

Colossians 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Analysis

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

The metaphor shifts from cosmos to church. "Head" (kephalē, κεφαλή) indicates both authority and vital connection—as head directs body, Christ governs His church and supplies its life. This organic union refutes any ecclesiastical system that diminishes Christ's direct rule or interposes human hierarchy between Christ and believers.

"The beginning" (archē, ἀρχή) means source or origin; "firstborn from the dead" (prōtotokos ek tōn nekrōn, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν) doesn't mean first chronologically (others were raised before Christ) but first in rank and significance. Christ's resurrection inaugurates the new creation, making Him supreme over death's conquered realm. He is firstborn of both creation (v. 15) and new creation (resurrection), holding supremacy in both spheres.

"That in all things he might have the preeminence" (hina genētai en pasin autos prōteuōn, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων) states creation's purpose: Christ's supremacy in every sphere—cosmos, church, present age, age to come. Prōteuōn (πρωτεύων) means "holding first place," demanding undivided allegiance and exclusive worship.

Historical Context

The early church battled tendencies to elevate apostles, angels, or ritual above Christ. Jewish Christians sometimes privileged Mosaic law; Gentile Christians pursued Greek wisdom; mystical groups sought ecstatic experiences. Against all such deflections, Paul insists Christ alone deserves preeminence. No person, practice, or principle may rival His supremacy. This principle has guided orthodox Christianity through every doctrinal crisis.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Does Christ have actual preeminence in all areas of your life—finances, relationships, career, leisure—or merely theoretical priority?
2. What church traditions, leaders, or practices might subtly compete with Christ's headship in your thinking?
3. How does Christ's resurrection supremacy shape your response to death, suffering, and eternal hope?

Interlinear Text

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς
And G846 he is G3588 the head G3588 of the body G3588
G2532 G2076 G2776 G4983

ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν
the church who he is the beginning the firstborn from G3588
G1577 G3739 G2076 G746 G4416 G1537

νεκρῶν ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων
the dead that things he might have in all G846 the preeminence
G3498 G2443 G1096 G1722 G3956 G4409

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 1:5 (Parallel theme): And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Acts 26:23 (Parallel theme): That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Psalms 89:27 (Parallel theme): Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

Matthew 28:18 (Parallel theme): And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

1 Corinthians 11:3 (Parallel theme): But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Revelation 22:13 (Parallel theme): I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Ephesians 5:23 (Parallel theme): For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Revelation 21:6 (Parallel theme): And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

1 Corinthians 15:25 (Parallel theme): For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Revelation 1:18 (Parallel theme): I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

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