

A Doctrinal Defense of Christ's Headship

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 80-303

We are going to wait until next Lord's Day to return to our study of the Gospel of Luke. I had originally intended to get back into the sixteenth chapter of Luke. However, I had been involved in a particular assignment. I was, this week, in Orlando, Florida, speaking at the Ligonier Conference for R.C. Sproul and I had been assigned the subject of "Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church"—to give a study, a lecture, a sermon on "Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church." And I've been so absorbed in that particular study and I went down there and I delivered my heart on Thursday of this week, and the response was just very encouraging to me, and I thought I needed to come back and give this same message to you because if it was that kind of an encouragement to those folks, I trust it will be to you as well.

So this morning I want to talk about this subject: "Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church." This is not unfamiliar to a student of the Bible. In Ephesians 1 the Scripture says Christ is the Head of the Church. In chapter 5 Scripture says Christ is the Head of the Church. In Colossians 1, again, the Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says "Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church." And that may seem, on the surface, a sort of "so what" kind of statement. We all know that. We all affirm that. That's a rather benign issue. Why would you want to give an address or lecture on that subject? It's straightforward, it's clear, it's unambiguous. But so much of what comes to us by way of pure understanding of the Word of God has come to us not with small difficulty but with immense amount of difficulty, and this doctrine is one of those that has made it down through the ages to us at the cost of many, many lives. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

In fact, we're all Protestants. But I'm not sure we understand what we're protesting. If you go to some place to work, occasionally, or go to some school or want to get involved in the military there'll be a little box that says "Protestant, Catholic or Other." And I'm sure most Protestants have no idea that Protestant means "a protestor." That Protestantism was born out of a protest. And I'm sure that there are...most...probably true of most Protestants, they really don't know what they're protesting and there are many Protestants who really wouldn't want to protest anything very strongly. But we were born in a protest and there are things that we still protest loudly and strongly. One of those things is any attack or any assault on the headship of Jesus Christ in His Church. So let's go back in history a little bit.

The name John Huss (H-U-S-S)—well-known and well-loved by many who are church historians. Anybody who knows the history of the Protestant Reformation knows the name John Huss. He was a

Bohemian from what would be modern day northeast Croatia, and he was a pre-Reformation reformer. He was born in Hussenitz, now in southern Croatia. He was born to peasant parents. People were basically named according to their village and Hussenitz was a little long for him, so at the age of twenty he shortened his name to Huss and that means "the goose." The nickname stuck so that when John Huss was martyred (burned at the stake), Luther said 100 years later in reflecting on that event, "the goose was cooked" and that's where that expression came from. It's still around today. The day for the cooking of "the goose" was July 6 and the year was 1415. 102 years later Luther nailed his thesis to the Wittenberg door and started the Protestant Reformation. This is 100 years before Luther.

Huss was taken to the cathedral in Prague. He was dressed in all of his priestly garments; he was a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. They stripped him, however, after he was fully dressed...they stripped him piece by piece by piece until he was virtually naked. He had been condemned to die by the Council of Constance, presided over by a certain bishop and that bishop at the Council of Constance decreed his execution by burning. The bishop ordered him tied to the stake and the flames engulfed him, and as they did historians say he said, "Lord Jesus, it is for you that I patiently endure this cruel death. Have mercy on my enemies." And then he went on reciting the Psalms as the flames engulfed him and took his life. He was so revered that that the Roman Church was fearful of any remnants of him, and therefore they scooped up all his ashes from the dirt beneath the fire and threw them into a nearby lake so that nothing would remain of him at all. Some, however, who loved him collected bits of dirt on the spot where he was burned, took them back to Bohemia to constitute a memorial in his honor. It was nearly 100 years later that Martin Luther was rummaging through stacks in a library, and he came across a volume of sermons by John Huss, and he read them. And they had an amazing impact on Luther. He wrote this, "I was overwhelmed with astonishment. I could not understand for what cause they had hurt so great a man who explained the Scriptures with so much gravity and skill." Huss became a hero to Martin Luther because Huss preached the Bible, because he preached biblical doctrine, very doctrines which became crucial later on to the Reformation, and because he was hostile to the Roman Catholic Church selling indulgences by which people could pay money to shorten their punishment in purgatory.

