

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

Ephesians 1:9-10, 22-23—Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.

And has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.

Colossians 1:15-19—Who (the Son of God's love) is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation; because by him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities: all things have been created by him and for him. And he is before all, and all things subsist together by him. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead, that he might have the first place in all things: for in him all the fulness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell.

Colossians 2:19—...holding fast the head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for calling us together to remember Thee at Thy table. Lord, we thank Thee that once again Thou has assured us that Thou loves us and loves us to the uttermost. We thank Thee for the precious blood that cleanses all our sins. We thank Thee for Thy body that was broken that we may have life and life eternal. We thank Thee for the communion that we have

The Headship of Christ

with Thee and with one another. Oh, how we praise and thank Thee for all that Thou has done for us. Now Lord, as we continue in Thy presence we ask that Thou will speak to us. Reveal Thyself in us. Lord, we pray that Thou will so make known Thyself to us that our lives will really be changed, that we may really live for Thee and not for ourselves. We do ask that Thy Holy Spirit will give us wisdom and understanding and bring us into Thy truth. We commit this time into Thy hands; our trust is in Thee. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

The headship of Christ is a most important theme in the word of God. As a matter of fact, it is the very heart of the eternal purpose of God. It is not a small matter. Even before the foundation of the world God purposed in Himself a purpose. It is called the mystery of His will; that is, He willed a will even before the foundation of the world, before anything began. And God willed that will according to His good pleasure; that is to say, it pleases Him to exercise His will, to set down a purpose, and that purpose is to govern all His workings afterwards. As we find in Ephesians 1:9-10, this will is that in the fulness of times God will head up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.

“To head up all things in Christ.” Now in different versions you will find it is put in different ways, but the meaning is the same. Some versions say, “To sum up all things in Christ.” Others say, “To gather together all things in Christ,” or “To gather up all things to Christ.” What does it mean? It means that it is God’s pleasure, it is God’s will, it is a purpose that He has set down even before the foundation of the world that He will never change, and that purpose is centered upon the headship of Christ. He wants His Son, His Christ to be the head over all things. He wants

The Headship of Christ

all things to be gathered up in His Son. All things are to manifest His Son and to glorify His Son. That is God's eternal purpose. Because this is such a tremendous thing, the very center of God's will, of God's working, therefore throughout the ages this has been challenged.

The headship of Christ was challenged in the first world. When God first created this universe, His highest created beings were angels, and yet one of the archangels, the perfect created being, rebelled against God's purpose. He wanted to take the place of God's Son. God accepted this challenge and cast out that angel, who turned himself into Satan, the adversary of God. God cast him out from his throne and cast him down. Evidently, our solar system, our earth, at that time was under his dominion. God had delegated authority to that angel to rule over our solar system. So when he was cast out, the whole solar system entered into ruin and emptiness. But God's purpose cannot be defeated and God's purpose will never change. He started to make this earth habitable again and He made man to have dominion over the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea. God's purpose was to use man to restore everything back to the headship of Christ, but unfortunately man sinned and fell into the hands of God's enemy. But God never gives up.

A second Man came into the world. God sent His beloved Son into this world to be a man, and as a man to bring fallen mankind, and eventually the whole creation, back into God's purpose—to gather up all things in Christ, that He may be the head over all things. And nothing is excepted. So this matter of the headship of Christ is of tremendous importance.

We have heard this term, but what does it mean? What does it mean that Christ is to be head over all things? The Bible tells us that He is head over all the created things; He

The Headship of Christ

is head over His church, His body; He is head over every man; but what does it mean that He is head?

Christ is the Beginning of all Things

First of all, according to the word of God, when we say, “Christ is the head of all things,” it means He is the beginning of all things; everything comes out of Him. He is the head of the universe because all things were created in Him, by Him, and for Him. Without Him there would not be the universe. He was the firstborn of all creation, and the firstborn there does not mean that He was the first created. The firstborn here means He has the priority and the sovereignty over all things because everything comes out of Him. Everything was created in Him. In the English Bible we translate it “by Him,” but actually in the original all things are created “in Him.” Why? It is because everything comes out of His mind. He is the architect. He has that design in Him, and that design answers to His character.

