

# The Administration of the Head

Ephesians 4.

Notes of address No. 3 by W. H. Westcott, 1929.

In our previous addresses we considered the Headship, of Christ; in the first we noticed that every person who believes the gospel, has, in receiving the facts of the gospel, received also what prepares him for the understanding of every other truth. As you advance in divine things you will never be able to leave out, or to leave behind, the basic facts of the gospel. In trusting yourself to Christ in the simplest way as Saviour, there is the gift of God, the grace of God bestowed upon you, the pardon of your sins, the gift of the Spirit, and eternal life: thus the simplest believer has in his soul the germ of all that God has to say to him. In our second address, looking at the same subject, we noticed the purpose of God in Ephesians 1: 10:- that He is going to head up all things in Christ, which are in heaven and in earth. Everything is to be redeemed, everything to be brought into the good of the gospel. We are told first that God has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of the times, Christ is to be the Head, Centre, and Administrator of all the will of God in heaven and in earth. It is mightily comprehensive: and as our hearts take in God's plan, we find that we have a peculiar and unique place in connection with that plan.

Secondly, we looked at the Person of Whom we read in the end of the chapter. God raised Him from the dead leaving behind all that belongs to sinful man and the first man's sinful history, all of Satan's power, and the world. He is beyond everything. Not only has God raised Him from the dead, but He has set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. He is not on the earth, but He is exalted as the risen Man far above all principality and power.

Whatever we may know of these mighty beings, mightier than ourselves — far above them all is Jesus at God's right hand in the heavenly places. He has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church. Every believing heart, every young Christian as well as every mature Christian, can look up and say, "I see that this worthy Saviour whom I have confessed as my Lord, is the One whom God entrusts to carry out this stupendous plan, He is 'Head over all things.'" And when it says, "Head over all things to the Church," it is not the same as Head of the Church. The church down here on earth, composed of every Christian, is connected with a Person whom God has set as Head over the creation, Head over men, Head over kingdoms, Head over everything. The church *recognises that* Christ is Head over all things; it is a sweeping inclusion of everything in heaven, and in earth. We know the One Who is the divinely designated Head. The church in the meantime is His body, as it states at the end of the first chapter.

Thirdly, we saw in Ephesians 5 the Partner that is given to Christ in connection with that wonderful place. The Church of God called out at the present time, is quite different from the saints of the Old Testament and from those of the world to come. We live in a parenthesis in the ways of God. While Christ is set there, hidden from the world at the right hand of God, God is gathering out for Him a living, heavenly; company. Their calling is not the same thing as the calling of Old Testament believers, it is quite distinct. They are a company spoken of as His body, or the assembly, the church which is to be given to Him. But more than that, it is a company so united to Christ, so equipped, so indwelt by the Holy Ghost that as a whole it will be an adequate object for the love of Christ, to be the real sharer of His throne. *His* throne; I do not say the **Father's** throne. It is ours to be the companion of Christ through unending years, a unique place. You get illustrations in the Old Testament. You find, for

instance, after Joseph's refusal by his brethren when he was carried down into Egypt, he obtained an Egyptian bride to share his honours. But let us understand that at the present time God is gathering out a heavenly company and to that company every saved soul, every Christian, belongs in this present dispensation.

Ephesians 4: 7-16.

