

# CHRISTIANITY'S MISCONCEPTIONS OF WOMEN

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# CHRISTIANITY'S MISCONCEPTIONS OF WOMEN

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## Contents

GLOSSARY .....	5
1: WOMAN AS A COEQUAL CREATION .....	6
The Creation of Adam and Eve .....	6
After The Fall .....	9
The Husband as Provider and Protector.....	11
Woman’s Coequal Role in the Promised Messiah.....	13
2: ROLES OF WOMEN IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES .....	15
Women’s High Standing and Wide Variety of Roles .....	15
Deborah: Spiritual Leader Chosen by God .....	18
3: SPIRITUAL EQUALITY IN THE NEWER COVENANT .....	22
Spiritual Equality in Messiah Yeshua .....	22
Headship and Covering .....	24
4: MARRIAGE AS A COEQUAL RELATIONSHIP .....	30
The Most Sanctified Union .....	30
A Coequal Partnership .....	32
The Misconception of Submission .....	33
5: WOMEN AS TEACHERS AND LEADERS IN THE CHURCH .....	38
Women as Teachers of the Word of God .....	38
Women in Leadership Positions in the Church .....	44
6: WOMEN’S DRESS AND ADORNMENT .....	57
Proper Dress and Adornment .....	57
Head Covering .....	60
The Biblical Guideline for Proper Dress .....	62

Proper Hair Length for Men and Women .....63

REFERENCES .....65

## GLOSSARY

CHRISTIAN BIBLE: Old and New Testaments.

HASHEM: *HaShem* literally means “The Name,” referring to The Name of God. The Tetragrammaton refers to the four consonants of the ancient Hebrew name for God (YHVH), considered by the Jews to be too sacred to be spoken aloud. The word *Adonai* (Lord) or *HaShem* is substituted for this name in utterance. Modern reconstructions of the name with vowels for pronunciation are *Yehovah*, *Jehovah*, *Yahweh*, and *Yahveh*. No one knows for certain the correct pronunciation. However, because there are no “j” or “w” sounds in the Hebrew language, *Jehovah* and *Yahweh* can be eliminated. We believe that *Yehovah* is closest to the correct pronunciation.

HEBREW BIBLE: Old Testament.

MESSIAH (*Mashiach* is the English transliteration from the Hebrew): The Anointed One of God; from the Greek, *Christos* (Christ).

SHEKINAH: The Glory Cloud of God, the physical manifestation of God’s presence.

TORAH: The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses; often translated “Law” but more correctly God’s “Instructions.”

YESHUA: The shortened form of *Yehoshua* (Joshua), meaning “The LORD (YHVH) Is Salvation.”

## Chapter 1 WOMAN AS A COEQUAL CREATION

‘It is not good that man be alone; I will make him a helper corresponding to him’ (Genesis 2:18).

So HASHEM [the LORD] God cast a deep sleep upon the man and he slept, and He took one of his sides and He filled in flesh in its place. Then HASHEM God fashioned the side that He had taken from the man into a woman, and He brought her to the man (Genesis 2:21-22).

The Biblical account shows that God created Adam and Eve in complete equality.<sup>1</sup> To understand the Biblical foundation of the complete equality of man and woman, we must understand the manner in which God created Adam and Eve, and their relationship to each other.

### THE CREATION OF ADAM AND EVE

In Genesis 2:19-20, we see that Adam was unable to find a suitable mate from among the animals God had brought to him for the purpose of naming:

Now, HASHEM<sup>2</sup> [the LORD] God had formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call each one; and whatever man called each living creature, that remained its name. And the man assigned names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to every beast of the field; but as for man, he did not find a helper corresponding to him (Genesis 2:19-20).

Adam was unable to find a suitable companion, one that would be his spiritual and intellectual equal and therefore be able to be his “helpmate,” both spiritually and physically.<sup>3</sup>

Some expositors have taught that all women should be subordinate to adult men because Eve was created after Adam to be his helper (“help meet,” KJV). Yet the word *ezer* (“helper”) is never used in the Hebrew Bible with a subordinate meaning. Seventeen out of the twenty times it is used, it refers to God as the helper. Instead of being created as a subordinate, Eve was created to be a “suitable” (*kenegdo*) helper, or one “corresponding to” Adam.<sup>4</sup>

God knew that Adam would be unable to find such an equal companion, and allowed Adam to see for himself that this was the case. Having experienced life for a time without woman, he would therefore more fully appreciate the preciousness and sanctity of their partnership and relationship.<sup>5</sup>

God created Adam as a being with both male and female characteristics.<sup>6</sup> He took from Adam’s body to create a suitable companion of the feminine gender, for God had said:

‘It is not good that man be alone, I will make him a helper corresponding to him’ (Genesis 2:18).

So HASHEM [the LORD] God cast a deep sleep upon the man and he slept; and He took one of his sides and He filled in flesh in its place. Then HASHEM God fashioned the side that He had taken from the man into a woman, and He brought her to the man (Genesis 2:21-22).

The Hebrew word often translated as “rib” in Genesis 2:21 is never translated as “rib” but always as “side” elsewhere in the Scriptures.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, it is more accurately translated “side” rather than “rib.” Therefore, it was actually from Adam’s side that God took in order to “fashion” the woman.

Unlike the creation of other life forms, including Adam, from the dust of the earth, woman was created from the side of Adam’s body. Had she been made from the dust, she would have been a secondary creation under Adam. However, taken from his side, she was his “other self,” a coequal self. Because woman was created in this way, she was created in complete equality, a spiritual and intellectual equal, a coequal partner and companion.

Although Adam was created first, God created both male and female components in a single body. Later, God separated Adam’s female part into a separate human being. Because both male and female were two halves of one whole, God called them “Adam.”<sup>8</sup>

On the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female. He blessed them and called them Man on the day they were created (Genesis 5:1-2).

And Adam recognized Eve<sup>9</sup> as having come from his own body:

And the man said, ‘This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This shall be called Woman, for from man was she taken’ (Genesis 2:23).



God created Adam and Eve to work together as one, complimenting each other, both to be honored and respected equally. They were to share their lives together as one, creating a whole, complete unit that could not be divided or deceived.

#### AFTER THE FALL

Let us look at Genesis 3:8-9 to see Adam and Eve's situation after The Fall:

They heard the sound of HASHEM [the LORD] God manifesting itself in the garden toward evening; and the man and his wife hid from HASHEM God among the trees of the garden. HASHEM called out to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' (Genesis 3:8-9).

Certainly God knew where they were. Then why did He ask? It is a tradition even today for Jewish fathers to ask their children standing before them, "Where are you?" The implied meaning is, "Where are you in position (relationship) with me?" God gave Adam an opportunity to confess his sin, an opportunity to repent.

He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I am naked, so I hid' (Genesis 3:10).

The word "naked" here does not refer to physical nakedness, but instead to spiritual nakedness:

Having eaten from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve lost the consistent inner purity that enabled them to treat all bodily organs and functions as tools in the service of God.... Adam and Eve used bodily impulses that

should have been solely in the service of God for their satisfaction of their own desires. For this they felt shame which had to be clothed (*Harav David Cohen*).<sup>10</sup>

They knew what they had done. They had forfeited their innocence and become aware of sin, shame, and fear. They were naked in the sight of themselves and God.

And He said, ‘Who told you that you are naked?’ (Genesis 3:11).

God is actually asking Adam, “Who told you that you were not in a right relationship with me?”

‘Have you eaten of the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?’ The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me—she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’ (Genesis 3:11-12).

Adam fails to take responsibility for his own actions, and instead shifts blame to “the woman You gave me,” blaming both Eve, and God, for giving him the woman. He is telling God, “It’s Your fault I am in this position. It’s because of the wife You gave me.”

