

Christ Is the Head, Not Us

The Verse Behind Ephesians 1:22

Ephesians 1:22

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

The church has no shortage of opinions.

Everyone has an idea about what the church should preach, how it should operate, what it should prioritise, what it should avoid, and what it should become.

Some want the church to follow culture. Some want it to follow tradition. Some want it to follow personalities. Some want it to follow whatever seems to attract the biggest crowd.

But **Ephesians 1:22** settles the question.

Christ is the Head.

The church doesn't belong to the pastor, the board, the congregation, the denomination, the government, or the loudest person in the room.

The church belongs to Jesus Christ.

And if Christ is the Head, then the church doesn't get to invent its own purpose. It receives its life, truth, direction, authority, and mission from Him.

What Ephesians 1:22 Is Saying

Paul says that God:

"Hath put all things under his feet."

Then he says God:

"Gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

There are two major truths here.

First, all things are under Christ's feet. **Second**, Christ has been given as Head to the church.

This means Christ possesses **universal authority**, but He also has a special relationship with His church. He rules over all things. And He leads, nourishes, directs, and fills His body.

Christ isn't merely one influence within the church. He isn't an honorary figure whose name appears on the sign while everyone else makes the real decisions.

He is the Head.

That means His authority is final. His Word is final. His gospel is final. His mission is final.

The church has no authority to contradict the One who owns it.

All Things Under His Feet

The phrase "Put all things under his feet" comes from **Psalm 8**.

Psalm 8:6 says: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

Psalm 8 speaks about humanity's calling to rule over creation under God. That calling reaches back to Genesis 1. God created man in His image and told him to have dominion over the earth.

But humanity's rule was corrupted by sin. Adam was meant to rule under God. Instead, he listened to the serpent. He surrendered to sin. And the one who was meant to exercise dominion became subject to death.

But **Jesus came as the true Man**. He is the last Adam. He obeyed where Adam disobeyed. He overcame temptation. He defeated sin. He conquered death. And God placed all things under His feet.

Hebrews 2:8 quotes Psalm 8 and says: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." Then it admits: "But now we see not yet all things put under him."

We still see rebellion. We still see suffering. We still see evil. We still see death.

But **Hebrews 2:9** says: "But we see Jesus."

We may not yet see Christ's authority openly acknowledged by everyone, but He has already been crowned with glory and honour. His rule is real, even when the world refuses to recognise it.

Christ's Authority Comes Through His Resurrection

The immediate context of Ephesians 1:22 is the **resurrection and exaltation of Christ**.

Paul says God raised Jesus from the dead and: "Set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

Then **Ephesians 1:21** says Christ is: "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named."

Christ is above every spiritual power. Above every political power. Above every earthly ruler. Above every religious authority. Above every name.

Then Paul says all things have been placed beneath His feet.

The Head of the church isn't a defeated teacher whose followers are keeping His ideas alive. He is the **risen Lord**. He has conquered death. He has been exalted to God's right hand. He possesses all authority in heaven and earth.

That is the One who leads the church.

Jesus Claimed All Authority

After His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples in **Matthew 28:18**: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

The word translated "power" carries the idea of **authority**. Jesus didn't say He had received partial authority. He didn't say He had authority over religious matters while everyone else handled the real world. He said **all authority** in heaven and earth had been given to Him.

Then He gave the church its mission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations."

Notice the word "**therefore**." The church's mission flows from Christ's authority.

We go because He is Lord. We preach because He commanded it. We baptise because He commanded it. We teach believers to observe His commands because He commanded it.

The church doesn't decide its mission through public opinion. Christ already gave the mission. Our responsibility is **obedience**.

Christ Is Head of the Body

Ephesians 1:22 says Christ is: "The head over all things to the church." The next verse explains what the church is.

Ephesians 1:23 says: "Which is his body."

The church is Christ's body. Christ is the Head. That picture tells us something about authority, but it also tells us something about **life and connection**.

A body can't function independently of its head. The head directs the body. The head coordinates the body. The head gives the body its unity and purpose.

