

The letters Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians and Philemon, were written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment [AD 62-64]. They are, for this reason, sometimes referred to as the Captivity Epistles.

1 - "In Christ" is the foundation of Christ's headship.

Ephesians - The Argument Flow

1. The purpose of God for us is found in the purpose of God for Christ.

In order to know what God is doing with us we are first directed to Christ to see what God is doing for Him. We move from understanding Christ to understanding ourselves and our current position in the purpose of God. We think Christologically both as to order and content; we start with Him and His relation to the Father and then we understand ourselves in relation to Christ. [1.3-14]

2. This purpose of God is to gather up all things in Christ as their head.

This headship of Christ is the first thing to understand, for our destiny is bound up with His. What God is doing with Him will define what He is doing with us in relation to Christ. Our relation to God derives from His relation to Christ. We have to think of ourselves in the light of God's purpose and way of honouring Him. Whatever God is doing with Him, we are caught up "in Christ" He is our Head. [1.8-11]

3. As to **what God has done for us**, the effective work of God **is first done in Christ**, before it may come to us through Christ. That man who takes flesh and lives, dies, resurrects and ascends for us; offers Himself to God by the Spirit – He is pleasing to God as the perfected Son of Man. [1.20-22].

4. **His humanity perfects ours**; for He is like us as to our flesh, but lives in a way that is unlike our fallen life. We see ourselves in Him. So He carries us into our inheritance which God had for Him and we find ourselves with access to God through Him. Specifically through His blood - his poured out, offered up, life brought to its pinnacle in his death. [Ephesians Chapter 2].

5. Paul has been commissioned by God to go to the Gentiles and relate the mystery of God's will to them. His **gospel is this mystery**, in its rich variety [3.10] is now being made known to the principalities and powers through the Church. They get to see it for we are those who, in the order of this putting all things under Christ, are now under the headship of Christ already, as a bride. Chapter 3 concludes with a prayer that they may know this.

6. This **deep union with Christ**, is expressed **as the unity of the Spirit** in the bonds of peace – held together through the peace with God. [4.1-6]. This unity is exemplified in

a. one body, one Spirit, one hope, one calling, one faith, one Lord one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all in all.

b. Christ has given each person a measure of his gift. These gifts, apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher

i. Equip the saints for the work of service

ii. Build up [establish] the body until we all come to unity, measure of the full stature of Christ

iii. so that the Christian church will mature in every way into Him who is the Head

iv. We are to live as those who put away the old life and are clothed in a new humanity. [4.17-24].

v. We are to live "in Christ" through the agency of ["in"] the Holy Spirit given to us [4.30]. It is \He who has been given as a seal of God on our life - showing that we belong to Him until he brings us to our goal.

7. [Chapter 5] Imitating the life that befits children of God as mature sons, loving one another as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering to God, we are to live the life of those who have been awakened.

We are to **be filled with the Spirit**: which practically means

[i] Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and songs

[ii] Singing in our heart to God

[iii] Giving thanks to the father for everything in the name of Lord

[iv] Being subject one to another out of reverence for Christ [the Head]. Examples of this

mutual submission to one another are:

Wives and husbands – mystery of Christ and Church

Children and parents - honour

Servants and masters – as unto the Lord

1.8. Consistent with the way that Jesus Christ was Tempted to be deflected from his mission, we are to **stand against the devil** - having put on Christ who is the armour of God [6.10-20]

2 - Christ the Head of the Church

Colossians 1.15-20 The Supremacy of Christ

Dwelling on our inheritance and our redemption Paul, in Colossians 1.15-20 speaks of the Supremacy of Christ. He speaks of Him under a number of figures: delineated under who He is in relation to God, his work of Creation and also of Redemption.

[a] He is the image of the invisible God.

This speaks of Christ as the proper man, who as Adam was made in the image of God, Christ is the image. In this way we are lead to think of Adam and all humanity as bearing the image, but this comes to mean that humanity is made in the likeness of the Son of God.

It also indicates that since God is Spirit, we cannot know Him by our senses. Christ is the revelation of God to us for He is God come to us as Man.

[b] the first born of all creation.

The title firstborn marks out the inheritor of all that the father has. In common understanding of the eldest son of the family he has a lion's share of the inheritance. In the case of Jesus, Paul is designating that Jesus Christ, as God's only Son, is the total heir of all that He has. In this case it is a matter of God's creation. Everything that God has made, He has made for His Son and in Him. This includes everything in the creation:

[i] things of earth and heaven

[ii] things seen and not seen,

[iii] thrones, dominions, rulers or powers - referring to subsidiary authorities

[c] He is before all things, and in him all things hold together

The Son of God is antecedent to the creation - he was there at the foundation of the world and it is in His person that all things co-inhere. He is the fabric and the matrix that holds the created universe together.

[d] He is the head of the body, the Church.

[e] He is the beginning - which speaks that he is the origin of all things. Or, if read with the next title, it may mean that he is the beginning of the those who resurrect.

[f] the first born from the dead. That is He is the eldest of those who have resurrected from the dead. He is the first one to rise from the dead. He has broken the power of death in humanity.

He has first place in everything. In all these matters of which these titles and designations of Christ find their meaning, their reason, it is that He has the first place in everything. No-one, and nothing, supplants Him from the supremacy that He has in relation to all that is made. This is the basic relation of Christ to the created world.

[g] In Christ the fullness of God was pleased to dwell - that is, He is God come to us as Man. Notwithstanding his full humanity, He does not cease to be God.

[h] God has reconciled all things to Himself through Christ - this includes both things of earth and also of heaven. He has done this through the blood of Christ's cross.

Implications:

To have a Head means for us that we have in Christ our

[a] **God** come to us as man, visible and the source of our knowledge of the Father. **We worship Him.**

[b] **Origin** in Him in regard to our creation - and therefore dependent. **We live off His provision for us.** And also in regard to our reconciliation to God - the forgiveness of our sins. **He is our access to God.**

[c] **First, pre-eminent Person** for our life. We are to **consider Him only.**

[d] **Owner**, in respect of our persons. We are his inheritance, his given persons. He can **do with us what He wants, we are owned by Him.**

[e] **Redeemer.** He is the **Head** of the body of Christ, which we, collectively are. We are a betrothed Bride in regard to our head. He is **for us.** His gracious words of promise and grace have **washed us** clean of our past. We have - by the Spirit - a **common life** with Him now, as a Husband who has laid down his life for us. He has a desire to present us to Himself as thoroughly acceptable. We are to **respect Him and honour Him** - we are privileged to live for His glory.