This is what we do today. We “pass the buck” when we make mistakes. Instead, we should go before our Heavenly Father, judge ourselves, admit our sins and our mistakes, and ask forgiveness of God and those we have wronged. When we ask God’s forgiveness, He is just and faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9; Matthew 12:37).

And HASHEM [the LORD] God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done!’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’ (Genesis 3:13).

God knew what she had done, but was providing her the opportunity to repent. Like Adam, she failed to take responsibility for her own actions and instead blamed the serpent. Even though neither Adam nor Eve were willing to accept the blame for what they had done, God still loved them and forgave them. They were punished for their disobedience, but never cursed. Hebrews 13:5 verifies: "... I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."

#### THE HUSBAND AS PROVIDER AND PROTECTOR

To the woman God said:

'I will greatly increase your suffering and your childbearing; in pain shall you bear children. Yet your craving shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you' (Genesis 3:16).

The Hebrew word *mashal* is translated as "rule" in Genesis 3:16, and its misinterpretation leads to a misunderstanding that the woman (wife) is totally subservient to the man (husband). According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*:

*mashal* usually receives the translation "to rule," but the precise nature of the rule is as various as the real situations in which the action or state so designated occur. ...

Eve, standing for all wives, was given to understand that in the home, the husband "shall rule over thee" (Gen 3:16). Such leadership as is appropriate—and it varies greatly—for a man to give his family is meant."

The Biblical picture shows that the husband is to be the physical provider and protector of the wife. As Hirsch notes:

... the new condition of life, that sustenance will be drawn only through hard labor, makes woman more dependent on man, the breadwinner. Obedience to Torah [God's Instructions] makes man and woman equally God-serving priests and restores the wife to her role as '*crown of her husband*' and '*invaluable pearl of his life*' (*Proverbs* 12:4, 31:10).<sup>12</sup>

The husband is to be like Messiah. He is to treat his wife as Messiah treats believers, His Bride. He is to have the knowledge and wisdom of Messiah so that when his wife comes to him for guidance or when a decision is to be made, the responsibility falls upon him. It has been appointed to the man to be so in line with God's Word that his advice to his wife guides her to make the proper decisions. The wife is to learn from her Godly husband; he is to be her example.

However, if the husband wishes to "rule" over his wife as a subservient person, he has to be ready to accept full responsibility for her actions—right or wrong! God has given the male an awesome responsibility.

As Hirsch notes above, the man and woman are coequals when they are in right relationship with God, being obedient to His will. It is not God who subjects women to take a secondary role to man. This debasing influence originated in the pagan world. During their captivity, the Jews were influenced by the Babylonian concept of woman's subservience to man. The Church, being likewise influenced by both the pagan Greco-

Roman world and Judaism, adopted this attitude toward women, and from its root has affected most of Christianity as a whole to this day.

#### WOMAN'S COEQUAL ROLE IN THE PROMISED MESSIAH

And HASHEM [the LORD] God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and He clothed them (Genesis 3:21).

This act of covering showed God's mercy toward Adam and Eve. God had to perform a sacrifice by taking the blood of an animal, one of His own creations, to provide this covering. By this act, God showed His love, mercy and forgiveness, and that He had not withdrawn from them (Leviticus 17:11).

God promised Adam and Eve that out of their seed would come the Messiah Who would restore the way back to Him. Woman is coequal in this. Therefore, she is the spiritual equal of man and able to participate on an equal basis (Genesis 3:14-15).

#### NOTES

1. *ArtScroll Tanach Series, Genesis*, Vol. 1(a), p. 109. All Scriptural quotations in this chapter from the *ArtScroll Tanach Series, Genesis*, Vol. 1(a). New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., © 1986, 1988.

2. *HaShem* means "The Name," referring to the Name of God. The Name of God is also called the Tetragrammaton because it is made up of four Hebrew letters (pronounced: *yud, hey, vav, hey*). Because of the sacredness of the name and fear of mispronouncing it, "HaShem" appears in its place in English translations of the Hebrew Bible (Old

Testament). In the same way, “the Lord” appears in its place in many English translations of the Christian Bible (Old and New Testaments).

3. *ArtScroll Tanach Series, Genesis*, Vol. 1(a), p. 105.

4. Assemblies of God Beliefs, Position Paper: “*The Role of Women in Ministry*,” [http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position\\_papers/4191\\_women\\_ministry.cfm](http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position_papers/4191_women_ministry.cfm), Assemblies of God Web Site, © 2003, The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1445 North Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802.

5. *ArtScroll Tanach Series, Genesis*, Vol. 1(a), p. 105.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

9. In Hebrew, *Chavah*, meaning “the mother of all living.”

10. *ArtScroll Tanach Series, Genesis*, Vol. 1(a), p. 124.

11. R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 534.

12. *ArtScroll Tanach Series, Genesis*, Vol. 1(a), p. 131.

## Chapter 2 ROLES OF WOMEN IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time (Judges 4:4).

And she used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment (Judges 4:5).

### WOMEN'S HIGH STANDING AND WIDE VARIETY OF ROLES

In Old Testament times, Hebrew women participated in every aspect of community life except the Temple priesthood.<sup>13</sup> Women were included when God instituted the Mosaic covenant (Deuteronomy 29:11). When Joshua read the Torah to Israel, they were present. Their presence was not just an option. They were required to be present for the public reading of Scripture on the feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:10-12).

In those days, women were not limited to private roles. They freely engaged in commerce and real estate (Proverbs 31:16, 24), as well as manual labor (Exodus 35:25; Ruth 2:7; 1 Samuel 8:13; Proverbs 31:16). In Temple worship, they played music in the sanctuary (Psalms 68:25), prayed (1 Samuel 1:12), sang and danced in religious processions along with men (2 Samuel 6:19, 22). They also participated in music and festivities at weddings (Song of Solomon 3:11).

Another important matter in the Old Testament is that of inheritance. If there were no male heirs in the family, then a daughter inherited the possessions. Since an inheritance could not be transferred from tribe to tribe, the daughter was obliged to marry within the family of the tribe of her father (Numbers 27:6-8; 36:6-12).

As a matter of interest, according to the rabbinic commentary, the Hebrew women refused to take part in the making of the golden calf mentioned in Exodus 32.<sup>4</sup> When Aaron told them to bring their gold rings to be melted down to make the idol, the women told their husbands they would not take part in idolatry and deny God, especially after witnessing the many miracles and wonders that He did on their behalf during the Exodus. Scripture implies that the men had to take the gold rings from their wives' ears, rather than that they were voluntarily given up (Exodus 32:2).

In both Old and New Testament times, women were gifted with prophetic powers. God used Miriam along with Moses and Aaron to emancipate His people from Egypt (Micah 6:4). Deborah, a prophetess, was a judge over the whole of Israel and also a leader in a great battle (Judges 4:4-10). King Josiah sent the high priest Hilkiah along with others to consult the prophetess Huldah, rather than Jeremiah, her contemporary (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-28). They were to ask her to explain the Book of the Law (the Torah, the first five books of Moses), which had been found by workmen repairing damages to the Temple. Isaiah's wife was also a prophetess. In the New Testament, the four daughters of the evangelist Philip prophesied (Acts 21:9).



In New Testament times, there was a prophetess named Hannah (Anna) who served in the Temple day and night over sixty years (Luke 2:36-37). She was accepted by the rabbis and priests as a prophetess. Like Simeon, she belonged to the pious remnant of Judaism.

On Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), the infant Yeshua (Jesus) was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem. First to receive Him was the devout prophet, Simeon, who acknowledged that Yeshua was God's promised Messiah.<sup>15</sup> Hannah acted as a second witness, proclaiming Yeshua as the promised Messiah to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:38).

