

Women in the Early Church

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- This is Part 2
- Part 1 of this presentation is found:
<http://nagasawafamily.org/article-women-in-the-early-church-p1.pdf>

Arguments Against Women in Church Leadership

- ~~Israel's priests and kings were men~~
- Jesus was a man
- Jesus' twelve apostles were men
- Paul's elders were men
- Paul on headship

Does Jesus' Gender Matter?

- The New Testament never makes this argument
- Two human natures: male and female?
- Only one human nature, which Jesus takes, heals, and gives back to both men and women



Does Jesus' Gender Matter?



- ‘It would be a grave biblical and theological mistake to bracket the incarnation with the gender or sex of Jesus in such a way that everything in his incarnate life and work depended on his maleness, for that would seriously call in question the salvation of female human being and detract from the incarnation as the assumption of complete human being.’ (T.F. Torrance, *The Ministry of Women*)

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The Twelve Apostles?

- Israel's Twelve Tribes:
 - Jesus' claim on Israel and act of renewal
 - Not significant after the apostles
- Hence the New Testament never makes this argument



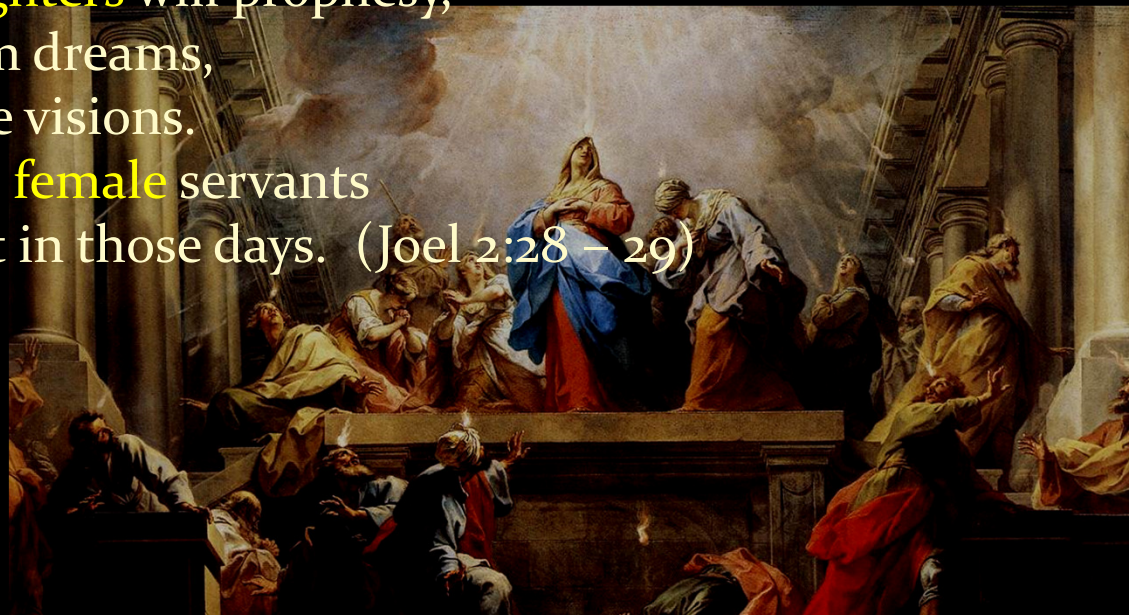
The Twelve Apostles?

- Jesus trained female disciples along with male disciples
 - The picture of 'loving God' (Lk.10:25) is not a man learning Torah in a synagogue but Mary of Bethany at Jesus' feet (Lk.10:38 - 42)



The Twelve Apostles?

- Jesus traveled with female disciples along with the men (Lk.8:1 – 4); very unusual and scandalous for a Jewish rabbi (Kenneth Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*)
- Jesus was preparing his followers for this:
 - ²⁸ It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and **daughters** will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
²⁹ Even on the male and **female** servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28 – 29)



The Twelve Apostles?

