

GOD AND CHRIST (PART III): CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH COLOSSIANS 01:18–19

Introduction

This is one of the great pictures of Christ and of the church. It pictures in the clearest of terms what the relationship is between Christ and the church. It is a passage that should be studied by every local church time and again.

- I. He is the head of the church (v. 18).
- II. He is the beginning of the church (v. 18).
- III. He was the first from the dead (v. 18).
- IV. He is supreme in all things (v. 18).
- V. He is filled with all the fullness of God Himself (v. 19).

I. *Colossians 01:18 Jesus Christ, Head of the Church*

Jesus Christ is the head of the church. (See *Church*, Mt. 16:19 for the meaning of the word *church*.) This is the most common description of Christ and the church: the picture of the human body with Christ as the Head and the church as His body. When the church is called the body of Christ at least three ideas are pictured. (See Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:19-22.)

1. There is the idea of life, of the most vital connection and relationship. A body cannot live apart from the head and a head cannot live apart from the body. Both the head and body are absolutely necessary for there to be life. Without Jesus Christ, the church does not exist, and without the church the life of Christ on earth could not be known or exist. Christ is made known only through the lives of His people, the church. That is His chosen method to make Himself known.

Thought 1. This means something of critical importance.

- (1) If any part of the world is without the church (His body), that part of the world cannot know Christ the Head.
 - (2) If the world sees a body of people with some head other than Christ, then that body of people is not the church, not the true church.
2. There is the idea of activity and its source. It is the body that acts, but it is the head that tells the body to act. It is the head that...
 - plans for the body
 - activates the body
 - inspires the body
 - arouses the body
 - guides the body

- directs the body
 - drives the body
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The body does nothing without the head. All that the body does begins in the head.

Thought 1. This is significant. It means that the church is totally dependent upon the Head, Jesus Christ. The body finds its purpose, meaning and significance in the Head who is Jesus Christ. Therefore, the body or church must learn more and more to acknowledge and honour the Head. The body must learn to look to the Head for its plans, guidance and motivation.

3. There is the idea of control. The head is to rule and reign over the body. The body is to be controlled by the head. The body is not to act apart from the head. But note: sometimes a body does act apart from the head. But when it does, it is because of disease, handicap or injury. There is some malfunction – some physical, emotional or mental problem. So it is with the church. When Christ does not control the church body, it is because there is some malfunction, some problem within the body.

Thought 1. The church body is to let Christ control it. The church is to walk a disciplined, controlled life just like Christ says. When the church lives like Christ dictates, then the church body lives a life free of disease and injury.

Eph 1:22 *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.*

Eph 4:15 *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

Eph 5:23 *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.*

Col 1:18 *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

Col 2:19 *He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

II. Colossians 01:18 Jesus Christ, the Beginning of the Church

Jesus Christ is the beginning of the church. The word *beginning* (arche) has a twofold idea.

1. *Beginning* means creative power. When something first begins, it is created or brought into being by some person or thing greater than itself. Jesus Christ was the Person who gave birth to the church. He is greater than the church; therefore, He had the power to create the church and bring it into existence.
- => The church is the idea of His mind: He was the One who dreamed of the church, thought it up and saw the great purpose it could accomplish upon earth.
- => The church is the plan of His heart: He saw how the church could be founded and built upon the earth and His heart wanted it.

- => The church is the desire of His will: He desired and longed for the church; therefore, He willed to create it.
- => The church is the activity of His hands and life. Jesus Christ came to earth and gave birth to the church (see *Church*, Mt. 16:18).
- => The church is the result of His love: He loved the world; therefore, He founded His church and He reaches out to the world through His church.
- => The church is the subject of His care: He looks after and oversees the welfare of His church, making sure that it fulfils its purpose on earth. Even the very gates of hell cannot prevail against the church because of His love and care (Mt. 16:18).

The point is this: Jesus Christ began the church. He is the beginning, the creative power who founded and gave birth to the church.

