

Our Lord

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[0 : 00] Hello. Praise Yahweh that you are all here today. Today's sermon is called Our Lord.

! It is a pervasive and powerful theme in the Bible that is worthy of much reflection, as it helps us understand our relationship to Him and to all that He has made, objects and persons.

Lord is a political term, so a quick definition of politics is in order. My working definition is this.

Politics is the theory and practice of who gets to tell who what to do. To put it another way, politics is the theory and practice of what persons get to tell other persons what to do, at least if it's among us. It's simple, but in the political science, theological, philosophical debates around that, you could probably get something deeper, but I don't think it ever escapes this simple definition. Ultimately, it's who gets to tell who what to do. I think you can run deep with it. So my thesis is this. The ultimate political system is a deeply theological one.

Yahweh, our triune God, is the ultimate personal God and Lord. And all three persons of the Trinity get to tell us what to do in a way that no one else can, and in ways that no one else can usurp.

Even if the pathetically rebellious forces around us, and in us, superficially make it seem otherwise, and even if, in the depths of our suffering, the said pathetic rebellious forces make their petty, doomed, pyrrhic victories seem final in our eyes, make it seem like we're forever stuck in the prison cell. Yahweh will always be Lord. All other lords are only there because Yahweh put them there, and just because he put them there does not mean that they will do good. It may not even mean that they are capable of doing a good job. Before we get into it, though, let me start with Acts 17, 10 through 15. That again is Acts 17, 10 through 15.

[2 : 23] Acts 17, 10 through 15. Here reads the word of Yahweh. The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica.

They received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

So reads the word of Yahweh. This is definitely a passage worthy of its own study. All biblical passages are, and like much of Acts, this section represents a piece of the intentional whirlwind of the Acts of the Apostles, the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 46] However, there are two quick reasons for why I start with this passage that I believe can be stated briefly. The first is that it shows what it means to be noble, which for the record is a term that has political connotations.

The nobility of the Berean Jews is directly tied to them receiving the new word of God from Paul and Silas, but also systematically checking it with the word of God that they already had to make sure that what came from Paul and Silas matched up.

They did not assume the truth of what Paul and Silas said, and neither should you do so with me. Close to the beginning of the documentary, Puritan, which I meant to have a copy of right here to show, totally forgot about that, Dr. John Piper, one of the main guests in the documentary, says, I do not live my life in search of new ideas.

I live my life in search of help. He laughs and then says, I need help. I need help to know God. I need help to love him. I need help to kill my sin.

I need help to be a more kind person. I need help to be a better husband. I need help to be a better father. I need help to figure out life. And I just feel like a cauldron of needs.

[5 : 08] Now, Dr. John Piper has been so blessed with being inherently biblical in his thinking and speaking that he is able to move on to incorporating the thoughts of the Puritans into his help.

But I am at a far more basic level. And not just because I am special needs when it comes to marriage and family. I live my life in search of new ideas as a painkiller to mask the real diagnosis. I need help. I desperately need help. And maybe, just maybe, if I can get it through my stubborn skull that Yahweh is the Lord of my whole being, from my atoms to my soul, then I will seek him for help.

The one saving feature of this wannabe self-exhortation is that, to the extent that the Lordship of Yahweh is in the Bible, is the same extent to which I am not the only one that needs to know this. Even if I am still the one that needs to know it and imbue it and practice it the most. Praise be to Yahweh that he and his word are so universal that my needs can be turned into our edification.

[6 : 20] At least if I do this right. May Yahweh have mercy. That is why y'all need to be Puritans when it comes to my words, to discern what is biblical. May the Holy Spirit present with us make it easy.

The second quick reason for the Berean passage is that it also gives us insight into what the Bereans studied, and therefore what we should study.

It is clear that the Bereans examined the scriptures daily, and that the scripture is indeed biblical scripture. But we still need a bit more nuance. At the time of this account, it is possible that none of the New Testament had been written down yet.