- In John 20, Jesus appears to a woman, Mary, in a garden, to bear a word of new life to the men. Jesus seemed to see his female disciples as a renewal of Eve.



The Twelve Apostles?

- Women leaders in the early church:
 - Lydia (Acts 16:13 – 15, 40)
 - Priscilla (Acts 18:18 – 26, Rom.16:3)
 - Philip's daughters, prophetesses (Acts 21:9)
 - Chloe and Nympha (1 Cor.1:11, Col.4:15)
 - Euodia and Syntyche (Phil.4:2)
 - Phoebe (Rom.16:1)
 - Tryphena, Tryphosa (Rom.16:12)
 - Junia (Romans 16:7) probably an **apostle** (NASB, NRSV, etc.)



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Paul on Elders

- Christian elders already exist before *1 Timothy*
 - Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:17
 - 1 Peter 5
 - Didache
- Elders seem connected to a house church movement started by Jesus (Mt.10:11 – 14; Lk.10:5 – 9)
- Can we reconstruct Polycarp's understanding?



Paul on Elders

- ¹ Tim.2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. ¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. ¹⁴ And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵ But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- What about 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16, where Paul wants women (dressed as women) to pray and prophecy to all?
- Does 'gyne' = 'woman' or 'wife' here?
- The word *autentein* (not *exousia*) which is translated 'exercise authority over' is difficult to pin down with surety; 67% of the time the word appears in the extant Greek literature, there are significant negative connotations connected to it, including the sense of 'instigating or perpetuating a crime'.
- Is 'to teach or exercise authority over' describing one thing with two words (a literary *hendyadis*), or two separate things?

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- The word sometimes translated 'silence' in v.12 is the same word which is given the more measured translation 'quietness' (NASB) in 1 Timothy 2:2 and 11.
- The word 'if' in v.11 is better translated 'when' or 'when and if'.
- The verb 'will be saved' refers to a single female, but the verb 'to continue' refers to women in the plural.
- The word 'childbearing' has the definite article before it in Greek, thus reading '*the* childbearing' and perhaps referring to Jesus' birth.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- ‘^{2:12} But I do not allow a wife to *‘lead a husband into error’*, but to remain quiet. ¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. ¹⁴ And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. [implied: *And Adam was in knowing rebellion against God through his own participation.*] ¹⁵ But ‘she’ [i.e. *Eve*] will be saved through ‘the Childbearing’ ‘when and if’ they [i.e. *the wives referred to in 2:9*] continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.’
 - See Gordon Hugenberg, Gordon Fee, Douglas Moo, Gilbert Bilezikian, Ann Bowman, Aida Besancon Spencer
 - Recall Irenaeus’ fragment on Eve

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

- What was the problem Timothy was facing?
 - Why Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus: command certain persons to not teach false doctrines (1:3)
 - False teaching: 35% of the Paul's attention in the letter
 - ^{1 Tim.4:1} But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith... ³ men **who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods** which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; ⁵ for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.
 - What does this sound like?

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 2

Jewish

- Physical bodies good
- Death is the enemy
- Hope for bodily resurrection
- Care for the poor
- High sexual ethic of marriage, from creation order

Greek

- Physical bodies bad
- Death is release
- Hope for souls to be free; disembodiment
- Not much care for poor
- Have sex with anyone (Epicureans), or deny it (Stoics)

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 3

- ¹ Tim. 3:1 It is a trustworthy statement: if **any man** aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work **he** desires to do. ² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the **husband** of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. ⁴ **He** must be one who manages **his** own household well, keeping **his** children under control with all dignity ⁵ (but if a **man** does not know how to manage **his** own household, how will **he** take care of the church of God?), ⁶ and not a new convert, so that **he** will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. ⁷ And **he** must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that **he** will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 3