Thought 1. Jesus Christ is the Person — the only Person — who is to be honoured and acknowledged as the beginning of God’s church on earth. No other person is to ever usurp the place of Christ in the church. He and He alone is to be praised as the Source of the church’s life and being. He and He alone can bring men to God.

2. *Beginning* means *first in time*. Jesus Christ was the first Person of the church. He began the church; therefore, He was the first member, the great and glorious Founder of the church. All others who come into the church follow Him.

Thought 1. This means something of extreme significance. A person who does not follow Christ the Founder fails to really enter the church which He founded. A person may sit in the pews of a building and hear the voice of the preacher, but unless he follows Christ, he is not in the body and movement of the church’s Founder. He follows some other body and movement. And one thing must be noted: Christ was very clear about His body and movement — about how His church and followers are to live. Therefore, to be a part of His church, a person has to live in the will and movement which He established.

Eph 4:14-15 *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

Col 2:18-19 *Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

1 John 2:23-24 *No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.*

III. *Colossians 01:18 Church and The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*

Jesus Christ was the first to arise from the dead. There are three ways that the resurrection of Christ and the church are closely related.

1. The resurrection of Christ is the very reason the church exists. If Jesus Christ had not arisen from the dead, there would be no church. God loves man and longs for man to live forever in His presence. He made such possible through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and by establishing the church. What happened was this: Jesus Christ became the first person who ever arose from the dead and who never has to die again. He has blazed the path of conquering death; and because He has, He stands as the First, the Pattern, the Forerunner, the Ideal Man in conquering death. Therefore, when a person truly believes in the resurrection of Christ, God takes that belief and counts the person as being in Christ. God counts the man's trust in the resurrection of Christ as the energy and power of the Lord's resurrection. Therefore, when the man is ready to leave this world, he is *in the energy and power* of Christ's resurrection, and the Lord's energy and power transfers the person right into the presence of God.

Now note: this is the message and hope of the gospel. It is the people who believe in the resurrection of Christ who make up the church. This is what the church is: a body of people who have trusted the power of Christ's resurrection to conquer death for them and to transfer them into the eternal presence of God. Apart from the resurrection of Christ there would be no hope and no message of conquering power; therefore, there would be no church.

Thought 1. The resurrection of Christ and the church are tied together.

- => Every person who truly believes in the resurrection of Christ is a true member of the Lord's church.
- => Every true member of the church is a person who has truly believed in the resurrection of Christ.
- => There is no person who is a true member of the church who has not believed in the resurrection of Christ.
- => There is no person who is a member of God's true church who has not believed in the Lord's resurrection.

Thought 2. The church is a body of people who truly believe in the resurrection of Christ. The conquest of death is the church's great message of hope. It is this very belief that distinguishes it from all other organizations of men such as social and civic clubs.

2. The resurrection of Christ and the life of the church means there is a new life available for people. When Christ was raised from the dead, His body and life were entirely different from His former body and life. He had a changed body and life; He was raised

to live a new life, to live face to face with God forever. So it is with the church. The church is to be a picture of the resurrected and changed life of Christ. The church is...

- to be entirely different from the world
 - to be separated from the world and given over completely to God
 - to live its life as though it is face to face with God
3. The resurrection of Christ is the power by which the church is to live. The resurrection of Christ proves there is unlimited, enormous power available for living and conquering all the foes of life, even the foes of death and judgment. The church is to live as resurrected beings — beings with a new life, a life of power and energy that conquers all the trials of life. Just imagine! Power to conquer all the trials and temptations of life, including the terrible trials of death and judgment. Such power is available, and it is to be *alive and active* in the church. In fact, the resurrected power of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be the very life blood of the church.

Acts 26:22-23 “But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen — that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

Rom 4:25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 Cor 15:4 That he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Eph 1:19-20 And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

1 Pet 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

IV. Colossians 01:18 The Pre-eminence of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is supreme in all things. God the Father has only one child, the Lord Jesus Christ who is God the Son.

Note two points.

1. Jesus Christ is the supreme, preeminent Person in the universe because He died and arose again for man’s salvation. It is because Christ was perfectly obedient to God the

Father in dying and being raised from the dead that God the Father has made God the Son pre-eminent in everything.

