

**WCCC 2021**

**Brother Dana Congdon**

## **The Prevailing Authority of the Head (2)**

Good afternoon brothers and sisters. I'm just watching my brother Jonathan. He's preaching from the Moon. By the miracle of zoom, we can set any background we watch for our ministries.

### **Jesus is far above all**

I thank our brother Eddie for introducing our topic so well. Our theme is to speak on the prevailing of the authority of the headship of Christ. Indeed He is far above all. Jesus the crucified [is] far above all. Whether we call him the king or the Messiah, whether we call Him our head or authority, in all of these titles it expresses that He is far above all.

### **Passages**

I want to begin this afternoon just by reading the three verses and Colossians where the headship of Christ is mentioned the first one is in

*Colossians 1:18 and He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

And then in

*Colossians 2:10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.*

And then the third one is in Colossians 2:19 It's mentioned in the negative:

*Colossians 2:19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.*

## **Prayer**

Let's pray just the moment:

Lord, there could be nothing better than for us to be under Your headship, far above all, enthroned over us today. The greatness of Your preeminence is so tremendous that only the Spirit can reveal its dimensions to us. Help us this afternoon, young and old, to see the greatness of our Christ as head of the body. We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen!

## **The Kingdom Time Zone**

You know I'd like to begin by actually putting our theme of spiritual reality into its kingdom context. You know recently, with my brothers and sisters in Flushing, New York, we've been studying the Gospel of Mark. And one of the things that I was reminded of afresh is every time Jesus came into a situation, it's as if the people found themselves in the kingdom time zone. Now I'm speaking to you from the Eastern time zone. Our brother is translating from the Western time zone. But in reality, when the Lord is present, we are actually in the kingdom time zone. And this makes the things that we say very important specifically for this time. You remember how the Lord came onto the scene in Galilee and he said, repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. And by the authority of His words the people felt that they were in the presence of the kingdom, and must make an immediate decision to repent and believe.

## **The pandemic and the spiritual reality**

Now with that in the background, I'd like to speak for a moment about our topic, the spiritual reality. Our brothers reminded us that this scene was actually found in the Lord back in December 2019, just before the pandemic. And, of course, we had a delay for a year, and now we find ourselves still on this theme. Now this is the question I post to us today. Could it be that we asked the Lord to bring us into spiritual reality, and the pandemic was an answer in part to our prayers? Has this pandemic time not been a humbling test of the reality of our meetings? Has this been a time of shaking and that which is temporal was removed so that the unshakable might remain? Our Lord shook us, I believe, and He scattered us to see and to test who would overcome this time of isolation and outward problems and serve the Lord out of first love.

## **The Lord used captivity to restore the spiritual reality of Israel**

In terms of our kingdom time, there's a scripture that's been on my heart for several months now from Deuteronomy 30. These are some of the last words that Moses spoke before he died up in the mountains and the people went into the promised land, that he has just spoken about the blessings that would come upon their faithfulness or the cursing that would come upon their unfaithfulness. And so we come to these words in

*Deuteronomy 30:1-3 Now it should come to pass when all these things come upon you, the blessing and a the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives, and you return to the Lord your God and obey his voice according to all that I command you today, you and your children with all your heart, with all your soul, that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you.*

### **Near and ultimate fulfillment of prophecy**

Moses at the end of his life still had 20-20 spiritual vision. He could see that the Lord will scatter his people and strip them of their blessings, and send them into captivity. But Moses saw that the long range purpose of God would be to regather a humbled Israel, willing to obey and to serve Him with all their heart and strength. Now we know that Moses' vision here was prophetic because it had both a near and an ultimate fulfillment. Moses was for first speaking of Israel when it would be regathered after the exile back to the land of Judea. This was the near fulfillment of the prophecy. But he also saw that Israel would ultimately be regathered when the Messiah comes to reign out of Jerusalem in His kingdom.

### **The positive use of pandemic to restore spiritual reality**

Now I feel when we meditate upon this time of pandemic that has laid the whole world low, I wonder if the Lord is being merciful to us, and scattered us and striped us of those outward things of captivity that distract us from seeking His kingdom first. We know when we look down the whole of Church history, that the Lord through history has scattered, stripped, humbled His people, but had resulted in a recovery of spiritual reality.

## **The pandemic and His return**

Now the fact that this pandemic has affected the whole world leads us to believe that the king is also having mercy upon those unbelievers that they may see in this time, and repent and turn to the Lord. But whenever is a large work with the whole world, we know that judgment must begin in the house of God. So at least during this time of shaking, I hope that all of you have been wondering is this shaking a revival, a restoration, or is this the final shaking upon which He will return? Surely under His throne, the bride must be wondering if the bridegroom's footsteps are in the doors. Of course, no one knows the outcome of this present pandemic. But as the members of the kingdom of God, let us remember the ultimate reality we really seek.

