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Page | 1

Women in Ministry

Radically Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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Page | 2

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The Ministry of Women

Introduction:

The subject of this lesson on women in the ministry is one of great controversy. It has been so throughout Church history and undoubtedly will continue to be until Christ returns again.

Some churches allow total equality of the woman with the man when it comes to the ministry in churches. Others permit no ministry at all by women. Some endeavor to take a middle of the road approach, endeavoring to avoid extremes.

Most times, the subject is dealt with in such a negative way, in traditional bigotry, instead of searching the Scriptures fully and dealing with the positive things pertaining to the place of women in the Church. Many Churches have far more women believers than men. Salvation is for both men and women.

In these days of "Equal Rights," and "Women's Liberation Movements" and various militant Feminist Movements and groups arising, the Church needs to re-evaluate this subject and take a deeper look into Scripture on this matter. This is a generation when there is such a reversal of roles as pertaining to men and women. If ever women should find their place and find fulfillment, surely it should be in the redemptive and covenant community, the Church.

Oftentimes men react to dominant mothers or passive fathers. World Wars bring women into working positions and men's jobs, emptying the home. Women become independent of the man's salary, doing their own job. Thus women are no longer satisfied with being a mother and wife, a homemaker, with a family to raise for God.

The "liberation" humanistic philosophy brings dissatisfaction to the woman and the

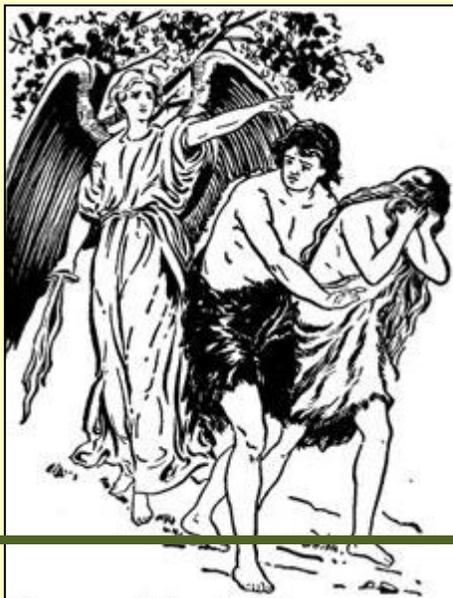
woman tries to be something she was not created to be. She tries to be a man, and failing to be such becomes frustrated that she does not even fulfill her womanhood. The prophecy of Isaiah is applicable today in the rise of ungodly women's movements when he says "Children are their oppressors and *women* rule over them"(Isaiah 3:12). Such was an indictment on the men who failed to take their leadership under God. Many cultures degrade womanhood. The woman is the slave of the man. This is seen in nations like India, Africa, Muslim countries, etc. Only where the Judeo-Christian Ethic has touched has there been any standard set for the protection of womanhood.

The major Principle of Interpreting Scripture is "*The Context Principle.*" Therefore one must take the total Biblical revelation concerning women and not base the rejection of women's ministry upon one or two verses of Paul's writings, which have been misinterpreted to suppress a woman's role.

Each local church should come to some conviction based on the Word of God and act accordingly.

The final court of appeal for all matters of faith and practice is the Word of God and not the standards of a society or lack of them.

This lesson endeavors to present a balanced view on this vital subject. At the conclusion of the lesson the "problem Scriptures" will be dealt with.



A. Order in Creation

Genesis 1:26-28; 2; 1 Corinthians 11:8. In these passages, we have the account of the creation of man and woman. There are some important things to notice as to Divine order established in the creation of

man and woman before the entrance of sin.

When God created the man and woman, His Divine order was first the MAN, then the WOMAN (I Timothy 2:13).

This was before the Fall or entrance of sin. This was the Divine order.

The man and the woman were created *equal* as persons, to rule and reign together over all creation as king and queen. God blessed *them* and gave *them* dominion. There was a joint-relationship. He called “their name Adam” (Genesis 1:26-28; 5:1-2).

This order of the man and the woman did not mean the superiority of the man. It did not mean the inferiority of the woman. It did not mean inequality as persons. It simply was the Divine order in the family as God intended the family to be.

Adam was first formed, then Eve. Priority in creation sets the order of man first, not the woman. The man was created first by God. Eve was not created to direct or control Adam. In this order in creation, the woman did not have authority over the man. The man was her covering, authority, headship and protection. They were heirs together of the grace of life. Order in this original home was thus established by God.

The original woman was created to be a “helpmeet” (Genesis 2:18) for the first man. It means “a helper suitable” (NAS); “suitable, adapted, completing” (Amp. OT); “counterpart” (Berry in Interlinear OT); or “a completing partner.”

It was not a term describing the woman as a subordinate. They were to rule together as mutual rulers over creation.

Thus they were partakers of the one name “Adam” (Genesis 3:20; 5:1-2).

The woman was complementary, yet distinctive. It is worthy to note that the first

woman, the original female was called:

a. ADAM or MAN. The “MAN” in the image of God was (Hebrew) “*Ish*” and “*Ishshah*” (Genesis 1:27; 2:23; 5:2). Thus we have the masculine part of the man and the feminine part of the man-made in God’s image.

b. WOMAN. (Genesis 2:23). Literally meaning “man-ess.” It is more a generic term than a name. It is associated with her relationship to Adam which she was created to fill. That is, to be his counterpart, his wife.

Woman is the womb-man, or man with the womb (Genesis 2:7, 8, 18-25). Therefore, we have MAN and WOMB-MAN (Wo-Man).

c. EVE (Genesis 3:20). Eve means “Life, life-giver, mother of all living, mother of the living one.” It was a prophetic name. Adam gave his wife this name after the Fall. Previously they together were “Adam,” but now it is “Adam and Eve.”

The woman was created to be the help-meet of man. That is, she was to be his aid, help, to surround, protect and succor the man. Each was to complete the other. The woman was created to be the mother of his children (Psalms 128:3).

She was to be virtuous, prudent and the builder of the family household (Proverbs 12:4; 14:1; 19:14; 31:10-31). When Adam found his wife he found a good thing (Proverbs 18:22).

The woman is not without the man, neither the man without the woman in the Lord. The woman is the glory of the man and man is the glory of God. The woman was made for the man (I Corinthians 11:1-16).

The man and the woman were co-equal when both were without sin. Each had their distinctive function as persons. One was the man, to be the husband and the father.

The other was the woman, to be the wife and the mother. Together they would raise the family for God. They would be fruitful and multiply and thus reproduce themselves (Genesis 1:26-31).

Thus before the Fall we have Divine order and the male headship. This is seen by the very fact that the order of creation was first the man, then the woman. It was not the superiority of the man nor inferiority of the woman. It was Divine order in creation (I Timothy 2:11-13; I Corinthians 11:3, 7-9).

B. Order in the Fall

(Genesis 3; I Timothy 2:14; II Corinthians 11:1-3).

In Genesis 3, we have the account of the Fall of the Man and Woman, and the entrance of sin into the human race.

Paul says that Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. In the Fall, therefore, we see a reversal of the order of creation.

The woman, apparently away from her husband, from her headship and covering in Adam, was deceived into violating the commandment of the Lord. (Note -- it is hard to think that Adam was just standing there listening to a serpent talk to his wife without him saying anything!!).

The Scripture account records that Eve herself said, “The serpent *beguiled me and I did eat.*” *This is her own confession of how she was led into sin. No doubt God had given the original commandment to Adam, so the woman was responsible to her husband in this matter of obedience to the commandment of the Lord.*

Thus we see in the Fall, the woman took the leadership over the man, over her husband and headship. She ate first and gave to her husband. Creation’s order was reversed. The woman, not the man, was the first to sin, the first and original sinner!

Man sinned by taking from the woman. Adam confessed, “The woman gave me and I did eat.”

Thus the man who was the first in order now takes orders from the woman. The order of creation was reversed in the order of the Fall. The woman was *first* deceived. Adam and Eve both violated their positions and there was a reversal of roles.

Eve was deceived by “the doctrine of devils” (cf. I Timothy 4:1-2). She needed to have a covering on her head because of the angels (i.e., The fallen angel, Satan, who deceived her). She was away from headship. She was out from under covering. As noted, it is hard to perceive why the Devil came to the woman and not to Adam. It is hard to conceive that Adam stood silently by while the serpent carried on this deceptive conversation with his wife without him saying a word against it when he had been specifically given the word of commandment (Genesis 2:16, 17).

The woman was more easily led astray than the man. The woman thus usurped authority over the man. Man subordinated himself to this out of love, obeyed her and ate of the forbidden fruit. Sin corrupted the loving headship of the man and the submission of the woman. Both became guilty rebels before God (Romans 5:12-21).