Now may we study a little the particular relations of the Lord Jesus Christ to the assembly. In the language of Scripture, although we know that all things are put under Christ, we can truly say, we *see not* yet all things put under Him. We do not yet see kingdoms and men, and this lower creation, brought into order as they will be by and by, under His Headship. But we see Jesus: we are introduced to the Person who will bring everything to pass. By faith "we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." So we know the Person who is going to put all under God, and to rule all for His glory. Here on earth is the sphere in which His glory and His authority are not at present recognised; but it is a great thing for us Christians to see to it that we yield *ourselves* to His administration and come under His control so that we become even now pleasurable to God. In that way it was intended that the world to come, although still actually future, should be appreciated and enjoyed and illustrated in the church of God even now. In the first chapter of Ephesians we have two things — "purpose, and power." We have the purpose of God indicated to us, and we have the power indicated by which God is going to bring all this about. Look at Ephesians 1: 9, 10. There we read of "His good pleasure which He *purposed* in Himself, for the administration of the fulness of times, to head up all things in the Christ" (N.T.). Then, in connection with the apostle's prayer, verse 19, he prays that we may know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead." As God wrought with mighty power to raise Christ out from amongst the dead by whom He was surrounded, and to introduce Him into that scene of glory at His right hand, so is the power that is in operation towards us. God would have us to learn that He has taken us up and has drawn us out from among the dead by whom we are surrounded, and has linked us up with that glorious Person in the heavenlies. The second chapter unfolds it further, but this is the power that is in operation toward us. It has picked us up, and will not drop us until it has us with Christ and like Him. The apostle prays that God would open the eyes of our hearts to see the glory with which we are connected, and the power that is operating for its completion; so that we might come more and more under the present administration of Christ.

Then in Ephesians 2 we learn two things which will greatly aid us in understanding of this. One is "grace" — the mighty grace of God; "God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ." Viewed from the standpoint of His purpose this is what His grace has effected, — that when He raised up Christ from the dead we are looked at as being quickened together with Him, and He has raised us up together with Him. You see the mighty power of God operating towards us from His standpoint; the object of it all being to set forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Grace has picked us up from such awful depths, and by such mighty power, and in such a wealth of mercy, in order to fulfil the purpose of love, — "For the great love wherewith He loved us." He has associated us in His own mind with Christ Who is in "the heavenly places." If we are then to be associated with Christ, it is surely only right that we should learn all we can about Christ and that we should seek to come under His administration and grow in the purpose of His will, while we are down here.

It goes on to say, in verse 10, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good

works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Now if you would set your face in that direction and humbly desire to understand the grace of God, and to be in the good of it, you would realise what is necessary, that is the Spirit. The Spirit is given; it is part of the gospel. The remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost; these are constituent parts of the gospel. When you believe, after you have forgiveness of your sins, the gift of the Spirit is also yours. But this Spirit is given to take us up and to lead us in the exercise of our hearts up to the very source of all. Look at Ephesians 2: 18, "For through Him (that is Christ) we both (that is the former Jew or the former Gentile now saved and brought into this one association and blessing), have access by one Spirit unto the Father." When it says, "The Father," I apprehend that it is not exactly our Father, nor a question of our individual relationship to Him as sons, but *the Father*. That is to say, the One Who has given birth to all this system of glory. I think you get in Ephesians 1: 17 the explanation of it, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." Who is it that has conceived the thought? Who is it that is the Author, the Source of all the blessing, if it be not the Father? The Holy Ghost not only gives us the knowledge of the blessing, but it is as though He says, "I am competent to lead you up to the knowledge of the Father from Whom the blessing has come." And you find that at the present time we are, in the 22nd verse said to be builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The second chapter, I suggest, brings these two things before us, Grace and Power; the Spirit is given to lead us into the present enjoyment of it.

Now in Ephesians 3 we come to two other things, *revelation* and *prayer*. You may ask, "How is it that we have come to know these things?" "Well" says the apostle, "I will tell you how I have this knowledge of the mystery of Christ." He says in the Ephesians 3: 2, 3, "Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to you-ward, how that by *revelation* he made known unto me the mystery." It was not given in the Old Testament scriptures. But when Christ had died, and risen again, and gone to glory, and the Holy Ghost had been given, He laid hold in a special way of Saul of Tarsus. It is in this connection that the Lord Jesus Christ made known this mystery to that wonderful apostle of Christ. In the very moment of his conversion there seems to be some hint of it, because when Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians he did not know that they were united to Christ as members of His body; but the Lord Jesus at the moment of arresting him (intervening in his wild career, and laying hold of him for glory and blessing), said, "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou *Me?*" To complete the truth you have this vessel of divine communications instructed in the mystery, as he goes on to say, "In other ages it was not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs." There is the bringing into being of this new formation of which there was no hint in the Old Testament; the bringing in of the converted Gentiles as well as converted Jews to form one body in Christ. As he goes on to speak of it in the 3rd chapter he becomes so impressed by the magnitude of it, that, after unfolding the truth of the mystery he seems to say, "Not even I, the apostle, can make it good to your souls." In the 7th verse he says, "I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