So why was The Goose cooked? Why, as a priest in the church, did the church burn him? Well, a little biography first. As I said, born to peasant parents in Bohemia he entered the priesthood only to escape poverty. It was a good way to make a stable living. But he was bright, so he went through the educational process and got a bachelor's degree and a master's degree and even a doctorate. In 1402 he was ordained as a priest. He was assigned, because of his abilities, to become the preacher and pro____ at the Bethlehem Chapel which seated about 3,000 people. He determined even then that he would preach in the language of the people, and not in the required Latin because he wanted people to understand what was being said. He had become influenced by the writings of John Wycliffe who lived about at that same time and Wycliffe was committed to the Bible and had a great influence on Huss. Huss said he desired to "hold, believe, assert whatever is contained in Scripture

as long as I have breath in me."

It was that commitment that put him on a direct collision course to the Roman system. Eventually, they couldn't take his preaching. Not only was he preaching the Bible, but he was preaching it in a way that people could understand it. That posed a huge problem for the sacramental system which controlled the people by their ignorance. He was then forbidden to preach. He was excommunicated from the church, and he kept preaching anyway, and he kept preaching in the Bethlehem Chapel. They couldn't get him out, and he was too popular at the time for them to take severe action against him. And the more he preached, and the more he preached in opposition to the system, the more courageous he came, and the more heavily he leaned on the Bible which he proclaimed as the final authority. The church finally developed a strategy and this was it: the church announced that no citizen would ever receive holy communion and no citizen would ever be buried on church grounds in that region as long as John Huss continued to preach. So to spare the people, the loss of the Lord's Table, and the right to an appropriate funeral, he left the Bethlehem Chapel in 1412 and went out into the countryside where he preached and wrote feverishly.

Among the things that he wrote, the most important treatise is called "The Church." He knew he needed to define the church for a people who really didn't understand the biblical view. When he completed that treatise, it was read publicly in Prague so the whole population could know what the Bible said about the Church. His views were radical. I'll just give you the three important components that were so radical.

Number One: He said the Church was made up of all the predestined believers of all ages. It was made up of all the predestined believers of all ages. In other words, everybody who was a believer belonged to the Church. You say, "Why is that so radical?" It was radical because during the time of Wycliffe and Huss, the official Roman Catholic position was that the true church consisted of the pope, the cardinals, the bishops, and the priests, period. They were the church. The lay people were not the church. The common people were not real members of the church, but when they ate the bread they communed with the church. And they didn't give them the wine. Their communion was limited only to the bread.

The second radical view that he had was that the authority of the Bible was higher than the authority of the church. This was something that Wycliffe had also made very clear. It is interesting, by the way, that Huss' words on the Bible being the true and final authority over the church...his very words were later repeated verbatim by Martin Luther.

But The Goose was cooked because of a third thing he said in that treatise. He said this: "Jesus Christ Himself is the Head of the Church" and he defied the Pope. In fact, he said, "The Head of the Church is not a pope who through ignorance and love of money is corrupt." He denied that any man is the head of the Church, especially one who lived, he said, a reprehensible life. And he said all

reprobate leaders are disqualified from leading the Church in any way but Jesus alone is the Head of the Church. To rebel against the Pope was to obey Christ as Head, said John Huss. And that was it. The Goose was cooked for affirming that Jesus Christ is Head of His Church. The Bohemians were furious at the execution. They repudiated the Council of Constance and the bishop who lead it. Over the next several years, a coalition of Hussites came together. Others that joined them refused to submit to the authority of the holy Roman emperor or the church. They eventually formed a little group called *unitas fratrum*—the union of the brethren, which became the foundation for the Moravian brethren, historically associated with missions, and it was from the Moravian missionaries that John Wesley and his brothers were saved. So the conversion of the Wesley's can go back to the testimony of John Huss.

The truth of the Headship of Jesus Christ, as I said, might seem a little benign to us, a little matter of fact, a little ho-hum. This glorious truth, however, has come down to us sailing on a sea of blood. Huss was not the only martyr. There have been many through the centuries, but it was a century later when the young Martin Luther found the sermons of Huss and was so influenced by them, and it was Martin Luther who engaged in the same fight for the Headship of Christ over His Church. Luther said this, and I quote from Table Talks: "I am persuaded that if St. Peter, in person, should preach all of the articles of Holy Scripture and only deny the Pope's authority, power, and primacy and say that the Pope is not the head of the Church, they would cause him to be hanged." If you got everything else right and you just said the Pope is not the head of the Church you'd lose your life, said Luther, even if you were Peter.