From our discussion of Biblical Scripture, it is clear that:

When the Old Testament picture of women is presented in contrast to Israel's neighbors, it is not difficult to see the advantages and advancement of Hebrew religion. D. M. Pratt's observation is worth noting: "Under the Hebrew system the position of woman was in marked contrast with her status in surrounding heathen nations. Her liberties were greater, her employments more varied and important, her social standing more respectful and commanding."<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that in actuality the Old Testament (Older Covenant) period covers the time up until the death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus). After Yeshua's death and resurrection, the high standing and spiritual equality of women was further enhanced in the New Testament (Newer Covenant).

## DEBORAH: SPIRITUAL LEADER CHOSEN BY GOD

Deborah is an excellent Old Testament example of a woman whom God placed in a position of spiritual leadership.<sup>17</sup> She was one of the judges of Israel during the period of time from the conquest of the land of Canaan, under Joshua, until the first king, Saul.

The period of the judges was a turbulent time during which Israel fell into repeated cycles of apostasy, salvation, restoration, and falling away again from the worship of the true God. The judges were leaders who brought the people back from spiritual confusion and apostasy to periods of restoration and peace.

The function of a judge included making decisions in points of Torah (Mosaic) law, as well as teaching God's statutes and laws to the people. During the time of Moses, individuals were chosen to assist in these functions. Jethro set forth the qualifications of a judge:

“Now listen to me: I shall give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk, and the work they are to do. Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place (these) over them, (as) leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they bring to you [Moses], but every minor dispute they themselves will judge.

So it will be easier for you, and they will bear (the burden) with you”

(Exodus 18:19-22).

During his lifetime, Moses did the teaching, and the judges did the simple judging based on the Torah that they had been given. After Moses died, God chose Joshua to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. On Mount Ebal, Joshua built an altar, read the entire law (Torah) to the Israelites (women and children included), and had it written into the stone (Joshua 8:30-35). This public reading and official proclamation of the Torah certainly seems to qualify as a form of teaching. During this time, the judges continued to judge minor cases, as well as carried on the work of teaching the law locally, in order to assist Joshua.

During the time of the judges, there seems to have been a failure in the transmission of the Torah (“God’s Instructions”) from parents to children. Though the judges and elders taught when asked, there was apparently no public standard for passing the Word of God from generation to generation. The result was a falling away from the true Word of God, along with absorption of idolatrous ways from the surrounding pagan religions.

Every time the Israelites fell away, they were defeated and oppressed by their enemies. Each time, the Lord raised up a judge to be their leader and guide them in His ways. Restoration and peace would follow, but only a short time until the death of the judge, when they again reverted to pagan ways. The people showed that they had not taken the judge’s teachings to heart, and the tragic cycle began again.

The Biblical picture shows that teaching the Word of God was an integral part of the role of a judge. This is especially significant to note since one of the judges was a woman, Deborah:

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time (Judges 4:4).

“At that time” refers to a period of apostasy, a time when the Israelites were oppressed by a king of Canaan.

Deborah was a prophetess and judge of the people. The Lord had placed her in a position of spiritual leadership of Israel. And this position included teaching the people the Word of God. We also know that prophets had to have a great knowledge of the Word and a great understanding of it to receive the insights and messages of God.

And she used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment (Judges 4:5).

There was a specific place where Deborah sat, and that is where they came to receive her judgment. The word “judgment” has the same root, *mishpat*,<sup>18</sup> as the word used throughout Psalm 119 to indicate “ordinances” (NASB) of God. These ordinances are God’s commandments for how we are to live our lives.

The very act of judging goes hand in hand with the act of teaching because every decision rendered must have its basis in sound exposition of the Law. Therefore, every decision

Deborah rendered was a lesson in the understanding and application of the Law (Torah, Word of God) to every individual present.

It was also Deborah who was given prophetic knowledge to guide Barak to successfully go against the Canaanites in battle. As a “mother of Israel,” Deborah was successful in giving her children, the Israelite people, knowledge of the Law (Word of God). Moreover, Deborah was successful in getting all of Israel to pass the knowledge of God to the next generation. The result was forty years of peace, enough time for the next generation to come and go in the knowledge of the Lord. Unfortunately, the following generation apparently failed to transmit the knowledge of God, leading to another evil generation and cycle of apostasy.

#### NOTES

13. This does not justify male-only priesthoods today. There is now no Temple or Temple priesthood. Messiah Yeshua is the only mediator between man and God. All believers in Yeshua constitute His new priesthood of the New Covenant.

14. *The Torah Anthology*, Vol. 10, p. 14.

15. The Hebrew name, *Yeshua*, means “Salvation.”

16. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 953.

17. This section is condensed from a study by Charles R. Sebold.

18. Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. II, pp. 948-949.

## Chapter 3 SPIRITUAL EQUALITY IN THE NEWER COVENANT

There is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile], there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua]. And if you belong to Christ [Messiah], then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:28-29).

### SPIRITUAL EQUALITY IN MESSIAH YESHUA

Galatians 3:28-29 provides a clear statement of the spiritual equality and joint heirship of women under the Newer Covenant (New Testament):

There is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile], there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua]. And if you belong to Christ [Messiah], then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:28-29).

The Older Covenant (Old Testament) was made between God and Abraham, and sealed with the rite of circumcision (Genesis 17). In this regard, the male received the covenant, not the female. All females in the Old Testament had to be covered by a male's circumcision of either father, brother, uncle, or some other male relative.

For example, Sarah received her status with God and her new name (Sarai to Sarah) through her relationship with Abraham, her "covering." Nevertheless, Sarah was considered an equal with Abraham. Prior to Yeshua's death and resurrection, women

were allowed equality but were still under the covering of the male. The purpose of this covering was to ensure protection of and provision for women.

Prior to Yeshua's death and resurrection, there were no women apostles since women were still under the Old Covenant and therefore required male headship. It is important to note, however, that Yeshua allowed women to work with Him and forbid the men to hinder them.

Women who enter into a personal New Covenant relationship with Yeshua come under His direct headship, and no longer require the Old Covenant headship covering of a man. The only true equality and deliverance of a woman is her acceptance of Messiah Yeshua, Who then makes her an equal heir in salvation. The woman's salvation comes directly through her relationship with Yeshua and His headship covering, and is totally independent of any type of human covering or church membership.

In Christianity, most churches are religious organizations operating according to traditions and doctrines not allowing women full equality. Such organizations have not fully recognized the total equality and freedom women have in Yeshua. They are still following a misconception of women's submission under The Fall of sin, not the pure relationship with Messiah which grants total equality to all, regardless of gender.

Let us also make clear at this point that a woman's salvation does not depend upon her giving birth to children. This erroneous teaching is due to a mistranslation and

misunderstanding of 1 Timothy 2:15. The following is a correct translation from the Greek text:

Certainly Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived has come to be in transgression. But she will be delivered through the birth of The Child [Messiah], if they [women] remain in the faith and in the love and in pureness of motives and with good sense, sound judgment, modesty and decency (1 Timothy 2:13-15).

The original Greek text is not referring in general to childbearing, but in particular to the birth of the Messiah Child.<sup>19</sup> This shows clearly that the woman receives her salvation through Messiah Yeshua (His birth and sacrifice), not by giving birth to many children, as some contend.

Much of the world today, including much of Christianity, operates under a mentality of women as subservient to men. This is totally at odds with the Biblical concept of women's equality and highly regarded status.

#### HEADSHIP AND COVERING

The issue of headship and covering is greatly misunderstood in Christianity today. Some churches claim that because man is the "head" over woman, he has total authority over her, and that a woman must always have a man's "covering." If she is married, her husband provides this covering. If she is not married, another male must provide this



covering. This erroneous concept is dispelled by understanding the Biblical context of headship and covering.

