

THE DAUGHTER OF A LION IS STILL A LION

WOMEN IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Introduction:

Our methodology is to move from the large, the clear and the indisputable to the small, and the disputable. For example, there is scriptural evidence for the practice of being baptized for the dead (I Corinthians 15:29) but we do not do it! It is a single scripture that does not flow with any others. There is scriptural teaching to support being single (I Corinthians 7) but when was the last time you heard a message on that? Let us not build doctrine and practice about women around one or two scriptures. What is the big picture in the scripture? What is the line of teaching through the whole of the Bible? What did this mean to the original readers? And let us note Peter's warning in 2 Peter 3:16! Let us also remember that "any text out of context is a pretext", i.e., an excuse to make the scriptures say whatever you want to make them say! Context determines how the text speaks!

1) WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Dominion mandate given equally to men and women - Genesis 1:26 & 28
- Both men and women created in His image - Genesis 1:27
- Miriam leads the worship for the whole nation - Exodus 15:20
- Old Testament penalties for violating moral law were equal for men and women, i.e., the wife was not the husband's property but an equal partner in the marriage covenant. No double standard of morality, i.e., one for women and another for men - Leviticus 20:10-12
- The daughters of Zelophehad, and all in the same situation, receive inheritance rights - Numbers 27:7
- Deborah leads and judges the nation - Judges 4:4
- The prophetesses: Hilda of II Kings 22:14, Naodia of Nehemiah 6:14, Isaiah's wife of Isaiah 8:13
- The Proverbs 31 woman was a manufacturer, trader, farmer and speculator in real estate
- The promise of the old to the new? "Your daughters will prophesy" - Joel 2:28

2) WOMEN IN THE HELENISTIC WORLD, IE, THE GREEK DISDAIN FOR WOMEN!

- Socrates (470- 399 BC) called women the "weaker sex" and in *Timaeus*, Plato argued that being a woman is a divine punishment, since a woman is halfway between a man and an animal.
- Aristotle (384- 322) codified the conviction that women are inferior to men and that therefore

they are to be commanded by men and used for the pleasure of men.

- From the Stoics came the conviction that women are a distraction and temptation to men and thus to be avoided by men who want to pursue those things that make them superior to women.

3) THE RABBINICAL WORLD MOSTLY ADOPTED THE GREEK DISDAIN!

- Standard prayer of Jewish male? “Thank you God that you did not make me a Gentile or a woman”.
- Teaching women? “Better to teach a dog the law than to teach a woman”. Women could not speak, read or be seen in the synagogue and did not count in making up a quorum for worship.
- Women were regarded as the husband's property, and could be divorced “for any cause” which was the basis for the exchange in Matthew 19:1- 10. While in John 8:3 the Scribes and Pharisees bring to Jesus the woman caught in adultery but not the man!

4) WOMEN AND OTHER WORLD RELIGIONS?

- Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, Orthodox all view women as lesser than men (women cannot be “priests”) and otherwise subservient to men or the property of men, e.g.: female circumcision, temple prostitution, widows burned alive with husbands, etc.
- Equality & dignity for women has come out of the Protestant Reformation. It is a tragedy that some expressions of Christianity place women back under the control of religion and tradition.

5) WOMEN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

- Jesus, Paul, Peter and the whole of the New Testament church spoke of and practiced a new order. Women were taught by them, ministered to them and worked with them. We need to look at the New Testament through that reality and not through Greek or Rabbinical eyes.
- Listen to the testimony of Tertullian writing about the early church and the relationship between men and women: “they perform their fasts, mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally are they both found in the church of God; equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other.” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4.48, Scribner's 1885). This is the vision Paul taught and established!

6) THE REVELATION OF PENTECOST? FEMALES ACCEPTED AS LIVING SACRIFICES!

- At significant moments in Jewish history, fire fell upon the sacrifices, e.g.: the dedication of the tabernacle (Leviticus 9:24), the sacrifice of Gideon (Judges 6:21), the sacrifice of David (I Chronicles 21:26), the dedication of Solomon's temple (II Chronicles 7:1) and the sacrifice of Elijah on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18:38).
- The meaning of the fire falling was always the same- God had received the sacrifice!
- Peter interprets the fire of God falling upon the 120 in the upper room by quoting Joel. The Spirit will be poured out upon “all flesh” and declared that to mean both male and female flesh!
- The fire of God's acceptance was not falling upon the flesh of bulls or goats but upon the flesh of men and women and both were acceptable, living sacrifices to God because of faith in Jesus!
- As living sacrifices both “your sons and your daughters” and “My menservants and my Maidservants” would “prophesy”. Both men and women would prophesy to their generation!
- Church history shows that during times of revival, fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit and Kingdom advancement, women have moved into the front lines of faith and ministry.
- Church history also shows that in times of kingdom decline, i.e., times of institutionalization, women are put down while men take positions of power.

7) INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY OF MEN & WOMEN? KINGS & PRIESTS!

- Male and female is a calling for time and not an identity for eternity, Mark 12:18- 27.
- Corporately we are all The Bride and we all make up The One New Man.
- Individually we are “royal priests”, I Peter 2:5 & 9 and “kings and priests”, Revelation 1:6.
- There are no first- or second-class priests but only one class: ROYAL!
- Male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free “all one in Christ”, Galatians 3:28, i.e., a new order of society, the kingdom of God! He is our peace-making one (Ephesians 2:14- 18)!
- Submission? “Submitting to one another in the fear of God”! Ephesians 5:21 is context of 22-33.
- Standard of how men are to love their wives? “As Christ loved the church!”

8) NEW TESTAMENT PRACTICE OF WOMEN IN THE KINGDOM?

- Elizabeth prophesies over Mary and Jesus, Luke 1:42- 45.

- Mary prophesies and declares the salvation of God, Luke 1:46- 55.
- Anna, the prophetess, gives thanks and prophesies over the Son of God, Luke 2:36- 38!
- Women followed Jesus, Matthew 27:55, Luke 23:49, 55 and ministered to Jesus “from their substance”, Luke 8:3, Mark 15:40- 41.
- Jesus taught women, Matthew 14:21, 15:38 and commended Mary for listening, Luke 10:38-42.
- Saul persecuted both men and women, Acts 8:3, 9:2!
- Priscilla and Aquilla explain the way of God to Apollos, Acts 18:26, Romans 16:3.
- Philip had four daughters who prophesied, Acts 21:9.
- Phoebe, teacher, pastor, minister of the church in Cenchrea, Romans 16:1- 2.
- Mary “who labored much for us”, Romans 16:6.
- Junia “...my fellow prisoners who are of note among the apostles”, Romans 16:7.
- Equality of authority and privilege in the marriage bed, I Corinthians 7:4.
- “help these women who labored with me...and the rest of my fellow workers”, Philippians 4:3.
- “Nymphia and the church that is in her house”, Colossians 4:15.
- “the older women....teachers of good things”, Titus 2:3.
- The book of Third John was written to “the elect lady and her children” and she was greeted in the conclusion by the “children of (her) elect sister”.
- Jezebel is not called a false prophet because of being a woman but because of her wrong teaching and practices, Revelation 2:20.

9) THE HELLENIZATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BY THE EARLY CATHOLICS!

Thomas Aquinas used Aristotle's philosophy of natural reason to defend and build his theology. He also took Aristotle's disdain for women (“woman is defective and misbegotten”) and made that foundational to his view of women and to his reading of scripture. His words still speak!

10) “HARD” SCRIPTURE #1, I CORINTHIANS 11

- Declares the opposite of traditional interpretation!

- Argues against either men or women wearing anything on their heads when they pray! Men covered their heads due to Jewish custom. Women due to customary modesty. In Corinth, only prostitutes wore their hair uncovered. Concession to culture? Let the women cover themselves so as not to dishonor their husbands (by appearing as prostitutes which is the same as being shaved!).
- The argument? If a man dishonors his head (Christ) by praying covered, then a woman would dishonour her head (her husband) by praying covered as well!
- Conclusion? “We have no such custom (of wearing head coverings) nor do the churches of God”, I Corinthians 11:16. That conclusion must govern how we interpret the whole passage!
- Conflict of creation order versus natural order, verses 8- 12? Conclusion? Equality- “all things are of God”!
- Verse 10, “woman ought to have authority on her head”! The Greek word for “authority” is Strong's #1849, “exousia”- freedom, mastery, right, authority, jurisdiction, and liberty. The phrase “a symbol of” is added to force a religious reading. The woman has the authority to do whatever she wants with her own head!
- Punctuation in verse 13 is incorrect – this is not a question but a statement! Written Greek had no punctuation so the meaning was taken from the context. According to the conclusion of this passage, this must be a statement, i.e., “It is proper...” Why? Verse 15, “... her hair is given to her for a covering!”

