

# Jesus, Head Of The Church

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If one were to set out listing the various descriptions and appellations of Jesus which are found in the Bible, it would take a while. There are the figurative or metaphorical: Rock (*I Cor. 10:4*), Shepherd (*I Pet. 5:4*), Word (*John 1:1*), Door, Way, Truth, Life (*John 10:9; 14:6*), etc. There are the titular: The Lord and the Christ (*Acts 2:36*), The Potentate and the King (*I Tim. 6:15*). There are the literal [Note: "Literal" does not mean more real or true]: God (*John 1:1*), Son of God (*Rev. 2:18*), Son of Man (*Rev. 1:13*).

The burden of this present article is to consider the Bible's designation and description of Jesus as the "Head of the Church." It would be a simple matter to note passages of scripture which affirm Jesus to be "head of the church" (e.g. *Eph. 5:23*), but we need to go beyond mere observation. Just as important as the meaning of these names, titles and figures is the application of the same to our thinking and the way we live.

"Head," like most nouns, has a literal meaning out of which has grown figurative applications. Remember one thing: The figurative application of a given word still retains some aspect or function of its literal meaning. For example: Jesus is the "door" because that's the way you "get in" to the Father. "Head," refers to that appendage attached to the very top of the human body. It is self-evident that the "head" is that part of the human body which ultimately decides, wills, and controls the rest of the body. The comfort or success of any person depends on whether or not he "uses his head." It's easy to see how this word has been appropriated to describe many other areas of life. It is used as noun to describe a person who is in a position of authority: "He is the head of a large company." It is even used as a verb: "He was chosen to head the campaign."

The most readily obvious implication of Jesus as "head of the church" is that of authority. It's so frustrating when people emphasize one aspect of Jesus and his relationship to us, and ignore others. Some only want to think of Jesus as Savior, but not master. Some want the Lamb, but not the lion (*Rev. 5:5-6*). It's kind of like some children who only want see parents as Dispensaries and not Disciplinarians.

As "head of the church," Jesus is ruler, controller, and guide of the church. What is the practical application of this? Paul says that this authority of Jesus extends to our every action and every word spoken: "*whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*" (*Col. 3:17*). *Acts 4:7* explains "In the name of the Lord Jesus" as meaning "by his power or authority." A church of Christ, and a "member" thereof (*I Cor. 12:12*), is obligated to act and speak only at the behest, direction or permission of him who is the Head. It is the height of hypocrisy to give lip service to Jesus as Savior and, by our deeds, reject him as our head.

We must also recognize the Headship of Jesus in the order of things. He is the Head of the church; He is

the "*Shepherd and Bishop of [our] souls*" (*I Pet. 2:25*), yet He has delegated authority and control over the daily affairs of local churches to elders or bishops (*I Tim. 3*). To refuse to submit to the eldership of the local church is to reject Jesus as the "head of the church." Jesus is equally the "head" of women as of men, yet, in our affairs within marriage and the church, we must observe the principles of authority and subordination. "*The head of every man is Christ; and the head of woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God*" (*I Cor. 11:3*). The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head the church (*Eph. 5:23*). Within "*Assemblies of the saints*" (*I Cor. 14:33b*), women are not "*permitted to speak*" [that is: as teachers or preachers] (vs. 34-35; cf. *I Tim. 2:11-12*). People who respect Jesus as Head of the church will respect his order of and delegation of authority.

Nor, is this Headship of Jesus limited only to the church; quite to the contrary. Reread *Eph. 1:20-23*. Paul says that (1) God raised Jesus from the dead, (2) Sat him at his right hand, (3) Put him in a position above all rule, authority, power, dominion and every name, and (4) Put all things in subjection under him. Note carefully: Verse 22 mentions "*all things*." This does not refer to all of the things or affairs of the church (although, it would certainly include them). The Italicized words to be unnecessary. A literal translation of the passage says, God "*gave him as head over everything to the church*." In other words, because Jesus is "head over all things," He is ipso facto the "*head of the church*." It must be noted that every human being on the face of planet earth is amenable to the Headship and authority of Christ. It is for this very reason ("*All authority hath been given unto me both in heaven and on earth*") that we must go forth and "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (*Matt. 28:18; Mark 16:15*). This recent notion that the Law of Christ, the New Testament, doesn't apply to the non-Christian is a flat-out rejection of Jesus as "head over all things."

How do we claim and keep Jesus as our "head?" John says that "*Whatsoever goeth onward [taketh the lead] and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son*" (*II John 9*). The Headship of Jesus cannot be separated from the "teaching" of Jesus. Jesus as "head of the church" also relates to the idea of the uniqueness and exclusiveness of the church. It is here that the idea of Jesus as "Head" is both literal and metaphorical. The church is "*His body*" (*Eph. 1:23*). There is only "*one body*" (*4:4*). The picture of a body with more than one head is a biological aberration. No less grotesque is the picture of single head attached to many bodies. To be sure; Each individual Christian is a "member" of the body of Christ (*I Cor. 12:12*); each is a "branch" of the "vine" which is Christ (*John 15:6*); but, there is no such thing in the Bible as many bodies or branches (i.e. denominations) attached to the one head, Jesus.

Let each of us be determined that the doctrine of Jesus: The Head of the Church, will not merely be trite cliché or the title of an article. May it be manifested in the way we act and live; in our beliefs and convictions.

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