God created Adam, representative of humankind, and placed him in a position of authority (headship) over creation. This does not mean that man is to exploit creation for his own selfish purposes, but he is to be a good steward over all the resources of creation, which are necessary for his own survival.

God also ordained the marital relationship to be the most intimate and holy of all human relationships, and to be a symbol of the relationship between Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus) and His Bride, the Church.

Let us examine some of the key Scriptures that deal with this subject and try to put it into its correct context.

To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Genesis 3:16).

As is fully discussed in Chapter 1 (subheading “The Husband as Provider and Protector”), the above verse has been misinterpreted to support the idea that the woman (wife) is to be totally subservient to the man (husband). The Biblical picture shows that the husband is to be the physical provider and protector of the wife. His responsibilities also include appropriate leadership, provision, and protection of his family. His role model is Christ (Messiah).

With Messiah as his role model, the man is to earn the respect of his wife and family, and to be self-sacrificing in his love for them. Just as Yeshua is not a tyrant ruling the believer, the man is not to lord over his wife and children. As the husband carries out his duties and responsibilities in the proper way, the wife is likewise to give proper respect to her husband. The man and woman are coequals, each to be in right relationship with God and act in obedience to His will.

We should apply this understanding to Ephesians 5:

Wives, (be subject) to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself (being) the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives (ought to be) to their husbands in everything (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Husbands are also instructed in this relationship:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... . So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also (does) the church, because we are members of His body (Ephesians 5:25, 28-30).

As previously discussed, when women were still under the old covenant, they required male headship. Since Yeshua's death and resurrection, the female believer comes under

the direct headship of Messiah Yeshua. The woman's salvation comes directly through her relationship with Yeshua and His headship covering, and is totally independent of any type of human covering or church membership.

That the woman and man are coequal partners is demonstrated by Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians 11.

However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man (has his birth) through the woman; and all things originate in God (1 Corinthians 11:11-12).

Before The Fall, Adam and Eve were covered with God's Shekinah (Glory) and experienced His direct presence in their lives. In 1 Timothy 2:14, we read that Adam was not deceived, that Eve was the first to eat of the forbidden fruit. However, Adam stood by and did nothing to correct her. Nor did he go before God as her covering to take responsibility for her disobedience. Instead, when nothing appeared to happen to Eve (i.e., she did not die instantly), Adam also deliberately ate of the forbidden fruit. Nothing happened to Eve until Adam, Eve's "covering," took part in direct disobedience to God's command. Then came The Fall.

As Eve allowed herself to be deceived, we also allow ourselves to be deceived by many things of the world's ways and partake of them. However, our covering, Yeshua, is sinless. He was tempted and tempted, but He did not partake of sin. He does not stand idly by and let us sin but reproves and rebukes us with the Word of God. We will never

be perfect in our present state, but as long as we choose to stay in that “marital” relationship with Yeshua, His “covering” will keep us sanctified.

We are given direct access to God by making Yeshua the Husbandman of our lives. Each and every believer, as a member of the Bride, is elevated with a new name to a position as joint-heir. We now have access to all of God’s blessings, love, and mercy. As a husband is to care for his wife, Yeshua now takes care of us, His Bride, the Church. Just as everything a husband owns also belongs to his wife, so it is with Yeshua and His Bride.

In Genesis 17, Abraham’s covenant with God was sealed with the rite of circumcision. The male received the covenant, not the female. Therefore, all females in the Old Testament (Older Covenant) had to be covered by a male’s circumcision, whether that of father, brother, uncle, or other male relative.

In the New Testament (Newer Covenant), Paul explains that we have a better covenant, signed with the blood of Yeshua. Both male and female are covered by His circumcision, and therefore inherit the blessings of Abraham (Galatians 3:29).

For in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love (Galatians 5:6).

According to Colossians 2:11-14, all believers, whether male or female, are circumcised with the circumcision of Messiah, one made without hands, not of the flesh but of the

heart. By removing the body of the flesh (the old nature which is corrupt), we become new creatures, neither male nor female, because there is no physical gender in the Body of Messiah. So as we stand before God, we stand as coequals. For this reason, a woman must go directly to Yeshua for her own salvation.

#### NOTES

19. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 570.

## Chapter 4 MARRIAGE AS A COEQUAL RELATIONSHIP

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

### THE MOST SANCTIFIED UNION

To better understand what God intended the union of a man and woman to be, we need to look back in the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible). In the union of Isaac and Rebekah, the Bible refers to a man “taking a wife” (Genesis 24:67).

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

When a man and a woman become one flesh in marriage, they become sanctified:

The Hebrew word for marriage is Kiddushin, which literally means “sanctification” or “holiness.”<sup>20</sup>

The union between man and woman is the most sanctified of all unions. Marriage, as God intended it to be, is an earthly counterpart of the spiritual relationship between believers, collectively referred to as the Bride, and Messiah Yeshua (Ephesians 5:25-32; Revelation 19:7; 21:2, 9).

The wedding day is considered sanctified for the bridegroom and bride, and is likened to Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). Yom Kippur symbolizes atonement for sin, and

matrimony can be looked upon as an opportunity to embark upon a new life together, free from the past, free of sin through the sin atonement sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua.

The wearing of white on Yom Kippur symbolizes purity, in accordance with Isaiah's words:

...Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow... (Isaiah 1:18).

For this reason, it is a Jewish tradition for the bride to wear white. In addition, some grooms wear a white linen robe (kitel) over their clothes. It is from this custom that the bride (and sometimes groom) wear white in a Christian ceremony, showing that they are sanctified and righteous in Messiah Yeshua.

The married couple comes before God holy and acceptable as they embark upon their new life together. They go out with no past. It doesn't matter what they did yesterday or what their lives were in the past. What matters now is their union in Messiah Yeshua. They now begin a new life, totally unblemished. (We are of course assuming that each individual is in a right relationship with God. This means turning to God in true repentance of sin and putting total trust in Yeshua as the Messiah and only Mediator between man and God. As a result, the individual's spirit comes into unity with God through the Holy Spirit.)

## A COEQUAL PARTNERSHIP

Their union is of two equals, male and female, joined as one, in a partnership.

Man is different [from the animals]: woman was created from man to show that only in partnership do the two form a complete human being (Hirsch).<sup>21</sup>

God built one side of man into woman — so that the single human being now became two. Thereby, the complete equality of man and woman was irrefutably demonstrated (Hirsch).<sup>22</sup>

Woman, created by God to be man's helpmate, is his "other self," in the feminine form. In creating her, God took from Adam's side, not rib.<sup>23</sup> Woman did not come from man's head, to be over him; nor from his feet, to be beneath him; but from his side, to be his joint partner. The Hebrew word should be translated "side" in this passage, as it is in all other Old Testament passages.

According to certain Jewish commentary, it was Adam's right side from which God took to form woman. This does fit the pattern, as the right-hand side is a symbol of equality. Psalm 45:9 pictures of a royal wedding, and tells of the queen standing at the right hand of the king. Likewise, believers as a unity are represented as the Bride of Messiah, and stand at His right side, just as Messiah stands at the right hand of God the Father.



To stand at the right side is to be a joint-heir. Therefore, the wife is to be granted honor and respect as a fellow-heir of the grace of life. A husband who does not so honor and respect his wife may have his prayers hindered:

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker [physically weaker, not mentally or spiritually weaker] vessel [abode of God], since she is a woman [out of man; other self of man]; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

Just as woman came from man, man comes from woman, by the process of birth. Therefore, they come from each other and stand as equal partners in this life, to share and be equal in all things. Everything they go through, good and bad, they go through together, side by side. In this way, they work together as a whole, complete person, who is less likely to be divided, deceived, or misled.