Here he introduced us to a second administration. In Ephesians 1 we read, "That in the *dispensation* of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ": ("dispensation" or "administration" as the word may more correctly read). That, of course, is future: when all the different lines of God's working with men will converge, and Christ will take up every one

of them. In the administration of the fulness of times He will head up all things in Christ; but, says the apostle, "There is another administration, and that is *now*." He says in verse 9, "To make all men see what is the *administration* (the same word) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, that *now* unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known in the assembly the manifold wisdom of God." There are the two administrations. There is one *future*, when Christ will bring everything into order, when He will subdue all enmity and hostility, putting down all enemies beneath His feet, and when the kingdom will be established in power. But there is *the present* administration, and that administration goes on in the assembly. You may ask, "What do you mean by the assembly?" Do not get any wrong idea into your minds; do not think that it means any denomination; do not think that it means any select company of Christians gathered in this hall or any other hall. The assembly includes within its circumference all Christians, and, from the stand-point of the Epistle to the Ephesians, all Christians from the day when the Holy Spirit first came, to the day when the Holy Spirit will leave with the church, and we shall be caught up into the air to meet the Bridegroom of our hearts.

The truth in the Epistle to the Ephesians is different from that in the Epistle to the Corinthians which looks more at the local constitution of the assembly in each town where God has wrought in grace. The local assembly covers the whole number of Christians in each city, who although they belong to that locality geographically are under the One Lordship of Christ, and are unified administratively by one set of instructions the new order intended to obtain all over the world. They act locally in view of what is to the honour of Christ everywhere, in the whole church of God; but they are the local expression of it. That is the teaching of Corinthians.

Here in Ephesians it is the church as a whole, and so it says, "Christ loved the church." It does not just mean a little number of Christians in any one town, but in all its fulness the *whole* church of God, from the day that the assembly was first formed on the day of Pentecost to the day when He calls the church home and presents it to Himself in glory. The assembly, the whole community of Christians on earth, is the circle in which the blessed administration of Christ as the Head is to be discovered *now*. We learn to be subject to Him, to derive from Him, to recognise Him as the source of direction, and as the resource of His people. It is this present administration that we would now consider.

Look then at Ephesians 4. I should first say that in connection with the revelation of the mystery we have again the apostle turning to prayer. He tells us how this mystery was revealed to him that he might make it known; but as to the making good of it in our souls he cannot do that. Hence he says, "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by *His Spirit* in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." I feel how very frequently we deprive ourselves of the force of some of these scriptures. It is not the love of Jesus dwelling in the saint saved by grace. Of course we would love to see the blessed Lord Jesus precious to every believing heart. But that is not the meaning of it. It is that Christ, the One Who is the Head, Whom God has designated, and appointed, and anointed, as the Head of all this great system of blessing, may dwell in the hearts of those who compose the assembly, by faith, that they "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." And that we all might come so completely under the guidance of the Spirit, and under the control of Christ, that we may understand in our collective assembly life what a blessed thing it is to be under the administration of Christ. Let us remember if we do turn to prayer, that chapter three, verse 20, says, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the assembly by Christ Jesus,

throughout all ages," — the present included. Let us remember that God by His Holy Spirit is working in us; and in proportion as the Spirit of God works in us (it is according to the power that worketh in us), even so will this desirable end be accomplished, that there will be glory to God in the assembly. People are very apt to quote this verse, as to His being able to do more than we ask or think. But as to the actual setting of it, it is that God's intention with respect to us might be carried out; that that the Christ might dwell in our hearts, so that there might be carried on this present administration in the assembly.