C. Order in Divine Judgment (Genesis 3).

We note the order of Divine judgment after the Fall and the entrance of sin. This order pertains to God’s redemptive plan. These things have a definite bearing on God’s order as it pertains to man and woman, the husband and the wife. The whole purpose in redemption from sin is to bring man and woman back to God’s order in creation before sin.

1. **Judgment on the Serpent** (Genesis 3:14, 15; Isaiah 65:25).

- a. The serpent cursed with an irrevocable curse.
- b. The seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head in due time, and it would be a MAN-CHILD that would do this, born of a virgin woman.

2. **Judgment on the Woman** (Genesis 3:16; I Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22).

- a. Multiplied sorrow on the woman.
- b. Multiplied conception. Sorrow in birth and motherhood (I Timothy 2:15).
- c. Headship of the man over the woman. She would be subject to her husband and know the rule of man over her. "Thy desire shall be subject to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

It seems evident that Eve had disobeyed the command of the Lord through Adam's lips, for he had been given that word (I Timothy 2:12-14). She usurped authority over her husband.

Some expositors suggest "You shall desire to have your husband's place of authority. You shall want his place of leadership over you, but it shall not be. He shall be your authority. The woman would desire to take his rule away from over her, to assert herself."

Before they ruled co-jointly together. Now the man would rule over her.

It is evident that there was more judgment on the woman because of her initiative in the Fall. It is evident also that there was a subjection of the woman to the man. Instead of *joint-rulership*, rulership was left to the man while *subjection* is placed on the woman (Genesis 3:16. Amp. OT). "Your desire and craving shall be for your husband, and he

shall rule over you.” Strong’s concordance says: “*To rule*,” i.e., have dominion, govern, reign, have power.

Before sin, both ruled together. Since sin came by the woman (though charged to the man. Romans 5:12-21), the woman is ruled over by the man.

So the woman would seek to rule her husband and not be subject to him. This thought is confirmed in Ephesians 5, where Paul tells wives to be subject to their own husbands in the Lord.

3. **Judgment on the Man** (Genesis 3:17-19; 2:17).

- a. To eat of a cursed earth in sorrow all the days of his life.
- b. Work to be sweat and toil, hard labor.
- c. Death would return them to the dust of the earth from whence he was taken (Ecclesiastes 2:23; 3:20; Job 21:26).
- d. Death would pass upon all of Adam’s race for sin entered his seed (Romans 5:12; I Corinthians 15:22).

Thus order in Divine Judgment is first on the Serpent Satan, then on the Woman, then the Man and finally the Earth.

D. Order in Redemption

In the midst of these judgments God promised that redemption would come through “the seed of the woman” (Genesis 3:15).

Thus, even though sin and death entered by the woman, yet God would bring

redemption by the seed of the woman.

However, this seed would be A MAN born of A WOMAN to redeem both the MAN and the WOMAN and restore man back to the image of God from whence had fallen. In I Timothy 3:15, according to the best authorities, the woman (as also the man), will experience salvation by the bearing of the Christ-child (Matthew 1:18-21; Luke 3:30-33; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-9; Galatians 4:4; I Timothy 2:15, Amp. NT).

God would use A WOMAN for the bringing forth of His only begotten SON, the Saviour of the world. He would not use the seed of A MAN, though the Saviour would be A MAN!

Thus we have the seed of the woman, then through the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David and then the virgin Mary, of whom Christ, after the flesh, was born. Paul, softening the seeming severity of the reasons given in I Timothy 2:13, 14 brings in the first prophecy of redemption from Genesis 3:15. Blessing is secured through Christ's birth of a human mother, a woman. There is salvation for the woman though subject to man's authority.

There is a Satanic hatred and enmity against women manifest throughout human history. Undoubtedly this is because Eve exposed the fact that the serpent, Satan, was a deceiver, and also because of the promise of the Lord that "the seed of the woman" would in due time crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

Thus in I Timothy 2:13, was the Order in Creation; Man first, then the Woman (Genesis 1-2); and in verse 14, is the Order of the Fall; Woman first, then the Man (Genesis 3:1-6); and in verse 15, we see Order in Redemption; Woman brings forth the Man Christ (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus Christ will bring us back to God's original order which will be Man (Christ) first, then the Woman (The Church), which is NEW CREATION ORDER! (Ephesians 5:23-

33). Even though Christ has made redemption possible by the word of Calvary, and both man and woman will be ultimately restored to that from which they fell, yet there will still be Divine order.

Though there is equality as persons, yet, the man is first, then the woman. Even in the spiritual plane, Christ the Man is first, then the Woman, the Church is next in place and in order. This will be so throughout eternity. Christ is the HEAD of the Church, which is His Body. This is the Divine order.

Redemption brings back *order in the home* between husband and wife.

Redemption brings *order in the Church* between man and woman.

Both the natural and spiritual relationships between husband and wife and Christ and His Church are woven together in Ephesians 5:23-33. Paul blends them into each other by Divine revelation.

E. Order in the Christian Home

(Ephesians 5:23-33; I Corinthians 7; 11; I Timothy 2:13-15).

Redemption's work is to bring back the man and the woman into Divine order. The Christian home should be a place of order. Husband and wife relationships should exemplify and typify the relationship of Christ and His Bride, the Church.

Paul's writings are very clear as to the order in the home. The husband is the head, the covering, the protecting lover and the provider for the home. The wife is to be submitted to love and honor and reverence her husband's headship. She is to be under his love and covering. Though co-equal as persons, yet there is Divine order. Nothing alters this fact (I Corinthians 11:3, 7; Ephesians 5:22, 25, 28, 33).

The husband is to love his wife AS Christ loves the Church. The wife is to submit

herself to her husband and reverence him. Read I Peter 3:18 also.

The basic calling of God on the woman is to become a daughter, a wife, a mother and a home-maker. The basic calling of God on the man is to be a son, then a husband, a father and a home-builder and provider.

Together the husband and wife make the team. These Scriptures should be studied in connection with these comments. Genesis 2:18-25; I Corinthians 11:1-10; Ephesians 5:23-33; I Peter 3:1-8; Proverbs 31:10-31; Titus 2; 4, 5; I Timothy 5:14; Proverbs 12:4; 14:1.

Humanist Philosophy takes the woman out of her home, makes her feel she is a slave by being a home-maker, and thus seeks to destroy the first God-ordained basic unity, that is, the family.

Blessed is the man who has a prudent wife, who can guide the house, love her husband, love her children and be the glory of their husband (Proverbs 19:14; 18:22; 31:31).

In the home we have the natural house. Here the wife is subject to the husband as the husband is subject to Christ. Here the woman exercises authority because she is under authority. She does not usurp authority. The man is the covering, the protection, the head of the house because he himself is under the covering, protection and headship of Christ. He exercises authority because he himself is under authority.

The Christian home should demonstrate Divine order. For, how can a man or a woman exercise ministry in the house of the Lord, the Church, if their own house is out of Divine order? For, beyond the natural house and home order, God may place a spiritual calling on either the man or the woman relative to the Church, the house of God. But as it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual. There must be Divine order of the man and the woman.

Many good textbooks are available dealing with the relationship of the husband and wife in the home.

F. Order in the Church -- The Old Testament

We come now to the major purpose of this lesson and that is concerning God's order in the New Covenant community of believers -- the Church. Whether we speak of the Old Testament Church in the Wilderness (Acts 7:38), or the New Testament Church, there must be Divine order.

In this section, we consider the order of men and women under the Old Testament times. Then, we consider subsequently Divine order for men and women under New Covenant times. The Apostle Paul deals with such in the New Testament Epistles.

The point to be remembered is that men and women are *redemptively equal but functionally different*, whether in Old or New Covenant times.

In redemption, Christ is THE MAN, representing rulership, headship, covering and loving care and protection. Christ represents that which is masculine, and objective truth.

The Church is THE WOMAN, representing submission, that which is feminine and subjective truth. The figure of the Church as "the woman" is used of both men and women who are "in Christ" (Ephesians 5:23-33; Revelation 7:1-4; 14:1-4; 12:1).

In the natural house, as the wife is subject to her husband, so in the spiritual house, the Church is subject to Christ. Paul speaks of both the natural and the spiritual house in I Timothy 2:9-15 and I Timothy 3:1-16).

1. Ministry of Women in the Old Testament

We consider the ministry of women in the Old Covenant times as to Godliness and any calling of God they fulfilled under Divine order and headship.

There are many women mentioned in the Scriptures, both Godly and Ungodly, even as it is written of men.

Godly women are noted such as Eve, Rahab, Naomi, Miriam, Esther, Sarah, Rebekah and so forth. These were women of faith and of Godly character qualities.

Ungodly women also are seen in people like Jezebel, Michael, Lot's wife, Vashti and women harlots who destroyed the lives of men as well as their own.

(Herbert Lockyer deals with these in his excellent book "*All the Women of the Bible*).

