They were troublesome. They were disagreeable. They were abhorrent to the pure and holy nature of Christ," and he said, "even the afflictions which are sometimes called temptations, in this sense, Christ suffered being tempted with outward poverty and meanness and slight and neglect from his own relations and with a general contempt and reproach among men. He was often tempted, states Mr. Gill.

Having established that I hope, let's move on to this close-to-final point: Christ did not sin. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Yet without sin. In the beginning of the message this morning, I quoted what the Pharisees in their encounter of Christ, they believed that he sinned but Christ said to them, *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* Is there anybody in the world that can convince the fact that Jesus Christ ever sinned? He never did. 1 Peter 2:22, "Who," Christ, "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." 1 Peter 1:18-19, *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish*

and without spot. Listen to Judas, I have betrayed the innocent blood. Have you ever misquoted that before? I have many, many times. How do you misquote it? "I have betrayed innocent blood." He didn't say that, he said, "I have betrayed the innocent blood." What is so much about the blood of Christ that makes it the innocent blood? Because everybody else's blood is contaminated. Listen to Pilate, I find no fault in him. Pilate examined him and he said, "After all of my research and examination, I find no fault in him." Listen to the repentant thief, We received the due reward of our deeds but this man hath done nothing amiss. And if that doesn't provoke some joy in your heart, think of this: the Father in heaven said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. He could never do that if Christ had a sin nature. Christ could not sin. Not only would not sin, Christ could not sin. You know, he was manifested to take away our sins and in him is no sin.

John 14:30, *Hereafter I will not talk much with you for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me. Did you know that was in the Bible? John 14:30? Who is the prince of this world? The prince of this world is the devil and Christ said, The prince of this world is coming after me. He cometh but he hath nothing in me." What did he mean by that? Christ was saying, "There's not a thing in the world in me that Satan can use to stir up sin in my life. I have nothing to do with him." It would be good for you to be able to say that, wouldn't it? "I don't have anything to do with the devil." Why sure you do. He looks forward from the time you get up to the time you go to bed, he knows exactly what your weaknesses are and he doesn't prey on your neighbor's weakness, he preys on your weakness. But he couldn't find anything to work on in Christ. Isn't that good?*

Luke 1:35, *And the angel answered and said unto Mary, let me set the stage quickly. "Mary, you're going to have a baby." She said, "A total impossibility. I'm a virgin. How can a virgin have a baby?" The angel said, "I'm glad you asked, here's the answer to that." "The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, watch it, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. That holy thing, not that holy person. That holy thing. That holy thing does not refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, it refers to his human nature and it is called a holy thing. Mr. Gill says, "The human nature of Christ is here called a thing for it was not a person. It never subsisted of itself." I had to look that one up. "But there was taken at once into union with the person of the Son of God otherwise there would be two persons in Christ whereas he is God and man in one person and it is said to be holy, being free from the original pollution and sin."*

I don't know if I'll read all this to you. You've been very, very patient but it is so very, very important. Norval Geldenhuys is the preacher of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and he wrote these words. He said, "The angel in these words does not merely announce that the incarnation of Jesus will take place through the direct influence of the Holy Ghost, but also expressly declares that He who will through Him be begotten as Man will be free from all taint of sin—He will be the Holy One."

Every person that's born into this world is born a sinner. We're born with a depraved nature. You don't have to teach us how to sin, we already know all about it, my dear friends. Little children don't have to be taught, "Now honey, I'm going teach you how to

lie.” You don't have to teach them, they already know how to lie. We are born sinners. Christ had no original taint of sin. He had no sinful nature. He could not sin.

Let me conclude this message by giving you Mr. Best once again, though I don't agree with his statement on Christ could not be tempted, but it raises a question and I'd like to conclude with it: why is the impeccability of Christ so important? “Brother Cozart, why do you deal with these things? Why is this so important that He was impeccable? Why is that important?” I think Mr. Best gives us an excellent answer. He says, “The very heart of Christianity is the person of Christ. Moreover, the Scriptures focus not only on the person Jesus Christ but also on his work; however, we must ever keep in mind that Christ's person preceded his work for he is the eternal Son of God. Salvation, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, is vitally connected to his person. His person, not his work, gives value to his work. If Jesus Christ is not who the Bible represents him to be, then his work as Redeemer and Savior would be invalid. Thus, those who affirm his peccability invalidate his work. There is such an inseparability between Christ's person and work that any separation would cause one to go astray with respect to both. Thus, the slightest abstract notion of his person would take from the real essence of his work. Moreover, an isolated consideration of his work is impossible because it can only be known in connection with his person. His person cannot be isolated from his work and his work cannot be isolated from his person.”

Let me reread the text, *He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*. Our high priest can be touched with the feelings of the sinners infirmities but he can never be touched by Satan and sin. Jesus Christ is the impeccable Son of God. Do you know him as your Savior? Do you know him as your Lord? Not as one of many lords, but as the only Lord God there is, this man, Jesus Christ.