#### THE MISCONCEPTION OF SUBMISSION

The issue of a wife's submission to her husband is grossly misunderstood in much of the church world today. A proper context is necessary in order to understand the proper relationship of husband and wife. The following scriptural passages are frequently misused to prove that the husband has a biblical right to totally dominate his wife, who is to be dutifully and unconditionally submissive to his will.

Wives, (be subject) to your own husbands.... For the husband is the head of the wife... (Ephesians 5:22-23).

Wives, be subject to your husbands ... (Colossians 3:18).

[wives] ... being subject to their own husbands ... (Titus 2:5).

... you wives, be submissive to your own husbands (1 Peter 3:1).

Before we take the above passages and put them back into their proper context, let us also understand another key passage:

To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Genesis 3:16).

To understand what is meant by the husband “ruling” over the wife, please refer to Chapter 1 (subheading “The Husband as Provider and Protector”). In particular, the correct understanding of the meaning of the Hebrew word, *mashal* (translated as “rule”), shows that the husband is to be the physical provider and protector of the wife and children, and to provide appropriate leadership of the family.

The husband is to be like Messiah. He is to treat his wife as Messiah treats His Bride, the spiritual body of believers, the Church.<sup>24</sup> He is to provide appropriate leadership of his wife and family, and to earn the respect of his wife and children by his Godly character and behavior. His love is to be a self-sacrificing love, as Messiah demonstrated in His sacrifice, giving up His life for the benefit of His Bride.

With this understanding, let us quote the entire scriptural passage in Ephesians 5:22-33.

Wives, (be subject) to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ [Messiah] also is the head of the church, He Himself (being) the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ [Messiah], so also the wives (ought to be) to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ [Messiah] also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water of the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ [Messiah] also (does) the church, because we are members of His body.

*FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.* This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ [Messiah] and the church.

Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and (let) the wife (see to it) that she respect her husband (Ephesians 5:22-33).

The husband is to lead his wife in a Godly manner, as Messiah Yeshua leads His own Bride, the Church. He is to treat his wife with the same consideration and kindness that

Yeshua gives him. As the husband grows in the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord and leads his house spiritually, the wife is to be respectfully submissive to his guidance and leadership. But the husband must earn such respect; it is not automatic just because he is the man.

In this context, we can see that when a husband and wife are working together in a Godly way, the wife willfully submits to the husband's leadership role because he has earned her respect and provides Godly leadership. In this type of relationship, the husband has and applies the knowledge and wisdom of Messiah. Because of this, the wife willingly comes to him for guidance and learns from his example. However, if he wishes to "rule" over her, then he has to be ready to accept full responsibility for her actions—right or wrong! God has given the husband an awesome responsibility.

Messiah Yeshua earned the respect of His Bride, the Church. He suffered and died for humanity's sins to pay the price for His Bride. Because of His great love and sacrifice for us, we willfully submit our lives to Him. This is the ideal for the marital relationship. As the husband treats his wife in a Godly manner, she is to give herself totally to him, just as the Bride gives herself totally to Messiah Yeshua. Submission is mutual, one to another, and both to Messiah Yeshua, as part of the Bride.

The husband is to love his wife just as Messiah Yeshua loves the Church. He is to love his wife as he loves his own body (Ephesians 5:28), realizing that when he hurts his wife, he hurts himself, as she is his "other self" and they are one flesh.

Clearly, this type of Godly relationship is not present in physically and mentally abusive relationships. Unfortunately, well-meaning but misguided pastors have counseled women in such abusive relationships to be submissive in every way. They think that by the wife's total submission to the husband, he will realize his wrong behavior and correct it. But this is too often not the case. (For the Biblical perspective and guidance concerning divorce, we highly recommend the book, *Divorce and Remarriage: What Does the Bible Really Say?* by Ralph Woodrow.)

#### NOTES

20. Aryeh Kaplan, *Waters of Eden: The Mystery of the Mikvah*, p. 43.

21. *ArtScroll Tanach Series, Genesis*, Vol. 1(a), p. 111.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

24. Please note that the reference to the Church means all true believers united as one spiritual body, with Messiah Yeshua as the Head. It is not a reference to physical buildings or religious institutions.

## Chapter 5

### WOMEN AS TEACHERS AND LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

But I do not allow a woman to teach [until properly equipped] or exercise authority of man [until properly equipped], but to remain quiet [during instruction] (1 Timothy 2:12).

#### WOMEN AS TEACHERS OF THE WORD OF GOD

In certain Christian churches, women are not allowed to teach in authority positions over men. This erroneous doctrine is the result of misunderstanding key Biblical passages. Correctly understanding the Scriptures frees women from the bondage of erroneous man-made doctrines so that they are allowed to serve as the Lord calls them.

First let us consider the passage in 1 Corinthians:

For God is not (a God) of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law [Instruction] also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church (1 Corinthians 14:33-35).

Paul was dealing with a specific problem in the Corinthian church. Prior to these verses, he addressed the issue of speaking in “tongues” (languages which have not been learned by the speaker), and in maintaining proper order in the church. Paul instructed all members, including men, to be silent rather than to speak out in such a way as to cause disruptions and confusion in the body (1 Corinthians 14: 28, 30). For as he says, God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, and therefore the churches are to be operating in a way that creates order, not disorder, peace, not confusion.

In this regard, women were also speaking out in the Corinthian church in a way that was creating disruption and confusion. Paul said that the women were to keep silent, and take instruction from their husbands. Since at that time women generally did not receive instruction in the Scriptures as did the men, they needed to gain knowledge and understanding from their husbands so as not to disrupt church services with questions and comments that interfered with the orderly teaching of the Word of God.

Paul addressed a similar situation in the church at Ephesus, where the women also required instruction by their husbands concerning the Word of God:

Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness (1 Timothy 2:11).

The word “quietly” actually translates as “in tranquility, not in a disturbing way”; it does not mean complete silence.<sup>25</sup> “Entire submissiveness” refers to the proper order of respect and position. Therefore, Paul states that the wives were to quietly receive proper instruction in proper submissiveness from their husbands at home.

Once women were qualified to teach, they did teach in the Church. In his letter to Titus, Paul refers to women in the role of teaching:

Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good ... (Titus 2:3).

Older women refers to mature women who have the knowledge and understanding required to teach others concerning the Word of God.

Paul's letter to Timothy contains a passage that is taken out of this context to support the erroneous doctrine that women are prohibited from teaching in the Church:

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet (1 Timothy 2:12).

When Paul went to Macedonia, he left Timothy in Ephesus to handle certain problems that were occurring in the Ephesian church. Let us more closely examine this passage. The phrase translated "exercise authority over a man" is more accurately translated "exercise authority of man." This refers to a woman being able and allowed to function in a role of authority (leadership), just as a man is able and allowed to function in a role of authority in the Body of Messiah.

The Greek word, *didaskein*, meaning "to teach," derives from the root word *didasko*.<sup>26</sup> The subject of the sentence is *gunaiki*, the plural form of *gune*, referring to a "woman, married or unmarried," depending upon the context.<sup>27</sup> In this case, the context implies wife or wives.<sup>28</sup>



At issue here are the requirements for teachers of the Word of God, during Paul's time and in the future. And Paul was applying the same basic guideline whether men or women were teachers of the Word of God: No one should be allowed to teach unless and until they are well-grounded and knowledgeable in an accurate understanding of the Word of God.

The existing guidelines of Paul's day followed those applied to men in Judaism in general. For the most part, in those days, male children were taught the Torah (first five books of Moses) and the Psalms. From the ages of 13 to 20, the young men sat with the adult men to learn from adult male teachers. At the age of 20, the man was allowed to ask questions concerning what was being taught, but was still not allowed to teach. Finally, at the age of 30, the man was qualified to teach.

