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 Title: Jesus Christ: The Head of the Church
 Text: Col. 1:12-27 [vv. 15-20]
 Theme: Jesus Christ is the essence and glory of His church.

Questions:

1. How do you view the local church?
2. What is your relationship to the local church?
3. Is there any connection between your relationship with Jesus Christ and that of the local church?

Introduction: There can be no conversation in the church without its content circulating around the person of Christ. It is impossible to separate who Christ is from what He has done. His cross work secured for Himself a community of people called the church. He permeates and punctuates all things Christian. He is the unifying subject matter of creation and revelation.

The present danger:

We live in a period of time where the idea of the church has become almost obsolete. Many can relate to this small poem.

“Some go to church to see and be seen,
 Some go there to say they have been,
 Some go there to sleep and nod,
 But few go there to worship God.”

Proverb

Often I speak of every church being a Corinthian church and every Corinthian church being an Acts church. The local church has problems only because it is made up of “yet to be perfected” people. This “problem” will exist until we leave time and experience eternity. With all of the “problems” within the local church, I cannot separate what the church is in relation to her head, Jesus Christ. This fellowship is the consequence of our Lord Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. For me to denigrate the local church and to alienate myself from it and not support what she is and does is to grossly misunderstand the cross of Jesus Christ. We cannot talk about missions without talking about the local church, and it is impossible to speak of the local church without consider her head, Jesus Christ.

It is for this reason the intent of this study is . . .

Mind: To know that Jesus Christ is the Head of His Church.

Will: To express love for the head, Christ by expressing love and commitment for His body, the Church.

Emotion: To love His body, the church as Christ, the head loves His body.

As head, Jesus Christ is the very essence of the New Testament Church. He is her lifeblood and heartbeat.

“All the spiritual life and power of the church are drawn from Christ, the head.”
(R.C.H. Lenski, CNT, Colossians, 1&2 Thess., 1&2 Tim., Titus, Philemon, 61).

What does it mean to be the “head” of the church? Jesus Christ as the head of the church is sighted in several passages within the New Testament.

“But I want you to understand that **Christ is the head of every man**, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:3).

“For even as **the body is one and yet has many members**, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, **so also is Christ**” (1 Cor. 12:12).

⁹ “He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, **the summing up of all things in Christ**, things in the heavens and things on the earth” (Eph. 1:9, 10).

²⁰ “which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² 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**” (Eph. 1:20-23).

“but speaking the truth in love, **we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ**” (Eph. 4:15).

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as **Christ also is the head of the church**, He Himself being the Savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23).

¹⁸ “Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and **not holding fast to the head**, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God” (Col. 2:18, 19).

Several observations can be made from these passages.

- First, there is only one head over the body and it is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 5:23).
- Second, the importance of the head in relation to all other parts is stressed (Eph. 1:9, 10).
- Third, the head has a ruling authority over everything else (Eph. 1:20-23).
- Fourth, body stability is found in relation to the head (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:18-19).

We can say these are the “facts of headship as depicted in the Scripture,” but ultimately we must ask “what does this mean?”

The head is an object of affection. It is through the head we come to relational intimacy. The head is what we cherish and love. It is the object of our energy. It is where we spend our time. Priorities are set and established in relation to the head. In the absence of the head, nothing else has life. The head brings sustenance to the body. From the head the body lives and breathes and has its being. Although the body can become sick and at times appear dysfunctional, its very life breath is found in its relation to the head. It is the head that reigns supreme over the body.

Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He is the object of our affection. He is the one through whom we have relational intimacy with the Tri-unity of God. He is to be cherished and loved. He is the object of energy expended. All of life in all of its complexities are set, established, and understood in relation to Him. In the absence of Jesus Christ nothing else matters.

Although His body, the church, can appear sickly and dysfunctional through petty and party divisions, its very life and health are completely dependent on and inseparably linked to Him.

The passage before us shows us how Jesus Christ is “her lifeblood and heartbeat.” There are four actions on the part of the Trinity that secures this headship of the Son over His Church. Three are directly embedded in the text and one is from outside the text. Let us begin with the logical progression of this thought as it is found in a slight rearranging of the verses before us.

I. This headship is secured by the Father’s Plan (vv. 18, 19)

¹⁸ “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ **For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him**” (Col. 18, 19).

It pleased the Father that in His Son should all fullness dwell. Note how Paul states this same idea in Ephesians 1:20-23.

²⁰ “which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² 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” (Eph. 1:20-23).

“All the fullness’ is all that places the God-man in both natures above the being and the life of the whole creation and above every power of death and of destruction.” (R.C.H. Lenski, CNT, Colossians, 1&2 Thess., 1&2 Tim., Titus, Philemon, 64).

“No domain is left in which the absolute supremacy of Christ and of his work is not fully effective.” (R.C.H. Lenski, CNT, Colossians, 1&2 Thess., 1&2 Tim., Titus, Philemon, 64).

The Son occupies the position of Headship because the Father determined that such would be the case. The fact that this is true is based solely on the good pleasure of God. For us to reject this most fundamental idea is to run contrary to the purpose of God the Father.

