

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Jesus as King, Lord and Head: Head

The glories of the Lord Jesus are so wide and varied that it would be impossible to sum them up in one word or term, whether it be a name or a title. As Isaac Watts puts it in his well-known and much loved hymn,

*“Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That mortals ever knew,
That angels ever bore,
All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set the Saviour forth.”*

One major term the Holy Spirit uses in scripture about the Lord Jesus is that of HEAD. That is to be the subject of our thoughts today.

We need to bear in mind that things in the natural sphere, as God created them, are intended to teach us about things in the spiritual realm. The concept of a head is an outstanding example of this. We in our day are privileged to live at a time when God has allowed men to discover, and achieve, some amazing things. Tremendous progress has been made, especially in realms such as medicine and surgery. Things that were unheard of not so many years ago are now relatively commonplace. Think of the truly amazing transplants of major organs that can now be done, and lasting benefits derived. Hearts, lungs, livers, kidneys have been taken from those who have no further use for them and put inside other people's bodies and maintained in working order. I am aware that there are residual problems such as rejection, which only highlight the wonder of God's creation. Nevertheless, tremendous achievements have been made. Even faces, and parts of faces, have been removed from one body and attached to another, where major disfigurement has either occurred at birth, or been caused by disease or accident.

However, certainly up to now, it has not been considered right even to attempt to transplant a whole head. The moral reason for this is obvious. Even people who have no reservations whatever, normally, are aghast at the very idea of giving a person another head. Why? Because it is from the head that every thought and action of the body is controlled. Men generally recognise that to replace the head would be tampering with the very identity of the person. If you change the head, you will change the person. No doubt such attempts will be made at some stage. But such is the relative importance of the head that such actions would not really be so much giving a body a new head as giving the head a new body.

In the natural sphere, the head is recognised as the nerve centre and control point from which every thought and action of the human body is regulated. Of course, in the natural sphere, the head is firmly, physically attached to the body it controls. In the spiritual sphere, God, through the scriptures, teaches us that what we have learned and been acquainted with naturally is a metaphor for the spiritual situation. The Christian company, in total, the aggregate of every single individual Christian on earth at any one time, is looked at as a body. The big difference compared with the natural body is that while this spiritual body is on earth, the Head, Christ, is in heaven. The Head in heaven directs, nourishes and controls the body which is on earth. As in the natural sphere, this body is intended to function as an integrated whole. Each member of the body works with the others in a balanced, co-ordinated, inter-related way for the good of the whole. As with the human body, this is only possible if the communications system between the head and the various parts of the body is in good working order. We are always sad to see a case where an interruption of the flow of blood or damage to the nervous system results in the normal operation of a person's body, even the facility of intelligent thought or coherent speech, being adversely affected.

I have to say that I speak as a layman in these things without any real medical knowledge, but I trust the picture is clear.

It is, then, no figment of the imagination to think of the Lord Jesus as the Head of the church, which is His body. The word of God affirms the truth in many ways and in many places. We shall look at as much as we have time for. First of all, we shall look at the different ways in which Christ exercises his headship. Then we shall look at the different

groups towards which His Headship is relevant. In each case, I shall try to give you a scripture reference to look up when you have the time.

The Lord Jesus is Head in three different ways. He is HEAD racially, administratively and organically.

First of all, after Jesus died and rose again, He went back to heaven. Then, on the day of Pentecost He sent the Holy Spirit into the world to inaugurate the Christian church. In so doing, He brought a new race of man into existence. This race is acceptable to God because of the value to Him of the perfect work at Calvary of His beloved Son. He, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the appointed Head of that new race. Romans 5:12-21 gives us the teaching on that, and the contrast between the former race of man, under Adam as head, and the new race, of which Christ is the Head. Indeed, as noticed before, when you change the head, you change the person, and introduce him into a completely new life.

Secondly, Ephesians 4:8-16 teaches us that Christ is not only the titular Head of that race, but that He is also the administrative Head, controlling and guiding all the activities that are necessary for the benefit of the new race.

Thirdly, Colossians 2:9-10 show us that this is not merely an organisational matter. Those who are members of this new race are in it because they have received life from the Head of the race and that life takes its character from Him. The body is heavenly in character because its source and Head is in heaven.

Let us now think about the features and blessings of the Headship of Christ.

The Lord Jesus provides all that is necessary for the guidance and benefit of the race of which He is Head. Again, we can split this over three major activities:

1. Ephesians 4:15-16 - Direction

It is a wonderful thing that as a member of His body, living on earth, I can receive direction for every aspect of the life I live from my living Head, Who is in heaven.

2. Colossians 2:19 - Nourishment

All supplies to nourish the life that Christ has secured for me are available in Him. What an incentive to keep close to Him in the communion of my soul, day by day, moment by moment! I shall lack nothing that is good for me if I accept from Him the spiritual nourishment I need.

3. Ephesians 1:22-23 - Control

The very best of quality life is available if I accept no control other than that which He provides. This might well sound very deep and very mysterious, yet it is all available if I act upon the precept we impress upon little children:

*“Read your Bible,
Read it daily,
It’s a Lamp,
And a Light to your pathway”.*

We must now move on to consider the various spheres in which or over which the Lord Jesus does or will eventually exercise His Headship. When God describes anything as full or complete, He very often illustrates this by speaking of it in scripture in a seven-fold way. Sure enough, we find that this matter of Christ being Head is referred to as being relevant in seven different spheres. For convenience, we shall look at them in the order in which they come to us in the Bible.