Imagine a hand deciding it no longer needs instructions from the head. It wants to express itself. It wants to be authentic. It wants to do what feels right. That hand is not experiencing freedom. Something has gone seriously wrong.

In the same way, the church is healthy only when it remains **submitted to Christ**. When the church separates its beliefs, practices, or mission from Christ, it isn't becoming more relevant. It is becoming disconnected from its Head.

Christ Is the Source of the Church's Life

Colossians 1:18 says: "And he is the head of the body, the church." Then it says: "Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Christ is Head because He is the **source of the church's life**. The church exists because Jesus died and rose again.

We weren't gathered together by shared interests. We weren't united because we naturally get along. We weren't made one by human organisation.

Christ purchased us with His blood. Christ raised us into new life. Christ gave us the Holy Spirit. Christ joined us together as one body.

The church is a **resurrection people** because its Head is the risen Christ.

Without Him, we have no life. Without Him, we have no gospel. Without Him, we have no church.

We may still have buildings, meetings, music, programs, committees, and enough coffee to keep everyone awake, but without Christ we don't have spiritual life.

Christ Must Have the Preeminence

Colossians 1:18 says: "That in all things he might have the preeminence."

Preeminence means first place. Not one place among many. Not an important place. First place.

First place in the preaching

First place in the worship

First place in the decisions

First place in the doctrine

First place in the mission

**First place in the life of every
believer**

The church doesn't exist to make a name for itself. It exists to make **Christ known**. The church isn't called to draw attention to its own cleverness. It is called to proclaim His glory.

John the Baptist understood this when he said in **John 3:30**: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

That should be the heartbeat of the church. Less obsession with our image. More focus on Christ. Less desire to impress people. More desire to obey Christ. Less human glory. More of His.

Jesus Owns the Church

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18**: "I will build my church."

Notice the wording. "**My church.**" The church belongs to Jesus. He purchased it.

Acts 20:28 describes: "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The church was bought at a terrible price. Christ didn't purchase it with silver or gold. He purchased it with His blood.

First Peter 1:18 and 19 says we were redeemed: "Not with corruptible things, as silver and gold."
But: "With the precious blood of Christ."

The church has no right to act as though it belongs to us. A pastor may serve the church, but he doesn't own it. Leaders may oversee the church, but they don't own it. Members may belong to the church, but they don't own it.

Christ owns the church because Christ paid for it.

Church Leaders Serve Under the Chief Shepherd

The fact that Christ is Head doesn't mean human leadership is unnecessary. The New Testament appoints elders, pastors, teachers, and overseers. But **every church leader serves under Christ.**

First Peter 5:2 tells elders: "Feed the flock of God which is among you."

Notice that it is **God's flock**. Peter warns leaders not to become: "Lords over God's heritage." Then he says in verse 4: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory."

Christ is the Chief Shepherd. Every human shepherd is an undershepherd.

That means church leadership is **stewardship, not ownership**. Leaders don't have authority to create truth. They have responsibility to teach the truth Christ has given. They don't have authority to control people for personal benefit. They have responsibility to serve, protect, teach, correct, and care for the flock.

A leader is safe only while he remains under the authority of the Head.

Human Authority Is Never Absolute

Paul told the Corinthians in **First Corinthians 11:1**: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

Paul didn't say, "Follow me no matter what I do." He placed a condition on their imitation. **Follow me as I follow Christ.**

That principle applies to every Christian leader. No pastor, teacher, apostle, prophet, denomination, tradition, or movement has authority equal to Christ.

People can be respected. Leaders can be honoured. Teachers can be appreciated. But **Christ alone is Head.**

Acts 17:11 praises the Bereans because they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether Paul's teaching was true. Think about that. They checked the teaching of an apostle against Scripture. And Scripture calls them noble for doing it.

Biblical submission never means switching off discernment.

The Word of Christ Must Govern the Church

If Christ is the Head, how does the church know His will? Through **His Word**.

Colossians 3:16 says: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."