11) “HARD” SCRIPTURE #2, I CORINTHIANS 14: 26- 40

- Context? Order in the meetings.
- Theme? All participate, all contribute (men & women!), e.g., “whole church... all speak”, verse 23; “all prophesy... by all... by all” verse 24; “Each of you”, verse 26
- Conclusion? Verse 31- “For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and that all may be encouraged.” This speaks to both men and women! “All” must mean “all”! “Whole church” must mean “whole church”!
- Why must women “keep silent”? Cultural context! Men on one side, women sitting on the other and asking questions of their husbands or conversing with one another. Keep quiet to learn!
- Verse 35, “to speak”, is the Greek word (Strong's #2980), “laleo”, to talk, converse, and tell. Thus women were not to talk (to each other) in the church but were to learn at home. The cultural reality was that women were not normally allowed out of the house but now in the Kingdom of God they were- new freedom to see friends and unaccustomed to sitting & listening.

- Verse 34, “as the law also says”. Where? Not in the Old Testament! Perhaps rabbinical tradition.

12) “HARD” SCRIPTURE #3, I TIMOTHY 2:8- 15

- Historical context of persecution of church by Nero (AD 65- 70), which included torture and rape. Due to “the present distress”, I Corinthians 7: 26, Paul counsels that men and women not marry.
- Verse 12 is counsel to Timothy, limited to that time, also “due to present distress”. Limited counsel? Yes! The wine, the cloak and the counsel to stay single. If this is not limited counsel it is in contradiction to the general flow of the New Testament teaching and practice about women.
- Verse 11, “learn in silence” is the same as I Corinthians 14, the Greek word (Strong's #2271), “haysookheeah”, “stillness, and quietness” and speaks to the same cultural reality.
- Verse 13-15, Paul battles Gnostic heresy (I Timothy 1:3- 11) about Adam and Eve. The Gnostics were saying that Eve brought salvation by eating the fruit, i.e., she opened up the way to knowledge. Paul asserts that Eve did not bring salvation but that she was deceived!
- Adam carries more responsibility for his wrong choice -he made it with full knowledge. #1, He did not keep the garden (from being invaded by Satan). #2, He did not correct the lie of Satan (he remained silent). #3, He chose his own flesh, Eve, over his relationship with God. #4, He blamed God for his failure! Eve at least blamed Satan! That is the sin of Adam then and now!
- Some use this scripture to say that women should not lead due to their being more susceptible to deception! What about Catholicism, Mormonism or the Jehovah's Witnesses? They are huge perversions of Scriptural Christianity and yet all are led exclusively by men!
- Some denominations that do not allow women to preach or lead in the West have sent out many women as missionaries (apostles?). Women used to outnumber men by about 3 to 1 on the mission fields! The Western church would not let women preach to them but it was fine for women to preach to black, brown or yellow men!
- Verse 15, “Her child bearing brought about salvation reversing Eve.” This is a reference to the prophesy of Genesis 3:15 about salvation through “her Seed” who would crush the head of Satan.

13) LEADERSHIP & HONOUR TO LEADERS!

- All leaders have a first responsibility to “keep” their sphere of authority, to correct & rebuke (speak the truth in love!), to choose righteously, to accept responsibility and to ask forgiveness if wrong, i.e., reverse the sin of Adam!

- Yes, order! If you come into a house led by the one who has laid down their life for the vision of that house, you accept their leadership & their vision or you find another house! “Submit one to another” does not cancel normal household protocol! We come into the family of God by accepting the rule and authority of the head of the family!
- Yes, order in the family! “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church”, i.e., first in responsibility to lay your life down! But major decisions must be out of unity!
- Jesus is “waiting until His enemies become the footstool for His feet” (Hebrews 10:13). He is not demanding, commanding and controlling! The law of the kingdom is “ask, seek, knock!” The freedom and integrity of the other is never violated! You wait in an attitude of servant leadership.

14) FURTHER STUDY?

- The study given above is largely a summary of the research and expository work of the following authors. They quote many source materials and provide an extensive bibliography.
- “What Paul Really Said About Women”, John T. Bristow, ISBN 0-06-061063-8.
- “God's Word to Women”, Katherine C. Bushnell, ISBN 0974303100, www.godswordtowomen.org