With this understanding, it becomes clear that Paul was establishing guidelines and qualifications concerning teaching of the Scriptures, which reflected the cultural context of the time. Paul was not imposing any more restrictions on the wives than was also applied to the men. The focus has to do with the fact that the women were not qualified to teach at that particular time, because they had not yet learned adequately. In this context, it becomes clear that Paul could not allow a woman to teach YET, that is, not unless and until she was fully qualified to teach sound doctrine. For the same reason, Paul could not YET allow such an unqualified woman to be placed in a leadership role.

It is essential to understand the background of the concerns in that particular situation. Apparently, Timothy had to go to Paul for clarification on the issue of women teaching.

If there had been a blanket rule that no woman, anytime, in any of the churches was allowed to teach, Timothy would not have required Paul's further guidance in the matter.

The following verses, in context with 1 Timothy 2:12, are very interesting, but unfortunately very misunderstood and misapplied with regard to the issue of women as teachers.

For it was Adam who was first created, (and) then Eve. And (it was) not Adam (who) was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression (1 Timothy 2:13-14).

This has nothing to do with a woman (or wife) never being allowed to teach, but is a very hard-hitting statement concerning the qualifications necessary to be a teacher. Paul uses the creation and fall of Adam and Eve to make his point. It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman (wife) of Adam that caused them to fall into transgression. In other words, if Paul allowed these unqualified wives to teach, the result would be the same: the women would be deceived by their lack of knowledge, and lead their husbands into deception. Thus, both would fall into transgression. This is why the husband, having a proper understanding of the Word of God, is supposed to be the head of his household, and teach his wife and children accordingly. (Note: For correct translation and discussion of 1 Timothy 2:15, see Chapter 3, subheading "Spiritual Equality in Messiah Yeshua." Salvation for the woman does not come through childbearing, but comes through the fact that the Messiah Child was born.)

Paul also had to address the issue of men being qualified to teach the Word of God. In Ephesus, certain men were teaching, but teaching erroneous doctrines. Paul told Timothy:

As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus,  
in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines...  
(1 Timothy 1:3).

From this verse, it is apparent that there were even men who were not qualified to be teaching. Paul told Timothy to instruct these men not to teach these wrong doctrines. Basically, Paul is stating that these men ought not to teach until they are properly taught in correct doctrines.

...nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than (furthering) the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions (1 Timothy 1:4-7).

According to 1 Timothy 1:7, these men wanted to be teachers of the Law (Torah), even though they lacked a proper understanding of the Scriptures. Paul makes it clear that not every man can be a teacher. Only those who are qualified and properly instructed can be teachers.

## WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE CHURCH

Let us continue our examination of 1 Timothy to understand the leadership roles available to women, as the Lord calls them for service in the Church.

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires (to do) (1 Timothy 3:1).

Although “the office of overseer” (NASB) or “the office of a bishop” (KJV) is referred to, the word “office” does not appear in the original Greek text:

... in 1 Timothy 3:1, “the office of a bishop,” lit. ‘(if anyone seeketh overseership,’ there is no word representing office.<sup>29</sup>

What is actually being referred to is a supervisory function. The Greek word *episkopos* literally means “overseer.”<sup>30</sup>

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2).

Notice that the ability to teach is one of the qualifications an overseer must possess. This is one who has been proven to be qualified and “skilled in teaching” (Greek: *didaktikos*).<sup>31</sup>

Paul continues to list the qualifications required:

... not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. (He must be) one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take

care of the church of God?); (and) not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil (1 Timothy 3:3-6).

Paul brings out an important point in verse 6 that new converts should not be allowed in such positions. Today, we see certain celebrities and public figures, claiming to be newly “born-again” believers, preaching and teaching on religious TV stations. This is a great error if they lack a solid foundation of Biblical truth.

How many of these individuals are led down the path of a false unity movement, as well as other false doctrines, because they themselves are not well-grounded in the Word of God? If they preach or teach, this error is greatly compounded as many people have a tendency to believe such public icons. It is amazing how so many are so quick to criticize qualified women teaching, yet totally disregard this particular prohibition.

And he must have a good reputation with those outside (the church), so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise (must be) men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain... (1 Timothy 3:7-8).

The above verse is mistranslated in both the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version by the addition of the words “must be men,” which are not present in the original Greek text. Adding these words leads to the erroneous thinking that only men are qualified to become deacons. Both the King James Version (“deacons be grave”)

and the Amplified Bible (“deacons must be worthy of respect”) correctly refer to deacons without the addition of the misleading phrase “must be men.”

The Greek word *diakonos*,<sup>32</sup> translated above as “deacon,” is a generic word which refers to a servant or minister, male or female, who is willfully giving service. Many such examples of the use of this word occur throughout the New Testament.<sup>33</sup> Any English translation that adds the words “must be men” is clearly altering the meaning of the original text, as it is neither in the original text nor implied.

Paul continues his guidelines to Timothy regarding the qualifications of deacons.

... (but) holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach (1 Timothy 3:9-10).

Notice, “let *them* also first be tested; then let *them* serve as deacons.” Again, this is a generic term for anyone who has met the requirements, be they male or female. The proof of this is that in Paul’s following statement, he refers to women (or wives).

Women (must) likewise (be) dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things (1 Timothy 3:11).

This particular passage has been mistranslated in the KJV by the addition of words (“must their” and “be”) that are not in the original Greek text, to make it read as though these women are the wives of male deacons (“Even so must their wives be grave...”). But this is a distortion of the original text.

In context, 1 Timothy 3:11 shows that the women were held to the same high standards as the men when they served the body of believers in the role of deacon.

For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] (1 Timothy 3:13).

Robertson agrees that this refers to:

“women as deacons” (Romans 16:1 about Phoebe) and not women in general or just “wives of deacons.”<sup>34</sup>

Now, let us look at the book of Romans for proof that women were actively involved in teaching and leadership roles in the original Church.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea... (Romans 16:1).

The Amplified Bible translates “our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church,” which is correct. The Greek word *diakonos* translates as deacon, minister, or servant. There is no way to change the word for “sister” to “mister.” Phoebe was a woman and a deacon (minister) to the body in Cenchrea (seaport of Corinth). There is no mention of a man over her, or anyone else in charge other than herself. According to Robertson:

So here verses 1 and 2 constitute Paul’s recommendation of Phoebe, the bearer of the Epistle. ... The etymology of *diakonos* we have had repeatedly. The only question here is whether it is used in a general sense

or in a technical sense as in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8-13. In favour of the technical sense of “deacon” or “deaconess” is the addition of “*tes ekklesias*” (of the church).<sup>35</sup>

Paul goes on to state:

... that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well (Romans 16:2).

Apparently, the woman issue was already a problem, as Paul makes the point that these people should receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints (believers). They, men and women, were being asked to help her in whatever matter she may have had need of them. She was clearly the person who was the minister of that particular body of believers.

The word translated as “helper” is interesting in that it can also be translated as “protectress.”<sup>36</sup> She was a protectress of many, both men and women, in that body concerning the truth of the Scriptures. This gives the understanding that she was the teacher and head of this body. And Paul’s approval of her in this position is obvious, as is clear by his personal praise of her.