The church isn't led by Christ while ignoring the words of Christ. That sounds obvious, but churches manage to attempt it.

People sometimes say, "We just need to follow Jesus," while dismissing clear biblical teaching. But the Jesus we follow is the Jesus revealed in Scripture. We don't create a version of Christ who agrees with everything we already think.

Christ corrects us. Christ commands us. Christ confronts our sin. Christ renews our minds. Christ defines truth.

Jesus said in **John 14:15**: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Love for Christ isn't merely emotional admiration. It expresses itself through **obedience**.

Tradition Can't Replace Christ's Authority

Tradition isn't always wrong. Some traditions can be helpful. They can preserve wisdom, order, and faithful practice.

The problem begins when human tradition is treated as though it carries the same authority as Christ.

Jesus confronted this in **Mark 7:8**: "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men." Then He said: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

That is frightening. People can become so attached to religious customs that they reject God's command in order to protect them. We can confuse what we are used to with what Christ requires.

"We have always done it this way" isn't a Bible verse.

Every tradition must remain under the authority of Christ and His Word. If a tradition helps us obey Christ, it can serve a purpose. If it replaces, contradicts, or distracts from Christ's command, it must go.

Culture Can't Become the Head

The church must speak to the culture around it. We shouldn't use language nobody understands. We shouldn't create unnecessary barriers. We should care about real people and the real struggles they face.

But **speaking to culture isn't the same as submitting to culture.**

Romans 12:2 says: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

The church is called to love the world, but not copy it. We serve people, but we don't allow public opinion to rewrite the gospel.

Culture changes constantly. What is celebrated today may be rejected tomorrow. What was considered obvious ten years ago may now be called offensive. If the church builds its message on cultural approval, it will have to rebuild it every week.

Christ doesn't change.

Hebrews 13:8 says: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

The church needs a permanent Head, not a constantly changing opinion poll.

The Majority Isn't Always Right

There is a strange belief that if enough people agree, something must be true. Scripture doesn't support that.

The majority in Noah's day was wrong.

The majority at Babel was wrong.

The majority of Israel wanted a golden calf.

Ten of the twelve spies brought back an unbelieving report.

The crowd demanded that Jesus be crucified.

Truth isn't established by a vote.

Exodus 23:2 says: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

The church must listen to Christ even when obedience is unpopular. There may be moments when following the Head puts us against the majority. That isn't an excuse to become arrogant, argumentative, or unnecessarily offensive. But it is a reason to remain **faithful**.

We don't need the world to approve Christ's Word before we obey it.

Personalities Can't Replace the Head

The Corinthian church had divided itself around personalities.

Some said: "I am of Paul." Others: "I am of Apollos." Others: "I am of Cephas."

Paul responded in **First Corinthians 1:13**: "Is Christ divided?"

That question still needs to be asked. When Christians build their identity around favourite leaders, ministries, movements, or denominations, division follows.

There is nothing wrong with appreciating faithful teachers. God gives teachers to the church. But a teacher becomes dangerous when **loyalty to that teacher begins competing with loyalty to Christ**.

A leader should always point beyond himself.

Paul said in **Second Corinthians 4:5**: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Faithful ministry doesn't say, "Look at me." It says, "**Look at Christ.**"

Programs Can't Become the Head

Programs can be useful. They can help the church teach children, care for people, serve communities, disciple believers, and proclaim the gospel. But **programs are servants**. They aren't the Head.

A church can become so busy maintaining its activities that it forgets why those activities exist. The calendar is full. The building is busy. Everyone is exhausted.

But is Christ being preached? Are believers being equipped? Are people growing in love, truth, holiness, and faith? Are the lost hearing the gospel?

Sometimes the most spiritual thing a church can do is ask whether a program still serves Christ's purpose.

Activity isn't the same as obedience. Busyness isn't the same as fruitfulness.

Christ Gives Gifts to His Church

Because Christ is the Head, He supplies what His body needs.

Ephesians 4:11 says He gave: "Some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

Why did He give these ministries?