Godly women fulfilled the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:21-31, while wicked women are likened to the evil woman of Proverbs 4. However, we especially look at the list of women who were gifted of the Lord in spiritual giftings and ministry.

a. Women Prophetesses

There were a number of women whom God called to be His mouthpiece and prophetesses with the prophetic word and the word of the Lord in their mouth.

* **Miriam** was a prophetess (Hebrew "Nebiah," a female preacher, a prophetess, or generally, inspired woman; by implication, a poetess; by association, a prophet's wife). She prophesied before the hosts of Israel (Exodus 15:20). She sang the song of the Lord and led the women with timbrels and dancing before all Israel (Psalms 68:25; Numbers 12:1-10). God classes Miriam with Moses and Aaron and declared through the prophet Micah (Micah 6:4). "For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and

redeemed you out of the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.”

* **Deborah** was a judge, a Prophetess and a Mother in Israel for a period of 40 years (Judges 4:4; 5:7-15). She had the authority of a prophetess, a revealer of God’s will to Israel, and was acknowledged and submitted to as in the cases of the male Judges who succeeded her. She was also the military head of 10,000 men because Barak refused to go to battle without her. She was a married woman, the wife of Lapidoth. Her heart was towards the Governors of Israel that offered themselves willingly among the people. A curse came on some of the inhabitants because they failed to come to the help of the Lord under her leadership. Blessing came also on another woman, Jael, who was used to smite the head of Sisera, the enemy of the people of God. Deborah also sang the song of the Lord, the second recorded song in Scripture. No other of the Judges was called a Prophet until Samuel came, who was the last of the Judges and first of the Prophets.

* **Huldah** was a prophetess. In II Kings 22:12-20 and II Chronicles 34:22, we have the account of the king sending the high priest, the scribe and others to Huldah, the prophetess, and wife of Shallum, who dwelt at Jerusalem, at the college, to enquire at her mouth the will of God with reference to the book of the law found in the temple of God. Here leading men recognized the word of the Lord in the mouth of this woman and accepted her “Thus saith the Lord.”

* **Isaiah’s wife** was a prophetess also, sharing in her husband’s ministry somehow (Isaiah 8:1-3).

* **Noadiah** was a false prophetess in the time of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 6:14). There were true prophets at that time also, these being Zechariah and Haggai.

* **False prophetesses and prophets** are also dealt with in Ezekiel, chapter 13.

* **Anna** was a prophetess. She was a widow of 84 years of age, serving God in the temple.

And she (Anna) was a widow of about 84 years, which departed not from the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. She coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all that looked for redemption in Israel (Luke 2:37, 38).

Simeon had just prophesied beforehand of the Christ-child. Now, Anna, a prophetess follows likewise. It was during the same service. It was public, before men and women. The Jews accepted her as a prophetess. She was the first woman to publicly proclaim Jesus at His circumcision and naming in the temple.

b. Women were also used in the making of the Tabernacle of the Lord (Exodus 38:8; I Samuel 2:22). The word “assembled” means “to be in the host or to serve it.”

c. The Law of the Nazarites was for women as well as men. Nazarites were consecrated and separated to the Lord for sacred purposes (Numbers 6:1-27).

d. A wise woman saved a city from destruction (II Samuel 20:16-22).

e. A little girl witnessed to Captain Naaman about the true God of Israel who could heal leprosy (II Kings 5).

f. The woman Abigail gave David the king a word of wisdom. David was humble enough to receive it and save himself from bloodshed that he would regret in the time he came to his throne (I Samuel 25).

g. The five daughters of Zelophehad came before Moses, Eliezer the high priest, and the princes of the congregation and received their inheritances by the law of

the Lord. Daughters were then entitled to receive inheritances if there were no male inheritors (Numbers 27:1-7; Joshua 15:6-19; 17:3, 4; Job 42:14).

h. Esther the Queen saved her own nation from death under the counsel of Mordecai and her request to her husband (Esther 1-11).

i. Ruth the Moabites came into the faith of Israel and her name is in the genealogy of the Messiah (Ruth 1-4; Matthew 1).

j. Athaliah was a wicked queen who usurped the authority of the throne by slaying the royal seed (II Kings 8:26; II Chronicles 22:1-12).

k. Rahab, the harlot was saved by faith. She also has her name in Messiah's seed-line (Joshua 2; Hebrews 11:31; Matthew 1).

l. Women had faith for the resurrection of their children (Hebrews 11:35; II Kings 4:18-37).

m. Women were involved in the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity (Nehemiah 3:12).

n. Heman, the singer, had daughters, as well as sons, who sang the songs of the Lord (I Chronicles 25:5, 6).

o. In the restoration from Babylon, there were "singing men and singing women" also. The temple chambers were set aside for singers (Nehemiah 7:67; Ezekiel 40:44).

p. God used widows to minister hospitality to the prophets, Elijah and Elisha (I Kings 17; II Kings 4).

Widows were honored of God (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 14:28; 16:11; 24:17; Jeremiah 49:11).

q. Hannah was a godly woman, married to Elkanah. She was a woman of much prayer, and when Samuel was born, she gave forth a prophetic song of the Lord and was the first person to speak of “The Anointed,” or “The Messiah” under Old Covenant times (I Samuel 1-2).

r. God speaks of His nation Israel as a “Woman,” thus including both men and women under this figure (Jeremiah 3:1-20).

Thus, we have a variety of things in which women were involved under Old Testament times besides their responsibilities as wives and mothers in the home.

The highest calling that God ever gave to women in the Old Testament was on those He placed the prophetic mantle. To be His mouthpiece and His voice to the people of God was indeed the highest calling. Prophets and Prophetesses were the channels of bringing the word of the Lord to His people.

2. Old Testament Prophets

While there were many more male prophets than female prophetesses, the Old Testament prophets foretold of a coming day when the Spirit would be poured out on ALL flesh and the prophetic Spirit would be available for all men and women.

a. In the last days the Lord would pour out His Spirit on all flesh and “the sons and daughters, and servants and handmaidens” would prophesy. There is no mistake about the fulfillment of this prophecy, for, Peter, the Apostle on the Day of Pentecost quotes from Joel 2, and told the astounded Jews that this was the fulfillment of this utterance. Men and women spake in tongues the wonderful works of God.

b. In Psalms 68:11, we also have a prophetic word. It is a prophetic Psalm which the Apostle Paul takes up in Ephesians 4 and speaks of the gifts of the ascended Christ which He gave unto men.

“The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it” (Psalms 68:11). The Hebrew thought is “Great was the company of women publishers, of women evangelists.”

Matthew Henry says on this verse: “God gave them His word (the word of the Lord came unto them), and then great was the company of the preachers -- prophets and *prophetesses*, for the word, is feminine. When God has messages to send He will not lack messengers. Or perhaps it may allude to the women’s joining in triumph when the victory was obtained, as was usual.” (Exodus 15:20; I Samuel 18:7).

“The Lord gives the word of power; the women who bear and publish the news are a great host” (Psalms 68:11, Amplified Old Testament).

The good news or good tidings would be the proclaiming of the Gospel of Christ (Isaiah 52:7; 40:9).

Certain expositors say that the literal rendering of Isaiah 40:9, is “O woman, that bearest good tidings” This may refer to the women who preached the Gospel, or it may refer to the Church, as the Woman, the wife of Christ, bearing the good tidings to all nations. These things find fulfillment in the New Testament where women labored in the Gospel along with Christ and the Apostles.

Some also suggest that “the great company of women” who published and sang the song of the Lord refers to the women under Miriam who sang the victory song when Israel crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 15). However, the women were involved in publishing the good tidings!

It should be noted that while women were in the shadows in other nations, Israel, as God's nation, had tremendous laws of protection for their women. This was in such contrast to heathen nations. This honor of women is continued in the Judeo-Christian ethic until this day.

The laws of God in Israel were designed to protect the woman's weakness, safeguard her rights, and preserve her freedom. Vows could not be made by a woman without the protection of the father or the husband (Numbers 30). Note also (Deuteronomy 21:10-14; 22:13, 28; Numbers 5:11-31).

Under Divine law her liberties were greater, her tasks more varied and important, and her social standing more respectful and commanding than that of heathen women.

Godly women had great influence in the nation. Ungodly women seemed to lead the way in idolatry and immorality (Jeremiah 7:8; Ezekiel 8:14; Exodus 22:18).

However, it is when we come to the New Testament that we see the Lord Jesus and Christianity lifting the life standard of the woman to its highest plane in our fallen state.

Women were used by the Holy Spirit under Old Covenant times in a limited way. Under New Covenant times the Spirit is available for all, men and women. The New Covenant is no less than the Old Covenant. To say that God would use women under the Old Covenant and not under the New Covenant is to belittle the work of Calvary. Living under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit is vastly different from living under the dispensation of the Law.

