

The Role of Women in the Messianic Assembly

Tim Hegg
www.torahresource.com • thegg@bigplanet.com
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Introduction

The Role of Women in the Messianic Assembly

The role of women in the Messianic Assembly has become a very important topic of the eighties—and rightly so. After all, this issue involves people. More than that, it involves the *Kehilah* (Congregation) which belongs to Messiah and therefore enters upon the question of His glory. Further, the Scriptures have much to say on the place of women in the Messianic Assembly. And, even if the contemporary scene did not place so much emphasis upon this issue, we should be obliged to study it for the sheer sake of knowing the mind of God as revealed in His Holy Word.

Nevertheless, this issue is not always easy to discuss. Emotions often run high, since the questions which need to be asked are often very personal and relate to feelings and fears many of us carry with us wherever we go. What is more, depending upon what conclusions we reach, our life patterns and thinking may have to change—for some, that change may be dramatic. Add to this the tendency to human pride (and thus the hesitancy to admit error) and this subject has all the makings of an emotional time-bomb.

Obviously, we want nothing to do with explosives! For this reason, some basic aspects of how we intend to approach the subject are in order.

First, and perhaps foremost, I take as my starting point the Scriptures as the infallible revelation of God. I begin, therefore, by affirming that the Scriptures are sufficient in the hands of the Ruach to lead us to all truth, which of course includes the truth about the role of women in the Messianic Assembly. With such a starting point I place myself in the evangelical camp and will therefore walk a different path than that of the liberals who claim the Scriptures to be only one fallible record to past events, stories, legends and myths (defined as literary terms). Though I may disagree with the more liberal scholars, I do admit that there is much to be learned from their work and insights, especially from those women who have written out of their own experiences and perspectives. Still, the Scriptures will remain, for me, the final word in resolving any conflict of role and function of women in the Messianic Assembly.

Secondly, and of equal importance, taking the Scriptures as the infallible revelation of God, I hold that the Scriptures reveal the timeless and eternal principles or doctrines of God. And that while modes of expression and literary aspects of the text are culturally induced, the precepts are, when interpreted in the light of a grammatical-historical hermeneutic, eternal and therefore authoritative over every generation regardless of culture. I hasten to admit that application of the timeless truth may vary from culture to culture (though not so as to neglect the principle itself), but that the principle cannot be denied by virtue of its being initiated in a time and culture which is diverse from our own.

Thirdly, and finally, I hold that the tradition of various groups (whether labelled “Christian” or “Jewish”), while valid and worthy of our study, does not hold equal worth or authority to that of the Scriptures. For this reason, the statements of great and influential Sages and theologians, though valuable, cannot undergird our conclusions. In this study, like any other, the Bible itself must stand supreme as the authority upon which we base our practice.

Having stated the ground rules for our study, it might be important to point out a particular snare which has trapped some when engaging in this study. This trap exists as a

result of the feminist movement, particularly in America but also the world over, which began particularly in the early sixties. This feminist movement is often labeled as the Equal Rights Amendment (pictured in the mind's eye as loud-mouthed women, picketing in rebellion to authority in general), the National Organization for Women (NOW), suing for discrimination in the work place, etc., and finally leading to the feminist movement in favor of abortion.

To the Torah pursuant women, this movement is filled with so much bad that to even appear as identified with any part of it is a horrible prospect. For this reason, many women avoid any discussion on the matter of the role of women in the Messianic Assembly, and even if such a discussion is initiated, are so afraid of sounding like a “women's liberation advocate” that any true representation of their feelings and thoughts come out so rounded and smoothed as to be misunderstood.

This is most unfortunate. Regardless of the women's liberation movement of the sixties, God intends us to follow the Scriptures. And, the Scriptures have something to teach us on this subject. We must therefore be eager to learn, discuss, express thoughts and impressions and work to change where the Scriptures encourage us to. We need to be grieved when we see Messiah's *Kehilah* disregarding the admonitions of Scripture in this area, and we need to be the catalyst to change in order that the Messianic Assembly might conform to the desires of her Chief Shepherd.

It is hoped, therefore, that this course will be the platform for such discussion, teaching, and learning, and that the end result will be a freeing of women to minister as God intends them too. To this end I have dedicated myself in teaching this course.

Tim Hegg
June, 1988

Select Bibliography for The Role of Women in the Messianic Assembly

The following books are some which I have read and feel may be of interest to the general reader on this topic. For exhaustive bibliographies, reference those listed on page 4 of the syllabus.

The books listed here do not necessarily represent my views and understanding of Scripture on the topic of women in the Messianic Assembly. They are, however, a good representation of evangelical work in this area. Further, they stimulate thought and often contain good insights. As always, read with a discerning mind!

Allen, Ronald & Beverly. *Liberated Traditionalism*. Portland. Multnomah Press, 1985.

Allen, Ronald. *The Majesty of Man*. Portland: Multnomah Press, 1978.

Bacchiocchi, Samuele. *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*. Biblical Perspectives, 1987.

Bristow, John Temple. *What Paul Really Said About Women*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.

Evans, Mary J. *Woman in the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983.

Karssen, Gien. *The Man Who Was Different: Jesus' Encounters with Women*. Colorado: Navpress, 1987.

Malcolm, Kari Torjesen. *Women at the Crossroads*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1982.

Mickelsen, Alvera, ed. *Women, Authority and the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986.

Pape, Dorothy R. *In Search of God's Ideal Woman*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977.

Piper, John and Grudem, Wayne eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Crossway, 1991

Spencer, Aida Besancon. *Beyond the Curse*. Nelson, 1985.

The Role of Women in the Messianic Assembly — Present State of Affairs

The amount of material available on the subject of women's role is astounding! One need only view a good bibliography ¹to see how much has been published in recent years dealing with the feminist issue. While any generalization may be misleading, it is good at times to distill current opinion into as few headings as possible, in order to get a broad perspective on the present state of affairs.

Samuele Bacchiocchi, in his book *Women in the Church* (1987), sums the debate up under three basic headings, namely, the approach of

1. Liberal Feminists
2. Evangelical Feminists
3. Biblical Feminists.²

Liberal Feminists are those who deny the authority and infallibility of Scripture. They reject the idea that one must conform to the Scriptures and thus the basis of their arguments tend to be an impugning of Scripture as culturally and psychologically unenlightened. "Biblical texts and teachings are regarded as time-bound, culturally conditioned, androcentric (male centered), rabbinic in origin, anti-feminist in nature, hopelessly corrupted by a patriarchal mentality."³

Evangelical Feminists seem caught between the proverbial "rock and hard place". They, on the one hand, feel compelled to agree to the timeless authority of Scripture, while on the other hand sensing the need to reinterpret the Scripture in light of the heart-felt equality between the sexes. Thus, "headship" is reinterpreted as "source" or "origin" and "silence" in the "Church" as culturally bound. Galatians 3:28 is repeatedly appealed to as the more mature reflections of the Apostle Paul in the unfolding of progressive revelation.

Biblical Feminists are more difficult to define. This owes to the fact that "Biblical" is a loaded label. Everyone who claims to be evangelical claims equally to be "biblical". But in the absence of a better label, Biblical Feminists fit more the class of women who, on the one hand see the need to ask the contemporary questions and reinforce scriptural answers, but who likewise are compelled to retain the more traditional views of women in the Messianic Assembly as functioning differently than men and as having a fulfilling ministry in their own sphere of "God-given ministry."

I find myself somewhere between the Evangelical and Biblical Feminist position. It is my feeling that the scriptural texts need to be re-examined under the scrutiny of good exegesis, and that contemporary questions need to be pressed into the discussion. I further feel that the general mindset of the mainline Christian Church is far more androcentric than theological discussions often indicate. To say that women have a valid ministry in the

¹See the bibliography in Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible* [Illinois: IVP, 1983], 138; Additional bibliographical sources are: C. E. Cerling, Jr., "An Annotated Bibliography of the New Testament Teaching about Women," *JETS* 16 [1972] 47-53; D. M. Scholer, "Introductory Reading List for the Study of the Role and Status of Women in the New Testament [David Scholer, 1981] 1-4; K. Sorrie, "Contemporary Feminist Theology: A Selective Bibliography," *TSF Bulletin* 7 [1984] 13-15)

²Carl Hoch, "The Role of Women in the Church: A Survey of Current Approaches," *GTJ* 8.2 [1987] 241-51 uses the labels "Non-evangelical Egalitarian", "Evangelical Egalitarian", and "Hierarchalist". These amount to much the same.

³Bacchiocchi, Samuele, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Biblical Perspectives, 1987), 23.

assembly and in the larger believing society is different than saying it and also *encouraging* the women to minister. If God intends women to minister (I think this is hardly debated, though the definition of “minister” is key) then the leaders of the Messianic Assembly are obligated to equip them to fulfill this ministry. Somehow we must break out of the thinking that is trapped by tradition and culture, and truly listen to the Bible—then and only then are we free to reinforce tradition where it is biblical and reject it where it is not. Such a knowledge of God's revelation will likewise open the vistas of service for women which the Lord Himself not only desires but commands.

I. The Teaching of the Torah and Prophets About Women

A. Genesis 1-2

1. The Structure of Genesis 1 and 2

The viewpoint of Genesis 1

- The big picture
- Reader's viewpoint: perched in the cosmos
- Mankind is the climax of the story
- Mankind created in God's image as *persons*

The viewpoint of Genesis 2:

- Looking at the details
- Introduction of “evil”, “death”, some things “not good” in contrast to “very good” in chapter one.
- Reader's viewpoint: ground level
- The primary focus is Mankind, creation of man and woman and their function together on the earth
- Mankind created in God's image as *community*

2. 1:26 — Our first glimpse at Mankind in God's image

- Mankind consists of male and female.
- The image of God is found in each.
- The Image of God is found in their union.

Three views as to how the image of God is seen in the relationship of man and woman:

- a. Seen in each separately, and as complimentary to each other.
- b. Seen in their relationship in society (each carrying out important functions necessary to the whole)
- c. Seen in their conjugal relationship and the offspring produced

3. Dominion and rule is given to both male and female, not just to the male.(1:26, “subdue and rule”)

4. In chapter one there is no hint of inferiority of woman to man.

In the study of male and female relationships, the main message of Genesis one is *equality*.

5. Man (male) is created in 2:7 from the “dust of the ground.”

The Hebrew word אֲדָמָה (*'adamah*) means “ground”, the word used here for “man” is אָדָם (*'adam*). The word in Hebrew generally used for “male” (=man) is אִישׁ (*'ish*) or זָכָר (*zakar*). אִישׁ is not used until verse 23.

6. The purpose for creating Woman: (2:18ff)

- a. man lacked proper community, a necessary part of his being created in the image of God. Man (male) could not survive without meaningful community. (2:18)
- b. there was no created being “suitable” for man. The NASB has the term “a helper suitable” in verse 18. This phrase can be misleading in the English. First of all, the word translated “helper” is Hebrew יָזַר (*yezer*). This word stresses not merely the helping in work, or in the begetting of children, but means “support” in a broad sense. In Ex. 18:4 God is “yezer” as well as in Deut. 33:7 and Ps. 20:3. Mutual help is an essential part of human existence as God intends it. The second word, “suitable” (Hebrew נֶגֶד, *neged*) means literally “side” or “beside” and in this verse “for his side.” The obvious intention of the author here is to convey a deep sense of correspondence, not merely in the physical aspects of sexuality, but in the whole scope of life: mental, spiritual, emotional as well as physical.

7. The teaching of 2:22-23 shows:

- a. Divine intention in initiating the union of man and woman by bringing the newly “fashioned” (note Hebrew בָּנָה [*banah*] which literally means “to build”) woman to the man.
- b. While the first two chapters of Genesis are somewhat poetic in structure, 2:23 is the first obvious poetry—a fitting introduction to Woman!
- c. Adam gives woman her name, a name corresponding to his. Hebrew for “man” is אִישׁ (*'ish*); Hebrew for “woman” is אִשָּׁה (*'ishah*), the latter simply being the feminine form of the former. The naming process has as its primary lesson the fact of woman's correspondence to man. She is in every essential way like him, and thus able to have heart to heart (which, in the Hebrew sense, includes mind to mind) community with him and he with her.

8. The significances of 2:24-25 may be seen in:

- a. that verse 24, like other verses in Genesis (15:6 is an example) constitutes the theological application by Moses. The events of Eden have lasting, Divine significance for us all—Moses notes this in his own commentary (under the guidance of the Ruach).
- b. the correspondence or likeness between man and woman is the basis for marriage. Since woman was taken from man, it is fitting that in the marriage bond (both physical and spiritual) she returns to man from whom she was taken, the two becoming one again. This proves, among other things, that in her being “fashioned” she did not lose her “sameness”—she is able to be one with man. This essential fact is the basis of all community.
- c. the fact mentioned, that they both were naked and were not ashamed, sets the stage for the fall into sin in the next chapter, and the fact that not until both sinned did they realize that they were naked. That is, they were one in their being

Mankind, they were one in their physical relationship, they were also one in their sin.

- d. the physical bliss which is pictured in their being naked yet unashamed is the Divine sanction upon the physical relationship between husband and wife. (The fact that God “brought” the woman to the man indicates a conjugal picture to the semitic mind). The Song of Songs details this bliss of the physical union without reference to sin, which turns all things of beauty into selfish ugliness. This fact likewise sets the stage for the upcoming fall in chapter 3 and the physical aspects of the “curse” placed upon the woman.