## **The desire for spiritual reality**

We who gather in our outward meetings in our various assemblies are desiring to see that the inner spiritual reality to fill the church with his presence. Knowing His presence is touching spiritual reality. But let's remember that the Lord desires of fuller reality than we're thinking of. His desire, we might say, it's almost in the reverse. We have outward reality but we desire inward reality. He is waiting for our inward reality so that he can come in His outward reality in His physical presence as our king. So are our final reality will not be complete until the Lord actually comes back to receive His kingdom.

## **The subthemes and the instruments in the Tabernacle**

These themes that we're speaking on, the headship, the Holy Spirit, the cross, the overcoming life, these are as it were the furnishings of the Temple. If the Holy Spirit lights our lampstand, if the fullness of His life brings us before Him like the bread of His presence, if our coming to the cross ignites the incense at the altar of worship, these are the furnishings that are set in place in the Temple, but we still need the Ark that is missing for the glory to come down. So let's remember this as we are looking at these various aspects of spiritual reality.

The deeper aspect of our spiritual reality is the desire for the Lord's return. And if we sense that, in this kingdom time zone, we understand how important this matter of recovery of spiritual reality is.

## **The largeness of the headship of Christ**

Now the last time, as we shared on headship, we talked about the largeness of His headship overall realms and dimensions. Paul is restating His gospel in its larger cosmic dimensions. As we remember his headship is related to three different realms, creation, the Kingdom, and the church. And this headship is described for us, as you remember in Ephesians 1, as fulfilling God's eternal purpose. Ephesians 1:10 literally says that in the fullness of time, Christ will be heading up all things, things in heaven, things up on earth even in Him.

### **Reconciliation of all creation**

Now this great salvation, through Jesus Christ that Paul is preaching in his gospel, he says is being broadcast by the Spirit of God throughout all creation. Listen to what He says in Colossians 1:23, "This is the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister." What a great Gospel Paul is preaching, what's greater than just our personal salvation. This gospel is affecting the whole creation. Listen to verse 20, "and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross." So His reconciliation has tremendous proportions. We know that Satan's fall and Man's sin had thrown creation into corruption and darkness. But now, by the precious blood of Christ, there is a reconciliation going on that affects all creation.

### **Reconciliation of the church**

But God's mercy is so wonderful that this reconciliation includes us as well. So we read Colossians 1:21-23, "And you were once alienated, hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable, steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and in which I, Paul, became a minister." So here is this amazing reconciliation, which started with us, alienated sinners, and how He's reconciling us into the holiness and blameless, and members of His body. And from there the reconciliation of his great salvation reaches from the church and out into the world, and out into all creation itself, both in heaven and on Earth. But we noticed that this final reconciliation is crucially connected to our obedience in the gospel. There in verse 23 it says, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast. So our Lord and head who

is high above all has this cosmic reconciliation plan but it begins with us, with the church being faithful.

## **Three words for headship**

Now as Paul talks about this headship of Christ, he uses three different words, headship, authority and preeminence.

### **Headship over the church**

First, let's look at headship, because this pertains to position. Colossians 1:18 it says, and He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. But He not only is the head of the body, but He's the head as it were of the whole family of God. Now as the head of the church, He is the one who provides. He protects. He loves, and He rewards His family. It says He is the [head of the] body, He is the beginning. This is talking about Him being of first place. He is the highest in the new creation. And it says He's the firstborn from the dead. He was the first man to come through humanities limitations and death, reigning by the power of an indestructible life, and giving life to all the rest of the body of Christ by His resurrection. Now as the head, it's a position, but it's not as if He separates from the body. His headship is the basis of our unity in the body.

### **Head is the life of the body**

Now, as relates to creation, it says in Him all things cohere. But also in the body of Christ, He is the head, whom the whole body is united together in Spirit. Of course, you understand in a human body, all of the nerve endings of our body originate from the head. If the head is taken away from the body, there's no life left. The body is holy defendant upon the head.

### **Head joins the body**

But the head is also the exclusive source of all the interrelationships of the various members. You know, if you hurt your right finger, your left finger doesn't come to help unless the head tells the left finger to help the right finger. This is why we have to hold fast to the head, because He is the one who coordinates the whole body.

## **Head is the wisdom of the body**

That of course also as head of the body, He is the governing, life and wisdom and counsel of the church. Now the Colossians didn't realize it. But they were disgracing their head's authority by seeking counsel from the world, by various philosophies and elementary principles. And it's an offense to the head anytime we, even today, seek counsel from the world, check on the Internet for our answer, seek Google for psychology or Confucius or what's trending or some bloggers. Let me put it this way. Jesus as head is the tree of life with all the wisdom we need. If we're believers, but we're living by the natural wisdom of the tree of the knowledge is good and evil, it's an offense to our head. The scriptures tell us how freely He will give us wisdom if we asked Him, and He won't reproach us. He is our wisdom.

