

LIVING UNDER THE UNIQUE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST AND IN THE UNIQUE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two Practicing the Church Life under the Unique Headship of Christ

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:18; 2:19; 3:4; Phil. 1:1; Eph. 1:10, 22-23; 4:15-16

- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.
- Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.
- Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, ^aslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the ^bsaints in Christ Jesus who are in ^{1c}Philippi, ²with the ^{3d}overseers and ^{4e}deacons:
- Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;
- Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ^{3to be} ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.
- Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

I. The unique headship of Christ is closely related to the constitution of the church—the way in which the church is formed and arranged—Col. 1:18; Phil. 1:1:

- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, ^aslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the ^bsaints in Christ Jesus who are in ^{1c}Philippi, ²with the ^{3d}overseers and ^{4e}deacons:
- A. The constitution of the church is according to the truth that Christ is the unique Head; the church is constituted absolutely with Christ as life and with Christ as the unique Head—Col. 1:18; 3:4, 11.
- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.
- Col 3:11 ¹Where there ²cannot be ³Greek and ^{4b}Jew, ^{5c}circumcision and uncircumcision, ^{5c}barbarian, ⁶Scythian, ⁷slave, ⁸free man, but ^{9d}Christ is ¹⁰all and in all.
- B. The concept of organization related to the church cannot be found in the New Testament; organization leads to a hierarchy, and any kind of hierarchy is an insult to the unique headship of Christ—1:18; 2:19.
- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.
- C. In the New Testament, among God's people there is no unique, definite, official, or permanent leadership; such a leadership would be an insult to the unique headship of Christ—Matt. 23:8-11; Acts 5:31; Heb. 13:7, 17, 21.
- Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for ¹One is your ^aTeacher, and you are all ^bbrothers.
- Matt 23:9 And do not call *anyone* on earth your father, for ¹One is your ^aFather, ²He who is in the heavens.
- Matt 23:10 Neither be called ¹instructors, because ²One is your Instructor, the Christ.

Matt 23:11 And the ^agreatest among you shall be your servant.
 Acts 5:31 This One God has ^{1a}exalted to His ^bright hand as ²Leader and ^cSavior, to ³give ^{4d}repentance to Israel and ^eforgiveness of sins.
 Heb 13:7 ¹Remember the ones ^aleading you, who have ^bspoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their ^cmanner of life, ^dimitate their faith.
 Heb 13:17 ¹Obeys the ones ^aleading you and ^bsubmit to *them*, for they ^cwatch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.
 Heb 13:21 ^aPerfect you in every ^bgood work for the ¹doing of His ^cwill, doing ^din us that which is well ^epleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to Him be the ^fglory forever and ever. Amen.

D. The scriptural principle with regard to eldership is plurality; this plurality keeps any elder from being an official or permanent leader—Acts 14:23:

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

1. With the plurality of the eldership, there is no definite leader, and the unique headship of Christ is regarded, preserved, and respected—Titus 1:5.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

2. The practice of making an arrangement as to who is first among the elders is contrary to the truth regarding the plurality of the eldership under the unique headship of Christ—1 Pet. 5:1.

1 Pet 5:1 ¹Therefore the ^{2a}elders among you I exhort, who am a ³fellow elder and ^{4b}witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a ⁵partaker of the ^cglory to be revealed:

3. “God has ordained that several elders together share the work of the church, so that no one individual should be able to run things according to his own pleasure, treating the church as his own special property and leaving the impress of his personality upon all its life and work...As they honor one another and trust one another to the leading of the Spirit, none taking the place of the Head, but each regarding the others as fellow members, the element of mutuality, which is the distinctive feature of the church, will be preserved” (Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 49-50).

E. We should not regard certain persons as intermediaries between us and the Lord; we must never be an intermediary between God’s people and the Lord Himself, and we must never take someone else as an intermediary between us and the Lord—Matt. 23:8-11.

Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for ¹One is your ^aTeacher, and you are all ^bbrothers.

Matt 23:9 And do not call *anyone* on earth your father, for ¹One is your ^aFather, ²He who is in the heavens.

Matt 23:10 Neither be called ¹instructors, because ²One is your Instructor, the Christ.

Matt 23:11 And the ^agreatest among you shall be your servant.

II. The order of the church comes out of the authority in the church—the honoring of the unique headship of Christ—Col. 1:18; Phil. 1:1:

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, ^aslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the ^bsaints in Christ Jesus who are in ^{1c}Philippi, ²with the ^{3d}overseers and ^{4e}deacons:

A. In the church there is no human organization, but there is a spiritual order—v. 1; 1 Cor. 14:40; 11:34b:

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, ^aslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the ^bsaints in Christ Jesus who are in ^{1c}Philippi, ²with the ^{3d}overseers and ^{4e}deacons:

1 Cor 14:40 But all things must be done ¹becomingly and in ^aorder.

1 Cor 11:34b ...And the ¹rest I will set in order when I come.

1. The genuine church practice depends on the proper order under the Holy Spirit; without this order we cannot have the real practice of the church life—Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.