9. Does Genesis 2 show a pre-fall subordination of woman to man?

- a. traditionally the church has seen four reasons why Genesis 2 teaches the general subordination of woman to man. These four reasons are:
 1. Order of creation (woman created after man)
 2. Woman was taken from man
 3. Man (male) named woman (showing place of dominance)
 4. Woman was made as a helper for man
- b. When reconsidered in context, however, these four reasons are not so weighty. The argument based upon order of creation is lessened when one considers that animals were created before Man. (The use of this argument in the New Testament will be considered later in our study—see 1 Tim 2:13; 1 Cor. 11:8,9.) The fact that woman was taken from man speaks more to her correspondence to him than to her inferiority. The fact that man named woman does show a leadership role, but the name itself stresses “sameness”. The study done above shows that the term “suitable helper” likewise stresses correspondence rather than subordination. It should be added, as well, that this Genesis story is like all other teaching of the relationship between man and woman: this relationship is always seen in the context of “community” where God-ordained authority is in place. Neither here, nor elsewhere in Scripture are women said to be generally under the rule or leadership of men. Only in the community of marriage, church, etc., are the roles of men and women spelled out as to function. The idea that women are generally subordinate to men because of the manner in which they were created is simply not found in Scripture.
- c. it seems apparent that Genesis 2 has as its primary focus the unity and equality of man and woman, while stressing a distinction between male and female. In terms of personage, there is mutual subordination (or submission) and essential, lasting equality. The distinction in “role” does not appear to be one of “dominance” verses “subordination”. Each functions in his/her created ability, neither being considered more important or primary. The ruling over creation (1:28) is the mutual purpose of man and woman, and they function together as distinctly male or female to accomplish this agenda. It is not primarily man's agenda which woman aids in accomplishing—it is their agenda which they work together in, in loving community of equality.
- d. Genesis 2 emphasizes the equality between man and woman while still maintaining essential distinction as persons created in God's image.

B. The Fall (Genesis 3 & 4.7)

Genesis 3 presents the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, from that state of bliss which they enjoyed together, into the chaotic realm of the fallen world. The nature of sin is to turn everything on its head, or inside out. Thus, the relationship of man and woman, the purpose of their community together, along with their desire to obey and follow their Creator is flip-flopped and becomes burdensome.

While this chapter contains a great deal of very important information, data foundational to all Biblical Theology, we will focus our attention upon the activity of Eve (though not yet so named) in the fall, and the subsequent penalty given to her by God.

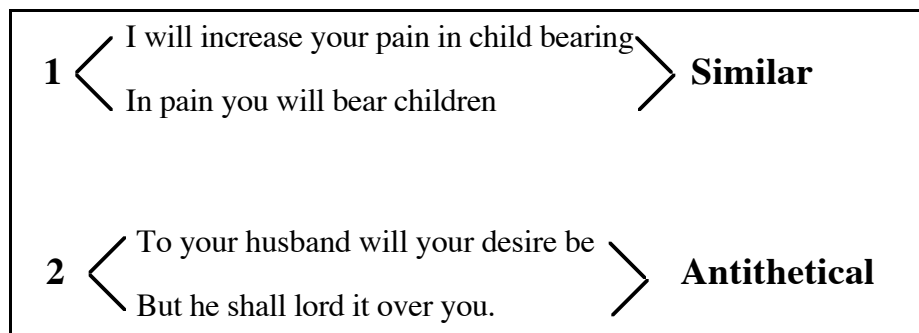
1. Satan approaches Eve with the temptation (3:1-7)

- a. The text nowhere indicates that Eve was naturally more gullible or naive—an “easier catch” for the crafty serpent. In fact, Eve argues with the serpent from an intellectual standpoint, something not found in Adam's silent acceptance of the fruit from Eve. Those who hold that the reason Satan approached Eve was because he knew that she, being a woman, was more easily persuaded, hold this view on speculation and not on anything in this text.
- b. on verse 6, and the fact that Eve saw the food was good, desirable for wisdom, and a delight to the eyes, see 1 Jn 2:16. Eve erred in (1) not knowing God's word (she added to it), (2) not recognizing her responsibility to function as an integral part of the community which together shouldered the responsibilities of carrying out God's directives. She acted independently of Adam, and thereby proved (though sadly) the truth of God's statement in 2:18 that “it is not good for Man to be alone”.
- c. Torah pursuant women today must not repeat the error of Eve:

They must *know* the Word of God. They must function as an *essential* part of the Believing community, fulfilling God's directives for them.

2. The penalty laid upon Eve for her sin (3:16)

- a. In actuality, only Satan and the ground are objects of God's curse (3:14, 17), though it has become customary to talk of the “curse” upon Adam and Eve. God would not curse the race for which His own Son would come to die and redeem!
- b. The penalty given to Eve consists of two parts, given in Hebrew poetry. The verse (in its two parts) may be outlined as follows (my own literal translation):



One of the keys in understanding this poetic speech of God to Eve is the word “desire”. Several approaches have been taken in the history of the church on the meaning of “desire” in this verse (the same word is found only in 2 other places, Gen. 4:7 and Song of Songs 7:11[Eng v. 10]). These interpretations include:

1. desire = a sexual desire of inordinate proportions, making the woman a sexual addict, always dependent upon men and constantly a threat to his moral purity. (This view was particularly popular in the first century and continued through the middle ages. Unfortunately, it still exists in some quarters).
2. desire = a sexual desire as compensation for the pain in child bearing. That is, while pain would be present in child bearing, the pleasure of sex would make up for this grief. (Once women were given a chance to speak on this issue, this interpretation fell quickly!)
3. desire = a sexual desire for her husband in spite of the fact that such a union may well result in bearing children, which promised pain. In other words, the desire is promised by God as a gracious and necessary means to perpetuate the race. Without such a desire, the woman might avoid her husband in view of the pain in child bearing. Not only would this interrupt the child bearing process, it would likewise ruin the community already established between the man and his wife. The NASB's translation as "Yet your desire shall be for your husband" has this in mind.
In a different vein, yet based upon this interpretation, some have taken the woman's desire for her husband as an additional penalty upon her—a kind of masochism. Child bearing brings pain, but something inside of the woman continues to ask for more.
4. These explanations fall short, however. This is primarily due to the fact that Gen. 4:7 uses not only the same word "desire" but also shows marked similarity in sentence structure to 3:16. Note the similarities:

3:16 Your desire will be to your husband
But he will lord it over you

4:7 its (sin's) desire is for you
but you must master it

Recent study has shown⁴ that the word "desire" most probably derives from an Arabic word which means "to urge, drive on," or "impel." This being the case, the meaning of 3:16 and 4:7 may be seen as very similar. In the same way as Satan (pictured as a crouching lion) intends to take control of Cain, to urge him on to do sin's will, so in 3:16, it is prophesied of the woman that she would attempt to drive the man to accomplish her agenda, to do her bidding. In other words, what the penalty entails is the woman attempting to act independently of the man and bringing him under her power and rule. The last line of 3:16 adds an additional twist—in spite of the woman's desire to control the man, he would usurp his power in selfishness and lord it over her. In short, the community based upon and thus mutual submission would be thrown into the chaotic world of self-centeredness. Man and woman, created to be perfect partners together, would now struggle in an ugly tug-of-war, vying for power over each other.

5. Genesis 3, the story of the fall, teaches us that apart from spiritual renewal, a woman's natural tendency will be to manipulate and control her husband. In the same way, but with much more "success", her husband's natural strengths and position will allow him to subdue or overpower the woman.
6. The only hope for the community of man and woman is to be united in Messiah Yeshua and thus enabled to restore equality and subsequent mutual submission.

⁴Susan Foh, "What is the Women's Desire?", *WTJ* 37 [Spring: 1975].

II. The Apostolic Teaching About

A. Women in the Gospels—Messiah's View of Women

Some Historical Background

It is impossible to appreciate the approach of Messiah to the women of his times without understanding the general mindset of the society toward women. So, while this course does not allow any real time for historical studies, it seems appropriate to mention some things about the first century culture and its view of women in general.

Women in Judaism

The sources informing us of first century culture in and around Palestine are few, but more are coming to light constantly. The primary sources are the Talmud and Mishnah, the legal writings of the Jewish nation. While the Talmud was not finally compiled and written until the fourth through the sixth centuries C.E., the Mishnah was extant as a written body of literature from as early as the time of Herod, though it was not until the 2nd century C.E. that the text was fixed. Regardless of the actual time of writing, both the Talmuds and Mishnah give us valuable reflect of the oral traditions and laws of the Jewish nation from as early as the third century B.C.E.

In the Talmud (as in most ancient Jewish writings), women are highly praised and noted as worthy in the realm in which the early Judaisms saw her role: home and family. Outside of the home and her role as mother and wife, women are sometimes described by the Talmud as lazy, stupid, vain, having a tendency for the occult, and in many ways frivolous and unteachable.⁵ Josephus, a Jewish historian, writes that “woman . . . is in all things inferior for a man”.⁶ That women were not regarded as acceptable witnesses in a court of law indicates their relative position in the society at large.

Likewise, in Talmudic halakah, divorce is the right of the man only, never of the woman. According to the most liberal halakah, the man could divorce the wife for nearly anything, including when he saw a woman who was better looking than she. In a court of law, the woman had no say in the divorce proceedings, unless she was accused of sexual infidelity, in which case she was allowed to plead guilty or not guilty. In other instances, she was to remain silent.

The sphere of the woman was decidedly domestic, and in this sphere she was praised, especially in the role of child bearing. Yet, while honored in her home, she was still considered on the same level as a Gentile slave. Philo indicates that a woman is in servitude to her husband, and that to acquire a wife is in every way similar to acquiring a slave. For this reason, similar qualities should be sought in both.

For a woman to venture outside the boundaries of her dwelling was frowned upon by the Talmud, though it was often necessary for financial reasons. A wife would often help bring money into the household by selling her wares (cloth, pottery, food, etc.). The Talmud, however, warns men from spending time talking with women, even women of one's household, since this inevitably leads to unchastity.⁷ The woman, seen as a sexual snare to man, was encouraged to veil herself outside of the house, not to talk with men nor to look at them face to face. Since the woman was assumed to have a naturally uncontrollable sexual need, any time a woman was abused or raped, it was equally assumed that she had seduced

⁵Ket. 30a; Meg. 14b; Nidd. 45b

⁶Contra Apionem 24:201

⁷Ned. 20a

the man. It was suggested that few if any men could withstand the seduction of a woman and were therefore not responsible for any sexual advances made upon a woman outside of her dwelling.

In the courts, a woman's testimony held little weight. The Talmud⁸ indicates that one could trust the testimony of woman as equal to that of a Gentile slave. Josephus would not allow the testimony of a woman because of the "levity and temerity of (her) sex".⁹

In the religious sphere the Talmud records little advantage for the woman, though recent study has shown that in the first century C.E. the women did play a very integral role in the life of the Jewish Temple and synagogue.¹⁰ In terms of a quorum to pronounce a blessing, three women were sufficient in absence of any men. However, if men were present, "a hundred women are no better than two men".¹¹ Women, on their own, could never hold an official service in either the Temple nor the synagogue.

The Talmud seems self-contradictory on the issue of teaching women the Scriptures. More often than not, however, teaching Torah to a woman is discouraged. One statement of the Midrash is very strong: "let the words of the Torah rather be destroyed by fire than imparted to a woman".¹² In the end, it appears that there existed a strong Rabbinic debate over the issue, with the majority stating the women should only be taught Torah relative to their duties, but that a full teaching of Torah should be reserved for men. The minority opinion must have been strong, however, since it appears to have been retained even to the time of Midrash Rabbah.

These brief statements about the view of women in early Judaism set the stage for the Messiah and His interaction with women. In the Rabbinic debate of His day, He must have sided strongly with the minority opinion. The following are only some examples:

1. John 11:5 Yeshua offered His friendship to women
2. Mark 14:9 Yeshua praised the work of Mary
3. John 4:7f Yeshua spoke at length to a Samaritan woman, gave her the gospel, brought her to faith
4. Luke 7:13 Yeshua openly displayed His personal feelings for a woman in grief
5. Luke 8:1-3 Yeshua accepted women as His disciples who travelled with Him in His ministry team
6. John 8:3-5 Yeshua treated the woman caught in adultery as an equal person to those accusing her.
7. Luke 13:16 Yeshua considered the worth of a woman as greater than the Pharisaic laws of the Sabbath.
8. John 20:17 Yeshua entrusts to a woman the vital testimony of His resurrection.

The life of Yeshua as recorded in the Gospels is literally full of contacts with women—married, single, sinners and saints. But in each case He treats them as people of high value, fully capable of hearing His message and, by the Ruach, responding to it properly. He endorses their cause (collectively and individually), pleads their case, and enlists their energies for the work He Himself was engaged in. He gives unequalled praise to women.

⁸R. Sh. 1:8

⁹Antiqu. 4:219

¹⁰See the comments of Rachel D. Levine, "Women in First Century Judaism", *YAVO* 1.4

¹¹Ber. 45b

¹²Mid. Rab. *Numbers* 9.48. It appears, however, that this was not a majority opinion by the rabbis.

- The life of Messiah teaches us that women are *important* to Him.
- The life of Messiah teaches us that women may be His *disciples* on an equal plane with men.
- The life of Messiah teaches us that women who have been born from above by the Ruach of God have a personal *responsibility and privilege* to serve God.

B. Woman in Relationship to Man (Introductory comments)

1. Headship, Authority, Submission

The vast majority of controversy arises when evangelicals attempt to interpret the New Testament Epistles in view of feminist questions. The role of women in the Gospels is very impressive, but little if any direct teaching is given as to how women are to function and how they are to relate to men (and *visa versa*). In the Epistles, however, there are a good number of passages which direct our attention to the specific issue at hand, and address questions relating to Headship (leadership, ruling position), Authority (God-given right to rule), and Submission (the requirement to follow with a willing heart).