I think it is very evident. When we see a building, sometimes we say that building is a dead building. Yes, because it is made of stone and wood. But in another sense a building is a living building because it expresses the character of the architect who designed it. If the architect is a very artistic person, he will design a very beautiful building. It may not be very functional, but it is beautiful. If the architect is a very practical person, then he will design a very functional building, but it may not be beautiful.

So you find that the whole universe comes out of our Lord Jesus. It is out of His mind; it is His design; it reveals His character. That is why Psalm 19 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.” That is why we are told in Romans 1 that by looking at the things around us, the created things, we

The Headship of Christ

know the divinity and the eternal power of God. He shows forth His divinity. He is divine, different.

Eternal power cannot be contained. All things were created in Him and all things were created by Him. When the whole universe had its beginning, our Lord Jesus was the engineer. He is the one who created all things and all things were created for Him. God has established Him the heir of all things. He is the owner of all things.

The same thing is true with the church. He is the head of the body. Why? It is because, as it says in Colossians, He is the beginning—"Who is the beginning." Without Him there would be no church. The church comes out of Him. Out of that pierced side was drawn out water and blood that become the material of the church. He is the beginning. And the church takes its character from Him, the firstborn from among the dead. In other words, the church is on resurrection ground; it is not on any old ground. That is the character of the church.

And individually, of course, it is very true—He is our beginning. We were at the end, condemned to eternal death, with no hope; and yet our Lord Jesus came. He rescued us; He redeemed us; He paid a tremendous cost for us. He delivered us out of death into life. He translated us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of His love. We have our beginning in Christ. He gave us a new life: "Christ in you the hope of glory." Because of this He is the head. I think that is reasonable and understandable. He is the beginning. That is the meaning of the head. Anything that does not begin with Him is not in God's will. Anything that does not begin with Him is a challenge to the headship of Christ, to God's eternal purpose. God will meet that challenge and God's purpose will not be changed.

All Things Will Manifest the Glory of Christ

The Headship of Christ

Secondly, He is not only the beginning, but as the head, everything reveals Him and manifests His glory. Everything will reveal something of His character; everything will be governed by His character, and everything will manifest His character. That is the reason why He is the head.

So far as the universe is concerned, it was created to manifest His divinity. He is divine, not like human beings only. His wisdom, His power are immeasurable. You cannot confine Him. He is divine and His power is eternal. Unfortunately, all things have not manifested His glory as they should. The whole world now is under corruption and emptiness and all created things are groaning, waiting for the time of liberation. But we do find in Hebrews 2: "We have not seen all things subjected to Him but we do see Jesus made a little inferior than the angels because of the suffering of death for everyone." And we know, we believe that the day will come when all things will be subjected to Him and will manifest His character and glory.

The same is true with us human beings. We have fallen. We have lost, come short of the glory of God. We become a shame to His name, but He has begun His good work in us. He has given His life, put His life in us. His Holy Spirit is working daily with us bringing transformation, getting us out of death into life, out of the flesh into the spirit, out of ourselves into Christ, until we be transformed from glory to glory according to His image by the Lord the Spirit. We have not manifested the headship of Christ in our lives yet; maybe to a little degree, but far from God's purpose. But thank God He is working and He will one day bring us holy and without blemish before Him in love.

The same thing is true with the church. He loved the church and gave Himself for it, sanctifying it by the washing of water by the word, that He may present it to

The Headship of Christ

Himself, a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any of such things, a bride that is fit for Him. That is God's purpose.

So brothers and sisters, the reason He is head is because everything is to reveal Him and manifest His glory; therefore, He is head. Whatever is contrary to His character and His glory challenges the headship of Christ.