## **Authority and submission**

Now we look at the second word. If headship speaks of His position, authority speaks of the life flow within the church. And when we talk about authority, we must also talk about a second interrelated word, submission.

## **The meaning of authority**

The literal meaning of the Greek word authority gives us a picture of what authority means. The Greek word is "exousia". And this word is made of two parts, "ex" which is a prefix meaning "out of", "ousia" which is a root of the verb "to be". So "exousia" literally been from out of ones being. Authority is when life flows out of Jesus' very being. This life flow is not based on an outward power, or position, or personality, or charisma. When the people heard Jesus speak, they said, how does this man have such authority, because he didn't have a rabbinical degree or actual professional training. Whenever Jesus spoke, life came out of His being. Whenever Jesus touch, healing life came out of His being. So when Christ said, all authority has been given to Me, in heaven and earth, that means now eternal zoe life can flow out of His being to all all under its flow.

## **The meaning of submission**

So now who can receive this life? The second related word now is submission. And this is another Greek picture word. It combines the basic prefix "hupo", which means under,

with “tasso”, meaning to place or arrange. So submission is arranging oneself under Christ his head, so that His authority in life can flow out of his being with living power. By these two words we see the principle of spiritual reality.

## **Spiritual reality of authority comes from submission**

Real, true authority in the church only flows from the head through those who are arranged under Him and under His throne listening to His voice. This is very different from outward positional human authority. In the world we have authority by the gender, by age, by education, by financial status. But Jesus is our example of this principle of authority and submission. Why is it that God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him a name above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow? It's because He gave up His rights to His divinity, and humbled Himself and became a man, and arranged Himself under the will of God, and God's life flowed through Him. So practically speaking, spirituality reality of His authority comes as His saints are truly submitted under Him as their head, which brings us to the third connected word.

## **Preeminence of Christ**

Now with headship speaks of His position, and authority speaks of the source of life, preeminence speaks of love's estimation. Giving the Lord preeminence is a loving response and estimate of His greatness. We read Colossians 1:18, where we find this word. 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, or the first place could be translated.

## **The love and desire to give Him preeminence**

Now there's this little phrase “might have the preeminence”. That's very important to understanding Christ's headship. This verb “might become” is a subjunctive verb in the Greek. The subjunctive voice expresses not a fact but a desire. The scripture says the Father's good pleasure to give Jesus this preeminence, but the Father has made Christ head over the body, that the body of Christ might give Him the preeminence.



## **Preeminence of Christ in the church**

Now perhaps this verbal description is too difficult. Let's try to make it simple. Now the church might acknowledge is He is the head, they may submit to the authority, but the church can only show Him preeminence if they love Him and they give Him the preeminence. In creation, He does not have the preeminence yet, because the creation groans in anticipation of the day of his preeminence. In the kingdom of the heavens, His servants on Earth love Him, but still there's conflict in the kingdom, and He has not been made preeminent because there's still conflict in this world. But in this third realm, the church, out of love, can give Christ the first place in everything. That's displaying the fullness of God's love for His Son.

## **The three aspects of headship work together**

So these three words work together. God the father loves the Son and has made Him head overall. But then Christ uses His headship, authority, to pour the love of God into our hearts. And then the church in love submits to Christ, giving Him first place in everything, out of loving obedience and worship. So giving Christ the preeminence redefined all of our church life. Christ being all and in all to us is more than a goal. It's our love motive. As we give Him first place, we submit under His headship, so that His authority can come through the church. The world can see that Jesus Christ has come when the church is holding fast to His headship and submitting under His authority and giving Him preeminence and everything. And to me, this preeminence completes the circle. The church submits under the headship of Christ. But when the church can give Him the first place in everything, which is a hard matter, this will be the final piece enabling our Lord to come back for His bride and His kingdom. So we see these three words connected to this whole matter of the headship of the body.

## **Christ's headship for the Colossians**

And we see how important this headship was in terms of the body of Christ there in Colossae. False teachers had come into that church and were devaluing who Christ was as high, far above all, and Paul has the fight against these false doctrines by revealing this macrocosmic Christ. We're readings at the beginning of Colossians 2, of Paul's great struggle for the Colossians.

“But I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those are at Laodicea, and for all those who are not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit to gather in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” This is the mystery revealed Christ is the head, and He is the source of all treasures of wisdom and knowledge. They don’t need any gnostic teaching. Christ is their wisdom and knowledge. Because the Colossians had only a view of a small Christ, they couldn’t answer all their questions, and so they were looking to the world to gain answers. Paul tells them that all the fullness of the godhead dwells in Christ. And in Him you have been made complete, or filled full.