Unfortunately, all too often in the history of the church, (and thus extant in the church today), many bible expositors and interpreters (whether in the pulpit or in the pew) have approached the Apostolic Epistles without first reading and interpreting the Tanakh and Gospels. For this reason, many come to the Epistles with a sense that the Tanakh has already established the inferior status of women and the superior position of men. If one is convinced of this prior to studying the Apostolic Scriptures, it is not difficult to fit these passages into this same mindset.

But if the Tanakh establishes the essential equality of man and woman (as we have seen), then one needs to have this in mind as he/she interprets the Apostolic Scriptures. This is particularly true since the Apostolic writers constantly appeal to the Tanakh in support of their teachings, something especially true in this area of the role of women in the church.

A Correct Perspective: Person and Function

It has often been the case, in evangelical circles at least, that a distinction is made between one's Person and one's Function. I hasten to say that this is proper—distinctions of this sort need to be made. But what seems to me to be too often the case, is that far too much stress is laid upon Function (or role) and far too little upon Personhood. I think we all agree that God created man and woman as equal with regard to Personhood, but diverse or different (we might as well say “unequal”) in regard to Function or Role. This issue, of course, will form the basis of much of our further discussion. But the point I want to make here is that Function or Role does not in anyway determine Personal worth or value. The one who serves, for instance, is not below the one served. Messiah Himself is the best example of this, as well as His words that the greatest in the Kingdom is the one who serves (Matt. 23:11). What often happens, however, (and this is the result of sin), is that a silent deprecation of women leads to a two-fold error: an unbiblical restriction of their Function and lack of appreciation for their God-given Role. Only the power of the Word of God, used by the Ruach, will free both Torah pursuant men and women from the tyranny of natural thinking (the outworking of the penalty in Eden) which has in some places shackled women and disabled them from fulfilling both their desire and responsibility — serving God as equal members in His church.

C. Woman in Relationship to Her Husband

1. 1 Co. 7

The Mishnah (the interpretation and application of the law passed down orally within the nation of Israel) has much to say about the rights of the husband in the marriage relationship. It has far less to say about the the rights of the woman. However, it appears that in 1 Co. 7 Paul is using the Mishnah as a model or outline for his instructions¹³

Paul strongly contrasts the Mishnah at this point, however. While the Jewish law lays out very specifically the duties of the wife to the husband, including number of times per week marital duties are required (depending upon the occupation of the husband), Paul gives requirements to both the husband and the wife. Once again, the equality of husband and wife is stressed.

Mutual *submission* and *authority* is the message of 1 Co. 7:2-5.

a. Equality in conjugal responsibility

Note well verse 2 : “But because of immoralities, (Greek πορνεία, the same word used in Matt. 19:9 as grounds for divorce) let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.”

- the terminology is precisely the same for both the man and the woman. The idea of “have” means “possession,” or “ownership”. This means that the husband “belongs” to the wife in the same way that the wife “belongs” to the husband. This is in stark contrast to both the Judaic and Greco-Roman mentality which have the wife as the possession of the husband, but never visa versa.

b. Equal responsibility in duty to each other (v. 3)

- Once again the admonitions of the Apostle are directed equally to the husband and the wife. Both have God given responsibilities (literally “accomplish his/her duty”— same construction is used in Rom 13:7) to perform on behalf of the other.
- Duties are fulfilled mutually in that the exhortations are directed to each equally. There is nothing in this passage which makes the husband the one to “police” the wife and assure that her duties are carried out in the marriage relationship. Paul gives this exhortation assuming true “community” is in action.

c. Equal in authority (v. 4)

- Once again, the Apostle uses exact wording for both husband and wife: “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband (does); and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife (does).”
- This contrasts the Mishnah, which never gives authority to the woman in the conjugal relationship. Paul is speaking of marriage on a new plane, a marriage built upon the fact that the husband and wife are both equal members of the body of Messiah and therefore both submit to Him as their ultimate authority.

In the extended context of this chapter, a further contrast between Paul and majority opinion of rabbinic Judaism of his day is seen: consideration in the area of divorce is given to the woman. In the event that an unbeliever wants to “leave” (v. 15), he should be allowed to leave, the remaining spouse is “not under bondage” (the same terminology used in Rom. 7:2). Paul makes clear that this applies not only to a remaining husband, but also to a wife, for he addresses the remarks to “brother or sister”.

¹³Nashim/Kethuboth 5.5ff

Clearly, 1 Co. 7 teaches the following:

- In marriage, the wife has equal conjugal responsibilities and duties with her husband. She is his equal in this.
- In terms of conjugal “duties”, the wife has as much “say” as the husband. It is not only her duty to fulfill the needs of her husband, it is equally his duty to fulfill her needs. The medieval idea that a woman was given to a man primarily to fulfill his sexual desires is here entirely discarded. In Messiah, the marriage bond is one of pure mutuality, both husband and wife moving toward a mutual goal—growth in holiness.

2. Eph. 5.21ff / Col. 3.18-19

The “Headship” Issue

As we enter into the discussion of woman in relationship to man in the sphere of marriage, we begin to come into an area in which there is direct Biblical teaching. Yet, even though there is specific teaching on the roles of wife, husband, and children within the family, still the Biblical exhortations are cast in enduring principles which must be applied by the individuals in their own time and place.

Eph. 5 and Col. 3 are two primary texts dealing with the submission of wives to their own husbands. To these two texts may be added 1 Pet. 3:1, 5 as well as Titus 2:5. These will be discussed in order to ascertain

- what is meant by “be in submission to” and
- to determine how this functions in the context of equality (something already established from Scripture).

In coming to Eph. 5:21ff, we have come to a very crucial text in this whole discussion. But it becomes apparent, when reading the passage, that some preliminary discussion must precede our study of the idea of “submission”. This preliminary study has to do with the concept of the husband as “head” (Greek κεφαλη) of the wife. Today there is a very heated debate over what Paul meant by this metaphor.

The contemporary discussion may be summed up under two opposing heads: either “head” (κεφαλη) means (1) “source” and thus “supplier, sustainer” or (2) “authority,” “ruler.”

Arguments for “head” = “source, sustainer”

1. Linguistic argument:

- Those who hold this position point to the fact that in the Classical Greek language (used by literary writers from 300 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.) κεφαλη is sometimes employed to mean “source”, much as we use English “head” in “head of the river”.
- A second linguistic argument is based upon the distinction of Greek κεφαλη (“head, top, uppermost”) and αρχη (“ruler, leader, starting point”). While κεφαλη may at times denote a military leader who is “the first into the battle”, it is argued that whenever the idea of “ruler” or “authority over” is present, the Greek employs αρχη.

- This argument is said to be strengthened by the way in which the LXX translators employed κεφαλη and αρχη: since in the Hebrew there is only one word for “head” (שׂר), if κεφαλη and αρχη are synonyms, then they would be employed without distinction in the LXX translation. This does not seem to be the case, however. When שׂר is used to denote “leadership” and “authority”, αρχη is regularly used. When שׂר denotes “source,” “sustainer” or “first into the battle,” κεφαλη is used.
- Since the husband is never said to be αρχη over the wife, but only κεφαλη, it is taken that the meaning is “source” or “sustainer” without the idea of “ruler” or “authority over.”

2. Cultural argument

- It is argued that in the ancient world, the heart, not the head, was the seat of intelligence and volition. Leadership would not be symbolized as being in the “head”, but rather in the “heart”. Only modern, English usage gave “head” this meaning. Thus, when Paul employs κεφαλη in describing the relationship of husband to wife, he cannot be attaching to it the meaning “leader”, “ruler,” “authority over”, a meaning extant only in the modern era.

3. Parallelism Argument

- In the passages under investigation, there are verses which, it is argued, stress the meaning “source” for κεφαλη. For instance, in Col. 2:19 and Eph. 4:16, κεφαλη is employed in the context of supplying the body with all that it requires, thus emphasizing the meaning “source,” “sustainer.” Likewise, in 1 Co. 11:8, 12, since woman is said to proceed “from” man, the idea of source is extant. The argument is simply this: in each of the places where the husband is said to be the head (κεφαλη) of the woman, there is the idea of “source” or “sustainer” in the nearby or immediate contexts.

Discussion of These Arguments

1. Linguistic Argument

- It is true that “source” or “sustainer” as a meaning for κεφαλη can be traced in the classical Greek. But it is equally true that the meaning “ruler” or “authority over” may be found. Wayne Grudem¹⁴ has listed 32 examples. It would appear that merely doing linguistic study on the word itself will not settle the argument.
- The claim that the LXX regularly employed αρχη to denote “rule over” or “superior in rank” and κεφαλη to mean “physical head” or “first into the battle” is not borne out by study.¹⁵ It is true that these are meanings for the

¹⁴“Does Kephale (‘head’) Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” Appendix 1, in George W. Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Chicago), 1985.

¹⁵Note the somewhat mis-directed study of Bristow, *What Did Paul Really Say About Women* (Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 37ff; and n. 2, p.122. Interestingly, most of those who want to see κεφαλη as “source” argue that in the LXX the two words are interchangeable, and that since αρχη sometimes means “source”, the LXX translators must have felt κεφαλη could also have the same meaning! See Bacchiocchi, p. 113ff.

word, but it also appears that by “first into battle” is meant “military commander” which implies “authority over”. Note in this regard Judges. 11:11.

2. Cultural Argument

Once again, study bears out that even ancient man conceived of “head” as meaning “ruler over”. For instance, Philo (30 B.C.E.-45 C.E.) writes: “As the head in the living body is the ruling place, so Ptolemy became head among kings.”¹⁶. Other examples are also available.

3. Parallelism Argument

It is true that the contexts of these passages which use *kephale* in describing the relationship of the husband with his wife also have a sense of the “head” being the “sustainer”. But this does not negate the possibility that “head” in these passages also carries with it the idea of “ruler” or “authority over”.

The Bottom Line

While it may be impossible to state dogmatically the meaning of *κεφαλη* in these texts, it appears from all of the data that the following are true:

1. Paul chooses to consistently employ *κεφαλη* rather than *αρχη* to describe the role of husband to wife and wife to husband. This must not be overlooked. In such a choice, he definitely communicates that the husband is “head” of the wife in a way which contrasts the common “lording it over” manner of husbands in the Graeco-Roman culture.
2. One cannot deny that *κεφαλη* carries with it the idea of “source,” “sustainer,” “leader (first into battle),” and “supplier to the body” all on the analogy of the first meaning of the word itself, namely “head” (in a physical sense). In the same way as one's head does not act in an independent way from one's body (except at execution by beheading!), so Paul's consistent use of the word to denote the husband as head of the wife emphasizes the union of the two as one.
3. Likewise, one cannot deny that *κεφαλη* also can denote the idea of “leadership,” or “authority over,” though this is never on the basis of superior rank or greater worth (which could be the case if *αρχη* would have been used).
4. It appears that the Scriptures teach us the husband is the head of the wife because:
 - it is his duty to lay down his life for her (Eph. 5:25) in the same way that the “first into battle” willingly lays down his life for his troops
 - it is his duty to sustain his wife as of highest value to himself (in the same way that he values his own flesh, Eph. 5:29)
 - God, who is the God of order, sovereignly designated the man as the general authority in the marriage relationship and therefore the responsibility for general direction in the marriage falls upon his shoulders. (1 Co. 7, already studied, shows that there are areas of authority given to the wife directly by God. Other areas of authority may likewise be hers, as mutually

¹⁶ from Bacchiocchi, p. 113.

agreed upon within the marriage). This decision is not explained in Scripture, but is announced as based squarely upon God's free and sovereign choice. All indications of Scripture are that if He had chosen woman to be "head" of the man, she was created entirely able to fulfill such a role.

3. Messiah as the Model of "Headship"

Since Scripture is clear that the husband is to function as the head of the wife, it would be good to mention briefly the manner in which he is to function in this role. Eph. 5 gives us this teaching, by putting forth Messiah as the model to be followed. However, as is often the case, it is clear that the husband can never be the head of the wife in exactly the same way as Messiah is the head of the Messianic Assembly. The husband will never be the "Savior" of his wife (5:23) as Messiah is of the church. Nor will the husband be able to demand submission on the same level, since submission to Messiah is based ultimately upon His perfections. He never makes mistakes nor leads astray. This, unfortunately, cannot be claimed even by the best of husbands.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the illustration will inevitably break down at some point, Paul does parallel the relationship of the church and Messiah to that of wife and husband, and admonishes the wife to "submit" to the husband as her head in the same way as the church "submits" to Messiah as her head (5:24).

With this model in mind, the headship of the husband may be generally summed up as consisting in:

1. The husband's willingness to put his wife above himself and therefore
2. his willingness to lay down his life for her;
3. The husband's desire to see his wife purified and Messiah-like and
4. viewed by all as glorious and beautiful; holy and blameless.

Messiah became the Head of the Messianic Assembly, which is His body, in the act of laying down His life for her (cf. Rom 1:4; Heb. 2:9-18; Eph. 1:19-23; Phil. 2:5-11). Because of His willingness to submit to the Father's plan of salvation, Messiah took His rightful place of exultation as Head of the Messianic Assembly. But this place of exultation came only after He willingly suffered and died for His bride. This is the pattern of Headship for the husband—he is not head simply because he is male—he is head because in Messiah he has been called to sacrifice everything necessary to complete in his wife what God desires as a living illustration of Messiah Himself. It is in this kind of "headship", a headship which involves both "sustaining" and "authority", "source" and "leadership" that the husband functions in his God-given role. And, it is to this headship that the wife is asked to submit.

