

The Church That Jesus Is Building.
The Head Of The Church - Pastor Roger Ridley
Gretna Baptist Church, Gretna, NE, July 17, 2005

It was pretty exciting this past week to see the walls of our church building go up. With a combination of missionary builders, volunteers, and church members, far more got done than I thought would. It happened because all those people who came to the jobsite worked together as a team under leadership. Obviously, that is crucial to any building project. Can you imagine what our building would be looking like if everyone went out there, and just did their own thing? It takes leadership. It takes people willing to follow direction. It takes people willing to work together for any building project to go together as planned.

Nothing less is true concerning *the Church that Jesus is building*. It also takes leadership, submission, and teamwork in order to be built up effectively. For the past several messages, we have considered the various parts of the building itself, but now we want to turn our attention to the team, or the personnel that gets the job done.

With our project, on site, Rod Veith, makes the decisions, as the project manager. I think we would all agree that he has done a good job of it. However, he answers to Dallas Putnam, who is the director of the missionary builders for CBM. We have had the opportunity to talk with Dallas on several occasions, and have come to appreciate his leadership. But Dallas does not make the final decisions either, he answers to Dr. Gerald Webber, who is the president, or head of Continental Baptist Missions. Every organization on earth has a head person, who is in charge and responsible for what happens. It has to be that way for projects to be done right.

For the Church, that head person is Jesus Christ. Repeatedly, in the New Testament, He is identified as *the Head of the Church*.

Listen to a few of those references:

Ephesians 1:22 says that God *gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church*.

Ephesians 4:15 says that the Church is to *grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ*.

Ephesians 5:23 says that *Christ is the Head of the Church*.

Colossians 1:18 says that *He is the Head of the body, the Church*.

There is no question that the New Testament teaches that the Head of the Church, that Jesus is building, is Jesus Himself. Ephesians 1:22 says that He was *appointed* to that position by God the Father. Because of His appointed Headship there are some necessary responses to His leadership if the Church is going to be built effectively according to plan. Those responses are indicated in the passages that I have just brought to your attention.

I. The most obvious response is that of Submission to the Headship of Christ.

Look with me at two of those passages: Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18...

The point is clearly and concisely made that Jesus, **alone**, is the Head of the Church. No one else qualifies: not your pastor, not some hierarchy, not a pope. It is interesting to me that in these verses, it is emphasized that He 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.*” He is the Head, not only of the Church, but everything else as well!

Now that tells me, first of all, that He has the power to back up His promise, given back in Matthew 16:18, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.* The Church will be triumphant, it will be built, and it will accomplish everything that the Head wants it to accomplish! Amen?

Because that is true, Colossians 1:18 makes the additional point that He must have the *preeminence*. That’s not a word that we use very often in our society. Perhaps because we don’t like to apply it to anyone else *outside ourselves*. Like Diotrephes, in 3 John 1:9, we like to have the preeminence. We hate for anyone else to have it. It means *to be superior*. Jesus is to have that **first place** in the life of the Church.

Now, whether we ever acknowledge His superiority or not, He is supreme, He is the Head, and ultimately we will answer to Him. Acts 10:42 says that He will judge the living and the dead. Philippians 2:10-11 says, “*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.*”

Clearly, what all of that means is that you and I, our local church, and the Church as a whole must function in submission to Him. But like Israel of old, we often live in rebellion. I know we all do it, but I am amazed, and even frightened sometimes, at how blatant and bold people are in rejecting His leadership. I am not talking so much about people outside the Church, that’s to be expected, I am referring to professing Christians.

For some time now, it has been popular to ask, *What would Jesus do?*” As a result, we find WWJD showing up on all kinds of things: stickers, pens, bracelets, you name it. But when people come to me asking what Jesus would do regarding an issue in their life, or something that they want to do, and I give them direction from the Word of God, I am often surprised by their response. Too many times, I have heard, and witnessed, seemingly mature Christians *refuse* to do what Jesus says. That is scary to me.

It is only my opinion, but I believe we are living in a day, when the Church of Jesus Christ ignores His Headship, except when it is convenient to do so. Shame on us. We will answer for it.

