

EPHESIANS PART XVI

Submission and Headship; Ephesians 5:22-33

Please turn in your bibles to Ephesians chapter five.

Last week we began talking about marriage and household codes in Jesus' day. I don't want to go back through all that but suffice it to say that it was certainly different than it is now. Generally speaking, Jewish women were treated better, had more freedom and played a larger role in the running of the household. Remember that Paul's audience is mostly Gentile, so this idea of how a marriage is to work is different to what they are accustomed. But, while there were differences, there were also some things that remain the same, even though in practice, they were somewhat different.

We can't begin with verse 22 and just separate what he has to say about what is commonly referred to as "household codes" without seeing how he segues into the household from the overall theme of the letter.

Eph. 5:15 ^pLook carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ ^pmaking the best use of the time, because ^qthe days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what ^tthe will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And ^sdo not get drunk with wine, for that is ^tdebauchery, but ^ube filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in ^vpsalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ ^wgiving thanks always and for everything to God the Father ^xin the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ ^ysubmitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Eph. 5:25 ^gHusbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and ^hgave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by ⁱthe washing of water ^jwith the word, ²⁷ so ^kthat he might present the church to himself in splendor, ^lwithout spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ¹ ²⁸ In the same way ^mhusbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because ⁿwe are members of his body. ³¹ ^o"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and ^pthe two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, ^qlet each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she ^rrespects her husband.

- Note how he uses the word “submit” and that is what it means, literally. But as we shall see that isn’t the end of the matter. There is much more to it.

5293. ὑποτάσσω hupotasso, *hoop-ot-as'-so*; from 5259 and 5021; to subordinate; reflexively, to obey: — be under obedience (obedient), put under, subdue unto, (be, make) subject (to, unto), be (put) in subjection (to, under), submit self unto.

When it comes to the word “submit,” and this is where at least half of the problem is, there is no way around what it means. I have watched scholars duck, dodge, juke and jive in order to make the word something different, but they can’t do it. Now, that’s not to say that the definition is the end of the matter, because Paul will go on to clarify some things, but the difference in how this submission works is to be seen in how Paul uses the term “head”, not submission.

In verse 31, in order to make his point, Paul hyperlinks to the OT in order to make his case. And if Paul can do it, so can we. Paul is quoting from Genesis 2.

Gen. 2:18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; ¹⁸I will make him a helper fit for⁵ him.” ¹⁹Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed⁶ every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and ¹⁹brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam⁷ there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the LORD God caused a ²¹deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made⁸ into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,

“This at last is ²³bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was ²⁴taken out of Man.”⁹

Gen. 2:24 ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

We see that Adam was given an object lesson. God saw that it was not good that man should be alone and then placed before him all the animals of the field in order that he name them. Two things were accomplished by doing this, the first being that Adam came to realize that there wasn’t a mate for him. That was a biggie.

⁵ God **called** the light Day, and the darkness he **called** Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Gen. 1:6 And God said, ^d“Let there be an expanse¹ in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷ And God made² the expanse and ^eseparated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were ^fabove the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ And God **called** the expanse Heaven.³ And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

Gen. 1:9 And God said, ^g“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God **called** the dry land Earth,⁴ and the waters that were gathered together he **called** Seas. And God saw that it was good.

This is referred to as the⁴ divine right to name. In the ANE, whoever named you was your sovereign in some way. In the case of creation, it was God. In the case of Abram, God changed his name to Abraham. God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, etc. Now, if we go back to the creation story what do we see in Genesis one?

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, ^o“Let us make man⁸ in our image, ^pafter our likeness. And ^qlet them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Gen. 1:27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
^rmale and female he created them.

Gen. 1:28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, ^s“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

This is what we call the “Dominion Mandate”. We’ve talked about this, many times before. Mankind was/ is to rule over earth, and we are to be good steward over it in the character and will of God. Now, in light of this let’s go back to Genesis.

Gen. 2:18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; ⁿI will make him a helper fit for⁵ him.” ¹⁹ ^oNow out of the ground the LORD God had formed⁶ every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and ^pbrought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam⁷ there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a ^qdeep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made⁸ into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,
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 she shall be called Woman,
 because she was ^staken out of Man.”⁹

Gen. 2:24 ^tTherefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Who names all the animals? Adam. Adam, apart from being a proper name, also means human. So, who is to rule over/ be a steward over the animal kingdom? Mankind. Let's go back to the narrative.

Gen. 2:18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; ⁿI will make him a helper fit for⁵ him.”

Fit = “corresponding opposite”

¹⁹ ^oNow out of the ground the LORD God had formed⁶ every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and ^pbrought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam⁷ there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a ^qdeep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made⁸ into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

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Adam named her “isha” which means woman. Adam is a man, “ish”.

