

THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

“Who is Head of the Church?”

Colossians 1:18

Background

1. Who is in charge? This is a huge issue. The answers are varied depending on the source of one’s information and definitions for “head” and “church.”
2. We are concerned about what the Scriptures, God’s holy Word, have to say on the subject. We seek Biblical answers. Thank God, there is no doubt as to what it says!
3. But, consider what the context of our text has already recorded -- by inspiration of the Holy Spirit -- concerning other subjects.
4. The Lord Jesus Christ has priority before creation (v. 15). He is the image of God from all eternity. He is at once the very essence of God, the representation of God, and the manifestation of God.
5. The Lord Jesus Christ has superiority over creation (vv. 15, 16). He is the first born in relation to creation. He is, therefore, eternally generated within the Godhead.
6. The Lord Jesus Christ has authority over all creation (vv. 16, 17). The several parts of the total creation are all the work of His creative and sustaining power.

NOTE: The end notes in this: Jesus Christ is God and being God, He is the Person within the Godhead Who has called forth all creation.

7. Now, for the text at hand. It states unequivocally what the relation of the Lord Jesus Christ is to the CHURCH. Think through the arguments establishing the Lord’s absolute position:

1. He is the HEAD of the church.

a. Personally.

The emphatic pronoun “He” in antithesis to any created being, angelic or otherwise. It is Jesus Christ HIMSELF Who is the Head.

b. Practically

This is a central and critical factor. In the O.T., the nation Israel and the nations (Gentiles) are the core issues. The N.T. has a marked difference. The Body (Church) was promised (Mt. 16:18), hence it had not been up to that time. This is exactly what the N.T. affirms about the Church (Body). Look up Ro. 15:15, 26; Col. 1:24-26; Eph. 3:3, 5. 6.

How is the “Body” formed? Give attention to the Scriptures. Read them for yourself (1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Acts 1:5; 11:15, 16). With the use of the genitive of apposition or identity, the “Body” is the same as the “Church.” Nowhere in the O.T. is there this “organism.” Why? For the simple reason that there was no baptism with the Holy Spirit in the O.T. Just like there is no sealing (Eph. 4:30) and no permanent indwelling (John 14:16) of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost (Acts 2).

As the Head of the Body (the Church), the Lord Jesus provides authority for movement and ministry, direction for operation, and authority for members of the “Body” (Ro. 12; 1 Cor. 12). The cohesion, continuity, and harmony of the Body are all His. Being the Head, all the members of the body function at His command. Surely this is the bottom line for the use of the present tense copulative verb “is.”

2. He is the FIRSTBORN for the Church.

This worthy title has already been examined in this context (v. 15). It denotes precedence. All others bow before Him.

Elsewhere the Lord Jesus Christ is the firstborn “of the dead company” (Rev. 1:5). Here in Colossians the addition of a preposition stresses the fact that He is the “Firstborn out of the dead company.” He came forth in the power of resurrection life. He never died again. All who claim resurrection life must do so through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again the use of the present tense copulative verb acknowledges that the Lord is the only One Who has left the realm of the dead -- never to return there.

3. He is the BEGINNING with the Church.

The Greek term denoting “beginning” really means “origin.” He is, therefore, the One in the Godhead Three Who established the church. Jesus Christ is the Source of the church, the originating Power of the church, the dominant Cause of the church. Both in time and dignity, He is the BEGINNING (cf. Rev. 3:14; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Acts 3:15; Heb. 2:10; 12:2).

NOTE: The definite article is used with “beginning” in some MSS, but whether accepted or not, the word itself speaks of Jesus Christ being the absolute Beginning.

Afterward

Why make an issue of the “Body, the “Church,” the “Beginning” and the “Firstborn?” Very simply, in order that (purpose clause) He Himself (reflexive use of the pronoun) might become once for all (aorist tense) “holding first place” (present tense, only time verb used in the N.T.). This is “in all things” He MUST have it; He will have it -- blessed be His Name.