Phoebe, a leader in the church at Cenchrea, was highly commended to the church at Rome by Paul (Romans 16:1, 2). Unfortunately, biases of modern English translators have sometimes obscured Phoebe’s position of



leadership, calling her a “servant” or “helper,” etc. Yet Phoebe was *diakonos* of the church at Cenchrea. Paul often used this term for a minister or leader of a congregation and applied it specifically to Jesus Christ, Tychicus, Epaphras, Timothy, and to his own ministry. Depending on the context, *diakonos* is usually translated “deacon” or “minister.” Though some translators have chosen the word deaconess (because Phoebe was a woman), such a distinction is not in the original Greek. It seems likely that *diakonos* was the designation for an official leadership position in the Early Church.<sup>37</sup>

Another example of the woman being in a leadership position, even in regard to her own husband, is Prisca:

Greet Prisca [Priscilla] and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus  
[Messiah Yeshua] ... (Romans 16:3).

Aquila and Prisca (Priscilla) were husband and wife, but the wife’s name is mentioned first in the Greek text, indicating that she was first in position in the work and teaching in the church. Yet the King James Version puts the man’s name first, a deliberate manipulation of the text. This is illustrative of how human bias distorts the Word of God.

Four out of six times her name stands before that of Aquila (Acts 18:18, 26 [not in KJV]; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19). ... After hearing Apollos in the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila “expounded to him the way of God more accurately” (18:26). The order of their names indicates that Priscilla was the leading spirit in this ministry to Apollos.<sup>38</sup>

Paul refers to Prisca and Aquila as “my fellow workers in Christ Jesus” (Messiah Yeshua). The Greek word *sunergos*,<sup>39</sup> fellow workers, means that they were doing the same kind of work as Paul, which includes teaching and ministering the Gospel. Therefore, Prisca is clearly a teacher of the Scriptures to both men and women, as was Paul.

... who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles... (Romans 16:4).

The dedication and commitment of Prisca and Aquila are shown by the fact that they had helped Paul at great personal risk. Surely, this would have included their defending the teachings of Paul to those who came against him.

... also (greet) the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ in Asia (Romans 16:5).

Paul mentions that this body of believers meets in the home of Prisca and Aquila. Both shared in the work and teaching of this body. However, Prisca held the primary position, with great approval and support of Paul.

In greeting the members of the church in Rome, Paul reveals how the women were working right along side of the men in all endeavors relating to the Gospel message of Messiah Yeshua.

Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you (Romans 16:6).

Mary worked hard for the body of believers. The word “worked” is translated from the Greek word *ekopiasen*, denoting every type of work or task undertaken for the Gospel. This means she also spread the message to men and women by teaching.

Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me (Romans 16:7).

In the previous 1999 edition of this study, we the authors had stated there existed “some controversy as to the name Junia or Junias.” However, during our preparation of the 2003 edition for publication, Mark Ensign, of the Messianic Congregation Adot Adonai, happened to send us his excellent study, *The Status and Role of Women in the First Century Messianic Community*. Not only does Mark’s research confirm the correct rendering of the name as Junia, but also shows that the Greek text was manipulated in order to protect and justify a male-only hierarchy:

There is no evidence contrary to the understanding that Paul is referring to a woman, however. In fact, this person is referred to as a woman by [Church Fathers] John Chrysostom and Jerome. Catherine Kroeger has concluded that indeed early tradition considered Junia an apostle and it was not until the Middle Ages that this identity was questioned. In the Middle Ages a male-oriented church hierarchy could not conceive of a female apostle. The name Junia was changed to the masculine form Junias by translators and appears as such in manuscripts from that time on. This is in spite of the fact that the masculine form is ‘unknown in antiquity, and

there is absolutely no literary, epigraphical, or papyrological evidence for it.<sup>40</sup>

In this case, the New American Standard, New International, and Amplified versions have the incorrect “Junias,” whereas the King James Version has the correct “Junia.”

Paul mentions two more women, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who served together as colaborers in the Lord, right along with the men.

Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord (Romans 16:12).

Interestingly:

Both names occur among slaves at the imperial court of Claudius and they have been found in a cemetery used chiefly for the emperor’s servants. They may be among “the saints of Caesar’s household” (Phil 4:22).

In another passage, Paul apparently makes an interesting reference to his mother:

Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine (Romans 16:13).

This verse brings up a very interesting sidelight:

Taking these words at their face value could only mean that Rufus (Pudens) and Paul were sons of the same mother. Some Biblical scholars have suggested that the woman was Paul’s “spiritual mother.” But a spiritual mother, or father, was one who had converted another and it is

well known that Paul was converted by Christ Himself on the road to Damascus. The implication is that St. Paul and Rufus Pudens Pudentius were half-brothers, and this is not contradicted by the facts.<sup>41</sup>

There is a definite possibility that Paul's mother is being referred to in Romans 16:13. Tracing the historical background, E. Raymond Capt explains that Paul's mother may have married a second time and had another son, Rufus Pudens, Paul's half-brother. The ancient writers record that Paul spent most of his time in Rome with the Pudens family, whose residence became famous as a Christian sanctuary. The children of Rufus and Claudia (a devout Christian and adopted daughter of the Emperor Claudius) were "brought up at the knee of St. Paul," according to the "Roman Martyrologies."<sup>42</sup>

This historical information makes sense if Paul and Rufus were half-brothers.<sup>43</sup> If indeed this was the case, we can see that Paul's mother and step-brother were also workers in teaching and ministry.

Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them (Romans 16:14-15).

Just look at all the wives and women mentioned in these verses: all coworkers with Paul in the spreading of the Gospel message. These women had learned and were now totally qualified to teach and to work side by side with the men.

The instances of women filling leadership roles in the Bible should be taken as a divinely approved pattern, not as exceptions to divine decrees.

Even a limited [number] of women with scripturally commended leadership roles should affirm that God does indeed call women to spiritual leadership.<sup>44</sup>

There are those who say that women cannot be leaders or teachers, but both the Old and New Testaments affirm women called by the Lord for such service. There are those who admit what the Scriptures clearly show, but then justify denying women leadership or teaching roles saying that those examples in the Scriptures are the exception rather than the rule. Going by their own reasoning, if God made exceptions in the past, then why do they seek to deny God the option of making any exceptions today? Nevertheless, it is clear that God in His Word never made any decrees forbidding women teaching and leadership roles in His Church.

Before the resurrection, Yeshua could not use women to their fullest capacity as He had not yet redeemed them from the curse of The Fall. It was not until after the resurrection that all of this could and did occur. Galatians 3:28 is made alive and the wives and women were all one in the Lord Yeshua.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Great Commission is not for men only. Messiah Yeshua includes all believers, women as well as men, to go out and teach the Good News to all who will listen, and to

make learners (disciples) of all the nations. In this regard, let us remember that it is the Lord Himself Who calls an individual to His service, be that man or woman. And as Scripture says, God shows no partiality and makes no distinction among individuals (Romans 2:11; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 6:9).

#### NOTES

25. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (New American Standard), pp. 1599-1600.

26. W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 4, p. 111.

27. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp. 215, 227.

28. Zodhiates, p. 1599.

29. Vine, Vol. 1, p. 129.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

31. Vine, Vol. 4, p. 112.

32. Vine, Vol. 1, pp. 272-273.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 273. Scriptures specifically referring to servants of Messiah in the work of preaching and teaching include: 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:23, 25; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 1 Timothy 4:6.

34. Robertson, Vol. IV, p. 575.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 425.

36. Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, p. 481.