As we note the women in the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, we will see how the Holy Spirit equipped women in a greater way and greater numbers. This was because of the prophetic word that the Spirit would be poured out on "all flesh" regardless of nation, social distinctions, or sex (Joel 2:28-32).

G. Christianity and Women

Under the New Covenant, women find a position “in Christ” that is far beyond that under the Old Covenant.

Christianity brings the greatest honor and respect to the woman above all other nations and cultures.

* The Muslim world degrades the women. A Muslim can verbally divorce his wife. She is left to prostitution or starvation.

* The Hindu religion degrades women also. They are taught to worship the male organs, a total perversion in this system of Satan.

* In Africa, the women are to bear children and be the slaves of men.

* Even the Jews in the time of Christ put women down. This was contrary to the Divine laws. When Jesus came the Jews had great prejudices against women.

John A. Anderson, M.D., in *“Woman’s Warfare & Ministry”* (p.13), lists some of the Oral Laws from The Talmud concerning women. We quote but several of them:

“A woman should not read in the Torah for the honor of the synagogue.”

“The testimony of 100 women is not equal to that of one man.”

“It is a shame for a woman to let her voice be heard among men.”

The Talmud records that Rabbi Eliezer reproved a lady asking a question about the law in the synagogue. In the synagogue, a woman was denied recognition. A woman could not be counted along with nine men to form a congregation. Ten men only would

form a congregation.

A Jewish prayer “thanked God that he was not born a woman, a dog or a Gentile.” It was the Babylonian Talmudic traditions that Christ and His Apostles had to overthrow, and especially the Jewish attitude to women, not to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures. Even the Apostles had to be delivered from these traditions. It is worthy to note that in the life of our Lord there is not a single instance of a woman’s voice being raised against Him.

* In the Western world, influenced by the Judeo-Christian ethic, women have had the greatest honor, as a whole, in society. However, with the cultural explosion, and the rise of Humanist Philosophy, Feminist’s Movements and Women’s Liberation, the great blessings of the family, marriage and the home are being undermined. Male and female Humanists spread their philosophies that work like leaven in the educational systems, and all this under the guise of “liberty.”

Only the laws of God revealed under the Judeo-Christian ethic can really protect the total family and the institution of marriage and the honor and dignity of man and woman.

We consider Women in the Gospels, Women in the Acts and Women in the Epistles, and see how the New Covenant brings Divine order in the redemptive community.

1. Women in the Gospels

The coming of Jesus Christ into the world brought a whole new revelation of the place of women in the redemptive community. As already seen, the Jews were bound by many of the Oral Laws in the Talmud in their attitude to women. Jesus cut right across these things. He exalted womanhood.

* Gabriel, the archangel, came to two women, Elizabeth and Mary, and announced the miracle births of John and Jesus (Luke 1-2).

Both of these women sang prophetic songs. The spirit of prophecy was upon them both at the glorious announcements of John the Baptist's birth, Messiah's forerunner and then of Messiah's birth of the virgin Mary.

- * Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary in fulfillment of the prophetic word concerning the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). What exaltation of womanhood is seen here that the Son of God Himself was born of a virgin woman (Matthew 1)?

- * Four women are named along with their husbands in the Genealogy of the Messiah in Matthew 1. This was a great honor especially seeing that several were Gentile women.

- * Jesus allowed women to touch Him (Mark 5:34). He cleansed them.

- * Jesus ate with harlots and sinners and forgave them their sins while the Pharisees would not even associate (Luke 7:36-50).

- * Jesus taught women the Word of God, as well as men. The Rabbis refused to teach women as they counted them incapable of grasping Divine truths. Mary and Martha heard His Word (Luke 11:38-42).

- * Jesus touched women and healed them. The Jews would not for fear of defilement (Matthew 9:20-22).

- * Mary anointed Jesus with ointment for His burial (John 12:1-8).

- * Jesus commended the widow in the Court of the Women for the giving of her mite (Luke 21:1-4).

- * Jesus allowed women to minister to Him and the apostles of their substance

(Luke 8:1-3).

* Jesus ministered salvation to the woman of Samaria at the well. She witnessed to the men in the city opening the way for Christ (John 4). The disciples were surprised at His speaking to a woman who was a notorious sinner.

* Jesus ministered to both men and women together. Though the temple courts separated men and women, and the Jews would only count a congregation of ten men, even if a hundred women were present, Jesus ministered to a mixed congregation.

* Anna, the prophetess, spoke of redemption to those in Jerusalem at the temple. The temple priests recognized her prophetic words over the Christ-child (Luke 2:36-38).

* Luke's Gospel has a special emphasis on the ministry of Christ to women. There are more references in this Gospel concerning women than the other Gospels.

* Jesus honored marriage. He confirmed that marriage was to be indissoluble in nature, that marriage of one wife and one husband was God's original pattern (Matthew 19:3-11). Jesus did not endorse polygamy even though it was permitted under the law of Moses. Jesus condemned divorce "for every cause" but one (Deuteronomy 24:1-3; Matthew 19:3-11).

Jesus condemned fornication and adultery, as did the Law, to protect the sanctity of marriage and the woman (John 8:1-10; Matthew 5:27-32).

* Pilate's wife sought to have Jesus released after her God-given dream. The daughters of Jerusalem wept for Christ. Women were last at the cross and first at the tomb. If Pilate had listened to his wife he may have been saved from the eternal injustice in crucifying the Christ of God (Matthew 27:19; Luke 23:27-29; John 19).

* On the morning of the resurrection, the FIRST announcement of Christ's resurrection was given to two women. They were told to go and tell the brethren, and this by Christ Himself (Matthew 28:9, 10, 11, 24). The Apostles failed to believe them and counted their word as idle tales (Luke 21:10, 11, 24). Perhaps because it was a woman who sinned first in the Garden of Eden that Christ gave the resurrection word to two women at the Garden Tomb. A new era had dawned for both men and women now that Calvary's redemption was accomplished.

There is not one record of a woman ever speaking against Jesus in the Gospels. Christ came to emancipate women from the traditions and bondages of the Talmudic Law and bring them into the liberty of the Gospel of Christ.

Judaism was predominantly a man's religion. Jesus made the way open to God and brought access to both men and women. Every believer, regardless of sex, is now a priest unto God under the New Covenant. This is in contrast to the Old Covenant where only the Levitical tribe were priests. The Old Covenant only allowed men to be priests, and these being of the tribe of Levi, along with Aaron the High Priest. There were no women priestesses in the Old Testament. The New Covenant grants all believers, male or female, to be members of the priestly body. Christ Himself being the great High Priest. The veil has been rent. Men and women may enter within (Matthew 27:50-52).

2. Women in the Acts

* There were men and women in the Upper Room prayer meeting preceding Pentecost (Acts 1:13-15). These women had been touched by the Lord Jesus and waited for the outpouring of the Spirit along with the men.

This was a departure from the Jewish custom of those days. The temple had the Court of the Women and another court for the men. The men and the women did not pray together. Even today men and women are separated at the Jerusalem wailing wall. But now, since Jesus came, a new day was dawning. Men and women

prayed together, and together they waited for the Holy Spirit to be outpoured and make them witnesses of the risen Christ! (Joel 2:28-32 with Acts 2).

* On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit sat on the men as well as the women. Women and men were waiting together for Pentecost. Both men and women were filled with the Holy Spirit and together became living stones in the New Covenant temple. Both men and women spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Peter, filled with the Spirit, had no hesitation in saying that this was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy concerning the last days outpouring of the Spirit on "all flesh." In the last days, the Spirit would be poured on "sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens" -- that is, both male and female believers (Acts 2:16-18 with Joel 2:28-32). It was a new day!

* Dorcas, a woman of good works, experienced resurrection life under Peter's apostolic ministry (Acts 9:36-43). God saw fit to raise a woman from death whose ministry was making garments for the needy.

* Lydia was a woman whose heart God opened. She was the first convert in Europe and she opened her house to the Gospel (Acts 16:14, 15).

* Leading Greek women in Thessalonica heard and received the Gospel through the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:4).

* Prominent women in Berea also believed the Gospel (Acts 17:12).

* In Athens a woman named Damaris believed (Acts 17:34).

* Priscilla and Aquilla were husband and wife team and together taught the Word of the Lord as teachers (Acts 18:24-26).

* Men and women were hailed to prison for being Christians (Acts 8:1-4).

* Philip, the evangelist, had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy (Acts 21:9). Eusebius, the ancient ecclesiastical historian, says that Philip's four daughters lived to a good old age, always abounding in the work of the Lord. "Mighty luminaries," he writes, "have fallen asleep in Asia. Philip, and two of his virgin daughters, sleep at Hierapolis; the other, and the beloved disciple, John, rest at Ephesus.