Ephesians 4:12 says: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Church leaders aren't meant to perform all ministry while everyone else watches. They **equip the saints**. The whole body serves. The whole body grows. The whole body contributes.

Ephesians 4:15 says we are to: "Grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

Then verse 16 says the whole body is joined together and grows as every part works properly. Christ supplies life through the body. Every believer matters. Every gift matters. Every member has a place. But every part must remain connected to the Head.

The Church Must Grow Into Christ

Ephesians 4:15 says: "Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

Church growth isn't merely about attendance numbers. A crowd can grow without growing into Christ. A ministry can become famous without becoming mature. A building can become larger while believers remain spiritually childish.

Biblical growth means becoming more like Christ.

-  Growing in truth
-  Growing in love
-  Growing in holiness
-  Growing in discernment
-  Growing in unity
-  Growing in service
-  Growing in obedience

The question isn't only, "Are more people coming?" The question is, "**Are we growing into Christ?**"

Christ Cleanses and Nourishes the Church

Ephesians 5 gives us another picture of Christ's relationship with the church.

Ephesians 5:25 says: "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

Christ leads the church with **sacrificial love**. His headship isn't selfish control. He gave Himself for His body.

Verse 26 says He sanctifies and cleanses the church: "With the washing of water by the word."

Verse 29 says: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."

Christ nourishes the church. He cherishes the church. He cleanses the church. He prepares the church.

His authority isn't cold or cruel. The Head loves the body. The Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Submission to Christ isn't submission to a tyrant. It is trust in the One who died for us.

What Happens When the Church Ignores Its Head?

Jesus addressed seven churches in **Revelation chapters 2 and 3**. He commended what was faithful. He confronted what was sinful. He warned them to repent.

Ephesus

Had sound doctrine and strong endurance, but it had left its first love.

Pergamos

Tolerated false teaching.

Thyatira

Tolerated immorality and corruption.

Sardis

Had a reputation for being alive, but Jesus said it was dead.

Laodicea

Thought it was rich and needed nothing, but Christ said it was wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

A church's opinion of itself can be very different from Christ's evaluation. That should sober us.

The question isn't only, "Do people think this is a successful church?" The real question is, "**What does the Head say?**"

The Church Must Hear What the Spirit Says

At the end of each message in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus says: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Christ speaks to His church through the Spirit. The church must remain **teachable**.

We can become so committed to protecting our reputation that we stop listening to correction. We can defend our systems instead of examining them. We can explain away sin instead of repenting.

But a healthy church hears. A healthy church allows Christ to correct it. A healthy church doesn't assume that age, size, popularity, or history places it beyond examination.

Christ is the Head. He has the right to correct His body.

Unity Comes From the Head

Christ's headship is also the foundation of the church's **unity**.

Ephesians 4:4 says: "There is one body, and one Spirit." Verse 5 says: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

The church is one because it has **one Lord**. Real unity isn't created by ignoring truth. It is created by sharing life in Christ. We are united because we belong to the same Head.

This means we don't need to make every believer identical. The body has many members - different gifts, different functions, different backgrounds, different personalities. But **one Head**.

Unity doesn't mean the hand becomes the foot. It means the hand and foot both obey the same Head.

Christ Determines the Church's Message

The church's central message is the **gospel of Christ**.

Paul said in **First Corinthians 2:2**: "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

That doesn't mean Paul never taught anything else. It means everything centred on Christ and His cross.

The church can speak about family, suffering, relationships, justice, work, money, sexuality, hope, fear, and daily life. But every subject must be brought under the **lordship of Christ**. We don't merely offer helpful advice. We proclaim the risen Lord.

Second Corinthians 5:20 says: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ."

An ambassador doesn't invent his own message. He represents the ruler who sent him. The church has been sent by Christ. We have no authority to rewrite His message to make it easier to accept.

Christ Determines the Church's Morality

If Christ is Head, He has authority over **how His people live**.

Jesus said in **Luke 6:46**: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Calling Jesus Lord while refusing His commands is a contradiction. The church can't confess Christ's authority on Sunday and reject it throughout the week.

