



**Unit 1:** Withholding Nothing  
**Sermon Series Title:** The Lordship of Christ  
**Sermon 1:** Head of the Church  
**Bible Passage:** Ephesians 1:22-23

### **Background/Context**

On April 29, 2011, millions of people were glued to their television sets to watch the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton at Westminster Abbey in London. People are fascinated by the British monarchy—their carriages and castles, ceremonies and traditions. As visible as they are in British life, the royal family has no real power to lead the British people. They hold a symbolic position that reminds people of a long-ago time that has little to do with their nation's life today.

The name of Jesus is spoken, sung, and prayed in every Christian church, but some churches do not allow Him to rule over their beliefs and their actions. Culture, tradition, or personal opinion sometimes becomes the directing force in a church's life. The church will not have the spiritual power needed to fulfill its mission if Jesus is offered a merely symbolic position. He must lead the church as Lord. In Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul proclaimed Jesus' rightful position in His church, the relationship of faithful churches to Him, and the world-changing difference that the church can make when we honor and obey Jesus as Lord.

### **A. Jesus is the Head (Eph. 1:22)**

Paul describes Jesus' relationship to the church with two vivid images. First, he wrote that God "subjected everything under His feet." This means that Jesus is the highest authority for the life of His church. Nothing is more important for the church than obeying Christ as Lord. He sets the agenda for the church. His example is the measure of the church's methods. His Word is the church's message. When a church places its preferences, traditions, or cultural trends above the lordship of Jesus, that church is not honoring Christ's rightful position among His people.

Second, Paul said that God has made Jesus "head over everything for the church." Just as the head is the source of life, purpose, and unity for the human body, Jesus is the source of life, purpose, and unity for His body, the church. A body separated from its head will quickly die. A church that does not honor Christ as its head is spiritually dead. A healthy church puts the will of its head, Jesus, into action.

**Application Point:** Who or what is the head of your church right now? Have you recognized the position God has given Jesus in the church or are you allowing church leaders, church style, or church tradition to direct your church's life?

### **B. The Church is His Body (Eph. 1:23a)**

Each one of us experiences countless miracles each day. Through your nervous system, your body hears and responds to the wishes of your mind. Your body puts the will of

your mind into concrete action, transforming the desires of the mind into reality. A friend of mine contracted a terrible illness. Over a period of months, his body stopped responding to the leadership of his brain. His illness broke the connection between what his mind wanted to do and what his body actually did.

God wants His church to be a miracle. He created the church to put the mind of Christ, the head of the church, into action in the world. When the church hears and acts upon the will of Christ, then His mission is undertaken, and His love is shared.

Sadly, some churches are sick. The connection is broken between Christ's leadership of the church and the life of the church. Such a church may do many things and do some of them quite well, but they have ceased to function as Christ's body in the world. The church body is only as healthy as it is obedient to the church's Head.

**Application Point:** Make a list of the things that you believe Christ is calling His body, the church, to do. How much of your church's time, volunteers, and money does each one of those ministries receive? How much of your church's life has no clear connection to what Christ calls His church to do?

### **C. Christ's Presence is the Result (Eph. 1:23b)**

When Jesus came to earth as a real human being, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). In Jesus, people could see God's glory, experience His love, and receive His salvation. Though the ministry of Jesus is unique in salvation's story, the Word can still become flesh through the church as it faithfully carries out the will of Christ in the world.

In the life of the church, people can see God's glory shining in a dark world. Through the ministry of the church, people can experience God's love in acts of kindness, an attitude of concern, and a loving witness to the hope of the gospel. Because of the witness of the church, lost men and women can trust Christ and receive His gift of salvation. Wherever Christ's body follows the leadership of its head, Christ is present and is at work. Believers can have no greater joy than to know that, through their ministry, Christ's presence touches the world.

**Application Point:** Think of a person who doesn't know Christ. Ask God to show you one specific way that you can bring the presence of Christ into that person's life this week. Enlist a fellow Christian to pray for you and to hold you accountable for putting your plan into action.