Thus the Book of Acts shows no conflict concerning women receiving the Gospel or functioning in the gifts of the Spirit as they were endowed.

3. Women in the Epistles

The Epistles also confirms the fact that women were involved in the Gospel in various ways.

* Phebe was a servant of the Church at Cenchrea and Paul asked that the Church at Rome assist her in whatever business she had need of them (Romans 16:1, 2).

The word "servant" is the Greek word "*Diakonas*," translated "Deacon" three times, "Minister" twenty times, and "Servant" seven times.

That means Phebe was a minister, a servant, a deaconess of the Church. Paul says that she had been a succourer of many as well as himself.

* In Romans 16, Paul mentions about ten women's names who were fellow-workers in the Gospel in some way or another. Note verses 3, 7, 12. These are mentioned as "helpers," or co-laborers, companions in labor, work-fellows in Christ. Paul was not a male chauvinist as there are many references to women in his Epistles.

He claims that he and Barnabas have as much right as other Apostles to

take with them a sister, or a wife to help them (I Corinthians 9:5).

* Paul says that men and women may pray and prophesy in public meetings of the Church (I Corinthians 11:5; I Timothy 2:12).

* Paul also says that “in Christ, there is neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28). This is the only doctrinal statement in the New Testament concerning male and female position as to spiritual and redemptive equality. Physically there is male and female. Paul, the same writer, speaks clearly in his Epistles of the roles of husband, wife, and children in the home.

* Paul also spoke of Euodias and Syntyche as fellow-workers in the Gospel (Philippians 4:2, 3).

* Paul exhorts that older women teach younger women (Titus 2:4, 5; I Timothy 5:2).

* John the beloved Apostle wrote to the Elect Lady in his Epistle (II John).

* Christ reproved the Church at Thyatira for allowing the ministry of Jezebel, a false teacher, and prophetess in the Church, who taught idolatry and immorality (Revelation 2:18-29).

* There was an accepted ministry of widows in hospitality in the Early Church as seen in I Timothy 5:1-16; James 1:27.

* Timothy had a Godly grandmother and mother who taught him the Word of God from a child (II Timothy 1:5). Their names were Eunice and Lois.

* In Hebrews 11, the writer mentions WOMEN of faith as well as MEN of faith. Sarah, Rahab, the widows of Zarephath and the Shunamite who received their dead raised to life (Hebrews 11:35 with II Kings 4:18-27; Hebrews 11:1-40).

* Elders and Deacons were not to be polygamists but the husband of one wife in order to hold office in the Church (I Timothy 3; Titus 1).

* The woman was given the promise of safety in childbirth as she continued in the faith in sobriety and holiness, Paul said (I Timothy 2:13-15; Galatians 3:13; Genesis 3:14-16).

* Children were to honor their parents, to obey their father and mother (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3; Psalms 127:4, 5).

Note also Peter's words to husbands and wives in I Peter 3:1-8.

The New Testament Epistles, and especially Paul's writings, give women a place of honor and dignity. Paul, in no way, was a male chauvinist, as is attributed to him because of two "problem Scriptures" which will be dealt with in this lesson.

The student should take every reference in Paul's writings concerning women and then interpret these "problem Scriptures" in the light of such, as well as the historical and cultural setting of his time.

There is plenty of scope in the New Testament Church for the ministry of a Godly woman without violating Divine order.

4. Historical Evidences of the Early Church

There is evidence that women were involved in teaching and preaching during the first several centuries of Church History, as they were gifted of the Lord and by the Holy Spirit.

a. Justin Martyr, who lived until about A.D. 150, says, in his Dialogue with

Trypho the Jew that 'both men and women were seen among them who had extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God, according as the prophet Joel had foretold,' and Dodwell in His Dissertations of Irenaeus, says that 'the gift of the Spirit of prophecy was given to others besides the Apostles: and that not only in the First, and Second but in the Third Century -- even to the time of Constantine -- men had these gifts; yea, and women too' -- Mrs. Catherine Booth.

b. Tertullian, one of the earliest Latin Fathers, notes that women appear in every early reference to ecclesiastical orders. Four titles, he writes, are applied to the women clergy, of all which occur in the New Testament, "Widow," "Deaconess," "Presbyter," "Virgin." The two former, he adds, are Apostolic orders.

c. Marcella preached Christianity publicly in Rome, and Jerome (born about 340 A.D., and the translator of the Latin Vulgate Bible), writes of her: "all that I learn with great study . . . the blessed Marcella learnt also but with great facility." He also celebrates her immense influence for good in Rome.

d. In the Catacombs are found representations of women clergy, and they are shown presiding at the Lord's Supper.

e. Mabillion, a French writer on ecclesiastical biography and antiquities, records that the evangelization of Europe was due in great part to the Nuns of St. Benedict many of whom publicly preached the Gospel.

f. Among the Montanists, who were the evangelicals of the Third Century, Priscilla and Maximilla, ladies of rank, served as evangelists over a wide extent of country. Women were elected by the Montanists as Deacons, Pastors, President-Presbyters or Bishops. Opinions vary as to when the recognized order of women clergy died out. All agree it lingered longer in the East than in the West . . . It seems as if the decay of women's ministry took place with the decay of Christianity, the rise of the Roman Apostacy, and the proud pretensions of an exclusive priesthood.

(Letters a-f quoted from THE INDIAN STANDARD, the early official organ of the Presbyterian Church in India from the subject of “Women Preachers”).

g. Eusebius of the 4th Century, speaks of Potamania Ammias, a prophetess, in Philadelphia, and others, “who were equally distinguished for their love and zeal in the cause of Christ.”

H. The Ministry of Women Under New Covenant Times

Assuming that the New Covenant is greater than the Old Covenant days, we bring together the total Biblical revelation on the function of women as to ministry, and spiritual standing before God, through Christ.

1. Women’s Place and Ministry in Christ

a. Women may be born again of the Holy Spirit and become new creatures in Christ, even as men (John 3:1-5).

b. Women may receive the Holy Spirit baptism and anointing as well as men (Acts 2:1-11). This is in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32 with Acts 2:14-21). God said He would pour out His Spirit on the sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens.

c. Men and women may speak in tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance (Acts 2:1-4). Both men and women were baptized into the one body of Christ, which is the Church, at Pentecost (I Corinthians 12:13).

d. Men and women are together priests in the New Covenant Church. It is no longer a Levitical priesthood available only for one tribe of a chosen nation, and for men only (I Peter 2:5-9; Revelation 1:5, 6; 5:9-10).

e. Women may prophesy as well as men (Acts 2:17-21 with Joel 2:28-32).

This may include:

1) Preaching and exhortation. Old Testament prophesying as also New Testament prophesying includes such.

2) The Gift of Prophecy, as a gift of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:1-8; 11:5; Acts 21:9).

3) The Ministry of a Prophetess, as seen in:

(i) Miriam (Exodus 15:20),

(ii) Deborah (Judges 4:4),

(iii) Huldah (II Kings 22:14; II Chronicles 34:22),

(iv) Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3),

(v) Anna (Luke 2:36-38).

There were true and false prophetesses as well as prophets in Bible times. Note Nehemiah 6:14; Ezekiel 13; Revelation 2:20.

Is there anything higher than to be a mouthpiece of the Lord in speaking the prophetic word? Both men and women under this dispensation may prophesy. The Spirit is available for all regardless of nation, social distinction, or sex.

4) Prophecy includes edification, exhortation, and comfort, according to Paul (I Corinthians 14:3).

Edify = “to instruct and improve; to profit morally or spiritually.”

Exhort = “to incite by words or advice; to advise or warn earnestly.”

Comfort = “to impart strength and hope to; to console.”

- f. Women may have faith for the miraculous (Hebrews 11:35; II Timothy 1:5).
- g. Women may witness of Christ’s resurrection, even to men (Matthew 28:8-10).
- h. Women may evangelize and bring the Gospel to men, even as the woman of Samaria did, bringing men to Christ (John 4). Eternity alone will evidence the thousands of souls brought to Christ under the ministry of women. “Great was the company of women that published the good news” (Psalms 68:11; Isaiah 40:9).
- i. Women may have a ministry of prayer and intercession. This can include:
 - 1) Prayer with their husbands (I Peter 3:1-8),
 - 2) Prayer for the sick (Mark 16:15-20),
 - 3) Prayer in the public meeting in the Church (I Corinthians 11:5; I Timothy 2:8-10; Acts 16:13; I Samuel 1:27).
 - 4) Prayer with other women (Acts 16:13).
 - 5) Prayer of mourning (Jeremiah 9:17-21; Isaiah 32:9-15).
 - 6) Prayer with men of the Church (Acts 1:13-15).

j. Women may teach. This may include:

1) Teaching with their husbands, as Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18, 24-28; Romans 16:3; II Timothy 4:19).