As a church, is Jesus our recognized Head? As a Christian, do you live in submission to Him? Those are very important questions for us.

A second response, closely aligned with this one, and developed in the passages we have mentioned is this:

II. We are to recognize our Origination in the Headship of Christ.

Open your Bibles to Colossians 1, and look again at verses 15-18...

These verses make a number of pertinent points. I'll just bring a couple of them to your attention. One that is certainly important in the time in which we live is that *by Him were all things created*. Whether we are talking about heaven or earth, visible or invisible, whatever, they find their origination in Jesus Christ.

The universe exists because Christ spoke it into existence. This world exists because Christ spoke it into existence. You and I exist because, in eternity past, Christ spoke us into existence for this point in time. He is the Creator of everything. The Creator of everyone. The Creator of you and me.

The greatest happiness that you and I can experience in this life comes when we recognize our origination in Jesus Christ. That is why Christians should be the happiest people on earth. We know how we got here, we know why we are here, and we know where we are going.

That is also why so many, in our world, are unhappy and unfulfilled. Romans chapter one so clearly explains that when we fail to acknowledge our origination in Him, we become foolish in our thinking, we adopt lies about our existence, and we dishonor our own bodies.

Since all of life has its origination in Jesus Christ, should it be at all surprising to us that the also Church has her origination in Him?

Regarding the Church, Colossians 1:18 says that *He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*. Both the words *beginning* and *firstborn* emphasize His priority in time and position: He is before the Church, and at the head of the Church. But they also refer to the key moment of origin for us: the resurrection of Christ. Without the giving of Himself, without His death for sin, and without His victory over sin through the resurrection, there would be no Church. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 15:17-20...

Without the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, there would be no Church. Ephesians 5:23 says that *Christ is the Head of the Church: and He is the Savior of the Body*. We owe our life to Him. We owe our existence to Him. The Church finds her origination in Him. How foolish it would be for us to fail to acknowledge that.

Such acknowledgement starts with receiving Jesus Christ as the Savior, who loves us, and gave Himself for us. If you never have received Christ as your Savior, we encourage you to do so today: **Admit** that you are a sinner. **Believe** that Jesus died for sin and rose from the grave. **Call** upon Jesus to save you from your sin, and give you everlasting life.

There is a third response that should be obvious to everyone:

III. We are to be in Connection with the Headship of Christ.

Two of our passages give specific attention to this: Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 2:18-19...

As the Church, which in these verses is referred to as *the body of Christ*, our nourishment comes from the Head. Our strength comes from the Head. Our ability to grow and mature comes from the Head. Our ability to function properly comes from the Head.

As it is true in creature life, it is even more true in Church life, that the body without the Head is useless.

I grew up on a small farm in Tennessee. An imbedded memory of my childhood took place the first time I saw my dad butcher our chickens. One by one, he severed their bodies from their heads. That's not what caught my attention. What I will never forget is watching those headless chickens run around in circles. That was amazing for me as a small child, however, it didn't last long, because the body cannot function without the head. For everything to work right, and continue to work right, the body must be in connection with the head.

The Body of Christ, the Church, must be in vital connection with the Head, Jesus Christ, if we are to be nourished, if we are to grow, if we are to function properly, and if we are to survive. Can anything be more obvious?

There are churches today, so called, who have no vital connection with Christ, and therefore are dead. But there is another problem which I am more concerned about. We might call it spiritual paralysis.

For some time, I visited a lady in the hospital, who could think clearly, and talk clearly, but because of a disease, had no use of her body, it was paralyzed. Her head and body were connected, but her head would tell her body to do something, and her body would not respond.

Today, too many churches seem to have a similar problem: spiritual paralysis. Ineffective in the cause of Christ because they fail to respond to the messages of the Head, Christ Himself. Let's make sure that does not happen to us. Let's make sure that we stay vitally connected to Him, responding to Him, growing in Him, that we might be everything Christ, the Head of the Church, intends for us to be.

Conclusion: Because Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, we are to offer our submission to Him, we are to recognize our origination in Him, and we are to maintain our connection with Him.

May each of us do our part, so that our church, as a whole, might properly respond to the Headship of Christ.