

INTRODUCTION.

WE ARE CONTINUING TO CAREFULLY MAKE OUR WAY THROUGH PAUL'S TEN ~ sweeping and profound assertions ~ about the Person & work of Jesus.

▶▶ Col. ~ 1: ~ 15-20.

▶▶ Again, ~ false teaching was threatening the church at Colossae. ~~ Attacking & distorting.

▷▷ Paul wrote to refute them and set the record straight. ~~ False teachers today.

SO FAR WE HAVE LOOKED AT THE FIRST FIVE ASSERTIONS THAT PAUL MAKES

▶▶ Jesus is the visible expression of the invisible God. ~~ He is supreme over all creation.

▷▷ He is the sovereign Creator of the universe. ~~ He is eternal. ~~ And he upholds the universe by his powerful word.

TODAY, ~ WE'LL LOOK AT THE NEXT THREE. ~~ MOST OF THE TIME ON THE 6th.

THE SIXTH SWEEPING AND PROFOUND ASSERTION ABOUT THE PERSON AND WORK of Jesus.

VERSE 18a. ~~ "And HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, ~ THE CHURCH."

▶▶ To help us better understand this verse, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we're going to lay some groundwork and build up to and then explain ~ Paul's main point.

↪↪ And that is, ~ Jesus is head of the body. ¶¶ 1/13

FIRST OFF, ~ WE NEED TO NOTE THAT ~ GRAMMATICALLY, ~ "THE CHURCH" ~ explains what Paul means by ~ "the body."

▶▶ It could be paraphrased as, ~ *And he is the head of the body, ~ which is the church.*

▷▷ IOW, ~ Paul is simply clarifying what he means by "the body."

NOW I WOULD LIKE TO CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO "THE CHURCH."

▶▶ The reference here ~ is to the universal church ~ ¶¶

▷▷ into which all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit the moment they believe in Christ.

▶▶ As Paul tells us in his discussion in 1 Cor. 12 of spiritual gifts and the church, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ believers were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body.

▶▶ This work of the Spirit began on the day of Pentecost.

▷▷ And it will continue until the time of Christ's return to take His people into His presence.

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH IS MADE UP OF ALL WHO HAVE TRULY TRUSTED CHRIST alone for their salvation.

▶▶ The relationship between its members results ~ from our common identity as brothers and sisters adopted into God's family.

▷▷ The identity of this family is grounded in Christ's person and work.

↪↪ And therefore, ~ transcends any earthly distinctions of race, ~ class, ~ culture, ~ gender, ~ or nationality.

→→ See Paul making point in Gal. and then, ~ as we'll see, ~ later in Col. ¶¶ 2/13

▶▶ Again, ~ Paul has the universal church in mind here in [Col. 1:18a](#).

▷▷ By universal, ~ we mean that the church is not confined to any particular country or outward organization, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ but includes all believers throughout history and throughout the whole world.

▷▷ As the hymn of the four living creatures and the 24 elders recorded in Revelation tells us, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Jesus, ~ by his blood, ~ "purchased for God ~ persons from every tribe and language and people and nation."

BUT THERE IS A SECOND CATEGORY OF THE CHURCH. ~ And that is, ~ the local church.

▶▶ The most common use of the word church in the New Testament ~ ¶¶

▷▷ is to designate a group of believers that is identified as a local assembly or congregation.

▶▶ Thus we have the church in Colossae, ~ to whom Paul wrote this letter.

▷▷ And it designates all local assemblies of believers throughout church history.

NOW, ~ IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT A BUILDING.

▶▶ Although in common usage we use the word that way.

▶▶ And that's ok, ~ as long as we know ~ that the church ~ ¶¶

▷▷ is made up of the blood-bought people of God, ~ not of bricks, ~ mortar, ~ and lumber.

TWO POINTS OF APPLICATION HERE. ¶¶ 3/13

▶▶1st, ~ the fact that there is one universal church ~ does not eliminate or minimize the need for local assemblies of believers.

▷▷Such as ours.

▶▶2nd, ~ the fact that we belong to the universal church ~ does not release us from our responsibilities to our local church.

▷▷We cannot minister to the whole church.

