

# Should Women Preach?

**by Roderick C. Meredith, 1955**

HERE IS a vital subject which greatly NEEDS to be understood in every home, in every church, in every nation. Untold misery and suffering can be avoided if God's truth is understood and obeyed!

The very fact of women preaching reveals a striking condition in our modern churches of which very few are aware. Thousands of people of both sexes have a prejudicial conception of this subject. In nearly every instance, they look on it as an isolate topic having little or no bearing on the gospel itself - or on the very purpose of our human existence.

But they fail to realize that this subject deals with the very FOUNDATION of the gospel itself - and that its proper understanding carries an URGENT message to our present society.

Before this world goes crashing to its doom, it's time to OPEN our minds to God's truth!

## **One Clear Answer**

Where should a Christian look to find the truth on this important subject - or on any subject for that matter?

Should you look to men, to groups of men, to the many differing churches of men? Where is basic truth to be found?

As a Christian, you should know that there is only one source of spiritual truth. Jesus Christ said, "Thy WORD is truth" (John 17:17). And God's word reveals - IF we are willing to receive the truth - that the subject of women preaching is more far-reaching and more fundamental than you have probably realized. It is VITAL that every Christian man and woman understand the truth on this matter.

God's word is clear and definite in revealing the status of women in the church, in society, and in the home. From Genesis to Revelation, the same principles are consistently revealed by God on this topic. Here is one subject upon which there is just no place for disagreement if we are to accept God's word as truth.

Yet here is a matter upon which whole church denominations disagree - a matter which is causing much of the wretchedness and rottenness in our toppling modern civilization.

It's time to find the truth! Free your mind from blinding prejudice. And God humbly to open your mind to his truth as CLEARLY revealed in His word, the Bible.

## **Why Woman Was Created**

After God had created the man, He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an HELP meet (suitable) for him" (Gen. 2:18). Finding that none of the animal creation fitted this need, God created woman out of part of man. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man" (Verse 23).

Notice that the very purpose of woman's creation was to provide a help for the man. but on the first occasion when man had a severe trial and needed help, what happened?

Genesis 3:1-16 shows that the woman allowed the serpent, representing Satan, to beguile her into disobeying her Creator, God. And she thereupon caused her husband, whom she was supposed to help, to disobey God also and cut himself off from God's blessings.

The woman had taken the initiative. She had tried to lead the man - a thing for which she was not intended nor equipped - and as a result the whole human family was cut off from God until Christ came to obey God and make reconciliation.

Because she had sinned in doing this thing. God told the woman, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall RULE over thee" (Gen. 3:16).

Plain words, these. And these are God's words - not human opinion. God had made the man first - in His direct image, as God is always spoken of in the masculine gender. God had made the man physically stronger, and with every necessary quality to be the woman's leader. Adam knew that the woman was to be his helper - and he her head.

But now that the woman had taken the initiative without consulting her husband, and had sinned and led him to sin in so doing, God made their status doubly CLEAR: "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall RULE over thee."

Adam had not fulfilled his God-given responsibility to lead the woman in the right way, but had let her wrest the initiative from him. And so God told Adam, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3:17). Yes, Adam was punished "Because," God said, "thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife" - and so had been led to disobey God.

It is easy for a man to bog down and let his wife "run things." Adam did and Satan soon took over! Thousands of modern men are doing the same thing - particularly in America. And crime, almost universal corruption in every phase of life, broken homes, unhappy homes, and juvenile delinquency are abounding and growing EVILS which beset our society on every hand.

It's something to think about seriously!

In the final analysis, man will learn that when the God-constituted system of authority breaks down, real TROUBLE is in store. This pattern of authority is conspicuously violated today in the realm of the relation of men and women in society and in the home.

## **Consistent Principle**

The examples and teaching throughout the Old Testament reveal that the man was recognized as the head of the house, and was always designated and used by God to carry out any group project. The genealogy always came down from father to son. When Jacob was inspired to give prophetic blessings (Gen. 49), they were given to his sons, not his daughters in any case.

In other words, man was regarded as the direct representative of God over all the animate creation, and woman was recognized and respected as his helper. She derived her honor and blessings indirectly through her husband, her God-constituted head.

God called Moses to lead his people out of Egyptian bondage. And when it came time to institute God's physical priesthood, God chose Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:9).

Note this point. In every case, God chose men- not women- to be the leaders and spokesmen, or preachers - if you wish to apply it that way.

What a striking contrast to our society where women are conducting themselves in a way that would have made their great-grandmothers blush! But let's get the point and not try to excuse ourselves. The contrast is not between us and what is termed "old-fashioned." It is between our way and GOD'S way as revealed in His word.

God's word is consistent in teaching that woman is to be in subjection to the man - never his leader or spokesman. Another point to notice is that while in both ancient and modern times the both ancient and modern times the Gentile nations often had queens or women ruling over them, at no time did God ever appoint a woman as queen or to ANY administrative office either in the nation of Israel or in the church either in Old or New Testament times. That is God's way! If our own human idea or way is different, then it is we - nor God - who should REPENT of this error and change our own carnal, human ways.