- ^{1 Tim.3:1} It is a trustworthy statement: if **any man** (Greek *tis*; **anyone, male or female**) aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work **he** desires to do. ² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the **husband of one wife**, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. ⁴ **He** must be one who manages **his** own household well, keeping **his** children under control with all dignity ⁵ (but if a **man** does not know how to manage **his** own household, how will **he** take care of the church of God?), ⁶ and not a new convert, so that **he** will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. ⁷ And **he** must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that **he** will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 3

- The pronouns 'he' or 'his' are not present in Greek – that is an incorrect inference by English translators
- Greek, like Spanish, can conjugate verbs without specifying the pronoun; the pronoun is implied from the last occurrence
 - The last occurrence: In 3:1, the first pronoun 'anyone' (*tis*) includes male and female, and governs 3:1 – 7

Paul on Elders: 1 Timothy 3

- We have already seen that the Old Testament roles of elder, judge, and prophet, were open to women, even though the Hebrew text uses the male language and male example. But furthermore...



Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy

- A. Fight the Good Fight (1:1 – 1:20)
 - B. The Christian Household and Witness, Part 1 (2:1 – 15)
 - C. Church Leaders: Elders and Deacons (3:1 – 13)
 - D. The Truth at the Heart of the Church (3:14 – 5:2)
 - C'. Church Leaders: Older and Younger Widows (5:3 – 25)
 - B'. The Christian Household and Witness, Part 2 (6:1 – 11)
- A'. Fight the Good Fight (6:12 – 21)

Widows as Heads of Household

- Elders... able to teach... (3:1 – 7)
- Elders (3:1 – 7)
- The husband of one wife (3:2)
- Hospitable (3:2)
- Temperate, prudent, respectable... not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money (3:2 – 3)
- One who manages his own household, keeping his children under control with all dignity (3:4)
- Have a good reputation with those outside the church (3:7)
- Deacons... not double-tongued... not malicious gossips, but temperate (3:8 – 11)
- Deacons... faithful in all things (3:8) ... beyond reproach (3:10)
- The elders... preaching and teaching (5:17)
- Older widows over sixty years old (5:3 – 10)
- The wife of one man (5:9)
- If she has shown hospitality to strangers...washed the saints' feet (5:10)
- If she has assisted those in distress, if she has devoted herself to every good work (5:10)
- Be put on the list... if she has brought up children (5:9 – 10)
- Above reproach... Having a reputation for good works (5:7, 10)
- Younger widows... not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention (5:11 – 13)
- Younger widows... get married, bear children, keep house, give the enemy no occasion for reproach (5:14)

Widows as Heads of Household

- Widowhood was common
 - Wives typically 15 – 20 years younger than their husbands
- Age and character requirements for older widows
 - Identical with elders in 3:1 – 7
 - For receiving charity??? NO
- Widows' ministry
 - Not simply recipients of charity (although all widows should be honored by financial support first from their children and grandchildren as per 5:3 – 4)
 - But being remunerated for ministry, as per 5:17 – 18
 - Paul returns to the topic of elders preaching and teaching in 5:17 – 25
 - Widows are now spiritual heads of households
 - Widows are a subset of elders (recall chiasm)

Household Codes: Comparison

<i>Ephesians</i>	<i>Colossians</i>	<i>1 Timothy</i>	<i>1 Peter</i>
Wives, husbands (5:21 – 33)	Wives, husbands (3:18 – 19)	Wives, husbands (2:11 – 15)	Wives, husbands (3:1 – 7)
Children, parents (6:1 – 4)	Children, parents (3:20 – 21)	Children, parents (3:1 – 5:25) biological, spiritual	
Slaves, masters (6:5 – 9)	Slaves, masters (3:22 – 4:1)	Slaves, masters (6:1 – 11)	Servants (2:13 – 25)

Yet another reason why *gyne/aner* in 2:11 – 12 refers to:
wife/husband and *not* woman/man

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- Paul on headship

Paul on Headship

- Head (kephale) – body (*soma*) relation
 - Authority?
 - Source?
 - Something else?