Christ's headship reaches into our speech, our relationships, our sexuality, our money, our forgiveness, our honesty, our treatment of enemies, our care for the poor, our willingness to serve.

Every part of life belongs under Him. There is no private section of life where Jesus is politely asked to wait outside.

Christ Determines the Church's Mission

Jesus came: "To seek and to save that which was lost." He calls the church to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name.

The church isn't here merely to preserve itself. It exists to **bear witness to Christ**.

Acts 1:8 says: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me."

Notice the focus. **Witnesses unto Christ**. Not witnesses to our denomination. Not witnesses to our personal greatness. Not witnesses to our impressive programs. Witnesses to Jesus.

The church's mission is to make **Christ known**.

Christ's Headship Starts With Each Believer

It is easy to criticise the wider church. We can point at leaders, denominations, traditions, and cultural compromise. Sometimes those concerns are valid.

But **Christ's headship must become personal.**

Is He Head over my life? Do I submit my opinions to His Word? Do I obey only when I agree? Do I accept His comfort but resist His correction? Do I call Him Lord while still trying to run everything myself?

The church is made up of individual believers. A church that submits to Christ is made of people who submit to Christ.

We can't demand that everyone else recognise His authority while privately ignoring it ourselves.

Human Opinion Must Bow to Christ

Human opinion isn't automatically worthless. God can use wise counsel. Proverbs repeatedly encourages us to listen to wisdom. The church can learn from experience, history, culture, and even practical research.

But **every opinion must remain beneath Christ.**

We don't ask only,
"What do people
want?"

We ask, "What has Christ
said?"

We don't ask only,
"What will work?"

We ask, "What is faithful?"

We don't ask only,
"What will keep
everyone happy?"

We ask, "What pleases the
Lord?"

Galatians 1:10 says: "For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Sometimes obedience to Christ will please people. Sometimes it won't. But **pleasing people can't become the church's controlling purpose.**

The Head Has Not Abandoned His Body

There is also great **comfort** in this verse. Christ isn't merely Head in the sense of giving commands from a distance. He is actively caring for His church.

He supplies life. He gives gifts. He sends the Spirit. He intercedes for His people. He corrects, cleanses, nourishes, and protects His body.

Sometimes the church looks weak. Sometimes it looks confused. Sometimes its failures are painful and embarrassing. But **Christ hasn't abandoned His church.**

Matthew 16:18 says: "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The future of the church doesn't finally depend on human brilliance. Thank God for that. It depends upon Christ.

He is building. He is sustaining. He is correcting. He is purifying. He will present the church to Himself in glory.

Christ Will Present the Church Glorious

Ephesians 5:27 says Christ will present the church to Himself: "A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

The church's present condition isn't its final condition. **Christ is preparing His bride.** He will complete the work.

The church will not always be divided, weak, immature, or struggling. Christ will sanctify His people. He will remove every spot. He will complete what He began.

The Head will bring
the body to maturity.

The Bridegroom will
prepare the bride.

The Shepherd will
bring the flock home.

Christ Is Head Over All Things to the Church

Ephesians 1:22 says God: "Hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

Who Christ Is

- Christ is above every power
- He is the risen Lord
- He is the Chief Shepherd
- He is the Bridegroom
- He is the source of the church's life
- He purchased the church with His blood

What Christ Does

- He gave the church its mission
- He defines its message
- He governs its conduct
- He gives gifts to His body
- He builds, nourishes, corrects, and preserves His church

The church doesn't run on human opinion. It doesn't run on tradition. It doesn't run on personalities. It doesn't run on popularity. It doesn't run on cultural approval.

Christ is Head.

So when human opinion conflicts with Christ, human opinion must bow. When tradition conflicts with Christ, tradition must bow. When culture conflicts with Christ, culture must bow. When our own preferences conflict with Christ, our preferences must bow.

The church belongs to Jesus. And the safest, healthiest, and most faithful place the church can ever be is **under the authority of its risen Head.**