

### Jesus Christ, the Head and Beginning of the Church

#### Colossians 1:18-19

Colossians 1:18-19 - *“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. <sup>19</sup> For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell.”*

#### Background Notes

The great theme of Colossians is the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ. Christ is supreme and entirely sufficient to meet all our needs. If you ever meet someone who doubts that the Bible teaches this truth, have him or her read the book of Colossians. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write this letter for that very reason!

The Colossian believers were in danger of imbibing some false teaching that was circulating in the area. These false teachers taught that Christ was not supreme and all sufficient - in fact, they taught that Christ was less than God! In Colossians 1, this great Christ-exalting passage, there is no way of mistaking what the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ! Whether you read it in the Greek language in the 1st century or you're reading it in the English translations today, there is no mistaking what the Bible is teaching here - **Jesus Christ is fully God, preeminent in all things, supreme and all-sufficient.**

#### Doctrinal Points

##### 1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.

Verse 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.”* What's the idea here? Is it the idea that Christ has power and authority over the Church, or is it the idea that the Head controls the Body? The truth that the Church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Head of the Body, is taught in Ephesians 1:22-23: *“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

Both ideas are true, and both ideas are in view here. Just as your head controls and has authority over your body, so Christ is Head over His Body, the Church. He has authority and control over the Church. This truth is of great practical importance to the Church.

And the Head of the Church is **Jesus Christ**, not some human leader! The Head of the Church is in Heaven, not in New York or Rome. Local church leaders should be able to look directly to Christ for their authority. The Lord Jesus Christ is Head of the Church.

## 2. The Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning of the Church.

Verse 18: *"He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning..."* Jesus Christ is the beginning of the Church. The Church did not begin with Adam. It did not begin with Noah. It did not begin with Abraham. It did not begin with Moses, and it did not begin with David. All these Old Testament saints were believers - but the Church did not begin with any of them. The Church began with **Christ**. In Matthew 16:18, the Lord Jesus said, *"I will build My church."* At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the group of believers, and the Church began.

Christ is the beginning of the Church as to origin, and as to the Church's source of life. Christ is the fountain of the Church's being. Christ is the beginning of the Church.

## 3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead.

Verse 18: *"He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."* We saw that word "firstborn" back in verse 15. In the context here, does it mean that Christ is supreme over the realm of the dead, or does it mean that Christ was the first one resurrected out from among the dead? Both truths are involved here.

The preposition "from" (v18) means "out from." Jesus Christ was firstborn out from among the dead - the first one resurrected from among the dead. Because He was the first one resurrected out from among the dead, He is the One who conquered death. Therefore He is supreme over death and over the realm of the dead. As Hebrews 2:14-15 says, *"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

So both ideas are included here. Jesus Christ has authority over death because He has conquered death. He was resurrected from the dead and lives today in the *"power of an endless life"* (Hebrews 7:16).

But was Jesus Christ really the first one resurrected from the dead? What about Lazarus? What about Jairus' daughter? Were they not resurrected from the dead before Jesus Christ's resurrection? No, Lazarus and Jairus' daughter were *raised* from the dead - they were *resuscitated*, but they were not resurrected. They were really dead, and they were really raised to life, but they were not *resurrected*, because they *died again*. When we are resurrected, we will have new bodies - never to die again. As believers we look forward to the time when we will have resurrected bodies, and that will take place at the Rapture. But our Lord is now in His resurrected body of glory. He was the first one resurrected out from among the dead.

What about Moses and Elijah at the Mount of Transfiguration? Again, they were not in their resurrected bodies. Moses and Elijah will receive their new bodies in the future.

What about those saints in Matthew 27:52-53? At the time of the crucifixion, we read this: *“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”* Was this a raising or a resurrection? Christians differ in opinion here. Some say these people were raised from the dead, and appeared in the City of Jerusalem, but then died again. There is no record of that at all.

Others believe that this was indeed a resurrection. The bodies of these saints had already gone to dust. These saints were part of the “first fruits” of Christ’s resurrection, and the great harvest is to come at the Rapture.

But whether this was a raising or a resurrection, notice that the Scripture is very clear that they came out of the grave **after** His resurrection (Matthew 27:53). Some translations are a little misleading, because they seem to give the idea that these saints were resurrected before Christ, and then went into the city after His resurrection. But the Scripture is quite clear that they *came out of their graves after* His resurrection. So I think this was a resurrection, part of the first fruits of Christ’s resurrection, tokens of the great resurrection to come.

Our Lord was the first to be resurrected out from among the dead, and as such He has authority over death. He heads up the whole host of believers who will some day be resurrected out from among the dead! All this is involved in this great truth. The Lord Jesus Christ is firstborn from the dead.

#### **4. The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God.**

Verse 19: *“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell.”* You couldn’t say it any more clearly: **Jesus is fully God!** The same truth is brought out in Colossians 2:9 - *“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”*

If you were taking a course in the Greek language, and you were assigned to write as clearly and concisely as possible that Jesus is fully God, you couldn’t do it any better than what we have right here! Colossians 1:19 and Colossians 2:9 are great verses to show cult members who deny the deity of Christ.

When as a young teenager I heard my father debate two Jehovah’s Witness members. This cult denies the deity of Christ. My Dad constantly brought the men back to those two verses in Colossians that clearly teach the full deity of Jesus Christ. Of course the Jehovah’s Witnesses went off on all kinds of tangents, and tried to push their false doctrine, but my Dad constantly brought them back to those Scriptures. They could not deny that the Scripture there was teaching in no uncertain terms that the Lord Jesus Christ is fully God. Not partly God - not just a divine quality dwelling in Him - but **fully God!** Jesus Christ is all of the fullness of the Godhead in Christ in bodily form.

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God. The book of Colossians brings this out so strongly - there's just no question about what the Scripture is teaching here.

## Practical Application

### Does Christ have preeminence in all my things?

*"...that in all things He may have the preeminence" (v18).* We can apply that to our own lives. If Christ is preeminent in all things, is He preeminent in all **my** things? Christ is over everything. He is supreme. He is #1. But is He #1 in your life, and in my life? Does He have supremacy over my life? Is He preeminent in all my things?

There are a lot of ways we could come at this, but let's talk about a normal day. When you get up in the morning, how do you view your day? Are you thinking: How much can I get done? How much work I have to do? How much can I have? How much knowledge I can gain? How much money I can make?

Or do you think: How can I serve Christ today? How can I model Christ in my life? How can I share Christ with the person I commute with? How can I talk about Christ with my neighbor?

Do we just intellectually acknowledge the truth that Christ is preeminent in all things - or do we consider: Did I **really allow Him to be** preeminent in my life today? Was He really number one in my life today? Did I make Him supreme in everything, even my thoughts? Does Christ have preeminence in all my things?