"Wives, Be Subject to Your Husbands"

Now that we have discussed the issue of "headship" (and hopefully understand it better), we may look at this issue of "submission" as admonished in the Pauline epistles.

The primary texts are: Eph. 5:21ff; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5 and 1 Pet. 3:1,5. In all of these texts, the same Greek word is used. It is υποτασσω, which literally means to "stand under," and thus to "subjugate" (in the active) and to "be subjugated" (in the passive). Most interesting for our study is the fact that in every case where the wife is commanded to be subject to her husband, the word is found not in the active, nor in the passive, but in the middle voice. The three voices in Greek may be outlined as follows:

Active voice : “Tom threw the ball”

Passive voice: “Tom was thrown from the car”

Middle voice: “Tom threw himself into his work”

We may therefore note the following:

- Nowhere do the Scriptures exhort or even suggest that husbands actively subjugate their wives
- all exhortations regarding the submission of the wife to the husband are directed to the wife
- the middle voice (which is consistently used) signals that the exhortation comes to the wife as requiring her voluntary submission to God's order for marriage.

Once again, the Scriptures contrast the culture of the first century. To appeal to a wife to submit to her husband assumes (1) that she is an equal to which an appeal can be made, and (2) that her submission is not an assumed fact based upon natural inferiority and subjugation. Normally, in the first century, there would be no appeal to wives to submit to their husbands—it would be both an assumed fact as well as a legal one. A woman was not encouraged to this—she simply had no alternative. The gentle appeals of the Apostle stand in stark contrast to “woman-as-property” mentality of the first century culture.

Eph. 5:21ff

This text is perhaps the key one, and thus warrants closer attention. The manner in which Paul structured the text is important for its proper interpretation. While several possibilities exist for how the Greek text is structured, the following seems most plausible to me, on the basis of what I have studied, and in light of those who have written on this passage.

Verse 18 has a leading verb in the form of a command (imperative): “Be filled with the Ruach”. Following this command are several participles which relate back to the command (showing how the command is worked out in practical life). These participles are (v. 19) “speaking to one another”, (v. 20) “giving thanks”, (v. 21) “submitting to one another”. We might paraphrase structurally this way:

Ephesians 5:18

Be *filled* with the Spirit

| *speaking* to each other

| *giving* thanks

| *submitting* to each other

| wife, to your husbands

| husbands, to your wives (by sacrificing yourself for her)

- 5:21** The main heading of the section begins by showing that even in the marriage relationship there is mutual submission. While the term “submit” (*hupotasso*) is not used directly of the husband here, as it is of the wife, two things must be kept in mind: (1) it is used of the husband in v. 21, as he is seen as part of the whole, and (2) the fact that the husband is required to love (*αγαπαω*) his wife indicates that, like Messiah, he must submit his entire life to her welfare—to the meeting of her needs, the fulfilling of her life and conformity to Messiah. In a very real sense, the submission required of the husband exceeds that of the wife, in the same way that the submission of Messiah to the cross might exceed anything required of the Messianic Assembly in her submission to the Lord.
- 5:22** it should be noted that the verb “submit” is not actually in the verse itself. It must be supplied (and rightly so) from verse 21. Paul does this to show that v. 21 is the main heading under which he now wishes to instruct us about the marriage relationship. The NASB is inaccurate to have begun verse 21 with “and,” which is found in no Greek manuscript.
- 5:33** In the context of sacrificial love of the husband for his wife, the wife is admonished to “fear” her husband. This attitude of awe comes when the wife recognizes to what depths her husband will go to see her life fulfilled and her beauty in every way developed. This, of course, is drawn from the pattern of Messiah and the Messianic Assembly. When the Messianic Assembly contemplates the death and agony of Messiah on her behalf, she bows in glad worship to the One who loved her so. This is not burdensome submission, as inferior to superior, but is rather heart-felt wonder that such love should be extended and experienced.

A Final Word About “Submission”

The message of Messiah is that *submission* ought to characterize the Believer's life, most simply because it is the characteristic of the life of Messiah Himself. The whole plan of salvation rests upon this fact, that Messiah submitted Himself to the Father, obeyed His will, came to this earth, died, rose from the dead, ascended on high where He awaits His return to gather His bride to Himself. Thus, the pattern of Messiah is one of submission to the Father.

In this same way, then, those who follow Messiah must be characterized in their lives by the pattern of submission. All must submit to each other (Eph. 5:21); all must consider the other as more important than her/himself (Phil. 2:3); all must submit to God-given authority (Rom 13:1; Heb. 13:17).

Submission, then, in the general sense of the word, cannot be equated with “obey”. Rather, as Eph. 5:21 makes plain, the submission of the wife to the husband is in the context of general submission to each other, and this submission involves loving support and encouragement, as well as expressed appreciation. It would make no sense to equate “obey each other” with “submit to each other.” It is interesting that nowhere in the Apostolic Scriptures is there a command for a wife to “obey” her husband. This is in contrast to children (Col. 3:20) and slaves (Col. 3:22; compare Eph. 6:2ff) who are regularly exhorted to “obey” parents and owners, respectively. While the Graeco-Roman culture would put wives on equal plane with children and slaves, Paul certainly does not. In the role of submission, the wife functions as an equal partner with her husband, in loving community, striving to accomplish the tasks God has given to them both.

Finally, submission cannot be defined in a Torah pursuant context as denoting a lower rank and less worthy position. First, and foremost, Messiah, in submitting to the Father, is in no way inferior to the Father. Mutual submission reflects the image of God as seen in the mutual submission of the Trinity. What is more, the glory of Messiah is regularly extolled on the grounds that He was willing to obey the Father and submit to His will, regardless of the cost. The love of Messiah is in this very fact most vividly displayed. So too, in the life of the believer: the wife, in submitting to her husband, follows in the footsteps of Messiah. How could this be viewed as casting her in an inferior position. And the husband, in submitting to the needs and care of his wife, how is this demeaning? This is the path to greatness (Matt. 20:26). Rather, the attitude of selfishness, which manifests itself in a desire to “have it my way” or “to be seen as most important” only fulfills the inevitable results of sin described in the garden:

“you will try to force your agenda upon your husband but
he will lord it over you”

True God-honoring marriage is rather characterized by the manner in which Messiah Himself lovingly concerns Himself with His bride, and the way in which she therefore appreciates, honors and follows Him. This is the picture of submission.

D. Women in relationship to the Messianic Assembly

1. The Equality Question - Gal 3.28

Galatians 3:28 is a “key” verse, but has been somewhat mis-used by the more liberal side of the feminist movement. An investigation of the verse in the context in which it is found will help to put it in its proper perspective.

Paul, in this grand epistle (written close to the time when he wrote Romans) gives the basic teaching of how one “gets into” the family of God, and how one “stays in.” The sense of obligation to man-made halakah which some of the Jewish believers had brought into the Messianic Assembly at times challenged Paul’s teaching. God-fearers, untrained in specific kinds of traditional halakah, lived a life of faith according to the guidelines of the Torah, especially as taught and interpreted by Yeshua. That they were unwilling to bend to this or that halakah caused no little friction. It was in this context that Paul writes in order to explain the basis for “in” status (i.e., inclusion within the people of God) and how this method (justification by faith for those who are elect of God) fits with Torah life but may have little or no part with extra-biblical halakah.

In Galatians, therefore, Paul needed to establish two things:

- that justification was on the basis of faith in Messiah alone, a justification which was the foundation for sanctification, and
- that this doctrine was true for everyone, no matter what religious or cultural background he/she had.

In chapter 3, Paul deals specifically with the Torah as it relates to the promise of God to Abraham, showing that even Abraham was justified apart (actually “before”, cf. Rom. 4) the giving of the Torah, since the Torah was given 430 years after the covenant was made with Abraham. Our verse (28) comes as a conclusion: the New Covenant promises of Messiah come on the basis of faith alone. And, this is true for everyone, whether Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female. In this respect, as far as justification goes, there is no distinction (cf. Rom 3:22) but all are seen as equal: equally sinners, equally justified by faith since all are equally in Messiah Yeshua.

Now this statement of Paul is important for our study. It confirms the words of Peter in 1 Pet 3:7, that wives are “equal heirs in the grace of God” with the husband. Equality in personhood is established beyond any doubt. Further, equality as responsible heirs in the grace of God and therefore in His service and kingdom is also established.

It is, however, an exegetical fallacy to teach that this verse somehow levels all distinctions of male and female in life itself. This is most certainly not what Paul is teaching here. Function or role will continue to be different, as will physical attributes, desires, cares, etc. Paul's statement is not meant to erase essential differences in created purpose and order of the male and the female. It is meant to obliterate forever the notion that the female is less important, of less worth, or personally of less value to God than is the male. In God's economy of salvation (and this is the heart of God's activity) there is no distinction between male or female, in the same way as there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, bond or free. And, by this verse, the oneness in Messiah is likewise emphasized. In the church we all must realize that each member, regardless of position in life, is as important as each other member. Only as we consider each other in this role of “importance” will we benefit from the unique ministry each “joint supplies” (Eph 4:16).

2. The “Silence/Teaching” — “Authority” Question

a. 1 Co. 11.1f¹⁷

1 Co. 11 is a key text on the issues of women's role in the church. No one denies this! In a similar manner, no one denies that 1 Co. 11 has its share of interpretation difficulties. One should beware of anyone who dogmatically claims to have the inside “scoop” on this passage. The best of scholars and commentators have struggled with this passage, or at least parts of it, for nearly 2000 years and it is at least slightly arrogant for anyone individual to claim he or she now has the light.

In the tangle of writings on this passage, however, it may be said that there has been a lot of confusion offered to the general readership. Everything from absolute male superiority and female worthlessness (as some early Church fathers interpreted) to throwing the whole section out as a miserable example of Paul's own androcentrism of which he himself was not fully aware¹⁸ has been suggested. Both of these extremes should obviously be avoided, primarily because the text itself, when studied in light of the immediate context and the teaching of Scripture as a whole, simply cannot support them.

But what is Paul teaching us here? First, let's look at the immediate context. The first epistle to the Corinthians was written to instruct an assembly which, on the one hand, was doing some commendable things, but was likewise allowing elements of pride and sin to become resident within the gathering. Certain schisms were present which, if left unchecked, would damage the body greatly. To these issues of practical community life, sanctified living, and order within the Messianic Assembly, Paul addresses himself.

In the section immediately preceding chapter 11, Paul has dealt with the physical relationship in marriage (ch. 7), the wedding of one's virgin daughter (ch. 7), liberty from man-made halakah in matters of kashrut (ch. 8), the right of support for leaders in the Messianic Assembly as well as their liberty to not accept financial support (ch. 9), the oneness of the body as expressed in the Lord's Table (ch. 10) and the need to not offend one another in the exercise of individual freedoms (ch. 10). In all of these things, Paul has

¹⁷ The author has a paper, “Shall I Remove My Kippah: A Messianic Intepretation of 1Cor 11” which is available on the internet at: www.beithallel.org, listed on the “Articles” page.

¹⁸as was suggested by Belzikian at the 1986 national ETS meeting in Atlanta.

put himself forward as an example of one who willing gives up his rights in order to allow the gospel freedom of access to different groups (9:19ff; 10:23ff).

When chapter 11 opens with the words “Be imitators of me”, it most probably refers to this aspect of the Apostle—a willingness to give up his freedoms in areas of cultural differences for the sake of the gospel. Paul felt the freedom to accept various judgments regarding kashrut halakah (always, of course, which aligned with basic Torah halakah), but he was careful about his eating habits around those who were not as free in their conscience as he was (10:23-33, especially 32-33). With such an opening, one is therefore alerted to the fact that Paul is now approaching a subject upon which there was disagreement on an interpretative basis, something those of one interpretation (and surely cultural issues entered in here) would have to be careful about lest they offend members of another persuasion. After all, the Apostolic community was something new in this regard: it was a Jewish community in which non-Jews were given full entrance and equal status. While all lived out a Torah-pursuant life, the many, many traditions of halakah which were extra-biblical had, in many ways, become the hallmark of the various Judaisms in Paul day. To have community members who not only failed to live out the details of rabbinic halakah, but even more, did not know that such halakah even existed, no doubt presented many situations which required a good deal of “forbearing” on everyone's part.

The cultural item set forth by Paul in this section has to do with the manner in which people dressed when they assembled to worship together. The fact that both the preceding context and that which follows our section deal with the Lord's Table is evidence that what Paul refers to here is envisioned as taking place in the gathered assembly of the Christians as they worshipped together. The issue of clothing, as was the case with so many other aspects of Believing community, was a concern to Paul only in the manner in which it (1) affected other individual believers in their pursuit of Messiah and (2) in what it communicate about Messiah as the Head of the *Kehilah*. Probably nothing was more important to the Apostle, when discussing the Apostolic Messianic Assembly, than the absolute Headship of Messiah. Therefore, anything which might give a “mixed message” concerning His sovereign Lordship of the Messianic Assembly needed to be modified.

The issue of hair length in the Jewish community did have religious significance. Long hair for males signalled the Nazerite vow. Other than that, it was out of place in the 1st Century. Moreover, in the Roman and Greek cultures, long hair on a male was the common sign of a homosexual. We know that Paul could not have prohibited a man wearing a cloth or hat, for the tallit was common in his day,¹⁹ and every priest which ministered in the Temple wore a turban or mitre (Exodus 28:4ff).