All Things Will be Summed up in Christ

Thirdly, He is head because all things will be summed up in Him. Everything will return to Him. Everything will speak of Him. We have not seen it yet today. That is why the headship of Christ is so important. It has been challenged. It is not only challenged by the enemy of God; it is also challenged by every one of us. Daily, we are challenging it because we do not allow Him to be our all and in all. There are many areas in our life that still reveal ourselves and not Him. We do not allow Him to be our head; we want to be our own head. But the day will come when He will have it because it is God's purpose and it cannot be defeated.

FOUR AREAS THAT REVEAL THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

The Head is the Seat of Love

What do you mean by the headship of Christ? Let's look at it from another angle. First of all, when you think of the head, the head is the seat of love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." God's love is fully manifested in His Son. When our Lord Jesus gave Himself for us on Calvary's cross, that is the full expression that God is love. As we find in I John we cannot doubt anymore

The Headship of Christ

that God loves us because He gave His Son to us. He is head because He is love. He created all things out of love. He created us out of love. Isn't it true that we come to Him not because we are threatened by His power because He does not threaten us with His power. We come to Him because we are melted by His love. It is His love that draws us to Him. It is His love that touches our heart. It is because of His love that we are willing to give ourselves to Him and let Him be our head. It is love. As head He loves us.

In Ephesians 5 the apostle touches on this matter of husband and wife. The husband is the head of the family because he loves his wife, cherishes her, nourishes her as Christ is the head of the body because He is the Savior of the church. It is His love. He gave Himself so much to the church; therefore, He is the head of the church. He proved His headship by His love for the church.

The same thing is true with us individually. He shows His headship in our lives not by threatening us with lightning and thunders. Probably if He did that we would harden more. But when He approaches us with His love, amazing love, unchangeable love, we are melted. It is then His headship is revealed. Head is the seat of love.

The Head is the Center of Authority

Secondly, head is the center of authority. It is strange because in our concept love and authority contradict each other—if love, no authority; if authority, cold, harsh, no love. As head, He is the center of authority, but that authority is exercised in love. There is authority in love. He is our head because He loves us so much, so He has every authority over us. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. He is our authority.

The Headship of Christ

When you touch the matter of authority, when you trace to the source of authority, there is only one source. God is the authority of the universe because He loved. Out of His love came this universe. God is the authority over all of us because He loved us so much. Aside from Christ or God there is no authority. Any authority that is outside of Christ is a false authority. He is the very seat of authority. The whole universe is under His authority. The church is under His authority. Each one of us is under His authority because He is our head.

It is just like the nervous system. Every member of the body receives stimuli from outside. Does it react in itself, by itself? No. Whenever a member receives any stimuli from the outside environment, it is related back to the head, and the head will give a command and tell that member to react. So the reaction is not from that member; the reaction is from the head. The head is the authority. And this ought to be true in each one of us. How do we act and react? Do we act or react from our own selves? Or is our action or reaction from the head? It is His authority. He tells us what to do, how to react. It is His reaction; it is His action, His authority being known. This is true with individuals and true with the church.

The Head is the Cause of Unity

Thirdly, the head is the cause of unity. In holding fast the head, all the members of the body are ministered to and united together with every joint of supply, being increased with the increase of God. So in the word the head is the very reason for unity. Every member is different. Brothers and sisters, it is not the will of God that we should be uniform. We are all different and yet we are one. How can that be? We are united by the head. If we all hold fast the head, then we are one. If we do not hold fast the head, we

The Headship of Christ

disintegrate, each on his own. The head is the seat of unity, the cause of unity.

The Head is the Source of Supply

Fourthly, the head is the source of supply. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily and ye are complete in Him. He is the source of all supply. As we are united with Him, joined to Him, abiding in Him, then we receive from Him the life, the grace, the gift that we may be able to minister to Him and to one another. We draw all our supplies from the head.

He is the seat of love, He is the center of authority, He is the cause of unity, and He is the source of all supply. In these aspects we discover the headship of Christ.

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST IS PRACTICAL

Let's be practical. The headship of Christ is not a theory; it is not a theological thing. It is very practical. God means it to be practical to the whole universe, to the church, and to individuals. And again, I want to emphasize that God's purpose will not change. We have to change, but God will not change.

