

# The Only Master and Lord

Jude 4

*By Pastor Jeremiah Zhang*

Jude 4 (*translated from the Chinese Union Version Bible*):

***For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, (in some versions, include “and our”) Jesus Christ.***

[因为有些人偷着进来，就是自古被定受刑罚的，是不虔诚的，将我们神的恩变作放纵情欲的机会，并且不认独一的主宰我们（**我们或作和我们**）主耶稣基督。]

The Chinese Union Version Bible has suggested two possible translations:

- 1) Deny our Only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (based on this, the Lord Jesus Christ is our only Master and Lord);
- 2) Deny our Master and Lord and our Lord Jesus Christ (based on this, the only Master and Lord is not the Lord Jesus Christ but it's God Yahweh).

The meanings of these two translations are totally different which unsettle the readers completely. The first choice adopted by the Chinese Union Version is option 1. In that way, the only Master and Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ. However, what is the basis of this translation?

To many Christians, this question is not important. That is because according to the Trinitarian teaching, the God in the Bible is three persons in one. Therefore, it does not matter whether “the only Master and Lord” is Jesus Christ or God Yahweh; after all,

confessing that Jesus is God is confessing Yahweh as God; and confessing Jesus as the only Master and Lord is confessing Yahweh as the only Master and Lord; worshipping Jesus is worshipping Yahweh because they are both God and they are “in one”.

It is precisely because of this reason that the Bible translators, when dealing with Ro 9:5 and Tit 2:14, can freely use the titles of God on Jesus Christ. Since they are three persons in one, it does not matter which one is God. However, you would notice that, the first choice of translations (or explanations) always gives the place of God to Jesus Christ. This is mainly because Jesus is deemed more approachable while Yahweh is rather aloof and distant. Due to the emotional attachment to Jesus, the Church elevates Jesus as God and even to the extent of replacing the position of God Yahweh. As a result, God Yahweh has gradually been replaced by Jesus. Since the Church advocated the Trinitarian teaching, it has gradually forgotten the God Yahweh who saved her and even the holy name of Yahweh was removed by translators from the New Testament! How tragic and blasphemous it is!

Jude 4 is a very good example, from which we could see the woes brought by the Trinitarian teaching. If we follow the primary translation of the Chinese Union Version and drop the “and” from it, Jesus Christ would become the only Master and Lord right away.

With reference to the secondary translation suggested by the Chinese Union Version, the translator obviously did not dismiss the existence of the word ‘and’, just that he deliberately chose not to include it, attributing “the only Master and Lord” to Jesus Christ. This has seriously misled the readers to think that Jesus is that only

Master and Lord.

Not all the Chinese Bible translations agree with the translation by the Chinese Union Version. Appended below are three Chinese Bible translations which retain the word “and”:

① *LuZhenZhong version*: “... deny our only Master and Lord **and** the Lord Jesus Christ ...”

[因为有些人偷着进来，就是往古时候经上早已记载必须受这处刑的：嘿，不虔的人，将我们上帝的恩变为邪荡的托词，否认我们独一无二的主宰和主耶稣基督（或译：否认那独一无二的主宰和我们的主耶稣基督）。]

② *Chinese New English Translation Bible (CNET)*: “... not acknowledging our only Master and Lord **and** the Lord Jesus Christ...”

[因为有些人溜进你们中间，他们就是自古被定受这刑罚的，是不敬虔的，将我们神的恩典作为放纵情欲的借口，并且不认我们独一的主宰和主耶稣基督。]

③ *Chinese Catholic Studium Biblicum*: “... and deny our only Master and Lord **and** the Lord Jesus Christ ...”

[因为有些早已被注定要受审判的人，潜入你们中间；他们是邪恶的人，竟把我们天主的恩宠，变为放纵情欲的机会，并否认我们独一的主宰和主耶稣基督。]

If we drop the word “and” on our own accord, we are precisely making the mistake described in Jude 4 - denying the only Master and LORD. By removing the word ‘and’, declaring Jesus Christ

as the only Master and Lord, we are publicly denying the unique position of God Yahweh. Hence, this word ‘and’ is not one that is dispensable. It is, in fact, of the utmost significance.