For the woman, Jewish law required that she keep her hair pinned up on her head, since long, flowing hair was considered very sensual. Indeed, in some writings, hair which was “let down” was considered on the same level as nudity. The Mishnah states that a man could divorce his wife and not return her dowry if she transgressed either the Torah of Moses, or Jewish custom. Under Jewish custom is included the following: “If she go forth with her hair loose, or if she spin in the street, or if she hold converse with all men.”²⁰ The Talmud²¹ notes the confession of a pious mother whose two sons both functioned as high priest as saying that the good fortune of her sons was the result of her piety, confirmed by

¹⁹Bristow, p. 79. The Mishnah states that a man should have his head covered in worship, as showing his place of subordination to Moses, who covered his head (and face) when coming down from Mt. Sinai. The common article worn was the tallit or prayer shawl which the men wore whenever worshipping, whether at home or in public. (This is still practiced by orthodox Jews today). Thus, a Jewish man with his head covered when worshipping showed his submission to the Torah and to Moses as the mediator by which he worshipped God.

²⁰Keth. 7:6

²¹Yoma 47a

the fact that “throughout the days of my life the beams of my house have not seen the plaits of my hair.” This corresponds with Jewish mindset: if the Torah forbids going out of the house with your hair undone, you are one step safer if you never take your hair down, even within the house. Apparently, this was the custom for some Jewish women. Thus, under Jewish law, a woman was not to be seen in public short hair. She could either keep it braided and upon her head, or cover her head so that her hair could not be seen. This applied in worship as well, though not as indicating her submission to Moses and the Torah, but rather as keeping her from being a sensual detraction in the place of worship.

So much for the Jewish customs, what of the Greek and Roman? Interestingly enough, some are similar. For a Greek or Roman woman, long hair was considered stylish, especially for the wealthy. This was because long hair was considered sensual but also because it was the custom for the wealthy *heterai* (recognized prostitutes who were considered highly cultured) to braid gold and pearls into their hair as a way to show off their wealth. This custom began to be followed by women generally as would be expected in a culture where the men gave such styles their constant attention. The admonitions of Peter (1 Pet 3:3f) and Paul (1 Tim 2:9) no doubt are addressing this custom specifically, since the message communicated by imitating the *heterai* was entirely contrary to the heart of the Messianic community as an assembly of sanctified people living in holy community.

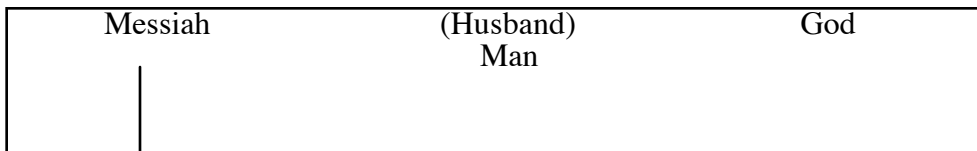
Likewise, both Jewish and Gentile customs of the first century had it that common prostitutes (uneducated women who pursued harlotry on their own initiative and not as trained by the schools of the *heterai*) wore their hair very short. In Rome, it was a law that prostitutes (whether common or *heterai*) make their hair yellow, and in time this custom became common even among married women, where dying the hair with peroxide or wearing yellow wigs became a fad.

When we return to 1 Co. 11 and read the passage with this brief historical background, we can understand first why a problem existed, and secondly, why Paul feels the need to address it in his epistle.

First, in an assembly made up of both Jews and Gentiles, one can understand how confusion over this issue could happen. A Jewish man who looked at a Gentile woman worshipping with her hair down (long, flowing) would immediately consider her as disregarding the warnings about sensuality. A Gentile who saw a Jewish woman with braided hair might wonder why she is following the pattern of the *heterai* if in fact she is intending to honestly worship God. A woman in the assembly who was saved out of prostitution (and if Messiah's friendship with prostitutes is any indication of a pattern, we would have to assume that many found their way into the messianic assembly as the good news of the gospel freed them from their lives of slavery to sin!) and had her head shaven was looked upon as ugly and disrespectful by all.

As is often the case, Paul cuts through this maze of cultural do's and don'ts and comes to the heart of the issue: what is important is what our hair styles say about Messiah and our relationship to Him. The overall message is this: we must communicate to others, whether through our words, deeds, or even how we wear our hair, that we are in glad submission to the authorities which God has placed over us. Let's see how this theme is worked out in our text.

v.3 Paul begins by reinforcing the manner in which God has established authority in the Believing community:



Since the words for “man” and “woman” are the same as “husband” and “wife“, it is difficult at times to know exactly how to translate. However, the authority structure which God has set up is definitely in the context of ordained institutions, that is, marriage, family, community of faith, government, etc, and therefore what Paul speaks of in this context most likely is restricted to the relationship of husband and wife.

- v. 4** Having laid out the authority structure in both the Community of faith and marriage (husband-wife), Paul continues by showing how one's hair-style culturally communicates one's attitude towards this authority.

“Every man who has (something) coming down from his head (a phrase which here means long hair) while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.”

Question: who is the man's head?

Answer: Messiah is the head of the man. (i.e., it is to Messiah each husband must answer if he does not fulfill his role as husband)

Question: how does he disgrace his head by having hair coming down from his head?

Answer: except for a man involved in a Nazarite vow, long hair was a sign of homosexuality.

- v. 5** But every woman (wife) while praying or prophesying who has nothing coming down from her head (a phrase meaning long hair) disgraces her head; for she is just like the one who has her head shaven.

Question: who is the head of the woman (wife)?

Answer: her husband

Question: how does she disgrace her head by not having something coming down (i.e., long hair) from her (physical) head when worshipping?

Answer: her appearance is like that of a prostitute in the first century, who were characterized by their shaven heads or short hair.

- v. 6** This verse is support for the conclusion in verse 5. If a woman is going to appear sensual (by having her hair cut off or worn very short), she may as well go all the way and appear as a prostitute by shaving her hair off. That is, if its sensuality you're striving for, a little is just as bad as alot. In Jewish culture, a woman's long hair (whether worn down or braided up on the head) was a sign of modesty. Thus, women who were found to be harlots were shaven as a matter of disgrace. Note also that in the ritual of the suspected wife (Num 5), the woman lets her hair loose (lets it

down) as part of the ceremony. The hair must have had some significance in the whole matter of modesty and moral issues.

- v. 7 But this is not proper. A wife, especially a Torah pursuant wife, obviously wants to show her love and submission to her head, that is, to her husband. Her desire is to give him praise and glory. This idea of giving glory is a primary theme for Paul here. It is why, in verse 3, he states things in a particular order: Messiah is head of man, man is head of woman, God is head of Messiah.

We must resist the temptation to give to this verse an interpretation which sees it as telling the whole story. That is, when the man is said to be “the image and glory of God”, this is not to say that the woman is not also created in the image of God—Gen 1:26 states this to be so explicitly. Likewise when the verse says that the wife is the glory of the husband, this is not to imply that the only purpose a wife has in life is to bring honor to her husband (though certainly everything she does as to the Lord will bring honor to her husband).

Verse 7 is made up of two phrases:

1. “On the one hand a man ought not to have a long hair coming down from his head, he being the image and glory of God.
2. Corresponding to this, the husband's glory is his wife.”

Note the following about the first phrase:

1. Paul has Genesis 1 and 2 in mind. He substitutes “glory” for “likeness” in the phrase from Gen 1:26, however, since his focus in this section is the issue of giving honor (a correct attitude toward God-given authority). Adam, when first created, honored God as the apex of His creation (remember in Gen 1 the creation of man is seen as the high point). In terms of the authority structure in the Community of faith, man (male) is to take the authoritative positions of headship, with all that entails (sacrifice, giving of one's self, as Messiah is head of the Messianic Assembly).
2. For a man to pray with long hair sends a mixed signal: except for one who is in the midst of a Nazerite vow (which would be known within the community because he would not eat nor drink anything from the vine), long hair on a man would signal a life of fornication. But if prayer in the assembly is to bespeak submission to Messiah and the Father, then there is clearly a conflict.

With regard to the second phrase:

1. It seems best to see here the marriage relationship: (remember, the words can be translated “man/husband, woman/wife”).
2. Again, in the context of the Genesis story, woman becomes man's glory, because only in her does he find his creative purpose, that is, to show forth the image of God. Adam is elated when he sees Chavah, because at last he has someone who corresponds with him. He rejoices (takes glory) in the fact that she has been created to correspond with him, in much the same way that he had been created to correspond to God (i.e., in His image). Thus, when Paul here designates the wife as the glory of the husband, it emphasizes essential equality in creative worth and certainly goes against the culture of his day.

3. Verse 8 and 9 proves this very point: woman is man's glory because she was created to make up what was lacking in him. The reverse was not true. Man was not created to fill in a lack or defect in woman.

v. 10 On account of this, a woman ought to have authority upon her head because of the angels

This verse has caused many (if not most) real confusion. The following should be noted:

1. This is a conclusion-type verse, stating a premise of the Apostle's argument. It basically says, "on the basis of what was just stated, it is clear that a woman should have authority upon her head"
2. Many versions include the word "symbol" in italics (NIV has "a sign"). The Greek actually says, however, that the woman "ought to have authority upon her head." What is this authority? It seems most probable that this authority harkens back to 1 Co. 7, where the wife is given authority over the husband in the physical relationship of marriage. But how would this be evident in the manner in which the wife prays and prophecies? Again, the cultural aspects enter in here. A woman who prayed with long hair would communicate that she, like her husband, was submissive to the authority of her husband. A woman praying with short hair or shaven head (and thus looking like a prostitute) would send mixed signals: is she submissive to her husband or not? Thus, when she adorns herself in a manner so that all know she is married (long hair), she also communicates that she is the one who has authority over her husband as granted in 1 Co. 7. Simply put, when she worships, all should recognize by her hair style that she has joined herself to her husband in submission to his headship, and that as so joined, she recognizes the authority in the Messianic Assembly as well as in her marriage.
3. What about this phrase, "because of the angels"? Several interpretations have been offered:
 - a. in medieval times, it was thought that the angels might be tempted to sensuality (cf. Gen 6) if they saw the women with short hair, so they were to cover it.
 - b. many relate this to the agency of angels in the giving of the Torah (Ac 7:53; Gal. 3:19). Since the Torah was mediated through angels, this, according to Rabbinic interpretation, showed a hierarchy in the heaven, as a pattern for the world. Thus there is God, then angels, then man (male) then woman (female) and finally all the creatures. For women to pray as though unsubmitive to men would be to spoil the chain of command set up by God.
 - c. others have related this to the appearance of angels to the women after the resurrection²². Thus, since the angels spoke with women concerning the risen Messiah, "because of the angels" is said to be given as additional proof that women have authority upon their heads.
 - d. I would like to propose an additional explanation, one which I have not seen else where, so I ask for your evaluation of it. 1 Pet. 1:10ff indicates that angels greatly desire to see the way in which the salvation as prophesied by the prophets of the Tanakh would be worked out in the Messianic Assembly. In similar manner, Paul indicates in Eph. 3:10 that the "rulers and authorities" in heavenly places would come to know the plan of God, not by direct revelation from Him, but by observing the Messianic Assembly! Thus, is it possible that Paul, by adding the phrase "because of the angels" intends us to understand

²²Bristow

that the message of one's adornment is a lesson not only to the assembly itself, but also to the heavenly hosts? I think this is at least possible.

v. 11-12 These two verses make it very clear that Paul has not intended to teach the inferior position of women in the believing community, nor to, in any way, cast them as of lesser worth. Neither man (husband) nor woman (wife) is independent, and thus should not function as such. Once again, Paul goes back to creation as a proof of this. Woman came from man originally (Chavah was shaped from Adam's rib), but all men have been born from a woman. There is therefore essential equality in terms of origins. The final phrase of verse 12 shows this: "all things are out from God". There is thus no place for boasting or setting oneself up as lord over another. Each must function within the God-given authority structure, and one's function within this structure should evidence a willing heart to glorify God.

v. 13 Paul begins his final conclusions, but gives additional teaching. It appears that he is instructing the assembly to accept the halakah that women should have long hair, but that the Jewish part of the congregation should understand that wearing the long hair down (flowing down rather than braided up on the head) was acceptable. If the Jewish women wanted to braid their long hair, that was fine, but there needed to be some latitude to allow the non-Jewish women to wear their hair unbraided. In any case, the long hair of the woman signalled in both cultures that she was married and that she recognized her position as one of submission to her husband. In fact, the tradition of covering one's hair (common in some Jewish communities), was also not required for all (though permissible to those who wanted to follow the custom), for Paul suggests that the woman's long hair is itself a covering.

In fact, verse 15 makes it clear that a woman's long hair (in that particular culture) was given as her glory (which could mean "beauty" or "honor"). That is, it made her distinctly "female" and was seen as very attractive. In this sense, since it was a sign of her femininity, it functioned as a substitute for a cloth covering. The Greek word *αντι* (*anti*) in the phrase "her hair is given to her for a covering" means "in the place of" or "instead of".

It appears that Paul was asking the Jewish people to accept a woman who came to the assembly with her long hair down, something no doubt common among the Gentile believers, because from her viewpoint she was showing (in the realm of her culture) that she was a wife, and not promiscuous (as shaven head or the braided or colored hair of the *heterai* would have suggested).

A further note on verse 14: the word "nature" is *φύσις* and means "that which regularly occurs" or "what is long-standing custom". Frankly, if "nature" here were to mean "natural" or "creative" order, there would be no sense in the rhetorical question, because creative order does not teach that men should have short hair. This points conclusively to the fact that Paul is here speaking culturally, for the Roman culture did in fact say that men should have short hair. Ovid, a Roman poet (43 B.C.E. - 17 C.E.) wrote in his treatise on *The Art of Love*: "Don't let your hair grow long, and when you visit a barber, patronize only the best. Don't let him mangle your beard"²³.