1 Cor 12:4 ¹But there are ²distinctions of ^{3a}gifts, but the ^bsame Spirit;

1 Cor 12:5 And there are distinctions of ^{1a}ministries, yet the ^bsame Lord;

1 Cor 12:6 And there are distinctions of ¹operations, but the ^asame ²God, who ^boperates all things in all.

1 Cor 12:7 But to ^aeach one is given the ¹manifestation of the Spirit ²for ^bwhat is profitable.

1 Cor 12:8 For to one through the Spirit a ¹word of ^awisdom is given, and to another a word of ^bknowledge, according to the same Spirit;

1 Cor 12:9 To a different one ^{1a}faith in the same Spirit, and to another ²gifts of ^bhealing in the one Spirit,

1 Cor 12:10 And to another operations of ^{1a}works of power, and to another ^{2b}prophecy, and to another ^{3c}discerning of spirits; to a different one *various* kinds of ^{4d}tongues, and to another ^{5e}interpretation of tongues.

1 Cor 12:11 But the one and the same Spirit operates all these things, ^adistributing to each one respectively even as He ^bpurposes.

2. The Head of the church is Christ the Lord, and the authority in the church is the headship of Christ—Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:18:

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All ¹authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

- a. In the church there must be order, but this order comes from the headship of Christ—Eph. 1:22-23.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

- b. If we would keep a right order in the church and among the saints, we must learn to submit to the unique headship of Christ—1 Cor. 11:3.

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that ¹Christ is the ^ahead of every ²man, and the man is the ^bhead of the woman, and ³God is the ^chead of Christ.

- B. We can have the real practice of the church life only by submitting to the unique headship of Christ—Col. 1:18; 2:19:

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

1. If we intend to practice the church life, we must learn to always submit to the headship of Christ—v. 10.

Col 2:10 And you have been made ¹full in Him, who is the ^aHead of all ²rule and authority.

2. When we are right with the Head, we are right with all the members and with the Body—1:18; 2:19; 3:15.

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

Col 3:15 And let the ^{1a}peace of Christ ²arbitrate in your hearts, to ³which ⁴also you were called in ^bone Body; and be ^{5c}thankful.

3. If we all honor the unique headship of Christ, there will spontaneously be a wonderful spiritual order among us in the church life—1 Cor. 14:40.

1 Cor 14:40 But all things must be done ¹becomingly and in ^aorder.

C. The order in the church comes from the headship of Christ being realized by us in a practical way—11:3, 16; Eph. 1:22:

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that ¹Christ is the ^ahead of every ²man, and the man is the ^bhead of the woman, and ³God is the ^chead of Christ.

1 Cor 11:16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we do not have ¹such a custom of *being so*, neither the ^{2a}churches of God.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

1. If we try to practice the church life without realizing the unique headship of Christ, we may meet together, but we will not have the reality of the church—1 Cor. 11:17.

1 Cor 11:17 ¹But I give *you* ²this charge and do not ^apraise *you*, because you ^bcome together not for the better but for the worse.

2. If we do not have the spiritual order in the church that comes from realizing the headship of Christ in a practical way, there is no possibility for us to practice the real church life—v. 3; 14:40.

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that ¹Christ is the ^ahead of every ²man, and the man is the ^bhead of the woman, and ³God is the ^chead of Christ.

1 Cor 14:40 But all things must be done ¹becomingly and in ^aorder.

D. We need to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, who is the unique Head—Eph. 5:21, 23:

Eph 5:21 Being ^{1a}subject to ²one another in the ³fear of Christ:

Eph 5:23 For a husband is ^{1a}head of the wife as also Christ is ^bHead of the church, He Himself *being* the ²Savior of the Body.

1. If we are not subject to one another, we offend Christ as the Head and have no fear of Christ in His unique headship—v. 23; 1:22.

Eph 5:23 For a husband is ^{1a}head of the wife as also Christ is ^bHead of the church, He Himself *being* the ²Savior of the Body.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

2. Only the Head is unique and different from the Body; none of the members is in a special or superior class—5:30; Rom. 12:4-5.

Eph 5:30 Because we are ^amembers of His ^bBody.

Rom 12:4 For just as in ^aone body we have ^bmany members, and all the members do not have the ^csame ¹function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body ¹in Christ, and individually ^{2a}members one of another.

III. If we honor the unique headship of Christ, then in the Lord's recovery the church as the enlargement of Christ will be not only the house but also the city—Ezra 1:2-3; Neh. 1:9; 2:5, 17; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 21:14:

Ezra 1:2 Thus says Cyrus the king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah the God of heaven given to me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Ezra 1:3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—He is God—who is in Jerusalem.