We must recognize clearly who is the “only Master and Lord” that Jude was talking about?

The term “***Master and Lord***” from the original Greek word *despotes* in the OT Greek translated text LXX, is used to address God Yahweh many times, especially in the book of Daniel where 7 occurrences are found. This word appeared 10 times with basically two usages. It can refer to the master of slaves (1Tim 6:1,2; Tit 2:9; 1 Pt 2:18). It can also refer to God, being the Master and Lord (Lk 2:29; Ac 4:24; 2 Tim 2:21, 2Pt 2:1; Rev 6:10). One of the examples of addressing God as ‘despotes’ is Ac 4:24:

***And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord (despotes), it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.***

“*Despotes*” refers to the master with absolute sovereignty. Besides using this to address God Yahweh who created us, this term can also be used to address the master of a slave. If we can use this to address the earthly master of slaves, we can certainly use it to address Jesus Christ because God Yahweh instituted him to be our Lord. However, if we add on the word “monos” before that, it would have to be none other than God Yahweh. Otherwise, we are refuting the absolute sovereignty of the Lordship of God Yahweh.

Such a conclusion is biblically founded because whenever the word “monos” is used, it is always referring to God Yahweh. A

convenient example of this is Jude 24-25:

***Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.***

In such a short letter, Jude had used this word “monos” twice, with once in the beginning of the letter (v4) and the other at the end (v25), which is obviously not a coincidence. In v25, he blessed God Yahweh, saying, “***to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever...***” Why did he say that glory, majesty, dominion and authority be to the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ? It is because while God Yahweh is our Saviour, he saved us through Jesus Christ. We should give praises to our Saviour God Yahweh because of the salvation work accomplished by Jesus Christ.

These words are almost identical to what Paul said in Phi 2:11, “...and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”. For the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, God Yahweh lifted him up, giving him the highest name above all, so that he is Lord over all things. All these glories are given by God Yahweh to him. Hence, all the glory will have to return to the heavenly father and God Yahweh through Jesus Christ.

***Ro 16:27 – “to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.”***

Paul’s words are the same as those in Jude 25. The only true

God alone is worthy of the glory. Such glory is returned to Him because of Jesus Christ. We can see how Yahweh is the only true God and He is the recipient of our praises and glory.

***1 Tim 1:17 – ‘Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.’***

Paul called Yahweh as the only God who is immortal and invisible. Paul gave honour and glory to this only God. At the end of the letter in ***1 Tim 6:14-16***, Paul used “monos” to describe God again.

***“that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.”***

Paul used a lot of noble titles to praise God Yahweh here. He addressed God as “*the only Sovereign*”; “*King of kings and Lord of lords*”; “*who alone possesses immortality*”; “*whom no man has seen or can see*”.

The descriptions are similar to those in 1 Tim 1:17: “*who alone possesses immortality*” is the same as “*immortal*”; “*whom no man has seen or can see*” equals to “*invisible*”, “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” is equivalent to “*the King eternal*”, “*only Sovereign*” means “*the only God*”.

“Sovereign” can be used to describe any man or spirit with power and authority. However, once “monos” is added on, it is

obviously referring to God Yahweh. Only God Yahweh possesses the highest sovereignty above all. Paul also used “the only immortal” to address God because only God lives forever and never dies.

This series of titles is absolutely not to describe Jesus Christ. The reasons are as follows:

- 1) The authority of Jesus Christ was not his own, but given by God Yahweh (Jn 5:27, 17:2; Mt 28:18);
- 2) Jesus Christ was not immortal. He died on the cross and it was God Yahweh who raised him from the dead;
- 3) Jesus Christ was not one who has not been seen or cannot be seen;
- 4) Although Jesus Christ was instituted by God Yahweh as Lord of lords and King of kings, he was subjected to the authority of God Yahweh – truly as a person "under one man and above all other men" (1 Cor15:27-28);
- 5) The date of the reappearance of Jesus Christ is decided by God Yahweh.

