



Luther and the Elector John Frederick of Saxony beneath the cross. Contemporary woodcut from the title page of the Wittenberg edition of Luther's works, 1550-69 (Luther Seminary Library, Adelaide).

into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, the almighty Father, from where he will come to judge the living and the dead.

The self-giving Son

Here we get to know the second person of God, so that we see what we have from God apart from the good things here on earth mentioned earlier. That is, we learn how he has completely spent himself on us and kept nothing back, but has given us everything. This article is very rich and far-reaching. To keep it brief and simple, we will take up just one phrase to sum it all up. From it we will learn, as we said before, how we are set free. So we will concentrate on the words: 'in Jesus Christ, our LORD'.

Jesus Christ has become my Lord

If someone asks you: 'What is the Second Article on Jesus Christ all about? What do you believe?', give this short answer: 'I believe that Jesus Christ, God's true Son, has become my Lord.' But what does it mean 'to become a Lord'? It means that he has set me free from my sins, from the devil, from death, and from every trouble. Before he came along, I didn't have a Lord or king. I was the devil's prisoner, condemned to die, tangled up in sin and blindness.

For after we were created and had received all kinds of good things from God the Father, the devil came along and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all sorts of trouble, so that we lay there under God's anger and in disgrace, sentenced to be damned for ever. It was our own fault and we had earned it. We didn't know what to do. There was no help and no comfort for us, until this one and only eternal Son of God took pity on our misery and distress out of the unfathomable goodness of his heart, and came from heaven to help us. So all those dictators and jailers have been driven away, and Jesus Christ has taken their place — a Lord of life who makes us right with God, gives us every good thing and eternal joy. He has snatched us poor lost people from the teeth of hell, made us his own, freed us, and brought us back into the Father's grace and favour. He has taken possession of us and placed us under his care and protection so that he can rule us with his justice, wisdom, power, life, and eternal joy.

How Christ has set us free

To sum up this article: the little word 'LORD' very simply means the same as Rescuer. That is, he is the one who has led us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness — and he

keeps us there. The parts of this article which follow do nothing but explain and describe how this rescue took place, and how Christ went about it — that is, what it cost him, and how much he spent and risked to make us his own and put us under his control. This is how he did it: He became a human being, was conceived and born without any sin by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, so that he would be Lord over sins. What's more, he suffered, died, and was buried to make amends for me and to pay what I owed — not with money, but with his own precious blood. All this he did to become my LORD. He did none of it for himself; there was no need. Afterwards, he rose from the grave, put an end to death, and swallowed it up,¹ and finally ascended into heaven, taking command at his Father's side. As a result, the devil and all other powers have been made to submit to him, and are under his control. Finally, on the Last Day, he will separate us completely from the bad world, the devil, sin, and all the rest.

Need for more detail

But a short children's sermon is no place to explain all these different aspects. That can be done in the main sermons, spread over a year, particularly at the times laid down² for dealing with these sections at length: Christ's birth, his sufferings, his resurrection, his ascension, and so on. In fact, the whole Good News which we preach depends on a proper grasp of this article. Our whole well-being and eternal joy rests on it; and it is so rich and far-reaching that we can never stop learning from it.

¹ Isa. 25:8

² Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ascension.

THE THIRD ARTICLE
I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy
Christian Church, the community of saints,
forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the
flesh, and eternal life. Amen. ³⁴

The Holy Spirit makes us holy

There is no better heading I can give this article than the one I gave before. It shows how we are made holy. It describes the Holy Spirit and says what he does, that is, that he makes us holy. This is why we have to take the word 'HOLY SPIRIT' as our basis, because it is so neat that nothing else will do. Other kinds of spirits are mentioned in Scripture, such as the human spirit,¹ spirits of heaven,² and evil spirits.³ But only God's Spirit is called a Holy Spirit. That is, he is the one who has made us holy, and still does so. Just as the Father is called the Creator, and the Son the Rescuer, so the Holy Spirit has to be called the Holy One or the One who makes holy — because of what he does. But how does he make holy? The answer is: In the same way as the Son takes control by making us his own through his birth, death, resurrection, and so on, so the Holy Spirit sees to it that we are made holy through these things: the community of saints (or the Christian church), forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the flesh, and eternal life. In other words, he first leads us to his holy community and puts us in the church's safe-keeping. Then through the church he preaches to us and leads us to Christ.

¹ For example, 1 Cor. 2:11.

² Luther means the good angels: 2 Macc. 11:6; 15:23.

³ For example, 1 Sam. 16:14,23; Tobit 3:8; Acts 19:12,15.