Luther went on to say this, "If Christ Himself were again on earth and should preach this that He is the Head of the Church, without all doubt" Luther said, "the Pope would crucify Him again." The Roman Catholic Church today holds to papal headship over the church. I quote from their documents, "The Pope possesses full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole church, not merely in matters of faith and morals but also in church discipline and in the government of the church." He's the king of the church. The Vatican Council declared (this is a quote): "If anyone shall say that the Roman Pope has the office merely of inspection and direction and not a full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal church, not only in things which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which relate to the discipline and government of the church spread through the world or assert that he possesses merely the principal part and not all the fullness of this supreme power or that this power which he enjoys is not ordinary and immediate both over each and all the churches and over each and all the pastors and all the faithful, let him be damned." Anathema. The Catholic Church damns anyone who says, according to Vatican Council, that the Pope does not have supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal church, each and every church, each and every pastor, and each and every person. That means they believe he is the head of this church, of me, and of you, even though we are the disenfranchised among the faithful.

What've we got? Catholic theologian, classic theologian writing in defense of these things said, "A true power, a universal power, a supreme power, and a full power is possessed by any pope who can thereby rule independently on any matter without the consent of anyone else, he himself is judged by nobody because there is no higher judge on earth than he. He answers to no one. No council, no cardinal, no bishop, no king, no one." And to this Luther said, "I owe the pope no more obedience than I owe to anti-Christ." Why? Because the Pope was anti-Christ because he was declaring himself the head of the church and taking a position in opposition to Christ. Against Christ. That's what antichristos means. D'Aubigne in his Classic History of the Reformation of the 16th Century, a great historical work, wrote this: "Luther's rejection of the Pope as head of the church inflicted the most terrible blow on Rome." This is really what was at the heart of the Reformation. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, not the Pope. John Calvin agreed, "Some think us too severe when we call the Roman pontiff anti-Christ."

John Knox, the great Scottish reformer, influenced by Calvin in Geneva, the one who brought back the Geneva Bible text to Scotland, contributor to the very English Bible tradition which we enjoy today...Knox called the Pope an "anti-Christ tyrant over the Church." They all saw him as the one who opposed Christ as the Head of the Church. Westley identified the papacy as "the man of sin, the son of perdition, the one who exalted himself above the true Head of the Church, and even above God Himself." He wrote that in his writing "Anti-Christ and his Ten Kingdoms." 1647, the Westminster Confession was written to affirm sound doctrine, and in the Westminster Confession which is still the confession used by Presbyterians today around the world, this is what the Westminster Confession said, "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof but is that anti-Christ, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalted himself in the Church against Christ and all that is called God." Pretty explicit.

In the 17th century when Knox came back to Scotland...of course the tremendous amount of influence there...but in the 17th century the same war was being waged over who is the head of the Church. By the 17th century, the battle was kind of shifting. If there was a Catholic ruler in England, there was call for everyone to subject themselves to the fact that the Pope was the head of the church and the king was under the Pope. If there was a Protestant ruler in England, the king or the queen was to be the head of the church. And so the battle raged about who was the head of the church. In England the Puritans fought that battle, the non-conformists fought that battle. But particularly in Scotland it really reached a feverish level. The Scottish had been influenced by John Knox. John Knox was a powerful, revivalist Reformation preacher, and he preached that Jesus Christ was the Head of the Church, and this put him in conflict with the royalty in England. The Catholic royalty still believed themselves to be head over the church and the Pope head over them. Even the Protestants, the Anglicans, the Anglo-Catholics in England believed themselves to be head of the church. And so the Scottish would not accede to that, they would not allow that, they would not submit to that.

In 1888 William Blaikie wrote a book called *The Preachers of Scotland* which I have read repeatedly with a lot of benefit, and one of the sections in the book says "the attempt by the state" (that's the English crown) "to force a new liturgy on the Church, the use of which should be binding under the highest penalty showed a determination to set aside Christ's authority and tyrannize over His people in the most sacred region of worship." This was the dually authorized worship book, authorized by the king. It was imposed by the English king upon the Scottish people, and it was brought into St. _____ Cathedral on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh where I've visited a number of times, and into the cathedral came this man and announced (this is 1637) that everybody has to conform to this by royal decree. And one of the interesting little moments in Scottish history...there was a lady sitting in the church that day by the name of Jenny Geddes who was offended at this, that the Crown would dictate to them whatever it wanted to and push upon them some liturgy. She was infuriated by what was being said and history says her fury reached such a level that she reached down, found a stool in the church and threw it at the guy who was reading the book. This ignited a riot and a revolt that basically launched the movement called The Covenanters. Men got together, wrote a covenant that was a national covenant the Scottish people would affirm, and at the head of that covenant was that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and not the Pope, and not the king, and not the queen.

