

“The Head of the Church”
Ephesians 1:18-23
(Preached at Trinity, February 9, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. For the last few weeks I've directed your attention to the final verses of **Chapter 1**.
 - A. Paul has been praying for the Ephesian Christians that their knowledge of the glory of God in their salvation might be increased—The hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance, and the surpassing greatness of His power towards those who believe.
 - B. He prays that they might fully comprehend that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead was at work in them.
 - C. He prays that they might fully comprehend the majesty of the exalted Christ who rules over all of creation.
2. In **Verses 22-23** Paul describes yet one more aspect of the mighty dominion of Christ that is most glorious for us. Paul declares Jesus Christ as Head of the Church.
Ephesians 1:22-23 NAU - "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."
3. Paul has already declared Jesus to have dominion over all things.
He sits above all and over all – **Verse 21** - "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named"
His dominion is universal – **Verse 22** – "And He put all things in subjection under His feet."
Curtis Vaughan – “The head that was once crowned with thorns now wears the diadem of universal dominion.”
4. Now Paul makes a particular statement regarding the universal headship of Christ:
Ephesians 1:22 NAS - "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church"
There are two different interpretations held for this:
 - A. There is the view that Jesus has been given dominion over all things *To* or *FOR* the Church. This view puts the emphasis on the word “gave.” Jesus Christ has been exalted as God's gift to the Church. There are many ways that this is true. He does sit at the right hand of majesty in the office of Mediator; as Prophet, Priest, and King for the benefit of the church.
 - B. The other view focuses on the phrase “to the church” in the sense “with reference to the church.”
In other words **Verse 22** has an emphasis upon the church under subjection to Christ. We could read it, “And appointed Head over all things with regard to the church.”

- C. Grammatically, either can be the proper interpretation. Theologically, either can be the proper interpretation. But the context is speaking of the supremacy of Christ, the authority of Christ, the dominion of Christ over all things. This supremacy must also apply to the church.
Jesus is the Head of the church.
5. Why does Paul now close out this first chapter by making particular reference to Christ as Head of the church? If Jesus is has dominion over all things can we not conclude He must also have dominion over the church? Why mention the church particularly?
The answer is clear. The Church is the focus of this entire letter. It is at the heart of God's redemptive purpose.
6. The word Church here has a particular emphasis. The Greek word translated church in the NT is ἐκκλησία. It is a word that is given great prominence; it is found 115 times.
- A. Almost every time it is used in a local sense—to particular local churches.
These are local gatherings of Christians joined in covenant with one another to do the work of the Kingdom as a unique fellowship of believers.
The NT epistles are written primarily to particular local churches. For example, the Church of Rome or the Church of Corinth, or the Churches of Galatia, or Ephesus, or Philippi, or Colossae, etc.
- B. But on occasion it carries the sense of the Church Universal referring to the full number of those for whom Christ died.
For example:
Ephesians 5:25-27 NAU - "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
- C. This is the use of the word here. Paul is declaring that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Of course, this must also true of particular local churches as well.
6. This morning I want us to consider Jesus Christ as the Head of the church.
Several years ago we identified seven qualities that characterize our church. The chief of these qualities is "Christ Centered." This quality is at the heart of this morning's sermon. The claim of being Christ Centered is a declaration of the headship of Christ.
7. I simply want us consider the headship of Christ under two dimensions.
- I. The supremacy of Jesus as the builder and maker of the church
- II. The supremacy of Jesus as the power and authority over the church
- I. The supremacy of Christ as the builder and maker of the church
- A. The church finds its fullness in Christ
1. In **Verses 27-28** Paul writes
Ephesians 1:22-23 NAU - "and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

- a. For the second time in one verse there are a couple ways to interpret this.
 - Christ finds His fullness in the Church. In other words the Church completes Christ, not in an ontological sense but Christ as our Redeemer. The head is incomplete without the body. A husband is incomplete without his bride. The Redeemer is incomplete without the church.
 - The Church receives its fullness from Christ. We are the fullness of Him. He displays His glory and power through His church.
 - b. The second is more likely, especially in the context. The church finds her fullness in Christ who fills all in all. Christ is all in all to the church.
2. Jesus asked His disciples in **Matthew 16**,
Matthew 16:15 NAU - "But who do you say that I am?"
 Peter answered:
Matthew 16:16 NAU - "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
 3. To Peter's great confession Jesus responded:
Matthew 16:17-18 NAU - "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."
 - a. Jesus Christ is the Solid Rock upon whom the church is built, the Sure Foundation, the Corner Stone.
 - b. The church is founded upon Christ, finds her fullness in Christ. All that the church is finds it's substance in Christ.
- B. The church finds its power in Christ
1. Jesus told Peter, "And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."
 - a. The picture is of all of the demonic forces rushing out of the gates of hell charging against the church
William Hendriksen – This "represents Satan and his legions storming out of hells gates in order to attack and destroy the church.
 - b. There is an ongoing spiritual battle in which the church is engaged.
1 Peter 5:8 – "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."
 2. Christ as the sovereign head of the church guarantees her safety
 "The gates of Hades shall not prevail"
- C. Jesus is also the lifeblood of the church
John 15:5 NAU - "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

