

Col. 1:18 (LD 17) “Firstborn from the Dead”

For the Children: You may be familiar with the story of Jacob and Esau. Esau would have inherited the “birthright,” the greater authority and riches. For He was older than his twin, Jacob. Of course, he sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. When God calls His Son “Firstborn” He does not mean that Jesus was born first. He means that Jesus inherits the greatest authority and riches – like the oldest son of the OT, only much greater! The Lord Jesus rules over all creation; He is also Head over all those who will follow Him in being raised from the dead. He is Head over the church, which is His “Body.” **Questions:** What does it mean that Jesus is “Head” over His Body/church? Of what does His resurrection guarantee us? In what way do we depend upon the Lord Jesus?

Introduction:

First Point: Christ’s Headship

- 1) Firstborn of Creation: In vss. 15-17, the apostle links Christ’s Headship and creation. In v. 15, “Firstborn” (see also Rom. 8:29; Heb. 1:6, 11:28; Rev. 1:5) does not imply that Christ was literally made or born at a point in time. It means that He has pre-eminence over all creation; Like the oldest son in the OT, He has the greatest authority and inheritance. He rules over life itself, over all existence. That “Firstborn” is not to be taken literally is seen in Heb. 12:23, where all in Christ are “firstborn,” heirs of the City of God through Him.
- 2) Head of the Body: Christ’s pre-eminence is also seen in that He is Head of the Body, the church. Like the head on a human body, He directs and guides and co-ordinates the various parts. He gives growth and life to the body. This is a different emphasis than 1 Cor. 12 or Rom. 12.
- 3) Firstborn from the Dead: In light of the above, when the verse states that Christ is the “Firstborn from the dead” and the “Beginning,” it means that He is the Source of new life, of resurrection from the dead. He is the Victor over death – as well as over Satan and sin. He has first place in EVERYTHING – from creation to redemption to creation-restored. Since He is Head of the church, His victory is shared with the rest of His “Body.”
- 4) First-Fruits and Forerunner: Being the Head of those who will rise from the dead, He is also called the “Forerunner” in Heb. 6:20 and “First-Fruits” in 1 Cor. 15:20, 23). He goes ahead to show us the path of redemption and resurrection. Like the first of the harvest offered to God in the OT, He is the best part of the “crop” and token that the whole belongs to God. We can see from this that the resurrection of Christ is as important as His death. It is just as much a part of our redemption.

Second Point: What That Headship means for Us

- 1) Death Overcome: We not only need Christ’s death to cover our sins; we also need His resurrection to give us the life and power to live out of the fruits of His death. His death and resurrection must go together for either to accomplish what they were designed to do.
- 2) New Life Obtained: That same life and power gives us the ability to begin exercising spiritual life e.g., by resisting Satan and sin and by doing good works. His victory over Satan and sin is outworked in our lives. See Col. 3:1ff.
- 3) The Hope of Resurrection: Christ’s physical resurrection is a guarantee that our bodies will be raised up at the end. Indeed, all creation will be restored when our bodies are glorified.
- 4) Our Dependency upon the Head: Since Christ is Head over all – creation, the new creation, the church – the source of all life and all spiritual life; and the Victor over Satan, sin and death; we therefore need to see our total dependency upon Him, as members of His Body. We depend on no mere creature in this way. Nor do we need to fear other creatures unduly – they are not “heads,” but under His authority..

Conclusion: