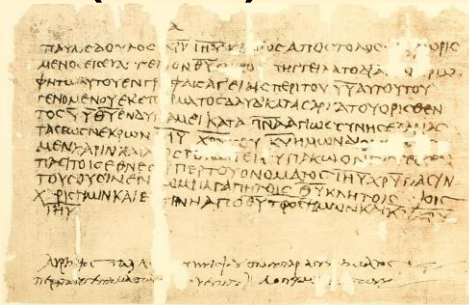


# Lesson 11 | November 15, 2020

## The Letters of Paul (Part 2)



**Study Text:** Ephesians 2:11–23; 4:7–16; Colossians 1:15–20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–10; 1 Timothy 6:3–12; 2 Timothy 2:1–7; 3:1–5; Titus 3:1–8

**Central Truth:** Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.

### Key Verse: Colossians 1:18

He [Jesus] 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 (KJV).

He [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy (NIV).

### Learning Objectives

- Understand the three key truths in this lesson: Christ is the Head of the Church, Christ will return for believers, and leaders are to follow Christ.
- Commit to living as one who is fully surrendered to Christ.
- Find opportunities to lead others into accepting the truth of Christ.

## Introducing the Lesson

**Say:** Today, we will continue our exploration of the letters written by Paul. The breadth of topics covered in these letters, as well as their timelessness, serve to remind us that he was inspired by God as he wrote these words. **His messages are timeless and true—as relevant today as they were in the first century.**

### Opening Activity—Benefits of the Body

*Ask: What benefits of being part of the body of Christ can you name?*

Allow your students to name several benefits as you record them on the board. Some answers you may hear include: forgiveness from sin, hope for eternity in heaven, fellowship with other believers, and help from the Holy Spirit in making decisions..

**Say:** The original recipients of Paul's letters were still learning about the benefits of having a relationship with God. While those who have been Christians for many years have heard these truths before, they were new to the first-century audience. As we

study this lesson, try to read with fresh eyes as they would have read, and ask God to help you learn the truths being taught. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

This is the second lesson based on the letters of Paul. It advances the previous lesson on the reconciling work of Jesus, the encouragement of unity within the Church, and a commitment to the truth of the resurrection of Christ. This lesson further engages Paul's teaching, with a focus on Christ as the Head of the Church, Christ's soon return, and leadership in the Church.



## **Part 1—Christ and His Church**

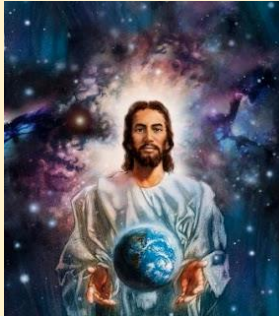
### **Christ: The Head of the Church**

Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 2:19–23

**[Col 1:15-20 KJV] 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 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. 19 For it pleased [the Father] that in him should all fulness dwell; 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven.**

**[Eph 2:11-22 KJV] 11 Wherefore remember, that ye [being] in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [between us]; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, [even] the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, [so] making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God**

in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.



**Say:** Christ is the Head of the Church. Let's consider what the head does for the body. It chooses the direction and actions of the body. It directs members of the body to care for the body. For example, if a finger touches a hot stove, the head tells the hand, wrist, and elbow to move the finger away from the heat. Likewise, Christ uses members of the body to care for one another.

(Share your highlights from the following text.)

The apostle Paul used multiple metaphors when talking about the Church. (Note that the term "Church," with a capital "C," refers to all believers around the world.) One of Paul's most meaningful and insightful metaphors is the comparison between the Church and the human body, detailed in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. Colossians 1:15–20 and Ephesians 2:19–23 offer deeper insight into this concept. In these passages, Paul taught that Christ is the Head of the Body (or, the Church). **This metaphor emphasizes His supremacy, leadership, and sustenance for the believing community. Colossians 1:15–20 establishes this reality upon the fact that Jesus is divine Creator.**

[1Co 12:12 KJV] 12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is] Christ.

[Eph 2:20-22 KJV] 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Note Paul's exalted language in the Colossians passage. Christ is the Son of God, the very image of God who is invisible, the One in whom all the fullness of God dwelled. Jesus himself declared this truth when He told the apostles that anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father (see John 14:9). **Christ was not merely a replica of the Father or a representative of the Father; He is all that the Father is. To assert that He was the "firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:15, NIV) does not just recognize that Christ is eternal. It also sees Christ as preeminent over creation. Christ was and is both Creator and**

**Sustainer of all things.** And He is also the means by which sinful humanity is reconciled to the Father, having died on the cross and risen from the dead.

Paul also used a different metaphor in emphasizing the centrality of Christ in understanding the Church. In Ephesians 2:19–23, the Church is compared to a building, a reference to the holiest place in the temple, the Holy of Holies. The foundation of this building is the message of Jesus, proclaimed by the apostles and prophets. And Christ is the Cornerstone, giving unity and purpose to the building. The purpose of the Church is to be the dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

### ***Discuss***

? How can describing Christ as the “Head” of the Body, the Church, help us better understand the purpose of the Church??

? How does your life reflect the reality that you are a part of the Church? How should your life reflect this reality??

## **Christ’s Gifts Build the Church**

Ephesians 4:11–16

**[Eph 4:7-16 KJV] 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: 16 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.**

**Say:** Christ, the Head of the Church, provides special gifts of leadership to the Church for the purpose of bringing it to spiritual maturity—to the “whole measure of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13, NIV). (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Earlier in this chapter Paul had talked about God’s grace as a gift to His Church (see verse 7), then he sharpened his focus to center on special gifts that serve the Church,

promoting service among the congregation and growth toward becoming the full expression of what God intends the Church to be.

Paul identifies five leadership gifts, three of which seem to be focused more on the larger Church, beyond the local body, and two of which are more focused on the local body. **Apostles and prophets—those especially sent with a charge from Christ and those through whom clear and special messages are delivered, were identified earlier in Ephesians (2:20) as the foundation of the Church. Evangelists have the unique and important ministry of taking the gospel to unbelievers who need to hear the message of Christ. Pastors and teachers are linked in Ephesians 4. Their giftings bless a local congregation by instructing believers in the truths of the gospel and caring for their needs and concerns.**

**Christ gave the Church these leadership gifts to promote ministry and service among the believers, with the ultimate goal of building up the body of Christ—that is, the Church as a whole as well as the local congregations. Unity and knowledge of Jesus, signs of maturity, lead us toward the full expression of Christ in us. The contrast is very clear: Instead of being infants, easily distracted and deceived, the Church is to speak and to live out truth, and thus grow into maturity as each member fulfills his or her call and purpose.**

#### **Resource Packet Item 1: The Nature of the Church**

Distribute the work sheet and assign each row to someone. Ask them to read it aloud and determine what description of the Church is included.

#### ***Discuss***

? Why is it important that believers remember that the Head of the Church is not a human leader, but Christ himself? How would fully grasping this truth alter actions and choices?

? How can Ephesians 4 help us understand what is meant by spiritual maturity (and spiritual immaturity)?

## **Part 2—About Christ's Coming Believers Will Rise To Be With Christ**

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

**[1Th 4:13-18 KJV] 13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive**



**[and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**

**Say:** A few years ago, the second coming of Christ was a major topic for sermons, conversations, and books. **While there was much speculation about just how the various events would unfold, we can all agree that we have this assurance:** There is a glorious future awaiting the Church. That future, as Paul taught the Thessalonian church, would be the joyous reality of eternity in the presence of Christ. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The Thessalonians accepted this message because **they recognized its absolute truth.** But there was a serious question that concerned them: **What about believers who died before Christ returns to receive believers into His eternal presence?** To better understand their questions, it is helpful to understand the ancient culture of the Roman Empire. **Many rejected the idea of a bodily resurrection.** (This belief had impacted the Church, and even reached into the Christian understanding of Christ.) But if this were the case, some were concerned that their deceased brothers and sisters would not be included in the glorious future.

Paul answered their concern with a word of assurance, reminding them of the work of Jesus in dying on the cross and rising from the grave (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). Because Jesus rose, death is not the end for believers. There is a great future for all Christians, living and dead: **At the loud command and the voice of the archangel announcing the return of Christ, the dead believers will first be resurrected; then, those believers who are alive at His return will be caught up together with them into the clouds to meet Christ in the air. In Latin, the phrase “caught up” is a translation of the word raptus, from which the concept of Rapture comes. Not only will those who die before the return of Christ not be abandoned, but they will in fact rise first.** These are very comforting and encouraging words for believers!

### ***Discuss***

? What does the hope of the Rapture mean to you, and how does it affect your life?

? The Early Church was sometimes affected by false beliefs regarding the resurrection of the dead. What are some false beliefs today that threaten to impact the Church, and how can we counter these false beliefs?

## **The Deceiver Will Be Defeated**

2 Thessalonians 2:1–10

**[2Th 2:1-10 KJV] 1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any**

means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 [Even him], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

**Say:** You may remember being frightened by some of the events described in books and movies depicting the Second Coming. **While the warnings must be heeded and some of the events are very sobering, Christians can have hope because, ultimately, Satan will be defeated and we will live with Christ the Victor in eternal joy.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, he addressed a false teaching that was troubling the believers there: They wondered whether the Day of the Lord— that is, the Rapture and the events following—had already come (2 Thessalonians 2:1–10). This teaching was being wrongly attributed to Paul. **He replied that there were two events that would precede the Day of the Lord: a rebellion and the revelation of one whom he called the man of lawlessness—the Antichrist.**

The rebellion—an apostasy—refers to a deliberate turning away from the gospel. The man of lawlessness will be identified by the ungodly activities enumerated in 2 Thessalonians 2:4: **opposition to the will God, determination to be seen as greater than God, prideful claim to be God, and the deliberate choice to violate God's temple.** He will use extraordinary powers, signs, and wonders, all enabled by Satan. His doom, however, is certain.

Paul assured the Thessalonians that his teaching was simply affirming what he had taught them while present among them. There is a factor that is presently holding back the rebellion and the man of lawlessness: **the Holy Spirit working in and through the Church. The removal of the Church, which has not yet occurred, will open the way for the Day of the Lord, a time of terrible judgment.**

### **Resource Packet Item 2: Views on the Rapture**

Distribute the information sheet and briefly discuss the different views of the rapture. Point out that the Assemblies of God believes in a pre-tribulation rapture.

### ***Discuss***

? Is it ever helpful and edifying to speculate about the specifics of end-time prophecies, such the identity of the man of lawlessness, in relationship to current events? Explain.

? How are you encouraged by the message of Christ's coming?

## **Part 3—Pastoral Care and Instruction**

### **Paul Cautioned Believers**

1 Timothy 6:3–12; 2 Timothy 3:1–5

**[1Ti 6:3-12 KJV] 3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, [even] the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and [into] many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.**

**[2Ti 3:1-5 KJV] 1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.**

**Say:** This segment of the lesson moves to what is known as the pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus). Paul was a mentor to Timothy and Titus, both of whom traveled with him at some point. The rich truths he shared with them apply to the lives of believers today, and are not limited to individuals in leadership positions. Let's look at these letters as though they were written to us. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul wrote letters to two of his protégés: Timothy and Titus. These were men who had worked with him in preaching the gospel and who were now leading congregations in



Ephesus and Crete, respectively. **Paul used 1 Timothy 5 to set out important teachings that Timothy was to reinforce with the believers: relationships within families and within the Church, such as the responsibility to care for the widows, proper respect for the elders, and proper care for one's health.**

Paul, however, warned that there would be those who would not accept his positive teachings about the life of the community (1 Timothy 6:3–10). He saw these people as conceited, lacking understanding, and given to quarreling and disputing. Their opposition to sound teaching was at least partly rooted in the assumption that the goal of the Christian faith is financial gain.