And even if some of it had, then it is still unlikely that a Jewish synagogue would have received it. But, as the text clearly points out, they had scripture.

So, what scripture did they have? They had the Old Testament. The Jewish Testament. The first and foundational half of the word of God. The Old Testament may be woefully incomplete without the New Testament, but the New Testament is woefully foundationless without the Old Testament.

[7 : 36] It is what Paul and Silas used to defend their claims about Jesus, and it is what the Bereans used to verify their claims about Jesus. Therefore, in our discussion of the Lord, that is where we will start.

So, please turn in your Bibles to Genesis 1, 1 through chapter 2, verse 3, which I love, is found on page 1 of your pew Bibles.

And again, for y'all digital Bibles, note that the ESV is what I'll be reading from, the English Standard Version. That is Genesis 1, 1 through Genesis 2, verse 3, found on page 1 of the pew Bibles.

Genesis 1, 1 through 2, 3. Sorry, I don't know why I blurred that. Genesis 1, 1 through 2, 3. Please stand, if you are able, for the reading of Yahweh's words.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

[8 : 58] And God said, Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from darkness.

God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And then there was evening, and there was morning, the first day. And God said, Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.

And God made the expanse, and separated the waters that were under the expanse, from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse heaven.

And there is evening, and there is morning, the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let dry land appear.

And it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called seas. And God saw that it was good.

[10 : 00] And God said, Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.

And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the third day. And God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens, to separate the day from night.

And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years. And let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon the earth. And it was so.

And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate light from darkness.

[11 : 11] And God saw that it was good. And there is evening, and there is morning, the fourth day. And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth, across the expanse of the heavens.

So God created the great sea creatures, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.

And there was evening, and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their kinds, livestock, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth, according to their kinds.

And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth, according to their kinds, and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground, according to its kind.

[12 : 19] And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. And God blessed them.

And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. And have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.

[13 : 27] And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, all the hosts of them.

And on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day, and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

So reads the word of Yahweh. Let us pray. Our Father, our Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you that it has been set aside for us.

Thank you that it can be proclaimed today. Now may it be understood. May your spirit be the dominant force on that. May all that is edifying from this pulpit be remembered.

May all that is not be forgotten. First and foremost, may we be your people today. May we be your people learning your word. In your precious name I pray. Amen. You may be seated.

[14 : 43] Early Genesis is rich in so many themes for so many disciplines in our day and age, but politics is not foreign to it. In fact, it is where Yahweh's lordship starts.

First off, note that there is at least a handful of obvious political terminology found in it. For example, in the account of the fourth creation day, Genesis 1, 14 through 19, God made the heavenly bodies for the purpose of either ruling the day or the night.

Again, that is Genesis 1, 14 through 19. Their physical abilities are a form of natural governance, dictating how creation works. Modern scientific inquiries have done much to understand this, but it first starts in a political sense.

Yahweh sets up physical governance, and physical processes make that happen. To think in terms of our political definition, Yahweh gets to tell the universe what to do, and the universe does it.

Second off, while there are many examples of God making his created universe behave in a certain way, think of the ten plagues of Egypt, or perhaps more to the point, Jesus rebuking the storm, in Genesis, we have him doing that in the very act of creation itself.

[15 : 59] Later, God commands what he has made. Here, he makes what he commands. In the course of six days, God creates everything, and while this account leaves the mechanistic causes for us to discover, he does not leave us without at least a hint of his intentionality.

In the fourth day above, he intentionally and physically structured the day-night cycle for things like signs and seasons. Even by the first day's end, we have at least hints of this.

Yahweh creates light and makes it distinct from darkness. Maybe that's not the greatest clarity, and some sections may have less in their own context, but by the end of the first creation account, we see the intention in the natural ordering.