Paul on Headship

- Head (kephale) – body (*soma*) relation
 - ‘Head’ refers to repeating God’s speech-acts
 - God was a ‘head’ (speaker of words) to Moses; Moses was a ‘head’ (speaker of words) to Aaron
 - ‘Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be *as God to him*’ (Ex.4:16; compare ‘God is the head of Christ’ in 1 Cor.11:2 – 3).
 - The ‘heads’ (leaders) of Israel were to speak to the people: judge, instruct, and prophecy (Mic.3:9 – 11)
 - ‘Now hear this, *heads* of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight... Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe; Her priests instruct for a price; and her prophets divine for money.’ (Mic.3:9 – 11)

Paul on Headship

- Head (kephale) – body (*soma*) relation
 - ‘Head’ refers to repeating God’s speech-acts
 - Head is the organ of speech
 - God spoke things into being, and worked by speaking through men and women who then became ‘prophets’ to God’s people (Am.3:7) or teachers, etc.

Paul on Headship

- Head (kephale) – body (*soma*) relation
 - God → Adam → Eve
 - ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’ (Gen.2:16 – 17)
 - Adam/Eve (in oneness, Gen.1:27) → their descendants
 - ‘Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and do not forsake **your mother’s teaching**’ (Prov.1:8)
 - ‘Be fruitful and multiply..’ (Gen.1:28) and ‘have dominion’ (Gen.1:29)

Paul on Headship

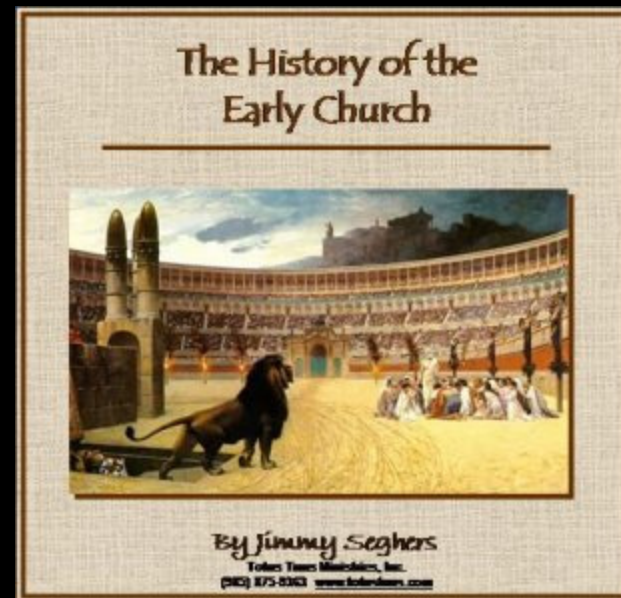
- Head (kephale) – body (*soma*) relation
 - *Source of God's words for shared authority:*
 - 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 16
 - Women can 'pray and prophesy,' with 'authority on their head'
 - Long hair is sufficient (11:15) because Roman law required:
 - Honored women: *stola* and *palla*
 - Prostitutes and adulteresses: a male *toga*, braided and uncovered hair
 - Wives may preach even with their husbands in the congregation; no inherent 'conflict of position'
 - see my notes http://nagasawafamily.org/paul_1corinthians.11:02-16.sg.pdf
 - 1 Corinthians 14:34 – 35
 - Paul is quoting his opponents and refuting them
 - see my notes http://nagasawafamily.org/paul_1corinthians.14.01-40.sg.pdf

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Two Vital Criteria

- Early Church History
- Scripture



Takeaways

- Biblical and Theological Foundation:
 - God made men and women equally in His image, loves them equally, and redeems them equally
- Ethical Foundation:
 - Christian faith offers a rational foundation for equal human dignity, with real historical testimony
- Prophetic Social Justice Mandate:
 - The influence of Plato and Aristotle and other cultural elements still need to be weeded out of the church, in this area, and others