**That which really brings gain—not necessarily financial gain—is the contentment that grows out of godliness.** The true believer recognizes that the search for financial gain is a never-ending cycle. We should recognize that having the basic needs for existence—supplies, food and clothing—is adequate. **The love of money and the over-emphasis on getting rich, however, have the potential to produce other evils.**

It is no surprise that there will always be some who refuse to follow sound teaching and living. Paul noted that such refusal is a sign of the last days (see 2 Timothy 4:3). In 3:1–5 **Paul provided a detailed list of character traits and actions of those who fall away from the truth, concluding with a sad commentary: They love pleasure more than they love God, and they maintain a form of the faith but deny the true power of the gospel.**

### **Discuss**

? What do you think it means to deny the power of the gospel? (Think about the practical results of this power in forming an answer.)

? Are the vices Paul enumerated in 2 Timothy 3:1–5 present today? Explain.

## **Paul Instructed Younger Leaders**

2 Timothy 2:1–7; Titus 3:1–8

**[2Ti 2:1-7 KJV] 1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of [this] life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. 5 And if a man also strive for masteries, [yet] is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. 6 The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. 7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.**

**[Tit 3:1-8 KJV] 1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, [but] gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. 3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, [and] hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 [This is] a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.**

**Say:** Young Christians, whether or not they are in leadership roles, need spiritual mentors who will challenge them and guide them. Paul served in this role to the younger Timothy and Titus as they led their congregations. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Timothy and Titus had great responsibilities in their ministries. Paul challenged Timothy to be strong in the grace that comes through Jesus, and for good reason (2 Timothy 2:1–7). Grace provides invaluable help when facing the challenges of opposition and rejection. It is vital that leaders not only live by the truths that have been taught to them, but also transmit them to others. They can then, in turn, teach them to others. The Church endures and expands as its truths are passed on to succeeding generations.

**Paul used three images to impress upon Timothy some important lessons of leadership: the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. Through these images, Paul offered a reminder that leadership roles include suffering; it was true for Paul and will be for all leaders (verse 3). The image of the soldier challenges the leader to have a single focus of pleasing the One who enrolled him or her in service—for the Christian leader, that is Christ. Furthermore, to receive the crown indicative of winning an athletic contest one must follow the rules of the game. Likewise, the farmer, who is hardworking and diligent about the task will enjoy the fruit of the labor.**

Young leaders must remember that the mercy seen in the redemptive work of Jesus has provided justification with God and placement as an heir of God. **The old life of failed relationships and enmity between others and God has passed away. This renewed life must challenge leaders to encourage right relationships among believers, marked by gentleness, peace, consideration, and doing what is good (Titus 3:1–8)..**

### **Resource Packet Item 3: Timothy and Titus**

Distribute the work sheet and have students fill it out individually or in small groups. You might want to have some groups work on the “Timothy” section while others work on the “Titus” section. Then discuss ways that class members might wish to be described by someone writing about them..

#### ***Discuss***

? What cautions and challenges from Paul to Timothy and Titus speak most directly to you? Explain.

? What are some ways Christians serve as leaders that are not always recognized as leadership roles? Why would Paul’s instruction be valuable in these roles?

## **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** Note three important truths from this lesson: (1) If we grasp that Christ is the Head of the Church, we will recall that He is worthy of our obedience and service. (2) Christ’s soon return should motivate us to look forward to His coming. (3) God has given leadership gifts to help equip Christians for service. With this in mind, let us seek out mentors who can help us grow in our faith, even as we look for opportunities to mentor others..

## **Living It Out**

### **Ministry in Action**

- Write a note of appreciation to one or more leaders in your church. This may be a pastor or someone else whose work keeps the church running smoothly.
- Look for an opportunity to witness to someone in your sphere of influence who may not be ready for Christ’s coming.
- Find a time this week to meet with someone who can mentor you in your faith (if you

are a young Christian) or with someone whom you can mentor (if you are a more mature Christian).

## **Daily Bible Readings**

Monday:

Jacob's Ladder.  
Genesis 28:10–19

Tuesday:

The King of Glory.  
Reference

Wednesday:

Isaiah Sees God's Glory.  
Isaiah 6:1–4

Thursday:

Jesus Referred to Jacob's Ladder.  
John 1:43–51

Friday:

Isaiah Saw the Glory of Christ.  
John 12:37–41

Saturday:

Christ and the Church.  
Ephesians 5:25–32