The pinnacle of Yahweh's creation both physically and narratively is the creation of us, of us, is the creation of us, those made in his image. After making a habitable, habitable, after making a habitable structured sandbox that has the entire universe as its background and support, Yahweh makes us in it and tells us to do things with it.

Yahweh built the universe to be a certain way for us, from providing us with food to providing us with signs and seasons. The days of creation show the intent behind them and how they came together.

[17 : 29] To make sure that I did not miss the politics of this, think of what governors do, or at least what they pretend to try to do. They make things to do things. Sometimes they just make laws.

Sometimes they make things like departments, both for the sake of doing something political. The second is the closest to a real parallel as the government sets up an active structure by which to create a process for us.

At best, what they create is made of what God already created, while God made the everything that human governors used to create, including the laws internal to the material world that govern our ability to use it.

Still, they perform a political role. Governors create things to either directly tell us what to do or to dictate that process, like different tax forms or building permits.

In contrast, Yahweh told everything what to do in the very act of creating it. Third off, and perhaps the most obvious and pervasive of the points, Yahweh creates everything by decree.

[18 : 36] He literally tells it to be and it becomes. Now, many human governors have tried this in ways too similar to what Yahweh did, usually with the result of a lot of very unnecessarily dead people.

A lot of unnecessarily dead persons made in the image of Yahweh. But only Yahweh, because of who he is, can actually do this. And he did.

In each of the creation days, God creates by decreeing, by speaking a command, by using words, and for every creation day, except for the first one, it is how he starts creating.

Yahweh is so much our Lord of everything that reality itself is his law. The fish in the sea is his law made manifest. All plants and their seed are his law made manifest.

All the heavens and the heavenly bodies are his law made manifest. We are his law made manifest. You want to know what a true ruler looks like?

[19 : 44] What a true lawgiver looks like? What a true Lord looks like? Read your Bible. Genesis is a great way to start. One small, but important piece to not forget as we move forward.

By the end of the first of creation count, we can easily infer that our God, our Lord, is the God of life. He's a God that creates things. He builds things up.

He gives them a process that are their own to imbue. Remember that for later in Acts 16. Our God is the God of life. Anyway, moving forward, note that the first creation account does all this without even using the term Lord.

God is mentioned as God. However, what we saw is something more important. We see why he is called Lord. And the rest of the Bible takes that into account.

Starting in Genesis 2-4, which is the first verse that uses the term Lord, uses it by calling God Lord God. This continues on through the end of Genesis 3.

[20 : 53] And in the first verse of Genesis 4, the word God is dropped. And the God of the Bible is simply referred to as Lord. Genesis 2-3 makes the connection between God and Lord by combining the terms.

Genesis 4 and onwards assumes that they are now synonymous words. The rest, as far as this theme goes, is epilogue. As the Old Testament constantly, across its literary genres, uses Lord as a regular means to reference God.

I have to skip much in order to get us out of here by day's end. And for those of you who know what the Tetragrammaton is, you may have already noticed that I have already skipped much. In fact, it just hit me.

I realized I totally skipped the part where God also, after he creates things by decree, then starts telling things what to do. Starting with the birds, the fish, the animals, and then us.

So yeah, missed that one too. And much, I wish I didn't miss that one, but so much just has to be missed because of how constant this theme is. That being said, one thing I do not want to skip is an example in Malachi though.

[22 : 07] For A, is arguably the last book of the Old Testament. In our words, it creates a bookmark. We start at the beginning, see the theme at the beginning of the Old Testament, see the theme at the end of the Old Testament. And B, it has an obvious political example in it.

Combine those two points. This passage demonstrates how Yahweh as Lord is an important theme that runs through the entire Old Testament. Malachi 1, 6 through 14.

Again, that is Malachi 1, 6 through 14. Here reads the word of Yahweh. A son honors his father. Did I miss something? Oh, sorry. No. Sorry, my apologies there. Malachi 1, 6 through 14. A son honors his father and a servant his master.

If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? Says the Lord of hosts to you, O priest, who despise my name.