37. Assemblies of God Beliefs, Position Paper: “*The Role of Women in Ministry*,” [http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position\\_papers/4191\\_women\\_ministry.cfm](http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position_papers/4191_women_ministry.cfm), Assemblies of God Web Site, © 2003, The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1445 North Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802.
38. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 232.
39. Vine, Vol. 2, p. 215 and Vol. 4, p. 232.
40. Mark Ensign, *The Status and Role of Women in the First Century Messianic Community* (unpublished manuscript), Adot Adonai, Amarillo, Texas, © 2002. Quote is from Lenore Lindsey Mullican’s article, “Women in Leadership,” *Restore! Magazine*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, p. 4, Atlanta, GA: Restoration Foundation, <http://www.restorationfoundation.org>.
41. E. Raymond Capt, *The Lost Chapter of Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 20-21.
42. Ibid., pp. 18-21.
43. According to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, there was a Roman military governor of Judea by the name of Rufus. His family could have gone to Rome, where it played an active role in the Church. Rufus’ martyrdom is noted in Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians XI:1 c. A.D. 135 (Vol. 5, p. 174).
44. Assemblies of God Beliefs, Position Paper: “*The Role of Women in Ministry*.”



## Chapter 6 WOMEN’S DRESS AND ADORNMENT

And let not your adornment be (merely) external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but (let it be) the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:3-4).

### PROPER DRESS AND ADORNMENT

Some churches believe that it is improper for a woman to adorn herself with regard to dress, jewelry, or hairstyle. However, this erroneous doctrine, based upon a misunderstanding of 1 Timothy 2:9, is not supported by the entire context of Biblical Scripture.

Let us begin with a description of Jerusalem as a bride in the book of Ezekiel. The Word of God is spoken through the great prophet to the people of Jerusalem:

“I also clothed you with embroidered cloth, and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. And I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands, and a necklace around your neck. I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey, and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty” (Ezekiel 16:10-13).

The above passage clearly shows the use of beautiful clothing of fine linen, silk, and embroidering, as well as various items of gold and silver jewelry, such as bracelets, necklaces, earrings, etc. Why would the Lord use this type of description to portray Jerusalem if it were unacceptable to the Lord for women to adorn themselves in this way?

From the beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, we can see that it was an acceptable practice for women of God to be adorned. When Abraham sent Nahor to obtain Rebekah as a bride for Isaac, articles of silver and gold, including bracelets and a gold ring, were given to her as gifts. Furthermore, the woman of God described in Proverbs 31 is shown to cloth her family in fine garments of scarlet. So we can see that fine clothing and jewelry were acceptable and enjoyed by women of God since ancient times. Nowhere in the Bible does God forbid the wearing of jewelry or fine clothing.

The source of the confusion lies in a misunderstanding of the context of what Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:9-10:

Likewise, (I want) women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

To clear up this confusion, let us also refer to Peter's instructions in 1 Peter 3:3-4:

And let not your adornment be (merely) external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but (let it be) the hidden

person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:3-4).

In essence Peter and Paul are saying the same thing. That is, a woman's adornment should not be *merely* external, but should especially be internal, of the spirit. As women did adorn themselves according to custom, they were likewise to adorn themselves in their good works and in the proper attitude and beauty of their inner spirits.

The word “merely” is implied within the context of Peter's statement. That it is why it appears in the English translation, either in italics or in parentheses to indicate that it is added for clarification. The word “only” (or “merely”) could likewise be added as an implied word in Paul's statement: “Likewise I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not (only) with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works ...” (1 Timothy 2:9).

What many have failed to understand is that these verses are using a very common HEBREW IDIOM. An “idiom” is a manner of speaking distinctive of a certain people or language. In this case, the idiom was a manner of speaking which would minimize a first clause in order to emphasize a second clause. Today, in order to express the thought contained in this type of idiom, we would place the word “only” in the first clause, and “also” (or perhaps “rather”) in the second clause, as follows: “Let not a woman's adorning be (only) that of outward things—such as fixing her hair, wearing gold, or pearls, or apparel—but (also, rather) let it be the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit.” With this,

the emphasis is on the second clause, *but it does not do away with the first clause*. It is in addition to it.<sup>45</sup>

Understanding of the context of the Hebrew language and culture, as well as the entire Biblical context, clearly shows that Peter and Paul were in agreement that women's adornment was to be not only external, of the outer being, but also and especially internal, of the inner being.

#### HEAD COVERING

Some churches require that a woman wear head covering during prayer and church. This erroneous doctrine stems from a misunderstanding of Paul's instructions to the believers in the Greek city of Corinth.

Every man who has (something) on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man (1 Corinthians 11:4-7).

The question Paul was answering for the Corinthian believers had to do with whether or not they should follow the Greek customs regarding head covering for men and women.

The Greek customs were different than the Jewish tradition. Jewish men covered their heads during prayer (and this is still practiced today). However, the Greek men in Corinth did not cover their heads, indicating that they were freemen.<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, Greek women did cover themselves to show that they were under the protectiveness of their husbands.<sup>47</sup> In marked contrast, women who did not cover their heads included the *hetairai*, who were courtesans or concubines, usually educated slaves.<sup>48</sup> This group was especially numerous in Corinth, a trading center well-known for its luxury and immorality.<sup>49</sup> And Paul's reference to the shaving of a woman's head relates to the fact that some female slaves and temple prostitutes had their heads shaved. The shaving of a woman's head was also punishment for an adulteress among the Greeks.<sup>50</sup>

From an understanding of the cultural background of this city, we can clearly see that the decision for a woman to cover herself reflected her morality and status. A woman of propriety would therefore choose to cover herself so as not to bring reproach upon herself or her family. This was a situation that had everything to do with the time and place, and was not a blanket rule that all women of the church were required to cover their heads in church for all time.

The question facing the Corinthian church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, was whether to follow the Greek or Jewish practice. Paul left the decision to them:

Judge [decide] for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God  
(with head) uncovered? (1 Corinthians 11:13).

Paul's advice indicates that to reject the Greek custom would bring reproach upon the women. If they did not cover themselves with a veil during public worship, they would be likened to the unveiled courtesans. In this case, they might as well be shaved, placing themselves in the same category as an adulterous woman or a temple prostitute.

#### THE BIBLICAL GUIDELINE FOR PROPER DRESS

The basic Biblical guideline regarding proper dress is God's instruction in Deuteronomy:

“A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 22:5).

The command against a woman wearing a man's clothes and a man wearing a woman's clothes must be appropriately applied within the cultural context. Proper dress varies according to culture and time.

In Biblical times, men and women wore similarly styled clothing (robe-like garments). The wearing of pants as we know it in Western civilization today does not at all reflect common attire for men of the Biblical period. Therefore, to say women should not wear slacks or pants is totally out of context in regard to God's guideline for proper and appropriate dress. It is the principle that needs to be applied, within the cultural context.

That is what Paul was doing when he wrote to the Corinthian church. He was applying the Biblical principle of proper and appropriate dress for men and women, according to the cultural context of the time and place.

#### PROPER HAIR LENGTH FOR MEN AND WOMEN

The issue of hair length in men and women is raised in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15. This scriptural passage has been misused to condemn long hair for men, and short hair and the cutting of hair for women. Again, the entire context of Biblical Scripture disproves such erroneous thinking and doctrines.

There are two examples of Godly men in the Old Testament who had long hair. Both Samson and Samuel, as Nazarites consecrated to God, took a vow not to cut their hair. Furthermore, it is important to note that in general, hairstyles for men during Biblical times were not the very short hairstyles of today's Western world.

With regard to women, nowhere does the Bible forbid the cutting of hair. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul is dealing with the customs of Greek society. In this context, the cutting of a woman's hair or the shaving of her head was done to slaves, temple prostitutes, and adulterous women. This has nothing to do with women trimming their hair or wearing it in the shorter styles of today. (See also Chapter 3 "Headship and Covering".)

## NOTES

45. Ralph Woodrow, *Women's Adornment: What Does the Bible Really Say?* pp. 11-12.
46. Zodhiates, p. 1519, footnote.
47. Ibid.
48. *Webster's New World Dictionary*, p. 633.
49. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 961.
50. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 160.



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