Neh 1:9 But if you return to Me and keep My commandments and perform them, though your outcasts are under the ends of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.

Neh 2:5 And I said to the king, If it please the king and if your servant has found favor before you, that you would send me to Judah to the city of my fathers' graves that I may rebuild it.

Neh 2:17 Then I said to them, You see the bad state we are in, that Jerusalem lies in waste and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know ¹how one ought to conduct himself in the ^{2a}house of God, which is the ^bchurch of the ^{3c}living God, the ^{4d}pillar and base of the ^{5e}truth.

Rev 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve ^{1a}foundations, and on them the twelve names of the ^btwelve ²apostles of the Lamb.

A. The church as the house is mainly with Christ as life, and the church as the city is mainly with Christ as the Head—1 Tim. 3:15; Matt. 5:14; Col. 3:4; 1:18:

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know ¹how one ought to conduct himself in the ^{2a}house of God, which is the ^bchurch of the ^{3c}living God, the ^{4d}pillar and base of the ^{5e}truth.

Matt 5:14 You are the ^{1a}light of the world. It is impossible for a ^{2b}city situated upon a mountain to be hidden.

Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

1. When we experience and enjoy Christ as life, we have the church as the house; when we realize the unique headship of Christ, the church will be enlarged as the city, which signifies the kingdom of God—Matt. 16:18-19.

Matt 16:18 And I ¹also say to you that you are ^{2a}Peter, and upon ³this ^brock I will ^{4c}build My ^{5d}church, and the ^{6e}gates of ^fHades shall not prevail ^gagainst it.

Matt 16:19 I will give to you the ^{1a}keys of the ²kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you ^{3b}bind on the earth shall ⁴have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens.

2. The church as the city is built not only with Christ as life but also with the headship of Christ; thus, Christ must be not only our life but also our Head, not only our enjoyment but also our authority—Col. 3:4; 1:18; 2:19.

Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

B. For the church as the city, our will must be exercised, renewed, and transformed so that it will be subdued under the unique headship of Christ—S. S. 4:1b, 4; 6:4.

S.S. 4:1b ... Your eyes are like doves behind your veil; Your hair is like a flock of goats That repose on Mount Gilead.

S.S. 4:4 Your neck is like the tower of David, Built for an armory: A thousand bucklers hang on it, All the shields of the mighty men.

S.S. 6:4 You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, As lovely as Jerusalem, As terrible as an army with banners.

C. We need to see that a local church is an expression of the Body of Christ, that the Body is under the headship of Christ, and that we all must be under the authority of Christ; if we see this and honor the unique headship of Christ, the church will be enlarged from the house to the city for the King and His kingdom—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-13, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Rev. 11:15.

1 Cor 1:2 To the ^{1a}church of God which is ²in ^bCorinth, ³to those who have been ^{4c}sanctified ⁵in Christ Jesus, the ^{6d}called saints, ⁷with all those who ^{8e}call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, *who is* ^{9f}theirs and ours:

1 Cor 12:12 ¹For even as ²the body is ^aone and has many ^bmembers, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

1 Cor 12:13 For also in ^{1a}one Spirit we were all ^bbaptized into ^{2c}one Body, whether ^{3d}Jews or Greeks, whether ⁴slaves or free, and were all given to ^{5e}drink one ^fSpirit.

1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and ^amembers individually.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

Rev 11:15 And the ^{1a}seventh angel ^{2b}trumpeted; and there were loud ^cvoices in heaven, saying, The ^{3d}kingdom of the world has become the ^ekingdom of our Lord and of ^fHis Christ, and He will ^{4g}reign forever and ever.

IV. The church life is a life of being headed up under the unique headship of Christ—Eph. 1:10, 22-23; 4:15-16:

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

A. God is heading up His chosen ones to be the Body of Christ with Christ as the Head—1:4, 22-23:

Eph 1:4 Even as He ^{1a}chose us in Him ^{2b}before the foundation of the world to be ^{3c}holy and ⁴without blemish ⁵before Him ⁶in ^{7d}love,

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

1. The first step in the heading up of all things in Christ is for God to place His sons under the unique headship of Christ—vv. 5, 10.

Eph 1:5 ^{1a}Predestinating us unto ^{2b}sonship ³through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the ^{4c}good pleasure of His ^dwill,

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

2. When the church takes the lead to be headed up under the headship of Christ, God has a way to head up all other things—vv. 22-23, 10.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

B. In the proper church life we are being headed up in Christ—1 Cor. 11:3:

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that ¹Christ is the ^ahead of every ²man, and the man is the ^bhead of the woman, and ³God is the ^chead of Christ.

1. If we do not know what it is to be headed up in Christ, we cannot know the church—Eph. 1:10, 22-23.

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

2. In the church life we are taking the lead to be headed up in Christ; for this we need to grow up into the Head, Christ, in all things—4:15-16.

Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.