[23 : 13] But you say, how have we despised your name? By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, how have we polluted you? By saying that the Lord's table may be despised.

When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor.

Will he accept you or show you favor? Says the Lord of hosts. And now entreat the favor of God that he may be gracious to us.

With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? Says the Lord of hosts. O that there were one among you who would shut the doors that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain.

I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. From the rising of the sun to its setting, my name will be great among the nations.

[24 : 14] And in every place, incense will be offered to my name. And a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised.

But you say, what a weariness this is. And you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as an offering.

Shall I accept that from your hand? Says the Lord of hosts. Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock and vows it and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished.

For I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

Again, a passage worthy of its own study.

But again, the isolated political lordship point holds true. And three analogies may help. First, imagine you met both me and President Trump.

[25 : 21] But you gave President Trump a nice gift while you gave me the obvious disposable re-gift. Now imagine I say something like, wait, you gave President Trump a nice gift but not me?

Why? I believe that a fair response to that would go something like this. He's the president, I'm not. I'm not in the same hierarchy and even if I was, I am very outmatched.

Now here's the second analogy. Imagine that you met us again but I am the mayor of Palmer Lake and you give me the nice gift and gave President Trump the obvious disposable re-gift.

And President Trump says, wait, you gave Mayor Zach a nice gift but not me? Why? In this case, I'd say that the frustration is valid because I now obviously exist in the same political hierarchy as President Trump but I reside several stark degrees lower in the hierarchy than him.

Now, third and last, imagine that instead of giving President Trump the obvious disposable re-gift, you gave it to the Lord of the entire universe.

[26 : 34] That whole Malachi section and particularly Malachi 1, 7 through 9 is making this case. The Jews are presenting nice things to their local governor and not Yahweh, their complete king. But this makes the most sense because Yahweh is, from the creation of everything, the highest of lords. A local governor is in the same category but the degree is absurdly different. The Jews are honoring a petty ruler but not their creator God ruler. They are despising the one who truly gets to tell them what to do as already done so through their very being. Now, even if all of you find this compelling, a Berean or two may be thinking, does this idea of political lordship match with all scripture?

For example, take John 18 verses 33 through 38 below. Again, that is John 18 verses 33 through 38. Here reads the word of Yahweh.

[27 : 43] So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus answered, Do you say this of your own accord or did others say it to you about me?

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of the world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.

Then Pilate said to him, So you are a king. Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. Pilate said to him, What is truth? So reads the word of Yahweh.

[28 : 51] If Yahweh is such an obvious political ruler, then why would Jesus, the second person of our triune God, say that his kingdom is not of this world? I am still working out the best way to think about this, but I do not believe that it is a contradiction.

Yahweh is still a political ruler, even if the political structuring that he rules through is different. There have been many different monarchies, there have been many different tyrannies, there have been many different anarcharchies, there have been many different anarchist associations, and there have been at least a number of democracies.

But there is only one church in God's universe. There is only one people of God and one created universe, and its political structuring is radically different than any other political structuring. How and why God gets to tell us what to do is awesomely different than how any alleged governor does. We can only make kingdoms of this world.

Yahweh does not have that limit. Are there examples of this? Many, I believe. Psalm 2 comes to mind, where our Lord just laughs about how the nations plot in utter vanity about how to undermine God and his kingdom.

[30 : 06] It would be of value, as it also elucidates another difference between God's kingdom and the rest, that in terms of scale, there is no meaningful comparison in their power and control. That will need to wait for another time, though.

For, in the New Testament, I believe that we have an example. Acts 16, verses 16 through 34. That again is Acts 16, verses 16 through 34.

Here reads the word of Yahweh. As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.

She followed Paul and us, crying out, These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation. And this she kept doing for many days.

Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

[31 : 22] And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.

The crowd joined in attacking them and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.

Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them.

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.