And so what happened was, for fifty years really, this blood bath went on. Even prior to 1637 it had started (it went from 1625 to 1675). Fifty years of slaughtering these Scottish people for affirming that they will not submit themselves to the Crown or to the Pope. Blaikie writes this, "By force of reaction the Church was thrown into a more full assertion of Christ's claims as Head of the Church and the glorious privilege of the Church to follow her divine Head and the more this truth was thought of, the more glorious did it seem." What happened was when they had to really think through and defend that Christ was the Head of the Church, they began to clarify, crystallize, deepen, broaden that great doctrine until it became such a precious, rich doctrine. The more they fought for it, the more they worked with it, the more glorious it became. And Blaikie says "every vision of the true head of the church of Scotland was enriched so that no other than the glorious king exalted to such honor there, the Lamb in the midst of the throne having on His head many crowns and surrounded by elders and living creatures and thousands and thousands who cried with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain' burst upon their sight." They began to see the full glory of Christ as the true Head of His Church. And Blaikie writes, "The men of those times did not, like so many now, deem it enough to recognize Christ's headship over themselves personally. They joined to that with all the ardor of their nature, His headship over the whole church and to repudiate the one was as a great a crime and as great a folly as to repudiate the other.

I've spent a lot of time in my life writing and preaching on the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord over every true Christian. You do not come to salvation if you do not confess Jesus as Lord, but He is not just our personal Lord, He is Lord of the Church, and you cannot let go of that doctrine either. To deny Him, His place, and His Church is to imperil one's personal relationship to Him, "almost as much,"

writes Blaikie, "as if to deny His atonement." You cannot deny His headship in His Church without significant results and they're all negative. In fact, Samuel Rutherford said, "The more one delighted to think of His grace in relation to oneself, the more was one bound to see to it that He sustained no insult and no injury in His wider dominion. For the believer to join with those who gave over His authority as King to any earthly sovereign was about as wicked as to join with those who set aside His personal authority that they might serve the Devil and the world and the flesh." You can't deny His personal authority in your life and be a Christian. And you can't personally deny His personal authority in His Church and be true to the Word of God. And that was crystallized among those Covenanters as they had to fight to defend that even as it had been crystallized a couple of centuries before that in the Reformation, as they had to fight that battle as well.

And Knox, who was really brash and bold as were many of the Reformers, confronted Queen Mary, who was Catholic and slaughtered Christians, and addressed her as "a woman of stout stomach." This is not a good way to address a woman, but he was a pretty brash guy. He confronted her as "a woman of stout stomach who can't abide the presence of God's prophets." And the issue with Knox was who ruled the Church—Christ or the monarchy. It was in those years that they built a Presbyterian parliament building to rule the church of Scotland. The Presbyterian Church is where all the...or to lead it. It's on the Royal Mile between H_____ Castle and Edinburg Castle up the rode past John Knox's house and I've been in that building. I was in there with Eric Alexander. And it's actually such an interesting building...it's kind of a rectangle like the British Parliament is and it was used for the...for basically the discussion of the issues in the church. It wasn't the Scottish Parliament facility but rather the church parliament facility. By the way, the Scottish Parliament did use it when their own building was under construction some years back. But it has all kinds of facing seats at different levels so that all the leaders of the church, all the bishops, and all whoever are people of importance, all the way up the ranking seats and they're all in sort of a pecking order in that traditional kind of hierarchical structure of the church and that kind of government.