▷▷But each one of us ~ can strengthen and build the church ~ by ministering to our fellow believers here in our local assembly.

NOW LET'S CONSIDER THE PHRASE, ~ THE BODY.

▶▶"the body," ~ or "the body of Christ," ~ is a common NT metaphor for the universal church.

▶▶Very briefly, ~ here are three reasons the church may be called the Body of Christ.

▷▷1st, ~ believers are joined to Jesus in salvation.

▷▷2nd, ~ the church is the physical representation of Christ in this world.

↳↳The Church ~ is the organism ~ through which ~ Christ manifests His life to the world today; ~~ 77

→→and through which ~ he carries out his purposes and performs his work.

▷▷And 3rd, ~ believers share a common bond with all other believers, ~ regardless of background, ~ race, ~ or ministry.

↳↳As Paul says elsewhere, ~ we are all one in Jesus. ~~ I.e., ~ Jesus makes us all united and equal. 77 4/13

TWO POINTS OF APPLICATION HERE.

▶▶1st, ~ every believer is a member of the body, ~ ¶¶

▷▷given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit ~ that enable him or her to function for the benefit of the body.

▷▷When every member does their part, ~ the body, ~ the church, ~ fulfills its God-given role.

▷▷Paul notes in Eph. that when each believer exercises his or her spiritual gifts, ~ it helps other believers grow spiritually, ~ ¶¶

↳↳so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (Eph. 4)

▷▷And when all the gifts are functioning properly, ~ they help preserve and protect our unity, ~ ¶¶

↳↳because when we are using our gifts, ~ we are working together, ~ we are unified.

▷▷As Paul also in his discussion of sp. gifts & the church in 1 Cor. 12, ~ sp. gifts are given to each of us so we can help each other.

↳↳P: ~~ believers should use whatever gift we have received to serve other believers.

↳↳The purpose of our spiritual gifts is to focus on and assist other believers.

↳↳It is not ~ to draw attention to ourselves ~ or for our own benefit ~ or to give us an ego boost.

↳↳They are tools. ~~ Tools ~ to be used for focusing on, ~ benefitting, ~ serving, ~ and helping our brothers and sisters in Christ. ¶¶ 5/13

▶▶ The 2nd point of application.

▷▷ Paul's reference to the universal church ~ puts emphasis ~ ¶¶

↳↳ on the corporate body of the church ~ and its importance to the plan of God for this world.

▷▷ In our culture of rugged individualism, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ it is crucial to understand ~ the importance of the church as a corporate group.

▷▷ No believer is meant to function independently. ~~ When God saves us, ~ we do not become spiritual lone rangers.

▷▷ When we become believers, ~ we become part of a family, ~ a people. ~~ We belong to and need each other.

▷▷ In his 1st Epistle, ~ Peter tells us ~ that believers, ~ like living stones, ~ are being built up as a spiritual house, ~ to be a holy priesthood.

↳↳ We are not being built up as individual houses, ~ individual priesthoods.

↳↳ The whole church together is "being built up as a spiritual house, ~ to be a holy priesthood."

NOW WE CAN TURN TO PAUL'S MAIN POINT, ~ THE SIXTH SWEEPING AND PROFOUND assertion about the Person and work of Jesus.

▶▶ And Jesus is the head of the body, ~ which is the church. ~~ This simply means that Jesus ~ is supreme over the church.

▶▶ After His ascension into heaven, ~ God the Father officially established Christ as the head of the church. ¶¶ 6/13

▶▶ Paul writes that the Father raised Jesus "from the dead ~ and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ~ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, ~ and above every name that is named, ~ not only in this age but also in the one to come. ~~ And he put all things under his feet ~ and gave him as head over all things to the church." Eph. 1:20-22

▶▶ That's somewhat of an awkward reading. ~~

▷▷ It can be translated this way: ~~ "and he gave him to the church as head over all things." NET

▶▶ Paul's point being that God the Father has made Jesus the supreme head of the church.

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS DON'T BRING THIS OUT, ~ BUT IN TWO WAYS, ~ PAUL makes it crystal clear here in Col. 1:18a ~ ¶¶

▶▶ that Jesus, ~ and Jesus alone, ~ is the head of the church. ~~ Just mention in passing.