Let's begin with ourselves. We talk about the headship of Christ over us. Let's face it and see how real it is. I acknowledge that Christ is my head. How do we come into experiencing Him as our head? It is not a matter just for words. It has to be expressed in life. How can Christ be head to me and to you as long as I have my own head? Even after we have received the Lord Jesus as our Savior, have we received Him as our Lord? Has it been proven in our lives that in everything we honor Him as our head, that He is the beginning, He is the continuation, and He is the

The Headship of Christ

end? Do we manifest His love, His authority, His unity, and His supply? We all have our own head. We have our own opinion, our own will, our own choice, our own preference, our own likes and dislikes, our own ways, methods, everything. And is it not true that in our spiritual life we find conflict after conflict? Why? It is because there cannot be two heads. Christ is meant by God to be our head, but we are determined also to be our own head. So two heads clash all the time. How can we really begin with Christ as our head? One head has to be beheaded. Now which head, whose head?

Consecration

That is the reason why you find in the Scripture: “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, and this is your reasonable service.” Why as a believer must we present our bodies a living sacrifice? What does it mean? Why is consecration the basic, first Christian experience? We are constrained by the love of Christ and come to Him and hand over to Him our head and say, “Lord, I am willing to be beheaded and take You as my head.” That is consecration. You give yourself to Him; you give up the right to your own self. You acknowledge Him as your head. Without such consecration there can be no growth in Christian life. We will go wandering in the wilderness and never enter into Canaan. Again and again in our life experience this is being challenged. The Lord will challenge you and say, “Now who is head? You want your way? Fine; if you really want your way go ahead, but who is head? Do you honor Me as head? Are you willing to surrender, to capitulate and let me take over?”

It is a matter of our will. Consecration is a matter of will. One day we are made willing to really surrender our life to Him, to be a love slave and let Him be our head. But

The Headship of Christ

consecration is not just once for all. Consecration has to have a beginning; that is, one day when you are constrained by the love of Christ, so far as you know you surrender your all to Him. It is a matter of will, but so far as reality is concerned there is much in your life that is still not surrendered yet. You do not realize it at that time because honestly, so far as you know, you surrendered to the Lord. Then you find the Holy Spirit will begin to work. Gradually, He will bring one thing at a time. He will not try to oppress you, overwhelm you by many things, telling you of many things that are wrong in your life, that you are still your own head, so that you will be crushed. No; that is the work of the enemy. When the Holy Spirit works, He is gentle. He will remind you maybe of one thing, and in that one thing you are still your head and you have challenged the headship of Christ. You will struggle over it and by the grace of God you say, "Lord, I yield," and the headship of Christ is manifested. So that is the reason why our Lord Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me let Him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me." This is the only way to be His disciple. Denying yourself is a matter of will; take up the cross daily. The Holy Spirit will arrange the cross for you every day. Take it up; don't try to bypass it. Let the cross work in our lives, cutting off our head, letting Christ be our head, and enabling us to follow the Lord.

The Anointing Within

The Holy Spirit is the one who will guide us into this matter of the headship of Christ in our lives. He will teach us in all things because the Holy Spirit in us is to glorify Christ. He does not speak of Himself but what He hears from the Lord He will relate to us. He will teach us in all things according to Christ so that Christ may really be all

The Headship of Christ

and in all to us. If we listen to the anointing within us, then we will abide in Christ. Now that is, in a practical sense, how we allow Christ to be our head.

How the Headship of Christ is Manifested

How does He manifest His headship in our lives? Are we really, daily constrained by His love? Is His love the dominating factor in our lives? You know, the Lord challenged the church in Ephesus: You have all these good things—commendable, scriptural, correct things, but where is your first love?