But I noticed the first thing you notice when I walked in there and I looked up at the top of the building...my eye was drawn up there...there was a throne up there about where the cross is. Just a throne way up there. And I said to Eric Alexander, "Who sits there?" And he said, "Well, that's the seat for the king of queen." Vestiges of that same old issue. No one sits there when the Parliament meets but, sad to say, the Presbyterian leadership of Scotland would be anything but Christian these days, so they probably wouldn't mind if royalty was there to give them some aid in the enterprises they're involved in. But it showed up even in the architecture—a seat for royalty above everyone else. The Church of Scotland rejected the rule of royalty. The ones that denied this were thrown out of their churches. Dragoons, from which we get "goons", you know people that show up to beat you up and kill you? Dragoons were sent by the English Inn to find these pastors who were not in compliance and kill them, and so they left their churches, and they ran out into the moors and the fields and the hillsides into what were called conventicles and people who wanted to worship had to go out of town in a hidden place to worship and that went on for years. They found them and they

killed them. In one region alone they killed 400 pastors and only 37 survived. People were chopped up. They were hacked. They were beheaded. Along the Royal Mile, up that same route in Edinburgh, there are spikes that stick up along the road and certain old buildings and they were places that they put the heads of the Covenanters—put them on parade in the middle of town. You can go to the hay market square in Edinburgh. You can walk around the hay market square and you can see the very places where the Covenanters were killed for denying that Charles was the head of the Church. Even Cromwell, with whom they made an alliance, thinking he'd be their helper. And Cromwell even had as a chaplain when he went over to fight the Irish John Owen, the great Puritan. But even Cromwell betrayed them.

There were still some vestiges of this idea that the king was the head of the church even in the days of Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon said this, "Of all the dreams that ever deluded men, and probably of all blasphemies that ever were uttered, there has never been one which is more absurd and which is more fruitful in all matter of mischief than the idea that the Pope of Rome can be the head of the Church of Jesus Christ. No, these popes die," said Spurgeon, "and how could the Church live if its Head were dead? The true Head ever lives and the true Church ever lives in Him." He went on, "Christ did not redeem His Church with His blood that the Pope might come in and steal away the glory. He never came from heaven to earth and poured out His very heart that He might purchase His people, that a poor sinner, a mere man should be set upon high to be admired by all nations to call himself God's representative on earth. Christ has always been the Head of the Church." He was speaking pretty clearly in those days against the very same thing Luther had addressed and Huss had died for.

In a sermon called "Jesus, Our Lord" Spurgeon said, "The Church of God in a very special manner calls Jesus our Lord for there is not and there cannot be any head of the Church except the Lord Jesus Christ. It is awful blasphemy for any man on earth to call himself Christ Vicker and the Head of the Church. It is a usurpation of the crown rights of King Jesus for any king or queen to be called the head of the Church, for the true Church of Jesus Christ can have no Head but Jesus Christ Himself. I am thankful that there is no Head to the Church of which I'm a member, save Jesus Christ Himself, nor dare I be a member of any church which would content to any headship but His."

And Jonathan Edwards, the great American preacher and theologian said, "Christians are one society, one body and they are subject to the same King, Christ Jesus. He is the Head of the Church. He is the Head of the Body. Indeed all men are subject to the power and providence of this King, but those who are in His kingdom of grace all acknowledge the same King, own His rightful sovereignty over them, are willing to be subject to Him, to submit to His will, and yield obedience to His commands."

All the great reformers and preachers through the centuries understood how precious to the Church is the great truth of Christ's headship. And, by the way, the people who voted Jonathan Edwards out of

that church obviously thought they were the head of the church, and sometimes congregations do that in rejecting the Word of the Lord and Head of the Church. It doesn't go away. Look at modern liberal theology at all the liberal seminaries, all the people you hear interviewed on television who are telling you things that aren't true about Jesus and about God and about the Bible. I was called recently by The History Channel. They said, "Would you be an expert consultant for us and we would like to interview you and have you speak on the things that we do on The History Channel that relate to religion." Yikes! I can't run fast enough from that. You think I want to be on there with all those wacky people who deny the deity of Jesus Christ, deny the Scriptures, deny the headship of Christ? Modern liberal theology denies the deity of Christ, so what does that do to His headship? Modern liberal theology denies the resurrection! That makes Him dead! How can He be the Head of the Church if He's dead?! Furthermore, liberal theologians deny the inspiration of Scripture, so even if He were alive, he didn't say anything to His Church. Maybe the great sin of liberalism summed up is its rejection of Jesus as Head of His Church.