II. This headship is secured by the Son’s position (vv. 15-17).

¹⁵ “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ **For by Him all things were created**, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--**all things have been created through Him and for Him.** ¹⁷ **He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together**” (Col. 1:15-17).

The “for” of verse 15 explains how the Son as the image of the invisible God holds the place of “firstborn.” As firstborn He outranks all creatures in every relationship.

“Verses 15-20 are entirely about Christ who has already been called ‘the Son of the Father’s love,’ the King of the kingdom (v. 13).” (R.C.H. Lenski, CNT, Colossians, 1&2 Thess., 1&2 Tim., Titus, Philemon, 46).

It is impossible for us to fully process the magnitude of what we are hearing. We deal with sequence, with tangible objects that form a basis for concrete thought, yet here we see facts that must be embraced by faith. Listen carefully to New Testament Scholar R.C.H. Lenski concerning this thought on the majesty of Christ:

“The Scriptures present the facts, these are inconceivable but still eternal facts. Accept them, bow down and worship, leave a little to the light of glory, rejoice in Christ, God and man in one!” (R.C.H. Lenski, CNT, Colossians, 1&2 Thess., 1&2 Tim., Titus, Philemon, 49).

This celebrated position is because . . .

A. **By Him** all things were created.

This statement “expresses absolute universality and no exceptions.” (R.C.H. Lenski, CNT, Colossians, 1&2 Thess., 1&2 Tim., Titus, Philemon, 57). There is nothing that He is not supreme over.

- B. All things have been created **through Him**.
- C. **For Him**.
- D. **He is before** all things.
- E. **In Him** all things hold together.

“And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and **upholds all things by the word of His power**. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).

“No created being in the universe is independent of Christ.” (R.C.H. Lenski, CNT, Colossians, 1&2 Thess., 1&2 Tim., Titus, Philemon, 58).

This is why the Son’s position secures for Him headship. It is because of who He is that what He does carries so much eternal weight. There is nothing either invisible or visible that is not somehow connected to who Christ is and what He has done. Everything about your existence is directly connected to the sustaining power of Jesus Christ. Is it not stunning when you consider how absent He is from our thoughts? It is foolishness to ask God to show Himself mighty in your behalf when His direct and immediate work is holding your life together. The local church shows the very majesty of Christ and is, in her worship, to celebrate Him for all that He is in His position.

Here, His headship is noted in relation to creation. What follows is His headship is noted in relation to redemption.

III. This headship is secured by the Son’s provision (vv. 14, 20).

¹² “giving thanks to the Father, who **has qualified us** to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³ For **He rescued us** from the domain of darkness, and **transferred us** to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ **in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins**. . . ²⁰ and through Him to **reconcile all things to Himself**, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. ²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²² yet **He has now reconciled you** in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (Col. 1:12-14, 20-22).

In light of who He is according to the good pleasure of the Father, the work in which He engaged is fully sufficient to secure the end desired. Because all things in Him find their fulfillment, it is possible and necessary for Him to reconcile all things to each other and to Himself.

- A. He has **qualified us to share in the inheritance** of the saints in light (v. 12)
- B. He **rescued us** from the domain of darkness, and **transferred us** to the kingdom of His beloved Son (v. 13).
- C. In Him we have **redemption** (v. 14a).
- D. In Him we have the **forgiveness** of sins (v. 14b).
- E. Through Him we have been **reconciled** . . . having made **peace** through the blood of His cross (vv. 20-22).

In these five statements we have a description of His body, the church, the local church. Nothing we do can undo what He has done. Regardless as to how young or old you are in your faith, every one of these rich consequences are true for all who are in Christ Jesus.

- IV. This headship is secured by the Holy Spirit's power (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27).

Listen to the Spirit's involvement in securing the Son's headship over the Church.

³“Or do you not know that all of us **who have been baptized into Christ Jesus** have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3, 4).

¹² “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ **For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).

“For all of **you who were baptized into Christ** have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

It is the Father's will for the Son to provide a basis for the Spirit to place His people into one new man. All of these actions put Jesus Christ as the head of His Church. The local church is a result of what the Holy Spirit has done to His people in placing them into the larger body of Christ.

Paul wrote the letter of Colossians to a local church or churches. What he says of Christ as the head of the body is true of all local churches. Although what we have seen is true concerning the body of Christ at large, it is directly true of the local church. Jesus Christ is the head of this church.

It is a constant prayer that God would open the eyes of His people to see the beauty of His body, the church, as it exists in relation to the head, Jesus

Christ. May the prayer of His people find their completion in the fuller revelation of Jesus Christ at His imminent appearance.

APPLICATION: Making it Personal – What's the NEXT ACTIONS STEP?

1. See the church for what it is as a part of God's eternal purpose.
2. See the church for what it is as a purchased possession by the blood of Jesus Christ.
3. See the church for what it is as an action of baptism whereby the Holy Spirit places His people into union with God.
4. Love the church. Stop nit-picking and start building up one another.
5. Find a local church to which you can commit yourself and become a member under the leadership as it is guided and directed by the Holy Spirit.
6. Missions begins in and through your local church to its immediate community, nation, and world.