Are we going to delay our CREATOR on this point?

## **Prophetesses**

In both the Old and New Testament, we find that God did use some righteous woman in the office of a prophetess. If we study these examples carefully, we will see that their function has often been misinterpreted and that their office carried no administrative authority, but that they were simply used of God to convey a message to one of his servants, or to other people - but never in the capacity of preaching or exercising authority over them.

Exodus 15;20-21 gives the account of Miriam the prophetess leading the women out to dance and praise God in song. But she is nowhere spoken of as having preached or having had authority of any kind over the men. And any honest Bible student knows that it would have been contrary to existing mode of conduct, and to God's command, for her to have done so.

## **Deborah**

An unusual situation in Israel which in many ways parallels our own present day DEGENERACY is described in chapters 4 and 5 of the book of Judges. To properly understand this account, we need to realize that the entire book of Judges is primarily devoted to a history of Israel's mistakes because: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

In Judges 4:1 we find that Ehud, Israel's present "deliverer" (Judges 3:15) had died, and the people began doing evil in God's sight. There seems to have been no man of real

purpose and leadership to guide Israel at this time, and God sold them into the hand of the king of Canaan for their disobedience.

At this point, we read: "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time" (verse 4).

Since no man had the courage and leadership to master the situation and take the initiative, Deborah - being a prophetess and knowing God's will - reminded Barak, "Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded ..." And she proceeded to remind him - not command him, because she had no such authority over the men - of what God had commanded should be done.

Barak, being a weakling and too fearful to exercise his God-given responsibility of leadership, told her, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go" (Verse 8).

Knowing full well that Barak ought to be man enough to carry out this responsibility without having to cling to the skirts of a woman, Deborah told him: "I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (verse 9).

Deborah herself - a righteous and God-fearing woman - had no desire at all to usurp man's responsibility for leadership. And her own words betray how ashamed she must have felt of her men, who were so weak that she had to "mother" them along to get them to carry out God's will. She later sang of this national tragedy: "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I arose a MOTHER in Israel!" (Judges 5:7).

## **Like Today**

This pitiful spectacle of men being too weak and too lazy to carry out their God-given responsibility for leadership is closely paralleled in America today - right now! And it is a growing trend in many other nations. It seems to be a part of our so-called "civilization." And it is wreaking havoc in our homes, our churches, our society.

Women preachers constitute only a small part of this general problem. The big problem is that men and women have departed from the WAY of God in their lives. They have forsaken the knowledge and practice of exercising the God-constituted authority. He set in the home, in the church, and in society.

The divorce rate and the number of juvenile delinquents and criminals is constantly growing. And most people don't seem to know why.

Asked to account for the rise in juvenile delinquency, an expert on this subject. Police Commissioner Gibbons of Philadelphia, answered: "Throughout the country there is a general disregard for CONSTITUTED AUTHORITY. I think that goes for the adults and is reflected in the thinking of the juvenile" Yes, Commissioner Gibbons and many other men and women who are constantly dealing with this problem have been forced to realize that proper understanding and respect for authority is rapidly disappearing from our society.

In its wake, we find increasing violence, murder, rape, corruption in many forms.

Commenting on America's problem of growing juvenile crime, a famous, visiting British general said that he remembered that when he was a boy, father's word was law and

disobedience was quickly rewarded by physical chastening. But now, in both countries, most fathers just don't seem to care, and the mother is either unwilling or unable to properly handle the situation.

Yes, men used to feel their God-given duties as head of the house and exercise them. But now it seems they just don't care.

In fact, the whole population seems to delight in ridiculing man's position as head of the house. This attitude of contempt for what GOD has ordained is prominently displayed in comic strips, movies, radio, and now television - all of which like to portray the husband as a big, helpless dumb brute who has to be "managed" by his intelligent, "modern" wife.

A recent newspaper report says: "The United States is moving rapidly toward the 'woman's world' with diaper-changing husbands and independent wives." Yes, the weak, spiritless American husband is fast becoming the butt of every joke. This situation may strike some as being very funny, but it is an ABOMINATION to Almighty God! The lack of a real father and HEAD in every home is leading to more broken homes, broken young lives, and wretchedness than you have realized.

It's time to wake up and get back to the WAY of God.

## **Other Prophetesses**

There are a few other prophetesses mentioned specifically in the Bible, and in every case they were used as Deborah was - to impart knowledge to others as to God's will. In no case did they exercise authority.

We read of Huldah the prophetess in II Chronicles 34:22-28. Here we find that the King of Judah sent to Huldah to find out what God's will was. But, upon learning, he made the decision as to what should be done.

In Luke 2:36-38, we read of Anna, a prophetess, who was a widow 84 years old. She was a very righteous woman who "served God with fasting and prayers night and day." And so it was revealed to her that the child Jesus was the expected messiah, and she was privileged to announce this to those who were gathered informally about Jesus and His earthly parents.