2) Teaching younger women to be sober, love their husbands, love their children, discretion, chastity, being good home-makers and obedient to their husbands (Titus 2:4, 5).

3) Teaching the children and youth the ways of the Lord (II Timothy 1:5. Eunice and Lois taught Timothy the Scriptures).

4) Teaching under the authority of the man, not usurping authority (I Timothy 2:9-15).

5) Teaching Christian Education in the Church in various age-groups according to the ability God gives.

k. Women labored with Paul and others in the Gospel of Christ (Philippians 4:3; Romans 16:3, 6, 12; Acts 18:26). This surely included more than cooking food and mending clothes!

l. John wrote to the Elect Lady who seemed to have care for the children of the Lord (II John 1:1).

m. Women may operate the gifts of the Spirit as He wills. This includes word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and the interpretation of tongues (I Corinthians 12:1-13).

n. There was an evident ministry of widows in the Early Church who ministered hospitality, good works, cared for children, washed the feet of saints, relieved

the afflicted (I Timothy 5:1-16; James 1:27).

o. Women may be Deaconesses, Phoebe was a “servant,” a “minister” or a “deaconess” of the Church at Cenchrea and Paul asked the saints at Rome to assist her in any business she had need of. She was a succorer of Paul as well as many others. She is often referred to as the beginning of the Order of Deaconesses (Romans 16:1, 2).

Mrs. Catherine Booth quotes, “Theodoret as saying ‘The fame of Phebe was spoken of throughout the world. She was known not only to the Greeks and Romans, but also to the Barbarians,’ which implies that she had traveled much, and propagated the Gospel in foreign countries.”

p. Women may lead in the song of the Lord with dancing (Exodus 15; Judges 4-5).

Note the “singing men and singing women” in the restoration from Babylon and in the Order of David’s Tabernacle (I Chronicles 25:5, 6; Nehemiah 7:67). Read the Songs of the Lord of Elizabeth, Mary, and Hannah (Luke 1-2; I Samuel 1-2).

q. Women may minister to women in counseling (Titus 2:4, 5).

r. Women may play musical instruments before the Lord and His people (I Chronicles 15, 16; 25:5, 6).

s. Women may attend to children, the young of the flock, in nursery work.

t. Women may minister hospitality to the saints (Proverbs 31:20).

u. Women may be “Mothers in Israel,” as Deborah also was (Judges 5).

- v. Women, as well as men, are called to be witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:5-8).

- w. Women can visit hospitals, especially to sick women, far better than men can in certain cases.

- x. Women can help in water baptismal services and help other women far better than men can also.

- y. Women may also have the ministry of helps (Romans 12:6-8). There are many other areas, though not confirms in Scripture, which can come under the ministry of “helps.”
 - 1) Writing -- Books, Tracts, Bulletins, Curriculum for Bible Classes, Bible Stories, etc. Such have blessed thousands.

 - 2) Music -- Choir, Orchestra, Soloist, Worship Leader, Song of the Lord, prophetic Songs, Groups Singing, etc.

 - 3) Office -- Secretary, Typist, Bookkeeper, Graphics, Phones, Receptionist, Filing, etc.

 - 4) Weddings -- Arrangements for receptions, Floral arrangements, and numerous other details for blessed weddings.

 - 5) Publications -- Tape Ministry, Printing Department, Librarian, Tract Distributions, etc.

 - 6) Children -- Nursery, Baby Showers, Dedication arrangements, Baby-sitting, Child care, organizing Games, etc.

 - 7) Youth -- Camping, Retreats, Spiritual and Recreational activities,

etc.

8) Church Property -- Janitorial, Kitchen Staff, Flowers, Plants, Decorations, etc.

9) Hosting -- Hospitality for visiting Ministries, Church visitors, Refreshments, etc.

10) Visitation-- Visiting the sick and needy at home or in the hospital, showing mercy, etc.

11) Distribution -- Clothes to needy, sewing and mending clothes, ministry of giving, etc.

These things are indeed great “helps” and ministry in the Body of Christ. Each local Church has other areas of need that can be filled.

Undoubtedly there is within these things a great variety of functions that can involve many of the women in serving the Lord and the members of His body.

Multitudes of men and women were saved in Acts 5:14 and thus added to the Church. Multitudes were water baptized. Whereas only men were circumcised in Old Covenant times, water baptism (New Testament circumcision) is for men and women. All are new creatures in Christ.

In Christ, there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28). This spiritual status and the natural must be kept in proper balance before the Lord.

If it pleases the Lord to anoint and equip women for any of the functions above, then Godly men and women will rejoice and accept the blessings of the Lord that flow through them.

2. Women and Male Headship

A study of the complete Scriptures on the matter of women's ministry clearly points to the Divine order of the man and the woman, whether in the natural house, or the spiritual house of the Lord which is the Church.

It is important, therefore, to understand Biblical headship. It is here that the Key to Divine order in the function of men and women lays. Women may function under male headship in Divine order and in this, there is the safety of the Lord. Headship, therefore, must be understood.

Headship does not mean superiority or dictatorship of the man or inferiority of the woman or her suppression under the guise of submission.

God is the Head of Christ.

Christ is the Head of the man.

Man is the Head of the woman, or, the husband is the head of the wife and home (I Corinthians 11:1-3).

Man and woman are together under the Headship of Christ.

Christ is THE MAN, the husband and head of the Church. The Church is THE WOMAN, the wife, and mother (Ephesians 5:23-32; Colossians 1:18; 2:9).

Headship means authority, order, loving care, discipline, covering, protection, provision, responsibility and security. If we want to understand what Biblical Headship is, then we see it is perfectly manifested in the Godhead and the Headship of Christ over the Church. This illustrates the order of the home, that loving order between

husband and wife, the man and the woman.

It also illustrates the order that should be in the Church, the house of the Lord. One exemplifies the other. Headship should not be looked upon negatively because of its misinterpretation and abuse as in many places today.

It is first the natural, then the spiritual. If the woman is not to have headship in the natural home, then it would be contradictory to have it in the house of the Lord. It would be a violation of the Divine principle.

Women, therefore, can minister in many realms except where it involves taking authority over men. Women can minister in the gifts of God as given to her subject to oversight and male headship. The woman is the pattern of the Word of God.

In the light of these comments, we note those women gifted of God who *ministered and exercised spiritual authority as they acted under authority*. They did not usurp authority but acted under it.

Examples of women who fulfilled their function under authority are seen in the following:

* The husband is the head of the house, the head of the wife. The Woman is subject to male headship (I Corinthians 11:3). The wife is under the husband's rule (Genesis 3:16; I Peter 3:1). She submits voluntarily to his leadership.

This typifies the Church, the wife of the Lamb, who is subject to the headship of Christ, the husband. The Church is under the rule of Christ (Ephesians 5:23-32).

* Miriam, the prophetess, acted under the authority of Moses and Aaron but was judged when she criticized him (Exodus 15:20; Numbers 12).

* Deborah, the Judge, Prophetess, and Mother in Israel, was a married woman, her husband's name being Lapidoth. She acted with authority with Barak, when he failed to go to battle without her, and the victory became hers (Judges 4-5). She counseled with Israel's Governors.

* Queen Esther, married to King Ahasuerus, acted under Mordecai's words and brought deliverance to her whole nation from the sword of death (Esther 1-11).

* Huldah, the prophetess, was a married woman, her husband's name Shallum. Yet she also had responsible men about her. Godly King Josiah, the High Priest and the Princes of Israel were her council. Yet they also recognized the mantle of the word of the Lord in her mouth, even though they were men (II Kings 22; II Chronicles 34).

* Isaiah's wife was a prophetess, yet her husband Isaiah was over her in the Lord (Isaiah 8:3). There was male leadership.

* The four women named in Matthew 1, were all married women and their husband's are mentioned along with them (Matthew 1).

* Philip's four daughters were under their father's authority when they prophesied (Acts 21:9).

* Any woman who made a vow must do it under the authority of her father or her husband, or they could nullify that vow (Numbers 30).

* Priscilla taught under her husband, Aquila's authority (Acts 18). In every reference, but one, Priscilla, the woman, is mentioned first.

* Phebe, the Deaconess of the Church of Cenchrea, acted under Paul's authority in her service at the Church of Rome (Romans 16:1, 2).

* Anna, the prophetess, was under temple authorities, as she lived in the temple chambers where also the priests of the Lord lived (Luke 2:36-38).

* Athaliah usurped authority over the throne of Judah and murdered all the royal seed to do so. She recognized no male leadership (II Kings 11; II Chronicles 22).

* Wicked Queen Jezebel usurped authority over her husband Ahab and brought about idolatry and the death of Naboth to gain his vineyard for her husband's inheritance (I Kings 21; Revelation 2:20).