### **Christ’s headship to us today**

Today you notice there’s been a change of perspective, rather than us seeking for the fullness of Christ, we are now seeking self fulfillment. We even see that many of our more contemporary worship choruses are saturated with this self idea, how can Christ fill me up and satisfy me. The point is, spiritual reality is when we look away from ourselves and find our fullness of Christ and He becomes our satisfaction.

### **Christ among you for the Colossians**

But Paul wrestled for the Colossians not just to reveal macrocosmic Christ, but also the microcosmic Christ, that is Christ in you, the indwelling Christ. For in order for us to come and know spiritual reality, the indwelling Christ, must be a reality to us. As we understand that it’s Christ in us, that we also understand how the Lord enables us to live by His resurrection life. Now I can’t speak on “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” because that’s somebody else is verses. But this verse is also properly translated in the Greek, “Christ among you all, the hope of glory.” This is a corporate matter. Is Christ truly among you as head of the assembly? This is a test that spiritual reality. And we noticed also that when Christ is among you, there is that sense of glory of His coming again, and we see how important this is to wait upon His coming.

### **Practical tests of spiritual reality of Christ’s headship**

## **Standing on resurrection ground**

Now once again time flies, so I will only mention a few aspects of knowing the spiritual reality of Christ is head over His body. Christ's headship is known among us in spiritual reality, first of all, when we stand on the ground of resurrection. Again we go back to work Colossians 1:18, He is the head of the body, the church. He's the beginning, the first born from the dead, so that He Himself may have first place in everything. Christ is on resurrection ground with an undefeatable life. And the church must be on resurrection ground to be under his headship and spiritual reality. Of course, negatively as our brother mentioned earlier, this means that the cross has to be applied to everything and anything that is outside of the head. So Paul exhorts in 2:20, now if you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why is it you're still living in the world? Do you submit yourself to decrees? These religious practices that these false teachers were telling them were taking them right out of this spiritual reality of Christ our fullness, Christ our head, Christ our supply. Then we noticed positively, in the beginning of Colossians 3, Paul says, now if you have been raised from the dead, now keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Now practically, this is our first practical test of spiritual reality: are we on resurrection ground.

## **Life flowing out of the abiding word of Christ**

The second practical test of Christ's headship is this, does our assembly life flow out of the abiding word of Christ? Colossians 3:16-17 give us a beautiful picture of assembly of life in spiritual reality.

And the spiritual life of the whole assembly comes out of the word of Christ. Verse 16 says, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. How wonderful when we gather and even our worship and our fellowship comes out of those who are abiding in the living word of Christ. This is spiritual reality indeed.

## **Submission to authority set by God**

And then the third and last practical test of Christ headship. Spiritual reality is when all the saints are submitting in proper order under whoever is over them. Heaven loves authority and order, in order to distribute unbounding life and love. So we would all say, oh, of course, Christ is our head. But as Paul goes on in chapter 3, he says, well now Christ

is our head, then wives, let your husbands be your head. Husbands, let Christ be your head. Children, let your parents be your head. Slaves, let your employer be your head. Masters, realize that you are under “Christ is your head.” Look how he put it in Colossians 3:23-24. “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, [as] for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord’s Christ whom you serve.” And, of course, life in the body of Christ must also be under the delegated heads that the Lord sets in the church. The Lord gives us responsible brothers and elders in the church, and they are ones who are submitted under the headship of our Lord. Everyone in the church needs to hold faster the head. And spiritual reality is experienced in the church when those in leadership truly give the head first place in everything.

## **Headship and Christ’s return**

When the Lord sees an assembly that truly have given Him first place, He is ready to return. So do we give him preeminence in all things? Do we have such love for our precious head? Maybe the pandemic has stripped us and destroyed our idols and simplified our lives, that we might seek his kingdom first. Whatever our desire may be for our bridegroom to come, our bridegroom has a greater desire for His bride. Perhaps this time of pandemic has been the final shaking to precipitate our king’s coming to earth. This may be our last conference before we see our Lord physically here on earth. Our show of preeminence is our desire for him to come. Meanwhile as we’re here on this earth, let us pass on to our children, through the authority given to us through Christ, that blessed hope of seeing His face even in the mist of shakings. This is our true reality when our king comes back.

## **Prayer**

Lord, we come to You and we thank You for all that You’ve done for us as our head, as our source of life and love. Lord, You know we are weak, and we have so many problems, but our hearts desire to give You the first place in everything. In this most recent shaking, we realize more than ever that this world will never satisfy us until You come and rule over it. So Lord, this is our spiritual reality, Maranatha, even so, come, Lord Jesus. We pray in the name of He who is far above all. Amen!