▶▶ 1st, ~ the pronoun "he" is emphatic in the Greek text.

▷▷ The point Paul is making is this: ~~ "Jesus ~ and no other ~ is the head of the body, ~ which is the church."

▶▶ And 2nd, ~ grammatically, ~ the phrase, ~ "the head," ~ indicates that Paul is saying, ~ "Jesus, ~ and Jesus alone ~ is to be identified as supreme over the church."

NO BELIEVER ~ IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

▶▶ This position ~ is reserved exclusively ~ for Jesus.

JESUS EXERCISES AUTHORITY OVER THE CHURCH.

▶▶ But he has appointed leaders to exercise authority in his name. ~~ Elders ¶¶ 7/13

▶▶ In his exhortations to elders in [1 Pet. 5](#), ~ Peter calls Jesus "the chief Shepherd."//

▷▷ Where the flocks were numerous and a large number of shepherds were necessary ~

↳ ↳ one was placed in charge of all the others. ~~ Jesus is the chief Shepherd ~ over all the others.

▶▶ Note Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders in [Acts 20:28](#). ~~ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, ~ in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, ~ to care for the church of God, ~ which he obtained with his own blood.

▶▶ Elders have only delegated authority.

▷▷ Eugene, ~ Steve, ~ and I ~ are merely under-shepherds, ~ to whom the chief Shepherd has entrusted the spiritual care of His sheep.

▶▶ And we, ~ the under-shepherds ~ are to appropriately watch over the believers entrusted to us.

▷▷ We will be held accountable for how we shepherd you.

▷▷ The author of Hebrews writes, in [Heb. 13:17a](#), ~ "Obey your leaders and submit to them, ~ for they are keeping watch over your souls, ~ as those who will have to give an account.

NOW LET'S TAKE A LOOK ~ AT THE SEVENTH SWEEPING & PROFOUND ASSERTION about the Person & work of Jesus.

VERSE 18b. ~~ JESUS ~ "IS THE BEGINNING." ~~ This is a pretty abrupt statement.

▶▶ And we are inclined to ask, ~ "The beginning of what?"

▷▷ Hardly the beginning or source of the creation, ~ for that has been covered. **↴ 8/13**

▶▶ The statements before and after this one provide the needed guidance. ~~ Context.

▷▷ This statement is sandwiched between two statements referring to Jesus' relation to the church.

▷▷ So, ~ simply put, ~ Paul is saying, ~ "Jesus is the beginning of the church."

▶▶ But what does "beginning" mean?

▷▷ "Jesus is the beginning of the church" ~ simply means ~ that Jesus brought the church into existence.

▷▷ Jesus said, ~ "I will build my church."

THE CHURCH IS WORK OF GOD ~ AND NOT A WORK OF HUMAN BEINGS.

▶▶ And that's why the church can never be destroyed, ~~ because it's existence does not depend on us ~ but on God.

▶▶ After saying, ~ I will build my church," ~ Jesus added, ~~ "and the gates ~ [or forces] ~ of hell shall not prevail against it.

▶▶ Jesus promises us that the church ~ will not be destroyed by the evil powers arrayed against it.

AND ONCE AGAIN, ~ WE COME BACK TO PSALM 2. ~~ THAT'S WHY I HAD STEVE READ.

▶▶ And God's reaction to the efforts of Satan and sinful humans ~ to overthrow Him, ~ to stop the gospel from spreading, ~ and to destroy the church.

▶▶ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; ~~ the Lord scoffs at them (NIV) 📖 9/13

THINK OF OUR STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS.

▶▶ As in the case of Col., ~ Paul was imprisoned in Rome. ~~ And what happened?

▶▶ Remember Paul wrote, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "Now I want you to know, ~ brothers and sisters, ~ that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

▶▶ The mighty Roman empire ~ could not prevent Jesus from building His church.

MY FELLOW CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, ~ I'VE SAID MUCH OF THIS BEFORE. ~~ And I'll say it again.

▶▶ We are temporarily residing ~ in the mightiest nation on earth.

▷▷ But even this nation cannot prevent Jesus from building His church.