From a cultural standpoint, then, Paul was asking the God-fearers to be aware of the way in which their Jewish brothers and sisters would look at their clothes and hair styles, and required the same understanding from the Jewish viewpoint. It appears that he bargains for a bit of slack from both, so that the immediate headship of Messiah would be the primary focus, and then the authority which He placed within the Messianic Assembly

²³Bristow, p. 81.

A final note: this passage should not be taken to prescribe halakah for how women should wear their hair! In our present culture, short hair is not a common characteristic of prostitutes. In fact, long, flowing hair is considered more sensuous in our culture than short hair. Furthermore, braiding of hair is not considered promiscuous either. Thus, this passage should not be used to determine how the pious women in any given Messianic Assembly should wear their hair, but should rather function to emphasize the need to demonstrate submission to God-given authorities. Whatever cultural elements may signal submission to authorities on the one hand, should be observed. And, on the other hand, whatever things are marks of rebellion in our culture, these ought to be avoided.

b. 1 Co. 14.27ff

Having studied 1 Co. 11, we were able to see that

1. Paul wanted women to function in their respective roles under the authority structure with Messiah as head
2. That women and men had a responsibility to show in their activity in the assembled body the way in which they functioned together, not as independents, but as people truly dependent upon each other.
3. It is assumed that women would pray and prophecy in the gathered assembly.

We, therefore, come to a difficulty when in 1 Co. 14:34 the same Apostle writes:

“Let the women keep silent in the assemblies; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves just as the Torah also says.”

In a similar fashion Paul instructs the women to be silent in the messianic assembly in 1 Tim. 2 (which we will study next).

What do we make of this? Is the Apostle contradicting himself? Does silence mean silence? If the women are not permitted to speak, how will they obey a command by Paul in Eph. 5:19 to “speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”?

Some Initial Matters of Interpretation

1. The most important rule of Biblical interpretation is to compare Scripture with Scripture. Not every passage is self-interpretive. The whole of Scripture must shed light on the individual parts. This is particularly true when it appears that one passage contradicts another (as is the case in our present text).
2. Words must be allowed to have the meanings attached to them by the writer or author. When Paul used the word “silence” (Greek *σιγαω* and derivatives) what did he mean? “Quietly,” “a few words,” or did he mean “silence”, that is, the total absence of speaking or any use of the voice? We must allow the word its proper meaning regardless of how that affects our present understanding.

The Passage Itself - 1 Co. 14:26-35

We obviously cannot do an indepth study of each phrase, but I want to look at the important aspects of this most crucial text as we focus in on the role of women in the Messianic Assembly.

First, as noted above, we are presented with what appears to be a very clear contradiction in Paul. Just three chapters earlier he writes instructions on how women are to pray and prophecy (that is, with long hair as a sign of their submission to their husbands), while here he seems to demand their silence. Believing that the Word of God is not self-contradictory, we must immediately seek a resolution of this seeming discrepency.

The word for “silent” means just that—“silence”! That is, the absence of speaking; no talking; no verbal communication. Of those who try to teach that this passage prohibits women from speaking in the messianic assembly, I have never seen them allow this word “silent” to have its clear meaning. That is, if one holds that a woman cannot talk in the assembly on the basis of this word, he must also prohibit her from praying, prophesying, singing, asking questions, or any other kind of verbal communication. But other Scriptures allow women to pray, prophecy, speak to one other and sing, so another explanation must be sought. The passage itself gives us the answer.

v. 26 The primary thrust of this verse is consistant with what Paul is teaching throughout this passage: “what ever is done in the assembly should be done for the good of the whole, specifically for edification, that is, building up”. The best way to edify each other is for order to prevail, an order which speaks of order in God's creation and administration of His kingdom.

vv. 27-28 In these verses, Paul gives instructions to those who will edify the body in the use of tongues. Some feel that this is the theme of the next several verses, but it seems quite apparent that Paul moves on to the ministry of prophecy.

v. 29 In this verse, Paul addresses the ministry of prophecy in the assembly. This verse is a key verse for understanding the structure of the immediate passage. I think it is clear that the two parts of this verse deliniate the structure of the following verses. This could be graphically shown as follows:

And let two or three prophets speak	and let the others pass judgement
(following verses describe how the prophets speak)	(the following verses describe how to judge prophecy)
v. 30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent	v. 34 Let the women keep silent in the churches
v. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted	for they are not permitted to speak
v. 32 and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;	but let them subject themselves, just as the Torah says
v. 33 for God is not the God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.	v. 35 And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church

It is not difficult to see how the structure is laid out. The first part of verse 29 gives instructions to the prophets about speaking. The second part discusses the issue of judging

(literally “sifting”) the prophecies. My proposal²⁴ is that verses 30-33 address the first part of Paul's instructions in verse 29, that is, the details about the manner in which the prophets speak, and verse 34-35 delineate a specific detail about the manner in which judgment was to be passed on the prophecies as they were given.

One can now understand how “silence” is interpreted in this scheme. Women are to remain absolutely silent when it comes to passing judgment on the prophecies given by male prophets. Thus, in short, what is prohibited here, is the verbal judgment of prophecy by the women in the assembly, a practice *which would cast them in a position of unrecognized authority over men.*

One might rightly ask, “Why did Paul prohibit women from passing judgment upon the prophecies men gave in the assembly? He obviously felt that women had the mental capabilities to accomplish this critiquing aspect of community life.”

The answer to this question lies once again in the issue of authority, headship, and ultimately, the headship of Messiah over the Messianic Assembly. The manner in which the assembly functioned was to communicate the headship of Messiah. It is conceivable that God, in His infinite wisdom and creative power, could have as well sent His daughter as His Son. That is to say, there is nothing intrinsically inferior in the female which would have prohibited God from revealing the Messiah as a woman. After all, Messiah came in the form of mankind (Phil 2:5-8) and “woman” qualifies as mankind according to Genesis 1. But the fact remains that He sent His Son, not His daughter, and for this reason the order that He established in His messianic assembly was that His Son is the head, and therefore male authority is established in the believing community primarily to witness to the headship of Messiah, the Son. Since Yeshua is the Head of the assembly, male leadership at the human level is consistent with the overall design.

Prophecy in the Apostolic Scriptures Different from that of the Tanakh

In the Tanakh, the prophet is the spokesman of God. God puts His words in the mouth of the prophet, and the prophet speaks to the people. As such, he was to be followed without reservation or condemned as a false prophet (Deut. 18:18-20; Num. 22:38; Exek. 2:7; Jer. 1:9). To disobey the prophet of God in the Tanakh was to disobey God Himself (Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam. 8:7; 1 Ki. 20:36).

Further, prophets are regularly said to be the authors of the Tanakh (Lk. 24:27). But when the Apostolic era arrived, not one book is written by a “prophet”. Rather, the word “apostle” is used by Messiah of those who would become the foundation of the messianic assembly (Eph. 2:20). These “apostles” functioned in the same authoritative capacity as the prophets of the Tanakh, as Gal. 1:8-9, 11-12; 1 Co. 2:13; 2 Cor. 13:3; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8; 2 Pet 3:2 indicate. Why the change in titles? The most obvious answer is that in the Greek culture of the first century, many of the mystery cults had their prophets, who spoke when in a trance. Literally, the meaning of the Greek word is “one who speaks as a result of an external, spiritual influence.” This is not a bad definition, as long as one is able to distinguish the spirits. But it appears that the word fell out of favor among the Believing community, and “apostle” was used to designate those who held ultimate earthly authority

²⁴based upon the work done by Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (University Press of America, 1982) and _____, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, (Crossway Books, 1988).

in the Messianic Assembly. Paul distinguishes his authority as an apostle as over against the words of resident prophets at Corinth (1 Co. 14:37). The prophet may have his thoughts, but Paul's word is "commandment from the Lord."

There were, however, prophets in the Messianic Assembly. These people functioned as the Greek word indicates, while under the influence of an external spirit, in this case, the Ruach HaKodesh. But the Apostolic Writings are clear that those who functioned in the Messianic Assembly as prophets did so, not as authorities, but as those whose words needed to be judged and sifted.

Those who spoke "through the Ruach" to Paul in Acts 21:4 told him not to go to Jerusalem, but he went anyway. Would Paul have disobeyed the voice of a one who "spoke through the Ruach" if such a designation gave ultimate authority? Twice, in our present text as well as in 1 Thess. 5:20-21, Paul admonishes his readers to examine prophecy carefully—to sift it and keep what is good, throwing out what is bad. This would never be said of Tanakh prophecy, which was to be accepted as the Word of God.

What is Apostolic prophecy then? It appears, on the basis of 1 Co. 14, that Apostolic prophecy involved the impressions that a person would have, perhaps brought to his/her mind by the Ruach, while gathered together with the assembled body. These impressions might relate to the Scripture being read, or taught, or to something which was in the community meal. Such a person would then share this impression, urging the body to listen and judge what was said. Such impressions could rightly be called "revelations", even as the word is used in Rom 1:17, 18. The point to be made, however, is this: prophecy involved sharing impressions and thoughts which were prompted in one's own heart and mind, but which were not given to the body as "thus saith the Lord." For this reason, since the authoritative doctrine by which the Messianic Assembly was to be governed was that given by the Apostles in their teaching, women could prophecy and yet not be seen as acting in an authoritative position, something reserved for the men of the assembly. But, and this is the point of our immediate text, for a woman to publically judge the prophecy as in error, as not worthy of the assembly's acceptance, was in fact to appear as acting in authority. This would be especially true if a woman were to dispute the validity of a prophecy made by a man. Further, even to ask questions of the prophet could lead some to the conclusion that the woman disagreed, or was judging the prophecy. Thus, to avoid any confusion on the issue of authority, Paul, in this text, commands the women to be silent in this specific area of judging prophecy. If they had questions, they could ask at home.

This does not, of course, mean that women were to be silent in every area of Synagogue life, any more than the command for men to be silent in verse 28 prohibits them from speaking all together. Nor does it imply that women do not have the mental abilities, or educational background to adequately judge the prophecies. The whole issue is authority—the headship Messiah over the Messianic Assembly, a reality best illustrated in the establishment of male authority both in the messianic assembly and in the home. Paul guarded this illustration tenaciously, and any exercise within the local assembly which might damage it was to be avoided.

c. 1 Tim. 2:8-15

It is no exaggeration to say that 1 Tim. 2:8-15 forms probably the most often debated passage in the study of the Role of Women in the Messianic Assembly. The number of articles and chapters written on this passage in the past 10 years is staggering!

Our method in studying this passage will be as follows:

1. *Look at the text itself, its structure, interpretation and meaning of individual terms (words)*
2. *Summarize the overall interpretation of the text in light of our previous study of the Role of Women*
3. *Discuss the Apostolic use of “teach” and “authority” as a basis for formulating the practical ways in which this text is to be followed by men and women in the Messianic Assembly.*

The Text Itself (1 Tim 2:8-15)

The chapter begins with Paul's admonition to “pray for every class of people” in order that the Believing community might live a “tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”

This desire of the Apostle for those at Ephesus (the messianic assembly to which this Epistle no doubt was pointed, Timothy being there) issued in his further admonition for not only private prayer (v. 1) but also public prayer, that is, prayer in the course of the worship of the gathered body of Messiah. Verse 8 begins with an entreaty to men (Greek *ανδρος* = “male” or “husband”) to pray “in every place” (most probably “in every place where the messianic assembly meets,”²⁵). The manner in which the men were to pray was “lifting up holy hands”, metaphorical language for “with a clean or pure life (heart)” (cf. Ps. 24:3-4).

Verse 9 begins with “Likewise,” as Paul turns his attention to the women (Greek *γυνη* = “female” or “wife”). It seems best to continue Paul's line of thought with this word, and thus the idea “I want women likewise to pray.” He then goes on to give instruction as to how they, like the men, will show forth a life of purity and holiness. In their case, it is often evidenced by the way the adorn themselves.

Thus, verse 9-10 correspond in specific detail to the admonition of “holy hands” given to the men. In both cases, the testimony of one's life, seen in one's external actions, must be in evidence if one's worship to God is to be viewed as sincere. Paul speaks of the adornment of women as it touched the society of first century Graeco-Roman and Jewish culture, something already discussed in previous chapters of this syllabus.

In verses 11-12, Paul continues his instructions to women, centering now upon the issue of “instruction” or “teaching.” The first command is “Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness” (NASB). Note the following details:

(1) This is an imperative (3rd person singular pres. imperative) or a command. In the English we do not have 3rd person imperatives, only second person, so it is difficult for us translate the Greek without putting in the word “Let.” The same is true of the common phrase in Revelation 1-3, “Let him who has ears hear.” This 3rd person command has the force of “Hear! Listen! You who have ears!” Likewise, in this text, the command is that the women be taught. We might paraphrase: “Woman: She is to be taught!” The Apostolic approach in this matter of halakah was from the minority opinion of the Sages, who generally felt that Torah study should be left primarily for the men. Women were to be taught Torah in the specifics in which they were responsible (home, family purities, etc.) but not in all matters of Torah. Apparently Paul took the minority view which stressed equality among men and women in matters of study and training.

²⁵ cf. Earle, “1 Timothy” in Gaebelin, ed., *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols. (Zondervan, 1986-), 11:

(2) As the woman is instructed, she is to respond in two ways, the text says: a. “quietly” (Greek ησυχια) and b. “submission” (Greek υποτασσω). We have already studied this second word, translated “submission” (see above). It is to characterize the lives of all as they submit to each other, desiring the same submissive heart of Messiah as He followed the Father's will for His life.

