

What Makes Us Different: The Headship of Christ

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Why am I a member of the church of Christ? When someone asks this question, the immediate answer might be “because Jesus only built one church” or “Jesus is only going to save His own”. But for many, the idea of distinction is really asking about doctrines and practices. If you asked someone what makes the church of Christ they know different, they might say instrumental music or baptism or the Lord’s Supper every Sunday or no single pastor over a church or no church headquarters. But these things are merely consequences of what makes us different. What makes us different is more central ideas such as the Headship in Christ, Sola Scriptura, our identity, our self-examination, and our view of things spiritual over worldly.

HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

Scriptures repeatedly teach us that Jesus came to earth to build a church (Matt. 16:18). It tells us that He came to build only one church (Eph. 4:4). Finally, we are told that Jesus is the (sole) head of that church:

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:22-23

He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. Colossians 1:18

Jesus church is His body; it is composed of the individual members, Christians, which have joined Him. This is true of the universal church (the Kingdom) and the local church (the congregation, the assembly). One aspect of understanding this headship is recognizing that the church is also the temple of God. This is the temple of prophecy, which the OT prophets said Jesus would come and build.

You are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, Ephesians 2:19-21

There is an important prophecy given in regards to the church as the temple of God. It is made in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10. There we are told that there was going to be a great falling away, and that those who fell away (for a lack of love of the truth) would be deceived by someone “*who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God*” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Jesus (who is God) is the head of the church; when someone is displaying themselves as God in the church, it means they have taken over the headship of the church.

What does this mean? In James 4:12 James says that there is but one lawgiver and judge (for the church). Thus, we can say that if someone attempts to make laws or rules, or revoke laws and rules, they have taken the headship away from Christ.

The Headship of Christ makes us different. We do NOT follow the directions of men; no men make our rules. Even our overseers (also called elders, pastors, shepherds or bishops, Acts 20:27) and our preachers (evangelists, ministers) are only carrying out the rules of Christ. They can only act within the authority of Christ. We do NOT have an outside authority. Christ is our only head. Many churches point to church councils/conventions/assemblies for their oversight or headship. Others have church presidents or fathers or founders. Maybe it is even church creeds or codes. The point is this: all of these things fulfill the

prophecy of the usurping of the headship of Christ. If the church answers to ANY OTHER AUTHORITY, it is not the church of Christ.

FINDING THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

If I wanted to find a person I know, I look for their face/head. So it is with the church of Christ. If I want to find the church that belongs to Christ, I look for the head that is Christ. I will not find multiple heads on one body (can you imagine), nor will I look for another. Christ's body has only one head, and it is Jesus.