The four virgin daughters of Philip the evangelist are mentioned in Acts 21:8-9. The account says she "did prophesy," but we find an example of how this was often done in the following verses (10-12) describing Agabus, the prophet. Notice that Agabus did not preach to the group or have authority over them, but simply warned Paul personally, and those with him, of what God had revealed would befall him at Jerusalem.

So, although the word "prophesy" means to "forthtell for God," whether in the sense of a revelation of future happenings or of inspired preaching, we see that the latter function was never exercised by women prophetesses, who never held authority over the men or the congregation, but only spoke privately to convey a message from God.

## **New Testament Teaching**

The New Testament teaching, example, and direct commands on this subject are very clear.

In I Corinthians 11:3-16, the apostle Paul says (verse 3), "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the HEAD of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

Paul says the man "is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man" (verse 7). Man stands in the direct image and as the visible representative of God, and so should not have his head covered as a sign that he is in subjection to any visible being - he being in subjection only to the invisible God.

But the woman is to subject herself to the man; she was made "for the man" (verse 9). Therefore, she ought to have power - or to make the meaning clear, a sign that she is under authority - on her head because of the angels. If she acknowledges her subjection to the man by this outward sign, she will be granted special favor by the ministering and guardian angels, whose help the woman - as the weaker sex - is particularly in need of.

Notice that this symbol of being in subjection - this covering or veil spoken of - is the wearing of long hair by the woman. Some interpreters have falsely assumed that their covering was a veil or scarf, but this was not the custom of Grecian women, as they assume, and Paul clearly defines, the woman's covering as her long hair, which he says is a glory to her (verse 15 of chapter 11).

Paul concludes this passage by saying that if anyone brings up a contrary idea, the churches of GOD recognize no such ideas of men. However, many of the churches of today have rejected these commands of God. Many unthinking modern women, kept in spiritual ignorance, now cut their hair short like a man - thereby dishonoring their human head, man, and their spiritual head, Christ, whose command they are rejecting.

It's time to realize that true Christianity means OBEDIENCE to God's commands!

## **Paul's Inspired Commands**

The apostle Paul was inspired to give directions for exercising spiritual gifts in chapters 12,13 and 14 of First Corinthians. He concludes these instructions in I Cor. 14:34-40 by commanding: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (verse 34). Here is a direct command from God that women are NOT to speak in church even in exercising the spiritual does not mean presiding over a group in these activities (I Cor. 11:5).

Their husbands are to study God's word and to be their head, their leader in spiritual as well as physical matters. Thus, if women wish to ask questions, "let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a SHAME for women to speak in the church."

Present circumstances are no excuse for disobeying the commands of God. Nevertheless, how many husbands are qualified to fulfill their responsibility as spiritual head of the family?

The shameful answer is: far too few. But this is no reason for women usurping this authority. For in I Timothy 2:12, God inspired Paul to write: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." He continues (verse 13

and 14), "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

The woman is not to have authority over the man, for she was created to be his helper. And this passage and others (II Timothy 3:6) indicate that women do tend to be more easily deceived than men. They were not intended by God to be physical or spiritual leaders over men - and most God-fearing women realize this and would be thankful if the men would AWAKEN to their God-given duty to guide the family and instruct their wives in spiritual knowledge. But - alas! how far men have fallen short of this CHRISTIAN DUTY.

## **God's Way Best**

Women preachers? Women leaders?

The answer is abundantly plain if we seek God's way!

This knowledge should certainly cause no "battle of the sexes," but rather bring both men and women to the sober realization of how far we have departed from the way and commands of God.

If men and women everywhere will both acknowledge the great error they have made, the great SIN they have committed in transgressing the commands of God in this matter - and will REPENT and turn from this wrong way, God will forgive and abundantly pardon.

Yes, we need to restore God's system of authority in our homes, our churches, our nations. Then growing children will be properly trained for life by firm but loving parents. And wives - as many of them secretly realize - would have a new respect and love for their husbands. And with people understanding God's authority and why, our church life would become cleansed of all the mixture of paganism and human tradition with what is left of real Christianity - the kind found in God's word.

Society as a whole would be immeasurably benefited by a renewed respect for constituted authority - and the realization that authority comes down from God himself.

## **God Holds Men Responsible**

Women - and women preachers - have taken unto themselves much authority that is not rightfully theirs. But in most cases they have done so because men were too lazy or indifferent to carry out the responsibility as they should. And so it is a situation for which we should all repent.

But you will have to realize that God at no time had used a woman as His minister in preaching or writing His word. Any woman usurping this authority was so doing in direct violation of the commands of God, and so cut herself off from God and from the Holy Spirit, "whom God hath given to them that OBEY Him" (Acts 5:32)

And any church or denomination which continues to REJECT this truth is not being used of God at all, for He says: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee" (Hosea 4:6)

Jesus Christ said: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4).

God's word is consistent. His will is clear.

Where do you stand?