

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## What Christ is to us: Head

What a wonderful subject! Christ as the Head! The words of our human languages cannot express the wonder of this aspect of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the study prompted the following verses that, at the least, attempt to outline this truth.

*How great Thou art, Lord Jesus,  
The church's living Head!  
How great Thy power and glory,  
Thy majesty and dread!  
All that's in earth and heaven  
By right belongs to Thee.  
Above all now exalted  
The Chief of all to be.*

*Agent of every blessing  
That comes from God above.  
The Fount of every honour  
And river of God's love.  
Thou art both Lord and Sovereign  
Supreme o'er all, Thou art.  
And one day, all creation  
Will praise to Thee impart.*

*We're nourished in our spirits  
And bound as one by love  
We grow in grace and wisdom  
To be like Thee above.  
How gladly we would serve Thee!  
The gifts Thou'st given use.  
We'd bind up and we'd build up  
The people Thou didst choose.*

*Thou gav'st Thyself for us, Lord,  
To bring us to Thy side.  
To Thee we would be subject,  
Thy complement, Thy bride.  
With joy Thou wilt receive us,  
Both cleansed and beautified.  
For ever, we'll adore Thee,  
The Lamb once crucified.*

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Many years ago, King David turned to address God saying, "Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all" (1 Chronicles 29:10-12).

Often, and rightly, we say that Scripture interprets itself and here is a classic case of this because if we wanted an outline of the meaning of "Headship" we find it in these verses where the LORD is proclaimed as Head above all. We are told that He, supreme in power and splendour, is the possessor of the kingdom - the exalted Head. As such, He is

the Source of riches and honour and the Ruler over all. It is the LORD, as Head, who is sovereign, being able to make great and strengthen according to His will.

The Hebrew word for "head" is used in many different ways in the Old Testament. However, there are several aspects that steer its use. The first aspect is that of having the highest place. The second aspect emphasises the aspect of excellence. The final aspect speaks of rule. We would need to subject ourselves to a person in such a high position. A person of such worth would deserve our worship, while the ruler requires our obedience.

Judgment is a further aspect of headship. This is found in Exodus 18:25-26 where we read: *"And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves."* These heads of the people took up positions of trust and authority. Exodus 18:21 reveals that they were *"able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness."*

Christ, of course, is perfect in every way and He is highly exalted having a name that is above every name. Israel will have Him as his head in a future day (Hosea 1:11) and Christ, like David before Him, will be Head of the nations also (Psalm 18:43).

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 we find that Christ is the Head of every man. Paul states: *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."* Here we find God's order of headship in its divine order. You might say, "I thought Christ was God and, therefore, equal with Him." This is true. He is and always will be God; but He voluntarily became a man. Therefore, He put Himself in a position of subjection to God. In 1 Corinthians 15:28 we read: *"And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."* Christ, the Son of the living God, always desires to glorify His Father. After His thousand years reign over the earth when every enemy has been put down, Christ will hand a cleansed world back to God in order that God may be all in all. So in becoming man Christ remains equal with God, but voluntarily took a subordinate position. Yet, being the Son of God and the perfect Man, He remains head of every other man. It follows that every human being must therefore acknowledge this and be subject to Christ. Ultimately, any who refuse to do so will be dealt with by God Himself.

In the original creation, the man (Adam) was made in the image and likeness of God. He was appointed to have dominion over the earth. The woman, however, was taken out from the man (see Genesis 2:21-22). So, from the beginning, God has appointed the man to be the head of the woman. Consequently, wherever men and women are found together, it is God's order for man to be the head. The woman is to be subject to the man. The head covering of the woman, when in the church situation, symbolises her subjection and also veils her personal "glory" (her hair) which was not to be seen in God's presence.

God will ensure that the authority of Christ is acknowledged by all in a day to come. We read in Philippians 2:9-11: *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

We will now consider Christ as Head of the body. In Colossians 1:18 Paul writes: *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

The Christians at Colosse were being infiltrated by the teachings of human philosophy (as well as by Judaism) so the Apostle shows them that in having such a supreme Head they needed nothing from the teachers of this world. Among other things, he showed them that Christ was the beloved Son of the Father, the Creator and Sustainer of all, the Redeemer, the very image of God, the Son in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells, the Firstborn and the Preeminent One. There is none to compare with Jesus whether in His personal excellence or in the position He fills!

Paul reveals the sufficiency of Christ as the Head of the body in Colossians 2:19-20. He admonishes the Colossians for not holding the Head, but then states that it is through the Head that the body is nourished, knit together and grows. Therefore, the Christians at Colosse had no need to revert to philosophy or to the works of the Old Testament law in order to make progress in the things of God. The apostle reminds them that the things found in the law were merely shadows outlining the reality now found in Christ and the blessings that emanate through Him.

In Ephesians 4 Christ is seen as having ascended up on high (Ephesians 4:9), He has led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8); revealing to the spiritual realm the triumph secured through His death and resurrection. The whole universe will one day be filled with His glory. Today, He gives grace and gifts to all who trust in Him - gifts that are given for the perfecting of His people, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:7-16).

It is a priority of God that we should grow spiritually as believers through the truth that is taught. Ephesians 4.15 states: *"But [we] speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* We are to hold the truth in love, and through it grow up to Christ - that is, to be marked by His characteristics.