Is this pre or post fall?

But it doesn't end there.

Gen. 3:16 To the woman he said,

"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
 'in pain you shall bring forth children.

^jYour desire shall be contrary to⁶ your husband,
 but he shall ^krule over you."

Gen. 3:20 **The man called his wife's name Eve**, because she was the mother of all living.^{7 21}
 And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

I don't know that part could be any plainer. Both pre and post fall, we have these declarations along with the theme of naming. Those run throughout the bible. Did this change when Jesus came announced the kingdom and then ascended to the Father? I don't think so, because Paul doesn't think so. He quotes from the creation story. BUT!!!!

We need to look at how this is supposed to work. The truth is that some women have an issue with this due to the fact that men have abused their station. And gentlemen, we don't want to be that guy. Let's look at what Paul says and how he uses the term, "head."

2776. κεφαλή kephale, *kef-al-ay'*; from the primary κάπτω kapto (in the sense of seizing); the head (as the part most readily taken hold of), literally or figuratively: — head.

Sometimes the metaphor of the body occurs in conjunction with Christ as the "head." These are two separate but complementary metaphors. Each metaphor stands on its own; each has its own meaning. Paul does not picture the church as a headless body or Christ as a bodiless head. But when the two metaphors are found side by side, the association of "body" with "head" does give to "head" a particular meaning. Of the passages in which these images are found together, the most important for ascertaining the meaning of "head" are Eph 4:15–16 and Col 2:19. Each contains the extraordinary statement that the body *grows* (into love, into Christian maturity) *from the head*. Herein lies the clue to both the meaning of the headship of Christ in these verses and the origin of the metaphor by which this meaning is expressed. But before we go any further down this track, we should first clear the ground of another concept of headship that is sometimes applied to these and related verses.

A number of Old Testament and nonbiblical passages use "head" (*kephalē*) in the sense of "ruler." In 2 Chron 13:12 "head" refers to God as the ruler of Israel. This concept of headship as ruler best accounts for Eph 1:20–22 and Col 2:10, in which Christ is said to be "head" over "all [other] rule and authority, power and dominion." But these passages do not refer to those ruled by the "head" as its "body" and do not say that they have "grown from the head." Thus, such

passages have little to offer in the quest for an understanding of headship in Eph 4:15–16 and Col 2:19.¹

Such “headship” becomes a model for others, specifically for the husband as “head of the wife,” as in Eph 5:23. Here Paul speaks again of Christ as “head” of “the body,” the church—the “headship of source.” He then draws from this the analogy that the husband is “head of the wife.” This headship, like Christ’s, is one of source and service.²

APPLICATION

Ladies and gentlemen, I know we are in some politically charged times. A time and culture that seeks to divide and turn upside down the things that God has said in His word. However, we are charged with going back to His word and then rightfully dividing the word of truth. When we do that, we will see the dividends – a healthy marriage, among other things. But we must also see that we will be swimming upstream, at least as far as common culture is concerned.

Ladies, we have seen what happened in the beginning. We have seen what the consequences are. We saw God giving Adam the right to name and what that then means. We see throughout the Bible what a healthy marriage can be like. We can also see some bad ones. And none of them are perfect. But what we do see is that a healthy one, where no one is pulling against the other, can be the nearest thing to Heaven on earth. A bad marriage can be the nearest thing to Hell on earth. If we are each other’s “corresponding opposite” as is commonly translated in many Jewish Tanaks, then we get the image of two people fitting together as one for the common goal of being imagers of God. Ladies, that requires respect and the biblical idea of submission.

Gentlemen! We also saw that happened in the garden when the man didn’t stop the buck when it came to him. Things quickly went awry. In my experience, women don’t respect a man who won’t do his job, his duty – a man who won’t be a man! How can they? Because then it falls on them to do a job they weren’t meant to do. And no one likes that. Gentlemen, we can’t lord over our wives as if we are dictators either. That is another reason why women don’t want to respect their husbands – because they have abused their station. We must love them, nurture them, protect and provide for them. We must do as Jesus did. We must enter into their worlds and die to ourselves. We must love them as Jesus has loved us. Who wouldn’t respect that? Who wouldn’t want to follow that? Guys, if we are dismissive of our wives, are we acting like Jesus? If we are over-bearing and controlling, are we acting like Jesus? I say no. How about we give them good reason to submit and respect us. I believe that would end the problem.

Let’s pray.

¹ David J. Williams, [*Paul’s Metaphors: Their Context and Character*](#) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 90.

² David J. Williams, [*Paul’s Metaphors: Their Context and Character*](#) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 91.