

2010

## Role of Women in the Worship by Bill Lockwood

One of the great attractions of Christianity in the early centuries as followers of the cross were persecuted by the Roman Emperors was its unflinching devotion to the principles of the Scriptures. On the other hand, a sad testament of many moderns is the willingness of those who claim allegiance to Jesus Christ to conform to worldly standards. Especially is this the case when one considers the role of women in the New Testament church and the desire of many today to depart from the clear standard given by inspiration.

Two passages outline the woman's role in the public worship assembly. These are 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-36. In each passage the teaching is identical.

*First*, the legislation applies "in the church." This phrase simply means in the context, "in the assembly." For example, Paul speaks of the brethren coming together "in the church"—or in the assembly (1 Corinthians 11:18). Though the verses in 1 Timothy do not speak of "in the assembly," the context certainly implies that a public gathering is intended as Paul speaks of the woman in a "learning" position.

*Second*, the legislation by inspiration says that the woman is "not to speak"—given in both passages. The Corinthian verse even forbids her to "ask questions" in the assembly. To Timothy Paul writes that she should "learn in quietness" with all subjection, for she is not to exercise "dominion" or authority over the man.

*Third*, the nature of her speaking includes "teaching" or "preaching" (1 Timothy 2:12) even to the extent she is not to lead in prayer (2:8) in the public assembly. If she would ask anything, let her ask her own husband at home, says Paul.

*Fourth*, the principle upon which this ruling is based is that the woman is to occupy a position of "subjection" (1 Timothy 2).

*Fifth*, and perhaps most importantly to today's context, Paul gives the reasons upon which he made such legislation. It was not due to the culture or the times or the prejudices of different peoples, but based upon solid and sound historical reasons. One, the order of creation. Adam was first formed, then Eve (1 Timothy 2:13). Two, the sin in the creation period. Adam was not "beguiled" but the woman being beguiled has fallen into transgression. The same apostle will bring in another reason in 1 Corinthians 11:3-10 as he mentions the Divine order of headship—man over woman.

Having mentioned the above, it is important to note that only Christianity elevates woman to honor. Witness the cultures today and across history that have had a different view of woman than Christ gives. She is everywhere treated as a slave or simply an object for man's desire. Her true place by the side of man is only found in the Bible, even though in *public worship* she is to respect the role that God has assigned.

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One can mark it down that religions in America who do not respect God's Word in this matter, but who seek to have women in the pulpit or in leading positions in the churches, have a low opinion of God's authority. If a church may disregard God's instruction here, why not also on everything else?