When the first love is gone, the headship of Christ is gone because the head is the seat of love. How do I know that I am under the headship of Christ? Look at love. Am I still in first love with Christ? Do I love my brethren as Christ has loved me? If there is love, there is the headship of Christ. If there is no love, no matter what you say, you do not manifest the headship of Christ. And that is the reason the emphasis is put on this matter of love in the word of God. Is our relationship with the Lord motivated by love? Is our service to the Lord out of duty or out of love? Is the love of Christ being manifested in our relationship with our brothers and sisters? That is the headship of Christ. Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not behave wrongly. Love is not proud. Love is humble. Love forgives, forbears, forgets. Brothers and sisters, how can we really show forth the headship of Christ in our lives unless love is manifested? That is the practical sign of the headship of Christ.

How do we really show forth the headship of Christ if His authority is not known? Do we submit ourselves under His authority? Do we submit ourselves to one another in the fear of Christ? Again, God is the only authority in the universe. Aside from Him there is no authority. Authority

The Headship of Christ

is not a positional thing. Authority is not something claimed. Authority is not something you can grasp at. It is Christ in you. That is the authority. It is His authority in you. There is an amount of authority in every member of the body of Christ because there is a measure of Christ there. That is why we have to submit to one another in the fear of Christ. We do not submit to man; we submit to one another because we see Christ in one another. He is the authority. We do not like to hear the word authority, but authority is one of the foundations of the world. If there is no authority, everything will be chaotic—no order, no beauty. But what is the authority of Christ? His authority is manifested in every one of us when we really yield ourselves completely to Him.

Do we really manifest the unity of Christ in our lives? We may disagree; that is a matter of opinion. But so far as our life is concerned, we are one. There is the unity of the Spirit there. God has already given us that unity—one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is over all, through all. He has already given us that unity. It is the unity of the Godhead, the unity of Christ. But do we diligently keep that unity?

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: “Some say I am of Paul, others say I am of Apollos, others say I am of Cephas, some say I am especially of Christ. Is Christ divided?” Our unity is in Christ. We should diligently keep that unity and not allow any party spirit in the church, grouping into small groups, dividing the body of Christ. Can we say, “We know the headship of Christ”? Do our lives manifest that we diligently keep that unity and continue to fellowship with one another? Be open; never insist; and eventually, by the grace of God, we will arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

The Headship of Christ

In our practical life, do we draw all our supplies from Christ, from the head? He is the head of wisdom, of knowledge, of strength, of strategy, of everything. Do we really draw everything from Him, or do we draw out of ourselves and try to give it to others?

In a practical sense what are we doing? Are we manifesting the headship of Christ? So brothers and sisters, to myself, I am ashamed. It is easy to talk of the headship of Christ but how weak we are when it comes to living in the reality of it. I feel we should humble ourselves.

The Church

So far as the church is concerned, how is the headship of Christ to be practiced in a practical way? Christ is the head of the body and the body is the fulness of Him who fills all and in all. That is the meaning of the headship of Christ. He is head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all and in all.

As the church, the body of Christ is made up of many members. Unless all the members hold fast the head, the headship of Christ will not be manifested in the church. You find the church in Colosse began well, but then someone came in and enticed them away from Christ. They began to be drawn into vain philosophy and man's teaching, according to the teaching of man, according to the elements of the world, not according to Christ. And when that happened, the headship of Christ was challenged. So every member of the house of God must learn to hold fast the head. If the headship of Christ is real in each one of us, then the headship of Christ will be manifested in the church. The love will be there, the authority will be there, the unity will be there, the supply will be there, the wisdom will be there.

The Headship of Christ

Look at the early church. I wonder how much teaching they had received on the headship of Christ. But the headship of Christ was a reality in their midst. They loved one another, forgetting themselves. They were under the authority of the Holy Spirit. They were united in one accord. They drew every supply from the Lord. So brothers and sisters, I feel it is the responsibility of every member in the body of Christ to so submit to the headship of Christ that it will be naturally manifested in the church.

The Church is a Theocracy

The church is not a democracy; it is a theocracy. But how does God lead the church, govern the church, and build up the church?

In the beginning you find the church probably will begin in a home. Even the church in Jerusalem began in the upper room with one hundred and twenty people. Then three thousand were saved, and more were saved. They had to break bread from house to house, but they met together at Solomon's porch.

