

THE HEADSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

One of the best ways to understand the concept of the church as it is revealed in the New Testament is to focus on the relationship between the church and Jesus. While the term “church” has often been corrupted, there are other terms that describe those who are part of Jesus’s church. Each of these, though, is centered around a relationship with Jesus Christ that cannot be ignored and helps to give clarity to everything else related to the church.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

The relationship between Jesus and His church is that of a King and His kingdom. The Old Testament foretold an eternal kingdom (Psalm 2) and Jesus often taught about this kingdom (Matthew 4:23; Acts 1:3). Now, Jesus’s kingdom has been established, as those who are saved through Him are part of it and He possesses all authority as King (Matthew 28:18; 7:28-29). So, whatever the King says must be obeyed by those who are citizens of His kingdom (as His law, 1 Corinthians 9:21). The words of the King are recorded throughout the New Testament (John 14:25-26; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 14:37). Therefore, those who are part of Jesus’s kingdom have submitted their lives to the authority of King Jesus. In doing so, He has rescued them from Satan’s domain and placed them under Jesus’s domain of authority (Romans 6:15-23)! Thus, Jesus’s church looks to King Jesus for authority in every aspect of their lives (Colossians 3:17).

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

The relationship between Jesus and His people is that of the Head and the body (Ephesians 1:22-23). Like your head, Jesus is superior in numerous ways, as demonstrated throughout this passage. Now, those who submit their lives under the direction of

Jesus as the Head are part of His body (Galatians 3:27). As Head, He is the only one who gets to decide how one is added to His body and what is required of those who are part of His body! Furthermore, Christ is Head over only one body – not over many different bodies that all believe, teach, and practice different things (1 Corinthians 1:13; Ephesians 4:4). Each member of His body, though, does have a unique way to serve (like members of the physical body, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:3-8). However, each member must serve together with the others in unity and grow into maturity (Ephesians 4:11-16)!

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

The relationship between Jesus and His people is that of the Cornerstone and the temple. In the Old Testament, the tabernacle and, later, the temple were built as physical structures in which God could dwell among His people (2 Chronicles 6:5-6). These structures were built according to the pattern that God had revealed (Exodus 25:8-9; 1 Chronicles 28:19). However, this physical temple was never able to contain the fullness of God (1 Kings 8:27) and a greater temple was foretold (Ezekiel 40-43). This better temple has now been built. It is Jesus’s church! Now, Jesus is the Cornerstone (the most important piece in the foundation) of this spiritual temple that consists of both Jews and Gentiles who believe in and obey Him (Matthew 16:13-19). This spiritual temple is also built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets who taught the word of God that people must believe and obey (Ephesians 3:3-6; 5:17). In building their lives upon Jesus and His revealed word, each member of His church becomes a living stone in God’s new temple to bring glory to God by obeying what the Spirit of God reveals in the pages of Scripture (1 Peter 2:4-10; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20).

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

The relationship between Jesus and His people is that of a Husband and a bride. In fact, Christ and His church are the model for a husband and wife.

Jesus selflessly loved His church in sacrificing Himself for her, so she could be made holy and blameless. Now, He is the Head over His bride and the church must submit (yield) to Him in everything (Luke 9:23-26)! One simply cannot be the bride of Jesus and then refuse to submit to Him. Furthermore, as one who has been betrothed (promised in marriage) to Christ, you must remain faithful to Him rather than pursuing another (2 Corinthians 11:2-4)! Sadly, many have not been loyal to Jesus and have followed a different Master and gospel, while professing allegiance to Christ. When Jesus comes for His bride on Judgment Day, only those prepared with righteous acts done in obedience to Him will go with Him to the wedding (Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 19:6-8).

JOHN 10:11-18

The relationship between Jesus and His people is that of a Shepherd and sheep. The Old Testament had prophesied a Shepherd over God's people (Ezekiel 34:23-24). Now, Jesus is this Shepherd who has given His life for the sheep! Through this, He has forever demonstrated His care for the sheep (unlike a hired worker). Furthermore, Jesus has sheep in His flock (church) who are both Jews and Gentiles. So, nationality does not determine who gets to be in Jesus's flock. Instead, those who are in Jesus's flock is determined by whether someone hears and obeys Jesus's voice. Therefore, His church will both believe and obey Jesus as their Shepherd, following Him wherever He leads (Psalm 23:1-6; 1 Peter 5:4). Today, we hear the voice of the Shepherd through the inspired writings of the New Testament Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:16).

CONCLUSION

Jesus's Headship is demonstrated through each of these metaphors. To be part of Jesus's church, therefore, requires, submission to Jesus's authority as the Head and what He teaches. Anyone who follows another (in beliefs and/or practices) rather than Jesus cannot truly be part of Jesus's church! And He is the only Head of His church!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

How is the relationship between Jesus and His church like a King and a kingdom?

How is the relationship between Jesus and His church like a Head and a body?

How is the relationship between Jesus and His church like the Cornerstone and the temple?

How is the relationship between Jesus and His church like a Husband and a bride?

How is the relationship between Jesus and His church like a Shepherd and sheep?

What do all these metaphors teach about Jesus's authority?

What do all these metaphors teach about the church's responsibility to Jesus?

Is anyone who follows another besides Jesus in beliefs and/or practices part of Jesus's church?

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