1. The church finds its existence in Christ
 In **Verse 3** Paul says our spiritual blessings are in Christ
 In **Verse 4** Paul says we were chosen in Christ
 In **Verse 5** Paul says we were adopted through Christ
 In **Verse 6** Paul says that God's grace was freely bestowed in Christ
 In **Verse 7** Paul says redemption is through the blood of Christ
 In **Verse 9** Paul says that God's purposes are in Christ
 In **Verse 10** Paul tells us that all things are summed up in Christ.
Everything is in Christ! And now Paul is telling us that the church has her fullness in Christ her Head.
 2. Without Christ the church would not exist. Without Christ the church would die.
 3. Just as the head is essential to the life of the body so Christ is essential to the church. Notice in **Verse 23** Paul refers to the church as the body of Christ. We are united to Him. Our union with Christ is as real as the union of our head to our body. As our head Jesus is the source of our life. There is no salvation apart from Him.
 4. Every soul is brought into the Kingdom through the work of Christ. Preaching becomes effectual by His power.
 5. The church does not grow through military conquest or human wisdom. They are swept into the Kingdom by the power of the Gospel of Christ.
- D. To declare our church to be Christ Centered is a declaration that He is at the heart of everything we are and everything we do.
1. As a church we find our being in Him. He is our strength. Without Him we cease to be.
 2. In **Rev. 3** the Church of Laodicea was in a horrible condition. They were no longer united to Christ. They were empty, poor, blind, and naked—and they didn't even know it.
Revelation 3:17 NAU - "Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"
 3. We must never forget that every aspect of our body flows forth from our head. He is the source of every ministry in our church. He is the purpose. He is the goal.

II. The supremacy of Jesus as the power and authority over the church

- A. The Church has the blessing of a powerful King
Verse 21 - "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion"
1. **Matthew Henry** – "It was a gift to the church, to be provided with a head endowed with so much power and authority."
 - a. **Authority** – Jesus has the right to rule. This is the nature of God's authority. There are natural laws in the universe. God made them. But He has the authority to overrule them.
 God made a week to be 7 days and then declared one of them to be holy. He has the right to do this. The authority is His.
 He has the authority to rule us. No one has the right to question His rule.

- b. **Power** – God has the might to enforce His Holy will.
Isaiah 46:10 – “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I **will do all my pleasure**.”
 - 2. Jesus has been given authority over all creation
Philippians 2:9 NAU - "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,"
 - 3. The same power and authority Jesus has over the universe He has over His church. He sits upon His throne as our Lord and King.
 - a. He has authority over us. He bought us. He has been exalted to His rightful throne. Jesus declared in the Great Commission.
Matthew 28:18 NAU - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."
 - b. He has infinite power.
 - 4. Jesus is a gracious King who rules over us with great compassion and gentleness and infinite love. He is our Shepherd who provides for us and protects us. But make no mistake: He is Lord of all.
He is the Chief Shepherd. All other shepherds are underlings.
 - B. As our King we owe Him absolute submission
 - 1. Jesus said in **John 14** - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."
 - 2. Jesus declared in the Great Commission
Matthew 28:18-19 NAU - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations"
 - 3. As our Head, Jesus is the source of our life, our power, and our authority.
 - a. He fills us. This is the meaning of the words Paul uses in **Verse 23**
 - b. As His body filled with His fulness, the church is the means through which Jesus is doing His work upon the earth.

Conclusion:

As our Head Jesus is our source of being as a church. We cannot exist without Him. He has power and authority over us

This has many implications for us.

- 1. He is worthy of all praise. He is the source of our existence. Our church grows and prospers by His hand.
We must pray for His hand of blessing upon our church.
- 2. He is the ruler of our church. We must never embark upon some new program or ministry without seeking His direction. We must never forget that our work is under the authority of Christ.
- 3. He is coming back to receive His church and set all things right.
Revelation 11:15 – “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”