The word for “quiet”, however, has caused some problems. It is, by the way, the same Greek word here that is used in verse 2 as well as in verse 12. It is different than the word used for silence in 1 Cor 14:34f (Greek σιγαω). It means “quiet, tranquil, not loud.” Everywhere Paul used this word in the Apostolic Scriptures, it has this meaning (cf. 1 Thess 3:12, the only other place Paul employs the word). This same meaning is attested in the Greek literature of the first century.²⁶

(3) “Quietness” and “submissiveness” are appropriate for anyone who is in a learning situation. That women in the first century Messianic Assembly were untaught is no doubt generally the case, since the society in which they lived generally considered honest academic education something outside the realm of possibility for a woman. As women were given an equal status in the Believing community, however, it was necessary that they be admonished to accept the teaching of the leaders, not in bitterness for the years of their suppression, but, as befits anyone who promises godliness (so the Greek indicates in verse 10), they should learn in a spirit of humility and thankfulness.

It is clearly a Rabbinic axiom that true learning takes place in the realm of quietness, that is, a purpose to concern oneself with his own learning, and not so much with that of others. This must be what Paul means when he exhorts the Thessalonians (3:12) to work “in quiet fashion”, that is, without gossiping. This stands in contrast to the “busybodies” just previously mentioned.

Learning in this sense is commended by the Rabbis. In Abot 1.17 Simon, the son of Rabbi Gamaliel comments:

All my days have I grown up among the Sages and I have found naught better for a man than silence; and not the expounding [of Torah] is the chief thing but the doing [of it]; and he that multiplies words occasions sin.

In another place of Abot R. Akiba is quoted as saying:

The tradition is a fence around the Torah; Tithes are a fence around riches; vows are a fence around abstinence; a fence around wisdom is silence.

This was in accord with the wisdom of the Tanakh, for Prov. 17:27-28 says:

He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is counted prudent.

From this the Rabbis reason that “Silence is better for the wise, and how much more so for fools”.²⁷

Verse 12 begins with the infinitive “to teach,” placing it in a position of emphasis. Paul naturally brings this word to the beginning of the sentence to indicate the subject of his next

²⁶See Moulton and Milligan *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, (Eerdmans, 1930), p. 281.

²⁷ b. Pesah. 99a.

admonition. Women are to be taught, but there is further instructions as to their role in teaching. Paul writes “I do not allow women to teach.” We will discuss more specifically what Paul means by “teach” but here it is apparent that Paul denies women this role, whatever we may conclude “teaching” entails. The verb “I do not allow” is in the present indicative, and could probably be translated more accurately “I presently do not allow women to teach”.²⁸ Those who feel that Paul is restricting this prohibition to those at Ephesus specifically, however, are probably not giving enough weight to the overall structure of the paragraph. Paul’s admonition regarding prayer does not appear to be temporally condition, so it is doubtful that this prohibition should be understood as “applying to women who were teaching falsehood” at Ephesus. It appears more likely that Paul uses this terminology to convey the Apostolic authority which he was presently exercising in ordering the Messianic Assembly.

The second aspect of this prohibition in verse 12 is that the Apostle does not allow a woman to “exercise authority over” a man (Greek *αυθεντειν*). Unfortunately, this is the only time in the Apostolic Scriptures that this word is used, so we have no help from corresponding passages to determine its exact meaning. Similarly, the Greek literature both of the classical and koine uses the word sparingly. “Have authority over” appears to be attested more often than other meanings in the Greek literature, however.²⁹ The fact that the word also meant “to murder”³⁰ in several instances as well as “to act as a temple prostitute”³¹ gives one the feeling that the word could bear a meaning of “dominate,” “over-power,” “render helpless.” On this basis, many of the modern translations have rendered it “lord over.” While there are no grounds for dogmatism here, it appears, on the basis of all the data, that “have authority over *in an over-powering way*” is most probably what Paul intended to convey by the use of Greek *αυθεντειν*.

The grammar of verse 12 does not necessitate the idea of two separate items in “teaching” and “exercising authority over,” though this is possible. The context, however, seems to indicate that “teaching” is prohibited since through it there would result a position of authority. One might paraphrase: “I do not presently allow a woman to teach because by this activity she would be placed in a position of authority over a man.”

Verse 12 concludes where Paul began in his admonitions to the women, namely, in a position of quietness. As noted above, this does not mean “no verbal communication.” If Paul had meant that, he most probably would have used the Greek words derived from “sigao” (*σιγαω*) as he did in 1 Co. 14:34ff. This word denotes a character of life and heart—a gentle and quite spirit before the Lord and fellow man.

Verses 13-14 are then given by the Apostle as substantiation for his admonitions regarding women. Structurally, the “proofs” given in this section attach themselves to the leading verse of the clause, which is found in the imperative of verse 11. The “for” which begins verse 14 should most naturally be taken this way, though there are some who feel that the “for” (Greek *γαρ gar*) is used here to introduce an example. It is true that *γαρ* is used this way.³² However, most often *γαρ*, when it follows indicative or imperative statements (whether positive or prohibitive) introduces the grounds for such statements and/or commands. This is what we find here: Paul gives a command (“women are to be

²⁸See J. B. Payne, “Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo’s Article, ‘1 Tim. 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,’” *Trinity Journal* 2 NS, 2(1981) 170ff.

²⁹See Knight, “Authenteo in Reference to Women in 1 Tim. 2:12,” *NTS* 30 (1984) 143-157.

³⁰See Moo’s article, *Trinity Journal*, 1NS, 1 (1980) 62-83.

³¹Catherine C. Kroeger, “Ancient Heresies and a Strange Greek Verb,” *Reformed Journal* 29 (Mar 1979) 12-15; “1 Tim 2:12— A Classicist’s View,” in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, 225ff.

³²*Ibid.*, Payne.

taught”) and then follows by giving logical and theological reasons why the command should be followed.

The first reason is the priority of Adam's being “formed” (Greek πλασσω *plasso*) before Eve. It is interesting indeed that Paul uses this word, since every other time he speaks of creation he uses the Greek word κτιζω (*ktizō*) or one of its derivatives. In fact, this word πλασσω is only used one other time in the Apostolic Scriptures, at Rom. 9:20, of a potter forming a pot (as illustrative of God forming a person). Walter Kaiser³³ suggests that the reason Paul uses this is because he wants to focus on “orders of education, not orders of creation.” That is, God first “formed” in Adam a sense of His divine person and then did the same for Chavah. Kaiser's idea may be stretching things a bit, but it is curious that Paul uses πλασσω (“to form”) here rather than κτιζω (“to create”). My own suggestion is that Paul is focusing on Genesis 2. My reason for this is based upon the fact that in the LXX account of creation, πλασσω is used at Gen. 2:7, 8, 15, 19. Remember that in Gen. 2 the Scriptures focus upon mankind as distinctly male and female, as well as upon their partnership in ruling over the creation. The priority of Adam in creation is first discovered in Gen. 2, not in Gen. 1. Thus, the teaching of Genesis 2, that woman was created because man lacked the ability to function in God's image, is by Paul brought to bear upon the present issue. It is not as though Eve were inferior (shown by being created second) but that she was equal (shown by the fact that she corresponded to Adam in a one-to-one correspondence). Thus, she too should be taught the Scriptures.

Verse 14 gives a second reason why women should be taught in the Messianic Assembly: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was quite deceived, (and) became a sinner” (my translation/paraphrase). Those who argue that this stands best as an argument to substantiate why women should not teach are hard pressed to explain how such a “proof” functions in their argument. One could understand why women are not to teach if this verse is telling us that women are naturally created to be easily deceived (like Chavah). But how does it follow that men (like Adam) are creatively qualified to be teachers when (like Adam) they sin knowingly? It appears again that Paul is giving us a reason why women should be taught in the Messianic Assembly. If Chavah sinned primarily because she was deceived (as the text indicates) and if she was deceived because she was untaught (by Adam), then it follows that in the Believing community such a situation should not be duplicated. Some have taken this reasoning a step farther. Kaiser³⁴ feels that once women are properly taught and thus guarded from deceptions which inevitably arise from ignorance, they are fit to teach. But, as long as they, like Chavah, remain deceived, they dare not teach, since they will lead people astray.

But once women are educated, are they then free from this prohibition to teach? While this is a current trend in interpreting this passage, I think the thrust of the text is against it. This is because Paul here parallels “teaching” with “having authority over a man.” The issue, so it appears to me, has to do with this “authority” issue primarily. Even as the husband is the “head” of the wife, so Messiah is “head” of the Messianic Assembly. As the “head,” He has appointed leaders to function as authorities, leaders to be obeyed (Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim 2:4,5). These leaders function as illustrative of the leadership of Messiah Himself—in humble service, sacrificial giving, as shepherds serving the sheep under the eye of The Shepherd. Thus, even as marriage is a picture of the relationship between Messiah and His *Kehilah*, so leadership in the messianic assembly illustrates the Headship of Messiah (or at least it is suppose to!). My argument is simply this: to put a woman in the place of authority in the messianic assembly, (i.e., over a man), runs the risk of confusing the illustration that marriage gives of Messiah and His *kehilah*. If she is authority in the

³³“Shared Leadership” in *CTI*, Oct. 3, 1986)

³⁴Ibid.

messianic assembly, is she not also in the home? And if this is true, how is her marriage a picture of Messiah and the messianic assembly (Eph. 5:25ff, especially v. 32). Thus, what I believe Paul here prohibits is a woman filling the position of an official teacher in the messianic assembly, a teacher who functions as regularly leading the body to the authoritative Apostolic doctrine, a leader in which there is vested authority.

Verse 15 is very difficult, indeed! No one has yet claimed to know dogmatically what Paul fully meant by this concluding verse. It does bear upon our study, though not nearly as pointedly as the previous verses discussed. I therefore will give only brief comments on its interpretation.

First, lest any reader think Paul is putting all women in an inferior position of worth, he shows quite clearly by verse 15 that women in general (so I take the “she” to refer to womankind, since in verse 13 Paul named Eve but in verse 14 he reverts to “woman” as a generic term) do have applauded value which exceeds (if we can speak quantitatively) the damage done in being part of the fall. This value of woman is here expressed by the Apostle as attached to her being the one who gives birth (child bearing). Now, this does not mean that a woman finds her only value in bearing children. What it does mean, however, is that even as womankind received a bad name because of Eve's sin, so she receives great exoneration for the central place she plays in bring forth the new lives of each generation. “She shall be saved” has both the temporal and eternal aspects, I think. The Greek word σωζω (*sozo*) is most often used of eternal salvation though at times it appears to have a broader meaning (cf. 1 Co. 7:14; 1 Tim. 4:16). It seems to be able to regard temporal salvation as well as eternal. In this verse, then, I think that a position of worth is found for womankind in light of her being the fountain from which all life springs.

The early church fathers, almost without exception, referred to the birth of Messiah in reference to this verse, and I think rightly so, though this is not necessarily the exclusive meaning the Apostle had in mind. That is, even as Eve lead the race into sin by her deception, so she was given the promise of the redeemer, and set the generations into motion which would finally bring Messiah. Thus, Mary showed for all generations the high place women hold in the economy of God's redemptive purposes. All of this, I think, is part of what Paul wants us to know in this concluding verse of the paragraph.

A General Summary of 1 Tim. 2:8-15

Thus, what this passage teaches us is this:

1. Women should pray (worship) like men—with holy hearts and lives. This will be best seen (especially from a first century perspective, but also in the contemporary world) by the way women adorn themselves. Like men, they should “put on the Lord Yeshua Messiah and make no provision for the flesh.”
2. Women are to be taught. They should thus accept this place of instruction as necessary for their personal growth and to equip them to fulfill the ministries which are their equal responsibilities in Messiah's *Kehilah*. They must learn in quietness and submission, as any who are students must learn.
3. Women, who are taught, will no doubt gain tremendous abilities to share and communicate this knowledge. This they must do, but not as recognized authorities in the messianic assembly, since this would confuse the pattern set within the messianic assembly by Messiah, her Head. This authoritative leadership is most often worked out in the authoritative teaching of the Apostle's doctrine. For this reason, women are not allowed to fulfill the official office of a recognized teacher in the messianic assembly,

i.e., the office of elder, bishop or pastor (three terms for the same office, cf. Ac. 20:17, 28).

d. Teaching in the Apostolic Scriptures

It is easy to see how confusion can reign when we start taking about “teaching.” The definition of “teaching” is difficult to arrive at! My purpose in this section of the syllabus is to outline the use of the term “teaching” (Greek διδασκαλος, διδασκω) in the Apostolic Scriptures. What I hope to show is

1. *That the word itself is used in two distinct ways in the Apostolic Scriptures.*
2. *That early in the life of the Apostolic Messianic synagogue, “teacher” was a title given to those in designated positions of authority*
3. *That once “elder” (Greek “presbuteros”) was attached to leaders in the church, “teacher” fell out of use, but was one of the main (if not the main) functions of the elders.*
4. *That this “technical” use of the term “teach, teacher” existed alongside the common use of the word, even as it does today in our language.*

“To teach” is used in two distinct ways in the Apostolic Scriptures:

1. Teach = Authority

Ac 2:42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to (the) prayers.

Ac. 13:1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers ...

Jms. 3:1 (an early Apostolic Scriptures book) Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.

[“Authoritative Teaching” in Apostolic Scriptures is never based upon “revelation” but rather upon the written record of Scripture]

Ac 15:35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also the word of the Lord.

Ac 18:11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Heb. 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for some one to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God . . .

Rom. 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction (teaching) . . .

2 Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching . . .

2 Tim 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

It is not difficult to see the importance attached to teaching by the Apostles in the early messianic assembly. Teaching was the passing on of established, apostolic doctrine. Thus Timothy is several times told to “command and teach” (1 Tim. 4:11) or “teach and urge” (1 Tim 6:2) Paul's instructions. Paul “taught” in every messianic assembly (1 Co. 4:17). This teaching aspect thus in a primary sense first provided the doctrinal and ethical norms by which the messianic assembly was regulated. Thus, among the elders, those who labored in the word and teaching were first to be given double honor, and so important was this function, that the ability to teach is required of every elder (1 Tim. 5:17; 3:2). Timothy is to take heed to his teaching (1 Tim. 4:16).