* The woman Jezebel usurped authority in the Church at Thyatira and taught idolatry and immorality and was judged accordingly (Revelation 2:20).

Note the warnings in Proverbs against contentious and strange women (Proverbs 9:13; 21:9, 19; 23:27; 25:24; 27:15; 30:21-23). The woman is responsible *to* a man, and the man is responsible *for* a woman.

The Divine pattern is seen throughout this lesson.

The Order in Creation is first the man, then the woman.

The Order in the Fall is first the woman, then the man.

The Order in Divine Judgment is first the woman, then the man.

The Order in Redemption is to restore the man and the woman.

The Order in the Christian Home is first the man, then the woman.

The Order in the Church is the man, then the woman.

In this manner, both male and female fulfill together their roles under Divine order, even as the Church (the woman), is subject to Christ (the man) and fulfills her role and ministry accordingly.

In concluding this lesson, we may say that any woman who functions in the Church in any gift or capacity should:

- a. Have the home in Divine order, for how can they minister in the house of the Lord when their own home is out of order?
- b. Be Scripturally qualified as a Godly woman with character qualities.
- c. Be Scripturally gifted and anointed of the Lord.
- d. Be under male leadership, either her husband's and/or Church leadership, so that she is acting under authority and not usurping authority.
- e. Recognize and accept God's order, first the man, then the woman, as noted in Order in Creation, the Fall, Redemption, the Home and the Church.
- f. Beware of Humanistic Philosophy that teaches "Women's Liberation," "Feminist Movements" and rebellion against male leadership in the home or the Church or society.
- g. Be an example of a Godly woman in word and deed and character to all other women in the house of the Lord and the home. The woman should beware of having a "masculine" spirit, even as the man must beware of having a "feminine" spirit. Many women today are "mannish" while men are "womanish" because of much reversal

of roles and the “uni-sex” mentality.

I. Problem Scriptures in Paul’s Writings

We now come to the two major passages of Scripture from Paul’s writings which have been used and are used to silence the ministry of women in any shape or form.

The two main texts used to discredit women’s ministry and limit such are found in I Timothy 2:11, 12 and I Corinthians 14:34, 35. Expositors need to be honest in dealing with these Scriptures and such should be done in the light of the context of the **whole** Bible, as well as Paul’s other writings.

It is in the light of all that has been covered in this lesson on the ministry of women that we now consider Paul’s writings.

1. Paul’s Epistle to Timothy

I Timothy 2:11, 12

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

This verse should not be taken out of its surrounding context. The context should be read and studied for this verse is but a part of it. We break open this verse in order to help us to understand it more clearly as to what it is really saying.

a. Silence

Verse 11, 12

“Let the woman learn in silence . . . but to be in silence.” The Greek word for “silence” (used twice here) is “*Hesuchia*,” meaning “stillness, quietness.” It means to be

still or peaceable, by implication, to keep one's seat or be undisturbing.

Strong's Concordance says it means "stillness, i.e., desistance from bustle or language."

It does not mean absolute silence as used in Acts 21:40; I Corinthians 14:28, 34 and Revelation 8:1. The Greek word used in these verses is "*Sige*" meaning "to hiss or hush, silence."

Timothy, as Paul's companion and son in the faith, knew of women who traveled with him. He knew of Paul's writings concerning men and women praying and prophesying (I Corinthians 11:4). He knew that Paul was at Philip's house where four daughters prophesied (Acts 21:9). He also knew of Paul's love for Priscilla and Aquila as teachers together (Acts 18:24-26; Romans 16:3). Also, he certainly knew of Phebe the Deaconess of Cenchrea (Romans 16:1, 2). Timothy would know Paul's word to Titus about older women teaching younger women (Titus 2:3-5). Paul would not contradict himself. Timothy would understand that Paul is not bringing women to absolute silence.

No Church today, generally speaking, takes this literally. Otherwise, women could not sing or pray even in a mixed congregation of men and women, let alone in women's meetings only. Nor could they teach Sunday School classes, and so forth.

Paul is saying that "the women are to learn in *quietness*." She is to be peaceful, restful, tranquil. He is not calling for muteness, dimness or absolutely no communication. The same word is used in verse 2 of this lesson. It speaks of stillness of spirit, undisturbed by strife or discord. So, a woman must be quiet, peaceful, restful and not strive.

b. Subjection
Verse 11

The Greek word “*Hupotasso*” = “*hupo,*” *under,* and “*tasso,*” *to arrange.*

In the context, it speaks of the marriage relationship (Colossians 3:8; Titus 2:5). It means that the woman is to learn in quietness and submissiveness. It means she shall not assert her rights but yield to the preference of others, especially her husband’s, as the context is here.

c. The Man
Verse 12

The Greek word “*aner*” speaks of “a man.” Some expositors say that it is more expressly speaking of “the husband.” The Pauline Epistles use this word 59 times, 34 of which King James Version translates “husband.” Of the remaining 25 occurrences, 18 are cases where the text is clearly speaking of a husband. Therefore it makes a justifiable translation in this case. That means, the woman is not to usurp authority over the man, her husband.

The context, verses 13-15, speak of Adam and Eve, the first husband and wife and points to how Eve usurped authority over her husband in the Fall. This has already been noted. Therefore, the woman, a wife, must not usurp authority over her husband but be in subjection to him. This is the word of the Lord through Paul in his Epistles (Ephesians 5:22-33).

d. Usurp Authority
Verse 12

The Greek word “*Authenteo,*” only used once means “to seize and hold in possession by force or without right.” Various translations translate this as follows:

“exercise authority” (NAS).

“to have authority” (Rotherham).

“to rule over” (Alford).

“to claim authority” (Conybeare).

“to domineer over” (Berkley).

“to dictate to” (Moffatt).

“issue commands” (Knox).

“lord it over” (Living Bible).

Jack Hayford in his comments says “In this spirit, the woman is not to ‘usurp authority,’ i.e., *not to be domineering* (authentew). This verb occurs this one time in the entire New Testament. The intent of instruction here is against an overbearing, demeaning control of her spouse. If the idea intended had to do with authority in the Divine structure of the Church, other terms more consistent with New Testament usage would have been employed.”

Williams Translation confirms this “I do not permit a married woman to practice teaching or domineering over a husband.”

Earnest Gentile says “It appears, therefore, that our paragraph under consideration is basically talking of the proper husband-wife relationship and their respective testimony to the world. The men are unashamedly to take the leadership in prayer and the women are to dress moderately and maintain a demeanor that is modest and serious. Women have the need and right to learn (at that time women were not given educational and vocational opportunities like men), and they will do so if they

maintain a contented, peaceable spirit, free of strife and discord, as they listen to the instructions and explanations of their husbands. Paul forbids the wives to dominate their husbands.”

The whole issue is the word “usurping authority.” Webster defines “usurp” as “to take possession by force, to seize and hold in possession.”

The Greek thought is “one who acts upon the basis of his own authority, one who does a thing himself.” It is an “autocrat” or one self-governed.

It is an artificial authority, an authority that is taken or grasped by one from nowhere (not having a source), and exercised in a despotic manner. Paul speaks very plainly that a woman is not to, on the basis of her own authority (an artificial authority, not a delegated authority), rise up and begin to teach the congregation, and thereby not recognize the headship and leadership already established in the husband or the man in the Church.

This was the situation in the pagan temples where sometimes the *women* conducted the whole religious ceremony from the worship to the teaching.

Ephesus had the great Temple of Diana, a goddess, and Timothy was at Ephesus when he received this injunction. The authority in the Church must not be self-styled and authoritarian but under authority. Godly women must not be like that goddess, Diana!

Queen Athaliah usurped authority over the man and seized the throne of Judah after killing all the royal seed (II Kings 11).

Queen Jezebel usurped authority over her husband, King Ahab, and had Naboth killed to gain his vineyard (I Kings 21).

The woman Jezebel of the Church at Thyatira usurped authority over the Church (some expositors say “the angel” was her husband) and taught idolatry and immorality (Revelation 2:20).

Understanding the setting of the times for this injunction is necessary to understand this passage more clearly.

Vine’s Expository Dictionary adds the fact that this word meant “not to have dominion over a man.” It involved the word for “playing the master, a self-doer, a master, an autocrat.”

Paul is not forbidding women to teach as he has already told Titus that older women may teach younger women (Titus 2:3-5). He is saying that a wife must not usurp authority over her husband and try and teach him. Of course, this must be understood to be a believing husband. Many unbelieving husbands have been saved by a believing wife having to teach him the way of salvation!

Paul is not demanding absolute silence of the woman for he also says the woman can “pray and prophesy” as well as “teach other women.”

The whole issue is that women must not seize the authority over the man, be it her own husband or male leadership. But she can act under authority, not usurp authority!