Moving onto the seeker movement which replaces the Word of God with psychological, self-help, narcissistic, man-centered kind of stuff. How is that an attack on the headship of Christ? Don't they believe He's the Head of the Church? They will tell you they do, but what good is it to be the Head of the Church if those who lead the Church silence you? Take the Bible out of the pulpit. Stop teaching Scripture verse by verse and you have silenced the Head of the Church. De facto. You have interrupted His rule. Pretty serious stuff. Replace the Word of God in the Church with what John Piper calls "evangelical slapstick". Substitute anything and everything else and you have just silenced the Head of the Church in His Church.

Bible translators do it with their feminist Bibles and their self-styled little Bibles that translate it any old way that they want, making it say what's convenient to their theological view. They tamper with the text. They are tampering with the Word of the Head of the Church to His Church. I mean, you've got to look where the blow is really being struck. The new emerging church—they're so smug and so self-content and self-impressed. They are happy to celebrate the lack of clarity in the Bible, that the Bible isn't clear. And they say they have hermeneutics of humility—they would never be so proud as to say they know what the Bible means by what it says. They're too humble for that. And humble people won't say they know what it means. So they would say "Christ is the Head of the Church, and we believe that, and He did speak but we haven't any clue what He said. We don't have any way to interpret this book. Besides, if you get too clear about it, too specific about it, it's very intolerant, very divisive." You see, you can attack the headship of Christ all kinds of ways. To say that the Bible is not clear? Or not true? Or not all of it's true? Or we can't be dogmatic? We don't know exactly what it means? Is to silence the Head of the Church in His Church!

John Armstrong who has headed up an organization called "Reformation and Revival"...he needs to change the name...said this, "certitude is often idolatrous. I have been forced to give up certitude. If there is a foundation in Christian theology," he writes, "it is not found in Scripture." Really? Scripture

isn't the foundation and you can't be certain about anything. He then went on to say, "Theology must be a humble, human effort to hear God but never about rational approaches to texts." It's not in Scripture. You can't be certain. And you can't use your rational mind to understand a text. Boy, that is a convenient confusion. Now you're not responsible for anything. Why would people come up with that? Because "men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." This is not intellectual; this is moral. The Bible is clear. It's too clear. It's too clear what it's saying. They don't want to acknowledge what it's saying so they say it's not clear. This kind of entrepreneurialism, this church of human ingenuity, this church of creative whatever, whatever everybody's inventing things their own way is, in its reality, a mutiny. It is a mutiny. It is a rebellion against the Head of the Church. And along with it...along with all this liberal sort of seeker emergent church comes disdain for the faithful teachers of Scripture—disdain for the faithful theologians, disdain for the faithful expositors of the Word, the faithful mediators of the Lord's rule in His Church through the proclamation of His Word to his Church. He rules by His Word in the power of the Spirit. You remove the Word, you silence Him, you mutiny against Him. Everybody in history who understood the issues knew where the battle was. I know what we're protesting and I'll keep protesting it just as it's been protested all the way through history. The Lord is the Head of His Church. I have no word to His Church but the Word that comes from the Head of the Church. And when anyone serving or leading a church deviates one step out of the revealed will of the truth, deviating one step away from the Word of the Head of the Church, he has declared mutiny on the Head of the Church. He has declared revolution. This is an overthrow and he's become the rival of Christ. He is an adulterer trying to seduce the bride away from her true husband. Pretty serious stuff.

Non-biblical ministry, non-expository preaching and teaching, non-doctrinal instruction usurps Christ's headship, silences His voice to His Church, gives honor to proud independence and autonomy as if it is a virtue. It's another kind of minor league papacy. This approach strips the Church of the mind of Christ, builds indifference and ignorance toward the Bible, prevents the preacher from being the voice of the Lord to His Church, removes protection from error and sin, eliminates transcendence and clarity, therefore crippling worship and producing compromise, cheating people of the glory of their Head in His fullness and all that flows out of it. So this is not a doctrine to be treated lightly, but to be treated seriously.

That's my introduction. You think I'm kidding? I want to ask three quick questions, ok? This is my three point outline. Question number one: What does "Head" mean? For two decades, this idea of headship has been assaulted by evangelical feminists. You see, if you take Christ as the Head of the Church in Ephesians 5, it says "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the Church." So they don't want the husband to be the head of the wife in a sense of governing, ruling, authority so they want to get that out because feminism can't tolerate that and in the getting of that out they have just stripped Jesus of His headship as well because whatever "head" means regarding the husband over the wife it means regarding Christ over the Church. And so the attack on headship has come relentlessly for twenty years.