In the Tanakh assembly of Israel, the prophets stood as God's voice to the people. They were the standard by which all was measured—they pronounced the “thus saith the Lord.” In the Apostolic Messianic Assembly, the Apostles stood in this authoritative fashion, as God's spokesman to His saints. The prophets and apostles have given the messianic assembly the written Word of God, the Scriptures. These now are the basis of authority in the messianic assembly. Therefore, those who stand in this official capacity as “teachers” of the Apostolic doctrine function in a realm of authority, as those who instruct God's messianic assembly from the Bible. At times in the Apostolic Scriptures, the terms “teach”, “teacher”, “teaching” carry this aspect of the authoritative office of one who announces the Apostolic Doctrine to the messianic assembly.

2. Teach = Communicating facts

This use of the term “teach” approaches the more common sense in our own language and speaks of the mere communication of facts between two people.

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Messiah richly dwell within you; with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, . . .

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

1 Co. 11:14 Does not even nature (long established custom) itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,

“Teacher” - a position of authority in the early messianic assembly

It appears, from the verses listed above, that early in the Apostolic Messianic Assembly, those who functioned as teachers of the Apostolic doctrine (those who were disciples or close associates of the Apostles) functioned in an official capacity. Acts 13:1 would most normally be interpreted this way, as would James 3:1, where James includes himself in the group designated “teachers”. In Acts 14, the appointing of elders in every church (the elders in chapter 11 at the Jerusalem church were most probably those Jewish elders who had converted to Christianity) replaced the title “teacher”, which was too broad to be descriptive. That is, Paul recognized that in a sense all were teachers, and all were to learn from each other. Thus “elder” became the title of those who would be in charge of guarding and teaching the Apostolic doctrines. For this reason, Paul includes “apt to teach” as one of the requirements of an elder or overseer (1 Tim. 3:2). After chapter 14 of Acts, “teacher” is never again used of an office in the church, it now being assumed as the function of elders.

The idea of “teaching”, however, still retained its authoritative sense, as the Scriptures listed above indicate. It was to be the highest priority among those who functioned as elders in the messianic assembly, so much so that those who labored in the Word and teaching

were to be cared for first if there were not sufficient provisions for the whole team of elders (1 Tim. 5:17).

Conclusion

What 1 Tim. 2:12 prohibits is not the common definition of “teach”, that is, the communication of facts. This is impossible if one considers that in this common sense of the word, we teach when we pray, sing, prophecy, testify, worship, and even in the way we dress and conduct ourselves. Our lives are “epistles” testifying of God's grace. We therefore “teach” in this common sense in everything we do. If this common definition were placed upon the word in 1 Tim. 2:12, then women have no place at all in the messianic assembly, for even their presence would contradict the prohibition of Scripture.

But it seems obvious to me that what is prohibited in 1 Tim 2:12 is a woman holding the authoritative teaching office in the church, even though it appears that a woman is in every way qualified (both by life and ability). This authoritative office (called by the title “elder” or “overseer = bishop” or “pastor,” actually, “one who pastors or shepherds”) is reserved for men (males), not because they are better, or more qualified, but because in the economy of the messianic assembly, God has set up certain illustrations of the relationship between His Son and His *Kehilah*. The most important illustration is that of marriage, where the two become one, but where the husband functions as “head” of the wife. If the woman were allowed to take the position of authority in the messianic assembly, this illustration would be mixed, and so would the message. For this reason, and this reason alone, women are to function in other teaching capacities, but not in the official office of elder, bishop or pastor.

E. Women in Relationship to Society

1. Titus 2:3-5

In this epistle to Titus, the Apostle Paul lays down several lists of instructions which deal with practical matters in the messianic assembly. These involve not only matters of leadership, but also of family life, the heart and soul of the Believing community.

In his admonition to the older women in 2:3-5, we see specific instruction regarding the role of women in the messianic assembly, as well as in society. Obviously, for first century followers of Yeshua, there was no division between “Synagogue” and “Society” as they experienced it. That is, the *Kehilah*, or Synagogue, was their life everyday, not just Shabbat. This means more than just “living for Messiah every day of the week.” In the Believing community, sharing one another's burdens is an every day duty, not just when the messianic assembly gathers for instruction and fellowship. It becomes apparent, then, why Paul's epistles to the messianic assembly regularly touch on the domestic side of things.

The older women are admonished first in regard to their own behavior and then in their duties to the younger women. This is their typical order of things for the Apostle to those who are teachers. To Timothy Paul writes: “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.” (1 Tim. 4:16) In similar fashion, before exhorting the older women to their duties as teachers of the younger women, they must first look to their own lives of piety and holiness before the Lord.

The first word is “reverent” (Greek *λεποπρεπεις*) which literally means “holy like a priest”.³⁵ Thus, their lifestyle was to be characterized as someone who regularly engaged in

³⁵ According to Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich (BAG) Lexicon.

“holy duties.” “Not malicious gossips” is actually “not diabolical” or “demonic” (Greek διαβολουσ).³⁶ “Slander” or “gossip” is, of course, the primary mark of Satan himself. The next phrase, “not enslaved to much wine” indicates a possible problem of that culture, with those who may have much idle time. (Would it be stretching it too far to substitute “addicted to TV” for our culture?). The final admonition of this verse is “teaching what is good”, a single word in the Greek (καλαδιδασκαλουσ). This compound word is made up of the common word for “teacher” to which is attached the word for “good”, not as an adjective, but describing the substance of what is taught. It should be remarked that this word attaches to the general admonitions of verse 3, so that grammatically it is not necessary to put this teaching in the domestic sphere only. These older women are to be “teachers of good so that they might instruct the younger . . .” That is, their lives as teachers of good form the basis for their encouraging the younger women in their respective duties.

These admonitions to the older women point to several things:

1. That women need to consider their own spiritual lives before the Lord, in order that they might qualify to function in this capacity when experience has given them a platform for teaching the younger women.
2. That the older women ought to be established as “teachers of good” so that they are received as worthy by the younger women when approached with instruction.

In verses 4 and 5, the older women are instructed to encourage (Greek σωφρομιζω) the younger women in seven things. The word “encourage” shows that the “teaching” admonished in verse 3 is worked out by the life of the older woman. The word σωφρομιζω has to do with disciplined living which functions in propriety, rightness, and thus a good testimony (always the bottom line for Paul).

The Greek word for “younger women” (νεασ) may, in fact, indicate “newly married”.³⁷

The seven duties enjoined upon the older women are:

1. love their husbands (Greek φιλανδρουσ) - This is an obvious place to start. The mutual relationship now a part of the Believing community is something new for first century Palestine. The adjustments would no doubt be difficult for both husband and wife, as they tried to unshackle themselves from the traditions of their culture. One is struck with some of the same things for those in our own society.
2. love their children (Greek φιλοτεκνιουσ) - Once again, the practical aspects of relationship take on new perspective in the Believing community. Tasks culturally relegated to slaves now become the privilege and duty of parents (cf. Eph. 6:1ff). No longer will the wife and husband function as individuals in society, nor will the children be put in a place of little or no worth. They to must show forth the claims of Messiah in their lives as nurtured and molded in the love of Messiah. What was in first century culture a thankless task given to slaves and household tutors now is give high priority as demanding the utmost energies and time of the parents, but specifically the wife. Loving children (and all that the word “love” entails) is fixed as the honored place of a wife who now comes to her duties with new appreciation in a heart won over by the love of Messiah. This duty is not for those who have nothing better to do—this duty deserves,

³⁶cf. 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3 for the same expression.

³⁷cf. BAG.

yes demands, the very best. Let a woman improve herself in every way—and for what? for loving her children.

3. to be sensible (*σωφρονας*) - this is the word often translated “sober” in the older translations and is the requirement of those who seek the office of bishop (or elder), 1 Tim. 3:2). This is a common word for Paul which describes proper attitudes and actions, which flow out of a disciplined life of growth in Messiah.
4. pure (*αγνας*) - The same word is used to admonish Timothy in 1 Tim. 5:22. This is a general word for Torah piety, describing what is good (Phil. 4:8) and what the wisdom of James 3:17 is in the first case. It means “untainted,” “holy,” “unblemished.” It may well be that these two words follow in order of the commands regarding husbands and children, so that they attach to each respectively. That is, to love one's husband will require soberness in life, a discipline to obey God even when difficult. To instruct children, correspondingly requires a pure life. Children see the inconsistencies immediately, and our lives do speak louder than our words!
5. workers at home (*οικουργος*) - this word is made up of the Greek words for “house” and “worker.” In our present study, it is important to ask the question: “Does Paul here prohibit a woman from activity outside of the home, specifically vocational activity outside of the home?” I would like to approach this question with several observations:
 - a. It seems quite obvious that Paul is speak here to women who function as mothers. In this he does not address single women, nor primarily women without children. The fact that he includes “children lovers” as one of the previous lessons to be taught is sufficient indicator of this.
 - b. the “home” in first century Palestine is somewhat different than what we envision in our culture, but not entirely different. By “home” is no doubt meant the sphere of the families dwelling and community. Since “family” in any eastern culture is much broader than our definition (and especially in practical ways), a worker at home means “working in the domestic sphere of one's family.” This could involve any number of things, including the family trade or business, which women of households were no doubt an important of.
 - c. What is fairly obvious (at least is seems so to me) is that Paul wanted wives to realize that their children and family constituted a very high calling for them. They stood as primary stewards of a great gift and responsibility, one which they should not take for granted, nor neglect. With the tremendous amounts of freedom now afforded Believing women, Paul needed to instruct them (through the older women) that rather than leave the domestic sphere which in the past had held them cultural prisoners, they should now reflect upon their homes as liberated places in which God now wants them to teach the most important people in their lives—their families, specifically, their children.
 - d. This verse should not be seen as an iron-clad norm for every woman. As stated above, the primary group here addressed are wives who are mothers. The Apostolic Scriptures give good examples of those who functioned outside of the home as disciples of Messiah and co-laborers with the Apostles (Lk. 8:1-3; Rom. 16:1-15). Furthermore, singles (1 Co. 7) are to remain single if given this spiritual gift so as to be free to minister within the believing community in ways which married women cannot. This undoubtedly means in ways outside of the home (cf. 1 Co 7:33-34 especially).
 - e. It appears to me that if wives have children, their domestic as well as spiritual welfare become her top priority as far as the Lord is concerned. To neglect them in this, or to relegate this task to others (day care, nurseries, etc.) seems ill conceived at best. One must honestly ask “what is of higher priority?” “Why must I work, what are my reasons?” “More money, therefore more things?” Maybe your life-style needs

to change. “Self-fulfillment, self-improvement?” I think you know the answer to that one! What we all need to plant firmly in our minds is the priority God puts upon parenting—He always has and always will. Not the least of reasons being that He has revealed Himself to us both as Father and Mother (cf. Is. 66:13; Matt. 6:9).

6. kind (*αγαθος*) - another Greek word for “good”, here most probably meaning “open-hearted,” “sharing.” An open home often bespeaks an open heart.
7. being subject to their own husbands (*υποτασσομενας τοις ιδιοις ανδρασι*) - (see the material above on this concept).

2. 1 Tim. 5.

One other verse which deserves comment at this point is 1 Tim. 5:14. The instructions of the Apostle Paul concerning widows brings him to comment about young widows (those younger than 60 years, v. 9) who wanted to be put on the list of widows under the care of the messianic assembly. Paul warns against this, since younger widows will undoubtedly have the urge to remarry after the sorrow of the former marriage fades, and then be forced into a precarious situation, having already received the support of the messianic assembly for a length of time. Paul thus instructs the younger women to remarry, and includes (in v. 14) the additional admonitions to “bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach.”

At first this sounds fairly androcentric, a kind of “bare-foot and pregnant in the kitchen” remark. But of course the Apostle is not speaking in this fashion. Paul knows the Divine economy of bringing strength to the Messianic Assembly by building strong families. The bearing of children, then, is the normal course of events in marriage, and Paul is speaking of the norm here. There may, in fact, be exceptions to the rule. Some widows may desire to remain single (like Paul's exhorts them in 1 Co. 7) and dedicate themselves to serving the Lord. Others may have already shown themselves unable to bear children. These do not have to concern themselves as though they have no way of obeying the Lord in this Scripture. Rather, this is the normal course of events, and, generally, is good instruction for the vast majority of women who find themselves in this situation.

The final term, “keep house” (Greek *οικοδεσποτειν*) means literally “to rule the house,” being made up of the Greek words “house” and “despot”. This is clearly a place of authority in the house, one which Paul undoubtedly envisioned as shared between the husband and wife as co-laborers in God's kingdom. Even in this equality, however, there is a sense in which the wife is seen as ruling in the home, something the husband ought to consider fully. As Evans points out:

This verb occurs only here in the NT, but the noun *οικοδεσποτης* occurs 12 times and it 'denotes the “master of the house” who has control over the *οικος* (household) in the widest sense.' Although the husband is part of the household and is not specifically excluded from the rule of the wives that is mentioned here, it does seem likely that “when wives 'rule their households' they are not giving up their submissiveness, but are acting as the female counterpart of their husband, the householder. Nevertheless the use of such a strong word does seem to show that Paul saw the husband and the wife as standing together in their management of the household and indicates clearly that

decision making and ruling were by no means the sole prerogative of the husband.³⁸

³⁸Mary Evans, *Women in the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), p. 79.