Now look at the way in which we are influenced by this administration. After speaking in the 4th chapter of seven things that are common to us all, in verses 4, 5 and 6, he says, in verse 7, "But unto everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." In connection with the One Body, and the One Spirit, it is not that God passes all into a mould and fashions everyone alike. It is not that God produces absolute uniformity, although the unity is perfect. Looking at things from the standpoint of Ephesians, this oneness embraces all Christians; but each one of us has his own place in the body. It is quite a unique place, the little function of my life is not precisely like the little function of your life; each is connected with its own position in the body. There is unity, all under the direction of the One Head, but there is not uniformity. All must be formed in the life of the Head, all equipped from the Head, all directed from the Head. In a body that is properly operating everything is subject to the Head. We enjoy this now; it says, "Now unto everyone of you is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Christ Who descended has gone up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. From the very lowest to the very highest point Christ is Head, and everything is to be brought under the administration and control of Christ. In the future that administration will be manifested so that everybody will see it; but at the present time it is to be seen only in the assembly.

Now as to the assembly; look at the wonderful resource, and the perfect administration of the One Who is the Head. "He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints." There should be a semi-colon after the words "for the perfecting of the saints." A different word is used in the next clause; instead of "for" it should read "with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ." Unfortunately words that are different in the Greek are not always made different in our authorised version. The object that God had in committing all this administration to Christ is at the present time for the perfecting of the saints. If you understand that you will see that Christianity is not come into the world for the making of the earth better; the whole service of Christ at the present time, and the whole administration of Christ at the present time, is for the perfecting of the saints, not for the betterment of the world. The way that He carries it on is by constant ministry from Himself. Of course there is the ministry of the Apostles and prophets in the New Testament scriptures. But there is the constant ministry from the Head in glory, so that we may be reminded of the truths they were inspired to give us, and that their influence may be made distinctly real in all our lives. The evangelist is just as much for the perfecting of the saints as the apostle. The evangelist who thinks that he is only to save souls is mistaken. The apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher, are all for the perfecting of the saints. But how? Well, if there were no evangelists there would be no saints to perfect. The evangelist is used to bring light to the soul, to turn men to the Saviour, and they trust Him and receive the Holy Ghost. But what after that? The evangelist has to bring them into the circle where they can be cared for, "for the perfecting of the saints": that they may be brought into the circle of Christ's administration and receive of all His fulness and come under His Headship all the way through. "Till we all come," this goes right on to the end; it is with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God man, unto the measure of the stature of Christ."

Coming to the 14th verse we read, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." It is not a question of running after this man or that man, this elder or that elder. The object of all ministry is to bring people into contact with the Head, and instead of being children tossed to and fro, that they may grow up unto Him. The work of the ministry in every form is for this purpose; to put people into living attachment to the One who is the Head. When that is the case, you will see that not only Christ is the One Who is going to bring everything into accordance with the will of God by and bye, but that everything in your life and among the saints is to come *now* under the administration of Christ. Hence it says in the 15th verse, speaking of holding the truth in love, you grow up unto Him in *all things*, which is the Head.

If you read the rest of the Epistle you find some of the "all things" that come under the direction of Christ as Head. If we speak of our lives, our ordinary day by day lives, these are to come under the control of the Head of the new race. Putting off the old man and being renewed in the spirit of our minds, we "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (verse 24). Then he says, give up such things as lying and deceit and lust; all these things are done with, we have put off the old man. Then as to our whole business life, coming into contact with the world, let each man speak truth one to another. There are no such things as "white lies," "business lies," in the new man. When you come down to the detail, it speaks of the relation of wives to husbands, of children with their parents, or servants with their masters. Each ought to take his character as a Christian from the One Who is the Head; each one is to live in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ as His Head. You find many a Christian going on with all sorts of religious or worldly entanglements. But if he looks up to Christ Who is the Head in all things, it has the effect necessarily of severing him from all that which is of an independent or worldly formation; whether it is in the way of moral reformation, or in the way of religious associations and organisations. If you are entangled in anything that is not after Christ, you are not in a position to carry out this scripture. I would earnestly pray, and ask that we may all be concerned about coming more distinctly under the direction and administration of Christ as Head and that we may discover in Him every resource. You may depend upon it, such is His care for His people that He will supply every need, in spite of all the weakness and sorrow of the present times. He will supply us with grace so that we may be able to grow up unto Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ; "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."