In Ephesians 4, we are led to the living union of the Head and the body of Christ. In an article on the Headship of Christ, William Reid writes: "The whole body, which embraces every believer on earth indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is vitally united to Christ the Head, and is united together, the members being not only members of Christ, but members of each other. Joints of supply also connect the members together, and every part functioning, according to its measure, works for the body towards its self-edification in love. But all that supplies the body to procure its self-building comes from the Head to which the body is united. How dependent we are upon our heavenly Head! Whether we consider the gift of grace given to each, the gifts given to men, or what comes to the body through the joints of supply; all comes from Christ on high, our exalted Head" (from the periodical *An Outline of Sound Words*, Volumes 31-40).

Different Christian denominations may hold certain men on earth as the heads of their churches; but Christ alone is the Head of the true church which is composed of all who truly believe in Him and have availed themselves of the salvation which comes through Him. Christ has been made everything to us and for us. The wisdom, authority and strength necessary to carry out anything in the assembly today resides in Him. Let us subject ourselves to Him. Let us obey Him. Let us worship Him.

Turning to Ephesians 5 we now move on to think about Christ as the Head of the Church, His Bride (Ephesians 5:23). Just as the rib that formed the basic building block of the woman was taken from Adam during the deep sleep that came upon him (Genesis 2:21-22), so the basis for the church was formed by the sleep of death that came upon the Saviour at Calvary's cross. He had said prior to His suffering that He would build His church and the gates of Hades would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

We then found that Eve became the wife of Adam. She was united to Him - *"flesh of [his] flesh and bone of [his] bones"* (see Genesis 2:23). This pictures the unity between Christ and His church. Eve was built through Adam and then united to him. In a similar way, this is so with Christ and His church.

Eve was placed under the dominion of Adam. She was supposed to be subject to him. In the same way, the church is to accept the government of Christ and be subject to His will. We read in Ephesians 5.24: *"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."* He alone is the Head of the church. It obtains all it needs from Him! Such needs include life, nourishment, affection, guidance and resources.

Furthermore, the church is here to display its Head in will, works, witness, worship, word, walk and spiritual warfare. Christ gives the grace that enables the church to do these things. It depends entirely upon Him and is independent of the world with its politics, resources, fads and fashions. (The "world" here may be defined as that system which is in direct opposition to God the Father). The Christian is commanded in 1 John 2.15: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

The church is especially motivated and shaped by one attribute of Christ, namely, love! In Ephesians 5.25-27 we find: *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."*

Christ loved the church so much that He delivered Himself up to death for it. This was no ordinary death either! It meant He would be made a curse and forsaken of God. It meant that He would come under the fearsome attack of Satan. It meant He would be made sin. Yet, *"for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame..."* (Hebrews 12:2).

Today, He is sanctifying and cleansing His church. While it is true that the church has been set apart to God and cleansed from sin once and for all through faith in Christ's sacrificial work, it still remains in the world and, therefore, is subjected to defilement. By the agency of the word of truth the Lord Jesus is sanctifying and cleansing it practically day by day. This should be seen in the spiritual growth and holy conduct of those who are members of His church. How important it is for us to allow the Lord to sanctify and cleanse us as individual believers. Do we study the scriptures? Are we happy to come under to teaching of God's word? Or do we neglect the opportunities to allow the Lord, by His Spirit, to lead us to spiritual maturity? The Bible contains our spiritual food. Without it there is can be no spiritual growth.

The result of the present work of Christ is seen in the section that follows: *"...That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"* (Ephesians 5:27). The work of Christ is perfect. The church will be made suitable for His presence. If this is the case,

and it is dependent upon the washing of water by the word, then the question arises: 'Are those who say they believe, but neglect the scriptures and biblical teaching, really part of His church?'

In Ephesians 1:21-22 we read that Christ is "*Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come...*" The verse continues by showing that God "*hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church...*"

In His present exalted position, the Lord Jesus is **far** above every other name and every other power, whether in this age or the age to come. All things are put beneath His feet, and He is given to be Head over all things. This includes every principality and power as well (Colossians 2:10). Even their divine resources are to be found in Him who is their Head. He controls, directs and supplies all the great spiritual beings that He created, and who carry out the commissions of God in the realm of creation.

Of course, He is also the Head **to** the church which is His body. If as Head over all things, He governs with a more objective hand, then we see a far more intimate relationship expressed in His governance of the church, His body. FB Hole in his notes on Ephesians states "that this may be illustrated by the case of Adam, who is a figure of [Christ]. Adam was created to be head *over* all other created things that filled the garden, but he was head *to* Eve, who was his body as well as his wife." (page 40, *Galatians to Philemon*, FB Hole. ISBN: 9780901860446). This makes it abundantly clear Christ's relationship to the church is far more intimate and wonderful than that over all things. Are you part of that relationship? Have you put your trust in this almighty Saviour?

We conclude with the first and last verses of a hymn written by Samuel J. Stone (1839-1900):

*The Church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,  
She is His new creation  
By water and the Word.  
From heav'n He came and sought her  
To be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her  
And for her life He died.*

*O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we  
Like them, the meek and lowly,  
On high may dwell with Thee:  
There, past the border mountains,  
Where in sweet vales the Bride  
With Thee by living fountains  
Forever shall abide!*

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