1. Psalm 18:43 - Head of the Heathen

At present, there are many nations who, generally speaking, have neither thought nor knowledge of God. When Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, even these heathen nations will be obliged to recognise Him and yield to Him. He shall be Head even of those nations, or, as this verse puts it, Head of the Heathen

2. Psalm 118:22 - Head of the Corner

The day will come, very soon we Christians believe, when Jesus will appear in power and great glory, to take up the reins of government of the whole of the universe. As the long awaited Messiah of Israel, He will enter the city of Jerusalem in triumph. Outbursts of applause and acclaim will meet His ears from the grateful people whom He has

delivered from their arch enemies. Then, as they come into closer proximity to Him, they will find that He Who thus saved them is none other than the Lord Jesus, Whom they have been despising and rejecting for so many long centuries. This will cause them to exclaim with astonishment, "The stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner, This is the Lord's doing, It is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." It will be His day, and for the blessing of His earthly people Israel in His relationship with them as their Messiah. His people will surely rejoice in it.

This statement in Psalm 118 is the nation's acknowledgement of Christ as their Lord and Saviour. It is the moment when they look to Him Whom they have pierced and mourn and repent. Referring to this verse, Peter speaks of Christ as the Living Stone, rejected indeed of men, but elect and precious to God. He then quotes Isaiah 28:16: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation."

In this spiritual temple which God is building, Christ is first the corner stone binding together the foundation upon which rests the entire superstructure. Then, eventually, Israel will recognise in the Lord Jesus their Messiah and Saviour, and give Him the most honoured position in the building. They will be glad to acknowledge Him as the ornamental, topmost stone, crowning the whole structure.

3. 1 Corinthians 11:3 - Head of every man

This section gives us God's order in creation. At first sight, it appears to be very complicated, but really it is quite plain. It is a question of the subjection that is due because of the relative position in which God has placed us.

First of all, in becoming man, the Lord Jesus took the place of subjection towards God. To describe that relationship, we are told, "The Head of Christ is God". If we accept and understand that, the other steps are straightforward. The Lord Jesus is the Creator of the universe. When He came into the world, He became man, but He never became a creature. When He stepped into His own creation, clearly he must take the first place. So we are told that the Head of every man is Christ.

Moving down a further step, we read, "The Head of the woman is the man". Neither chauvinism nor feminism comes into it. It is God's order in creation. History confirms that we do well not to depart from God's order. Every member of the human body is directed from the head. The figure is very simple and expressive. It involves direction. The woman is to accept direction from the man. The man is to accept direction from Christ. Christ, as man, accepts direction from God.

4. Ephesians 1:22 - Head over all things to the church.

The time will come when all things will be subject to Christ. Everything will function in accord with God's will. Unique amongst the "all things" will be the church, which has a special relationship with Christ as His bride and wife. Indeed, Christ will use the church to take possession of all things, and direct all things. This is expressed in this special way. Christ will be Head of all things, but with that special place for the church relative to Him.

5. Ephesians 5:23 - Head of the church

What will be true ultimately of all things in the universe is true of the church now. The features which will be seen universally throughout creation are true of Christ and the church now. He is the Head of the church, He as Head in heaven, the church His body on earth. The church accepts the place of subjection to Him, being directed, nourished and controlled by Him.

6. Colossians 2:10 - Head of all principality and power.

We have already taken account of the fact that the day will come when it shall be made plain that Christ is Head over all things. This verse emphasises that no dignitary, however exalted in men's eyes, will be excluded from that hierarchy of subjection to Christ. All created intelligences, including the whole angelic host, will yield obeisance unto Him.

Overall, the motive is "that in ALL THINGS He might have the pre-eminence", as we read in Colossians chapter 1 verse 18. "He is the Head".

One thing I must emphasise. In order to be Head, in the various ways in which we have looked at the subject, it was necessary for the Son of God to become a man, a real man, having spirit, and soul, and body. He was not a man in heaven before He came into the world as a little baby at Bethlehem. But, in order to be a Saviour, to save us men from the penalty of our sins, it was essential for the Lord Jesus to enter into manhood. We must safeguard the fact

that He never ceased to be God. But, wonder of wonders, He Who is God became a man, that He might be the Head of a new race of men. They receive new life, eternal life, from Him, to be enjoyed in the faith of their souls.

We learn this particularly in The Epistle to the Colossians chapters 1 and 2. Let us read chapter 1 verse 19: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell". Then in chapter 2 verse 9: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily".

Let me explain that in my own words. Having become flesh He did not cease to be what He was before, that which He had ever been, very God. Having become a real man in order to die, and having died, He has not ceased to be what He became. He abides a Man forever. In becoming flesh, He brought the revelation of God to men right where they were. He has died, risen and ascended. Men, through redemption and being sealed with the Holy Spirit, can now be in the good of the revelation with Him where He is, and be like Him there for evermore. He has ascended where He was before, but He is there in a condition in which He was not there before. He is there in heaven in abiding, glorious Manhood.

While we are thinking about this, let me commend to you this wonderful Epistle to the Colossians. It highlights so many personal glories of the Son of God, the Son of the Father's love. Among other things, Colossians concentrates a lot of attention on this matter of Headship. Indeed, the prime features of the Epistle could well be summarised in this way:

- Chapter 1 The glories of the Head of the church.
- Chapter 2 The blessings that come down from the living Head in heaven to His body on earth.
- Chapter 3 The moral features that should mark those who compose the body.
- Chapter 4 Examples of individuals who exhibited such features in their lives upon Earth.

If we are really anxious to learn more about this matter of The Lord Jesus being The Head, we could not make a better start than to study the Epistle to the Colossians following such an outline. May the Lord Himself give us the desire and commitment to do so.

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