The Holy Spirit would not anoint women to contradict the Word He inspired if women were to keep absolute silence. The Spirit and the Word agree.

2. Paul’s Epistle to Corinthians

I Corinthians 14:34, 35

The next passage of Scripture that is used against women’s ministry and to

silence women in the church is this passage in Corinthians.

“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the Law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

The Corinthian Epistle is dealing with order in the church, in the public gatherings.

In Chapter 7, Paul deals with marriage problems.

In Chapter 8, he deals with the problem of meats offered to idols.

In Chapter 9, he deals with the support of the ministry.

In Chapter 10, he deals with temptations like Israel of old had.

In Chapter 11, he covers grooming codes for men and women and also order at the Lord's table.

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 deal with the operations of the gifts of the Spirit. At the close of chapter 14:34, 35 he deals with talkative wives who disrupt the services by asking their husbands questions in the services.

Again, it should be remembered that Paul has already said in I Corinthians 11:5, that men and women may pray and prophesy in the church. He does not contradict himself. The verses in chapter 14, must be interpreted in the light of custom and also of Paul's whole teaching concerning women. He is speaking to the same church. We break open the verses as follows to help us understand what he is saying more clearly.

a. “Let your women keep silence in the churches”

Verse 34

Compared with verse 35, it is referring to wives, as they are to ask their husbands at home. The R.V., says “let the women,” not “your women.” It is not a general statement to silence ALL women for saying anything in the churches. Women may pray and prophecy at least.

b. “Keep silence in the churches”

Verse 35

The Greek words for “silence” are “*Sigao*” from “*Sige*” and mean “to be silent,” “to hiss, or hush, silence.” The words are used in Acts 15:12, 13; 21:40; 12:17; Romans 16:25; I Corinthians 14:28, 30, 34; Revelation 8:1; Luke 9:36; 20:26.

If a person speaks in tongues and there is no interpreter then they are to be silent (I Corinthians 14:28). If the prophets have something revealed to them, then the first is to be silent and let the other speak (I Corinthians 14:30). And if a woman wants to ask questions of her husband, she must do it at home and be silent in the church (I Corinthians 14:34).

It is not a mandate to silence the woman in church any more than to silence the speaker in tongues or a prophet.

c. “For it is not permitted unto them to speak . . . For it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

Verses 34, 35

The Greeks used several different words to express speech, each of which is translated by the same English word “speak.”

“*Legein*” -- “to deliver an ordered discourse.”

“*Eipien*” -- “to speak in ordinary conversation.”

“*Lalein*” -- “to chatter, babble, prattle, gabble or talk in an undertone.”

It is the word “*Laleo*,” meaning “to talk, utter words,” that is used here.

In *Liddel & Scott's Lexicon*, the following meanings are given: “to chatter, babble; of birds, to twitter, chirp; strictly, to make an inarticulate sound, opposed to articulate speech; but also generally, to talk, say.”

Paul is correcting Corinth for disorder in the services, and says “Let the wives be quiet, they are not permitted to gabble, talk in an undertone in the church, for they are disturbing both speaker and hearers.”

The women had lately been converted from heathenism. They were hungry for the Gospel and thus disturbed the meetings as they had little or no education.

In those days, and still in some places today, it was customary for men and women to sit either side of the building. The women disrupted the meeting by calling out to their husband's various questions when they did not understand what was said. Generally, the women were not educated and so their questions disturbed the gatherings. Paul told them to be quiet and ask their husbands at home.

He is not talking about women praying or prophesying, singing or speaking. Of course, they would have to have believing husbands to fulfill this injunction of Paul.

Halley's Bible Handbook (pp. 596, 597) says “It was customary in Greek and Eastern cities for women to cover their heads in public, except of immoral character.

Corinth was full of temple prostitutes. Some of the Christian women, taking advantage of their new-found liberty in Christ, were making bold to lay aside their veils in church meetings, which thus horrified those of more modest type. They are told here not to defy public opinion as to what was considered proper in feminine decorum.”

Denominations that enforce “silence” in their churches permit their women to sing with the congregation, in solos, pray in prayer meetings, teach Sunday School classes, and even be Missionaries to heathen nations. What a contradiction this is to their stand and interpretation of Paul’s writings in both Timothy and Corinthians!

Paul is simply saying that the wives must not disturb the gatherings by inconvenient asking of questions, ignorant talking and chattering among themselves. He is not enforcing absolute silence on women in churches.

d. “But they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the Law.”

Verse 34

It does not say the Law commands *silence*, but to be under *obedience*. There is not one verse from Genesis to Malachi where “the law of Moses” said that women were to be silent.

This present phrase has been the cause of much controversy. There are two views presented here concerning the interpretation of this verse.

1) Some expositors believe that Paul is quoting back to them their own questions, that he is quoting some of the words of the Judaizers from the Oral Law in the Talmud.

John A. Anderson had a friend who wrote to the Chief Rabbi of England some years ago asking if these two verses were taken from the Jewish Talmud. The Rabbi replied that the passages are not literally reproduced from the Talmud but that

they are close parallels.

The Oral Law taught that it was “a shame for a woman to let her voice be heard among men” -- almost the very words used in the language quoted by the apostle.

It is possible that Paul is quoting what the Judaizers, who were trying to silence women, in the Corinthian church were saying.

If this is so, he reproves them by saying that the Word of God came UNTO them, and not FROM them, and that he himself was giving the commandments of the Lord (I Corinthians 14:36-40).

2) Some expositors follow this second view and this does not violate the whole context of Scripture concerning the role of women in the home or the church.

Women, and as here, it is referring to married women, are to be under obedience to their own husbands. Paul's Epistles tell the wife to obey her husband in the Lord (Ephesians 5:23-32; Colossians 3:18-20 with I Peter 3:1-8).

Some authorities refer to Genesis 3:16 concerning Adam's rule over his wife as “the law” referred to here.

In the light of the Corinthian problem, it is Scripturally correct to say that wives who were disturbing the services by asking questions, or chattering, needed to be under obedience to their husbands indeed, and ask their questions at home.

Jews and Gentiles did not worship together until they saw that the cross had broken down the dividing wall. They did not worship together as one until they saw they were “in Christ” neither male nor female (Ephesians 2:12-19; Galatians 3:26-29). The Judaizers tried to bring the Gentiles under the bondage of the Law as well as

Talmudic Laws. Paul opposed such legalisms continually.

In the Jewish Synagogue, the pulpit was in the middle and the men gathered around while the women were in the balcony. While the word was being ministered, it was permissible for a man to stop and ask him a question. But Paul here is telling the women not to yell down at their husbands but wait until they got home as they were creating so much noise and confusion in the services.

The ones that are learning are to keep quiet, not the ones that are teaching. So it is dealing with *wives*, not women's ministry!

Under obedience as wives to husbands, as also saith the Law. Talkative wives embarrass their husbands and it is poor behavior in public church gatherings. A good place to show proper husband-wife relationship is in public gatherings indeed. Therefore, talkative wives should not disrupt public meetings and embarrass their husbands, or the church!

Jim Beall states in "*The Female of the Species*" (p. 33). "In those days, custom dictated that men and women be separated in public services. This was true in the Jewish Synagogues and Greek gatherings as well. Women were usually confined to a side room or a screened-off balcony where they could scarcely hear what was being said. Consequently, attention would soon lag and they were on their way talking and chattering. In some buildings, the men and women were separated by an aisle."

In India today, some places still separate men and women.

In Cairo, Egypt, the writer was in a church where men and women were separated by a wooden stained wall built up to the middle of the pulpit!

In China, a Missionary told of the separation in the church meetings of men and women and the like disturbance that Paul spoke of having to be handled.

Women should not be domineering whether at home or in the church. This is Divine order!

The argument that false religions have been founded by women is the same argument that may be used of numerous men. Christian Science (Mary Baker Eddy); Spiritualism (The Fox Sisters), Women Witches (I Samuel 28), and the mixture in Seventh Day Adventist (Allen G. White) prove nothing more than many false and mixed religions have been founded also by men.

No failure of any woman cannot be applied to men. Both are failures apart from the grace of God in Christ.

e. "And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home."

Verse 35

Of course, this would imply believing husbands. Otherwise believing wives with unbelieving husbands would have to ask other believing men or women in order to learn what was meant. Some women would be sent back to heathenism or to Judaism, for spiritual help, or, in some cases no help at all, since many women may be without husbands.

Peter exhorts believing wives to be Godly women that their unbelieving husbands may be won to the Lord without them preaching the Word at them but by their lifestyle (I Peter 3:1-8).

In conclusion, then, it is not being honest to use I Timothy 2 or I Corinthians 14, to silence all women's ministry in the church, only by faulty interpretations, and this in the light of the total Biblical revelation of women's role under God, and under headship.

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