Thanks to our good friend, the encyclopedic, Wayne Grudem, who knows more about the issue of headship than any human who's ever walked on the planet because he studied it so intently...thanks to him, whenever there's a doctrine that's assaulted the Church goes to battle and he's been the leader in that battle. And in 1985, for one thing, among many things that he's done, he took the word for kephale, which is the word for "head" (kephale) and he examined 2,336 examples of it in ancient Greek literature from the 8th century B.C. (Homer) to the 4th century A.D. (the Church Fathers). 2,336 examples of kephale to find out if it's ever used as "source", simply to say that Christ is the Source of the Church, nothing more. That's crazy anyway because what does it mean that the husband is the source of the wife. What is that? What happened to the in-laws? Aren't they the source of your wife? That doesn't make any sense. So he studied all of those. This is his conclusion, and it's been in print and never been answered and he's written 1,000 pages on all of this: Never, when the word was used of a person, not a body part, but actually of a person called "the head", never does it have any other meaning than "governing, ruling authority." He's the Head of His Church, meaning He is the governing, ruling authority who rules through what He says to His church, as any ruler does—what He requires, what He commands, what He demands, what He asks. To say that Jesus is the Head is to say that He is Lord, and to say a husband is the head is to say that he is lord, just as it is said in 1 Peter 3 that Sara called Abraham what? Lord. That's why in Philippians 2, Paul says that when Jesus was given a name above every name, the name "Lord", in response to that Name every knee does what? It bows. Kurios equals kephale. Kephale equals kurios. Head—Lord. Lord—Head. That's what it means. He rules His Church.

Second question: Who made Him Head? Go back to Ephesians 1. Go back? You haven't been anywhere yet. Go to Ephesians 1. We got to get to the Bible, folks. That's what I keep saying, right? Ephesians 1. Now this is powerful stuff, so you're going to have to hang on. 17—Paul's praying here "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." One thing God wants is that you would understand and have wisdom concerning the truth. Ok? Paul's saying I'm just praying that God is going to help you understand. Verse 18—"that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened." You just need to know the truth.

Alright, let's go on down to verse 20. And here he says...now we can't cover all of this...but he says this, "when He raised Christ from the dead" ... when God raised Christ from the dead...you need to understand this...this is the truth...this is part of what he wants you to understand... "When He raised Him from the dead He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." Ok? After the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, He ascended into heaven, He took His place at the right hand of the Father. Ok? Verse 21—"far above" Huperono—ono (higher up). Huper (higher, higher up, super high up, way up, far above). "He is exalted in the heavenlies far above, infinitely above all rule (arkay)...all firsts, all primacies, all authority (exusia—right, all who have rights), all power (dutimas), all dominion (kuriatays), all lordships, all sovereignties. He is far above all of them, and just in case

something's left out "and every name that is named"...any other being, be it angelic or be it human...He is far above...way above all beings who have any rule, authority, power, and dominion, not only in this age but also in the one to come. Now and forever Jesus Christ is sovereign over all beings who exist. Now and forever. No change.

Then He says this...the language is magnificent...verse 22—"And He put all things in subjection under His feet." Not only is He over all beings, He is over all things. He is the King of the universe, He is the King of creation, He is the King over everything that has been created, material and immaterial. He is the King over all of it, now and forever. Now verse 22, at the end of the verse...and God who brought Him out of the grave, who raised Him from the dead, who seated Him at His right hand, who put all things under His feet, that same God and Father "gave Him as head over all things to the Church." Doesn't say He gave Him as Head of the Church. That's true, but that's not the emphasis. Do you see the language? He gave Him as Head over all things to the Church. He gave to us to be our Head the King of the universe. Wow. He gave the One who was already King of kings, who was already Lord of lords. He gave Him to the Church. The universal Sovereign over the entire created universe takes His rightful place as Head of His Church. Colossians 1:18: "That He Himself might come to have first place preeminence in everything." (ttp--I couldn't find the translation that matches this when I checked) This is the most glorious kind of language. I wish I could just explode on this for awhile, but I can't. I don't have time. He didn't give us Gabriel, He didn't give us Michael, I could go on and on like that. He didn't give us 10,000 super angels. He didn't just give us John Huss, and He didn't just give us Martin Luther's, and Calvin's, and people like that and Spurgeon's. He didn't give us just gifted pastors and teachers and theologians and evangelists to help us and support us and evangelize to bring us to salvation and sanctification and to teach us and defend us and guide us and lead us. He gave us the Ruler of the universe.