When Paul and Barnabas went on their journey, preaching the gospel, they visited different cities in Galatia. Many got saved and they met together as a family. Nothing was mentioned about how they should meet. They just met together in the name of Christ. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." That is how they gathered. Every brother and sister worked together. They sought the Lord together as a family, the young and the old. And when Paul and Barnabas came back after some time, they noticed that God had manifested some among them as more responsible, as more matured. Whom the Holy Spirit had manifested, the apostles confirmed; they were made elders in the church.

The Holy Spirit Manifests Leaders

When the people begin multiplying, how can you maintain order? Naturally, in the word of God we find that the Holy Spirit will manifest some. It is a matter of labor of love, not a position. It is just like a family. Even though all the members work together, you have the father and you have the mother. Here in the church, you find according to the word of God, some people will be manifested by the Holy Spirit, not appointed by man. The apostle did not appoint them; the apostle only confirmed them. The Holy Spirit manifested them, and they began to take the lead. It was not in the sense of being a separate group, superior, but in the sense of taking more responsibility for the family, laboring more for the family, giving more to the family. It is a matter of love and with love there will be delegated authority. That is the way you find in the Scripture.

The church is not a democracy. Even in the early days, when there was such a tremendous issue—some Jews became Christians and demanded that the Gentiles be circumcised—how did they settle that matter? If you read Acts 15, first of all it was open to every brother and sister. The whole congregation in Jerusalem met and those who were of the circumcision had the freedom and could voice their opinion. Everybody in the family could voice their opinion, not out of themselves, but out of what they felt was of the Lord. Now some may have been mistaken, but it was sincere and everybody was open. And after everybody was given their chance, then the apostles and elders took everything they had heard and brought it to the Lord. They sought the Lord's face until they came to one mind seeing that the "Holy Spirit and we" decided. Now that is the way it is done.

The Headship of Christ

We cannot expect the church to be a democracy. Some say, “Let all the brothers come together and make the decisions.” Now, why not the sisters? If you want to do that, let all the brothers and sisters come together; but this is not the Scriptural way. In the beginning, yes, you can do that because you are small in number. But when you have hundreds and hundreds of opinions, hundreds of thoughts, how can you decide on anything?

You have to be given the opportunity to voice how you feel before the Lord honestly. We should not despise each other, but let everybody have a chance to say what he or she feels honestly before the Lord, not out of ourselves; and then bring everything to the Lord. This is the way you find in the Scripture, and this is the way we, through the years, have been trying to do.

We feel that the eldership is not a position, a title; it is a function. It is a labor of love. Whoever aspires to be an elder, the Scripture says, desires a good work. In other words, it is a labor of love. You are willing to sacrifice, you are willing to suffer, to be an example—not lord over God’s people; it is not labor out of necessity or duty, but out of love. It is taking the lead, inspiring God’s people, but letting every brother and sister know that it is not a decision of a few. They should listen to the body. Maybe the Lord will speak through the body. After they hear from the body, bring it to the head and seek His mind on it. Brothers and sisters, if we can work together like this, I believe there will be blessing from above.

So since we all have this headship of Christ on our minds, I just throw out what the Lord has shown me. I hope you will take it home, review it, consider it, reject it if it is not of the Lord, but accept it if it is of the Lord. All we want is to do God’s will. That is what we want to do. We want to see the headship of Christ. I think this is the

The Headship of Christ

longing and desire of every one of us, and we want to see it in a very practical way, not just talk about it. I do look to the Lord that we will all humble ourselves and seek His face together and let the Holy Spirit lead us in the way ahead of us.

Shall we pray:

Dear Lord, it is the desire of all of us that Thy headship should be real in each one of us and in us together. Lord, we thank Thee that Thou art teaching us and we ask that Thou will give us an open and humble spirit that we may really hear from Thee and know Thy way. Lord, lead us. Thou art the way. Lead us into the headship of Christ. We want to be one with Thee in Thy purpose and may Thy will be done among us on earth as it is in heaven. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.