▷▷ The whole nation could turn against us tomorrow and the next day outlaw Christianity.

▷▷ And Jesus will continue to build His church.

▶▶ All the hostile nations on earth combined ~ cannot prevent Jesus from building His church.

▶▶ Jesus ~ will complete the building of his church.

▶▶ And then he will return and take us home.

AND NOW FOR THE EIGHTH SWEEPING & PROFOUND ASSERTION ABOUT THE Person & work of Jesus. ¶¶ 10/13

VERSE 18c. ~ ~ JESUS IS ~ "THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD."

▶▶ Paul here is referring to Jesus' resurrection.

BACK IN VERSE 15B, ~ WE NOTED THAT "FIRSTBORN" was being used in its figurative, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ and not chronological, ~ sense.

▶▶ In [verse 15b](#), ~ it was referring to rank. ~ ~ Jesus is supreme over all creation.

▷▷ But here in [verse 18c](#), ~ both senses are in view.

↪↪ Chronological and Supremacy.

▶▶ Jesus ~ was the first in time ~ to emerge from the realm of the dead with a glorified resurrection body, ~ never to die again.

▷▷ His was the first true resurrection.

▶▶ In [1 Cor. 15:20](#), ~ Paul writes, ~ "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, ~ the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

▶▶ And in [verse 23](#), ~ he notes, ~ "But each in his own order: ~ ~ Christ the firstfruits, ~ then at his coming those who belong to Christ."

▶▶ Jesus ~ was the first in time ~ to emerge from the realm of the dead with a glorified resurrection body, ~ never to die again.

▶▶ Others have been raised from the dead, ~ but they were not true resurrections.

▷▷ I.e., ~ they were not raised with a glorified resurrection body. ~ ~ And they eventually died again.

↪↪ E.g., ~ Lazarus. ¶¶ 11/13

PLUS, ~ BY VIRTUE OF HIS RESURRECTION, ~ JESUS HAS BEEN ELEVATED in rank ~ ¶¶

▶▶ to a position higher than any of the other resurrected dead will experience.

▶▶ He is seated at the Father's right hand.

▷▷ The author of Heb. tells us ~ that after making purification for sins, ~ Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ it is Jesus who will cause the resurrection of others.

▷▷ Jesus spells that out for us in [Jn. 6:37-40](#). ~ ~ Homework.

▶▶ Jesus' resurrection: ~ ~ 1st in time. ~ ~ 1st in supremacy.

COMING BACK TO 1 COR. 15:20, ~ JESUS IS REFERRED TO AS "THE FIRSTFRUITS OF those who have fallen asleep."

▶▶ The NT frequently uses the word "sleep" ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to refer to the death of believers to emphasize that our deaths are only temporary conditions.

▶▶ "firstfruits" is a promise that more resurrections will follow.

▷▷ Jesus' resurrection is a promise that our resurrection, ~ i.e., ~ those who belong to Jesus, ~ will definitely follow.

▶▶ 1 Cor. 15:22b-23, ~ "so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ~ ~ But each in his own order: ~ ~ Christ the firstfruits, ~ then at his coming those who belong to Christ."

▶▶ My, ~ ~ because Jesus has risen from the dead, ~ we too shall rise with a ~ physical ~ glorified resurrection body. ¶¶ 12/13

THEN PAUL ADDS, ~ AT THE END OF VERSE 18C, ~ "THAT IN EVERYTHING HE [JESUS] might be preeminent."

▶▶As a result of His death and resurrection, ~ Jesus has come to have first place in everything.

▶▶Paul drives home the point ~ that Jesus is not just another emanation from God, ~ as the heretics were teaching.

▶▶And being found in human form, ~ he [Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, ~ even death on a cross. ~ Therefore God has highly exalted him ~ and bestowed on him ~ the name that is above every name. Phil. 2:8-9

▶▶In an earlier message, ~ we noted that Jesus is supreme over the visible world and the invisible world.

▷▷Now Paul declares that Jesus is supreme over the church.

▶▶Jesus has first place in everything.

CONCLUSION.

JESUS IS LORD.

▶▶Praise him with hallelujahs, ~ for Jesus is lord!

LET'S PRAY 13/13