[32 : 39] And the jailer called for lights and rushed in. Trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them and he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

So reads the word of Yahweh. So much awesomeness in this passage, but so little time and one important theme to point out. And yes, that political theme cannot be avoided here.

The accusers argue that Paul and Silas are promoting customs that are not lawful. The magistrates order the beating of Paul and Silas and the jailer is ordered to keep them in prison.

[33 : 53] We see rebellious human governments telling Paul and Silas what to do and punishing their deviations from that. We see rebellious human governments in action. How does Yahweh's government work at this time?

After they had been intensely beaten and without any medical treatment, while in the inner prison, Paul and Silas sing hymns to God and it was apparently pleasing to the other prisoners.

Then Yahweh tells the local geology to quake and that act breaks the prison in such a way that every prisoner can leave.

The jailer, stuck in his political system, is so distraught by the consequences of losing all the prisoners, though through a circumstance totally out of his control, that he believes that suicide is his best option.

But before he does, Paul cries out to let him know that he, Silas, and all the other prisoners that listen to the hymns are still there.

[35 : 03] Fact. Throughout history, human governments prove themselves to be very good at murder. My not entirely hot take? Rebellious political governments are only good at waste, and murder is the ultimate waste of the ultimate creation in Yahweh's created order, human life.

The record of this, as presented in books like *Death by Government*, seem about as beyond reproach as it gets, and if anything, the death tolls are undercounted. As talked about in Ann Applebaum's *Red Famine*, for a summer in Ukraine in the 1930s, being alive was a sign of committing a crime, and by the end of it, millions proved to be good citizens by starving to death. To turn a mental eye towards home, how many tens of millions of unborn children have been slaughtered in the United States? How much blood is on this nation's hands?

That is not including all the environmental, material, financial waste, but do we even need to go there with such death totals? The point that I'm making is that rebellious political entities are always, at some level, about death.

It is part of the rebellion against the God of life, whether on that mass scale or in the individual cases of the Phillipian jailer. Indeed, in contrast, from Genesis 1 onwards, Yahweh's political system is one of life.

[36 : 36] He is the Lord of life. His governance creates while others destroy. In the passage above, the local governors beat Paul and Silas, and worse, they push their own faithful servant to the point of suicide.

But where the jailer's government would cause him to kill himself, God's government, through his servants, made him an adoptive brother of ours in Christ. Not by bureaucratic administration, and not by political policy arguments, and not by surveillance states, but by God renewing the hearts and minds of his servants, by giving them decrees so good that they are in harmony with both his character and the structuring of the entire universe, and by being so real to them and so near to them and so holistically supportive of them that they can show the worth of God's family kingdom to

them in a way that is utterly desirable in comparison where the prisoners stay.
And how is this defined? How is this put all together? What is the simple statement of what one must do to be saved? Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.
That, I hope, is at least a meaningful, coherent glimpse into the theory and practice of Yahweh's lordship, and also a glimpse of how good it is, hopefully for all of us, though I definitely hope for me. Now, my level of aggression against government may not be warranted, and many of you may be called to social service in the at least partially rebellious governments of the world.
[38 : 13] That has already been the case for people at our church, and we should be grateful for the light that they are capable of giving. That being said, always choose Yahweh, our Lord, first.
And unless you believe you have a calling to human politics, I suggest only choosing, Yahweh, only choosing Christ. Christ, to whom all authority is be given.
Christ, the one who took on our sins. Our God, the second person of the Trinity. And Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and the political reality of the universe is no exception. May our Lord have mercy, may our Lord bless. May our Lord have mercy, may our Lord bless. Let us pray. Our Father in Heaven, our Lord, our God, may mercy abound, may your peace abound, may your rules permeate our minds, our brains, and may that be a good thing.
May your yoke be light, may this sermon be light, and not just because it should be forgotten, may your word ring true to us, and may it ring merciful to us today, and as we go throughout our week.
[39 : 34] In your name I pray, Amen. Amen.