

The Head of the Church



“No aspect of Christ’s relationship to the church looms larger in Holy Writ than the fact that He is its Head.”

R.B. KUIPER

REFLECTION and PREPARATION

Think for a moment about those things in nature that we consider to be “supreme.” List at least 5 of them if you can.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

If you were to take those things which the dictionary describes as the greatest in status, authority, or power—those things which are highest in excellence and achievement—none of those things listed comes close to the supremacy the believer enjoys because of the Headship of Christ!

LESSON AIM:

- To gain an understanding of the nature of Christ’s headship (Lordship) in the church and to discover what it means for us individually and corporately.

DISCUSSION: Is the following statement true or false? (circle one)

- R.C. Sproul asserts, "If there is one maverick molecule in all the universe, then God is not sovereign. And if God is not sovereign, He is not God."

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THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

In part one on this lesson, we discovered that *Christ's headship is God's order of authority over us (1 Cor.11:3)*. Now in this lesson, let us think together about how...

2. Christ's headship is God's gift of supremacy to us.

- **Ephesians 1:22-23**—And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The context of these verses is important and helpful in rightly interpreting what Paul means. The phrase "*He put all things in subjection under His feet...*" is taken from Psalm 8:6, where David is reflecting upon the honor given to man to rule over God's creation on earth. This goes back to God's words in Genesis 1:26-28, where man was commissioned "*...to fill the earth; and subdue it.*" However, what the first Adam *lost through disobedience*, Christ the Second Adam *regained by obedience (Rom.5:17-19; 1 Cor.15:22)*.

The complete fulfillment of these words awaits Christ's return and final victory over Satan and death (*1 Cor.15:24-27; Heb.2:8-15*). Nevertheless, His resurrection, ascension, and present enthronement at God's right hand *guarantees the outcome*.

All things are under Christ's feet, even now—He is "*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.*" This corresponds with Colossians 1:16 which refers to "*...things...both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible.*" In terms of rank and dignity, our Lord is supreme above all the varied ranks of angelic administration as well as all earthly governments.

Practically applied: Think about it. This means that everything you are dealing with or concerned about right now is under Christ's control.

- Your troubles *at home*
- Your challenges on *the job*
- Your concerns with *your health*
- Your uncertainty about *the country or the world of politics*

If all our *troubles, challenges, concerns, and uncertainties* are under His feet now, how is this good news for us?

The good news is seen as Paul adds, and God "*gave Him (Christ) as head over all things to the church...*"

- In the greatness of His position as head over all things (*Eph.1:10*), *Jesus has been given to the church—to you and to me!*

Just to be clear...what is the church? Read verse 23—“*which is His body...*”

The definition of the church is “the called-out ones” who follow Jesus. Paul reminds us that we are “*His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.*” This indicates two things:

1. True Christians share a vital union with Christ that is *inseparable*. Read Romans 8:35-39.
2. The church is filled or *completed* by Christ. The phrase, “*the fulness of Him*” is passive not active—in other words, Christ fills us, we don’t fill Him. (Cf. Eph.3:19; 4:13; Col.1:19; 2:9-10)

Practically applied: Just as a body without a head is a *monstrosity*, and a head without a body is a *tragedy*, in a sense, the exalted Christ is incomplete without the church His body (Heb.11:39-40). This is a mystery called the mystical union of Christ and the church.

- Read Matthew 25:31-46—When His family members are ministered to or neglected, it is as if it is done unto Him.
- Read Acts 9:5—When Saul persecuted the church, Jesus said, “*I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.*”
- Read Zechariah 2:8—“*The apple of His eye*” refers to the pupil, which is the most sensitive part of your body. You guard your eye more than anything, because it is so important and vulnerable. God says that His people are like that to Him.

John Calvin put it this way:

“The love of God towards the faithful is so tender that when they are hurt He burns with so much displeasure, as though one attempted to pierce His eyes.”⁸

In another sense, although Christ physically *resides* in heaven, He is indivisibly *united* to His church through the Holy Spirit on earth.

What this means for us is this:

- Christ desires to *manifest* Himself through His body—or through you. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and Matthew 5:16.
- It is a part of His plan to make *His wisdom known through you* to the angelic world. Read Ephesians 3:8-12.

As such, we as His body are to **complement** our Head. We are to make Christ look good through our *attitudes, actions, and words*. Paul calls this “*adorn[ing] the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect*” (Tit.2:1-10).

What are a couple of areas in your life where you could adorn Christ better?

⁸ John Calvin, Calvin’s Commentary [Baker], on Zechariah, p.71



HART-TO-HEART

Jody Hart, Editor and Director Mountaintop Resources

Vessels

God made us vessels to display to all
The glories of Jesus, how He has reversed the fall.
He has given us a supreme role, to rule high above mankind
Fleshed out partially now, in full at the end of time.

We must be careful when we think of supremacy
Our flesh is still fallen, through cloudy vision we see.
The imageo Dei, every person is made in
Regardless of gender, class, race, and even sin.

Don't confuse Christ's supremacy with our own.
He is supreme in a class all alone.
God in the flesh, Creator of all,
Never once was He sinfully affected by the fall.

He gives us His Spirit to live as His own
But, don't you forget it, He still occupies the throne!
We are not Him, He is not us,
And yet, we represent Him, do it well we must.

Rejoice, O vessels! Rejoice in His sovereign care!
He rules over things here and things over there
In the joyous places and the hard, in all of your ways
His supremacy will rule over all of your days.

And as you find comfort, there is purpose you see?
To tell others about Jesus and how they can be
Forgiven, restored, rescued, redeemed,
Loved, truly loved, their lives made clean.

You are a vessel, a vessel to be used—
His hands, His feet, His life...but have you refused
To allow God's love to shine through your life?
As you know Him, you will show Him...go ahead, display the glorious Christ!

ANSWER KEY:

REFLECTION and PREPARATION

Answers will vary. Some examples include: the lion, Mt. Everest, the Grand Canyon, the redwood tree, the blue whale, the eagle.

DISCUSSION

- True

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible: 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.