Another way to say the same thing is this: God the Son willingly came to earth to die and to arise again for man's salvation. Therefore, God the Father is bound to love God the Son with a supreme love. He is bound to do the ultimate for Christ, to give Christ the supremacy over all things.

Still another way to say the same thing is this: God the Father has only one child who is the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son. God the Son was *perfectly obedient* in coming to earth to die for man and to arise from the dead. Therefore, God the Father is bound to love His only Son with a supreme love. He is bound to do everything and to arrange everything to focus around His only Son.

The point is this: God's great love for His Son explains why the church exists. God had created the world and man to worship and serve Him, but when man rebelled and refused to honour Him, God had to accomplish His purpose some other way. All men were not going to worship and serve Him, but He knew that some would if He provided a way. This God did. He provided the way through His Son Jesus Christ and the church. The person who believes in His Son Jesus Christ is forgiven for his rebellion and accepted into the new body of people God is creating, the body called "the church."

=> This is what the church is: a body of people who have approached God through the Lord Jesus Christ to worship and serve God.

2. This is the reason Jesus Christ is to have the supremacy, the pre-eminence in all things in all things: He is the Person who came to earth to suffer and die. He is One who has loved and given Himself for the church. He is the One who died to establish the church (Eph 5:25). Therefore, God has made Christ the pre-eminent and supreme Majesty of the universe.

=> Jesus Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God the Father.

Mark 16:19 *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

Eph 1:20 *Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*

=> Jesus Christ has been given a name above every name.

Phil 2:9 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.*

=> Jesus Christ has been given all things.

Rev 5:12 *In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"*

=> Jesus Christ has been made both Lord and Christ (Messiah, Saviour).

Acts 2:36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

1 Cor 8:6 Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

=> Jesus Christ has been exalted above all.

John 3:31 “The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.”

=> Jesus Christ is Lord of both the living and dead.

Rom 14:9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

=> Jesus Christ has a more superior name than the angels.

Heb 1:4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

=> Jesus Christ has more honour than even the greatest of men.

Heb 3:3 Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself.

=> Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.

Rev 1:11 Which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

=> Jesus Christ has all things put under His feet.

Eph 1:22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

=> Jesus Christ has all things in submission to Him.

1 Pet 3:22 Who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

V. **Colossians 01:19** *Jesus Christ and the Fullness of God*

Jesus Christ is filled with all the fullness of God Himself. All that God is dwells in Jesus Christ. This is what this verse means. Jesus Christ is fully God in all God’s divine nature. The word *dwelt* (katoikeo) means to make *permanent* abode or to be at home *permanently*. All the fullness of God was *at home* in Christ before He came to earth, *at home* in Him while He was on earth, and shall continue to be *at home* within Him throughout all eternity.

Jesus Christ is God, the Son of God who possesses the perfect nature of God the Father in all His Being and attributes.

This is significant for the church because it means...

- that God is the Head of the church
- that God is the beginning of the church
- that God is the One who came to earth, died and arose from the dead
- that God is the preeminent Person of the universe
- that God in all His fullness dwells in Jesus Christ, the Son of God

It means that the church worships God when it worships the Son of God. It means that God the Father is honoured when God the Son is honoured. Both the Father and the Son have the same perfect nature; therefore, what is done for the Son is done for the Father. The Son is to be worshipped and served even as the Father is. In fact, because of what God the Son has done in coming to earth — dying and arising from the dead — God the Father wants His Son to have the pre-eminence. Note the word “pleased”: it pleases the Father that His Son has His nature and is the pre-eminent majesty of the universe. (See Ph. 2:5-11.)

Thought 1. The church can please the Father only by praising and serving the Lord Jesus Christ, the One in whom dwells all the fullness of God.

John 1:1-2 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.*

John 1:16 *From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.*

Col 2:9 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.*

Eph 1:23 *[Christ] Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

1 Tim 3:16 *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

1 Tim 6:15 *Which God will bring about in his own time — God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords.*

Heb 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ■*