In verse 23 the Church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. That's almost untranslatable. Pontaeinpossinplayrumenoid. It says "all things in all things filling." What it means is He gave us a Head whose life flows down in us. He's not only over in us, He's in us. He gave us the King of the universe. He gave us the best. He picked the best shepherd to be our Shepherd. He picked the best husband to be our Husband. He picked the best king to be our King. He picked the best head to be our Head. Fall on your knees, you popes, and humble yourselves in the face of the true Head of the Church. Fall on your knees, you kings, you queens. Fall on your faces, you self-appointed lords of the church who deny the lordship of Jesus Christ and His headship in His Church by removing His Word. Humble yourselves, those who deny His Scripture is true or understandable or who deny its priority place. Fall on your face, you clever, creative, willful, self-styled, self-promoting people before the true Head of the Church.

How does He rule? That's the third question. Ephesians 5. How does He rule in His Church? This is quick. Verse 23. First, the husband is the head of the wife, Christ the Head of the Church. First, He Himself being the Savior of the Church. The first thing He does in his Church...He sovereignly

saves His Church. He sovereignly saves His Church. That's how He builds His Church and the gates of Hades don't prevail against it. Verse 25 says it in another way: "He gave Himself up for her." He saves His Church by sacrificing Himself for His Church. Secondly, He supervises His Church. Verse 24. The Church is subject to Christ. Thirdly, he sanctifies His Church, verse 26. He sanctifies her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word. He saves His Church sovereignly. He supervises His Church sovereignly through instructing and subjecting the Church to His Word and His Spirit. He sanctifies His Church through the purification of the Word and cleansing from sin. He even secures His Church, verse 27. He will present to Himself the Church. Nobody else is going to do it. He will do it Himself someday in the future glory—present to Himself the Church in all her glory without spot, without wrinkle, or anything like that, completely holy and blameless. In the meantime, He supplies everything His Church needs. Verse 29. He nourishes and cherishes. He moves His Church along with all they need to grow and flourish. How does He rule? Sovereignly saving His Church, sovereignly supervising His Church through the work of the Word, sovereignly sanctifying His Church by cleansing them from sin, sovereignly securing them to future glory, and sovereignly supplying everything they need to be nourished and cherished. And why does He do all this? Why does He do this? Because, verse 25, He loves the Church. Nobody loves the Church like the Lord of the Church, the Head of the Church. Nobody. I want to submit myself to the Lord of the Church because I know that He loves the Church. Nobody loves the Church like the Lord of the Church. I want His loving leadership in your life. I want His loving leadership in this church. I want His loving headship in this church, and therefore I submit myself completely to the Head of the Church who loves the Church infinitely and eternally.

Closing thought. When Huss was dying, he said this to the bishop who pronounced his sentence: "Sir, you may silence this goose but there will come another that you will not be able to silence." 100 years later came Martin Luther and you see pictures of Luther, old pictures of Luther with the Goose faintly in the background. He was the fulfillment, the Reformers thought, of John Huss' statement. Luther went to be ordained at Urfort. They brought him in front of the chancel in front of the altar. They told him, as they did in those days, to lay prostrate upon the ground with his arms spread wide, making with his body the sign of a cross. And Luther, flat on the ground, before those who were ordaining him, took his place. It happened that he was lying on a crypt which are pretty common in old cathedrals. He was lying on a crypt. Beneath him was what was left of the body of someone who was dead. Just so happens that crypt was the crypt of the bishop who pronounced sentence on John Huss. Now, just maybe when Huss said to that bishop 100 years earlier, "You may silence this goose but there will come another you will not be able to silence"... just maybe the bishop said, "Over my dead body." That's enough.

Let's pray: What a heritage is ours, oh Lord, what a heritage is ours. Help us to know what it is we have to protest. We would do anything to save the sacred reality of Christ as Head over His Church. We acknowledge, Lord Jesus, that you are the Head of the Church. We submit gladly to your saving, supervising, sanctifying, securing power and will. We thank you for the glory of the work of the Word

in us through the Spirit. Help us to exalt our dear Lord Jesus in every way we can. We thank You, Lord, that You have made us Your body, your bride, members of Your glorious kingdom for now and forever, and we give You all the honor and all the glory. Amen.

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