From the above, we can see that the series of titles can only be used to describe God Yahweh.

Paul used “monos” twice in v15 and v16, respectively, to address God because Yahweh is the only God and only He is worthy of our praises. Therefore, Paul would render all praises to the only God by default. The Lord Jesus used the word “monos” twice in John to describe his Father God Yahweh.

***Jn 5:44 – “How can you believe, when you receive [a]glory from one another and you do not seek the [b]glory that is from the one and only God?”***

The Lord Jesus teaches us not to seek glory from man. If we really believe in him, we should also imitate him and seek praises and glory from the only God alone. The Lord Jesus always sets our focus on God Yahweh. He has never taught us to glorify him because his concern was how to glorify the Father.

***Jn 3:17 – “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”***

The Lord Jesus addressed God as “the only true God”. God Yahweh is not only true, but also unique. The Lord Jesus also publicly confessed that he was the Christ sent by the only true God. He clearly expressed that he was not God, let alone being the only God.

***Mk 10:17-18 – ‘As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.’***

This passage has no mention of the term “monos”, but we must pay attention to how the Lord Jesus described God. He said, “No one is good except God alone”. In other words, only God is good. We can also express it in another way: God alone is good. These words of the Lord Jesus reminded us that although he was also good, compared to God, God was the only source of goodness and

that even Jesus' goodness came from the Father God. Apart from the Father God, there is no goodness to talk about. Therefore, if we want to become good, we must know God Yahweh.

***Rev 15:4 - "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED."***

*"For You alone are holy"* can be translated as *"only You are holy"*. Undeniably, the Lord Jesus, the prophets and the angels are all holy. However, the Bible would not use "monos" to describe that they are holy. We can see from here once again that the adjective "monos" is used only on Yahweh without any exception.

Hence, when we return to Jude 4, we cannot help but conclude that "the only Master and Lord" refers to God Yahweh. With the mention of "the only God" in v25, the short passage with two occurrences of using the term "monos" is obviously the author's deliberate emphasis. His focus is on God Yahweh who saved us; only God could keep our feet from falling (Jude 24).

Jude warned Christians not to deny the only Master and Lord and the Lord Jesus Christ. What does it mean by "deny" (Greek: *arneomai*) the only Master and Lord and the Lord Jesus Christ? That is to refute and reject God Yahweh's sovereignty in our lives. God Yahweh instituted Jesus as the Lord of the Church and God becomes King in our lives through Christ. Not listening to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ means denying the only Master and Lord; and those denying the only Master and Lord would also not listen to the Lord Christ instituted by God. Hence, 1 Jn 2:23

warned us as saying, ***“Whoever denies (arneomai) the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.”***

If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and acknowledge that Yahweh is the only God, yet without following Jesus’ teaching to live our lives, we are actually turning God’s grace into the opportunity of indulging in our selfish desires. (Jude 4)

How do Christians turn God’s grace into an opportunity of indulging in selfish desires? A common example is to regard sins as “weakness”. As a result, it has become acceptable that Christians sin. We thought that non-Christians would go to hell if they sin while Christians could sin without any hesitation because the precious blood of Jesus could cleanse our sins.

Such a careless attitude towards sins is a commonplace in the Church. Christ’s precious blood can indeed cleanse our sins, but his blood is certainly not a license for Christians to sin. Jude called us to stay away from this kind of ungodly mind-set and not to only “confess” with our mouth that Jesus is Lord when we do not respect him as Lord in our lives and behaviours.

How would Jesus want us to respect him as Lord? It is through our respect for his Father as the only God, “Only (monos) serve Him” (Mt 4:10), obey His will. However, none of us listened to his instructions. We served Jesus as God on our own, substituting the only God Yahweh with Jesus. Such a practice will not be endorsed by the Lord Jesus. He warned us in ***Mt 7:21***,

***“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father***

*who is in heaven will enter.*

The Lord Jesus' concern is doing the will of the Father in Heaven. If we respect him as Lord, we should follow his example to honour God Yahweh as the only Master and Lord, and follow His will. Otherwise, we would be denying the only Master and Lord, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

---