

Men and Women in Genesis 1-3

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Preface by Joseph Tkach

Does the Bible require men and women to have different roles in the church? Although the Old Testament does not provide the final answer for the question, proponents and opponents of females as elders often look to the Old Testament for evidence.

When Jesus analyzed the question of divorce for his first-century Jewish audience, he cited the creation account in Genesis to show how it was “in the beginning” (Matt. 19:4-5). Since Genesis tells us about the creation of male and female, the account may tell us something about God’s original design for male and female roles. We might see what the ideal was before sin distorted the relationship between the sexes.

However, Genesis does not say as much as we might like, and perhaps both opponents and proponents of women’s ordination have claimed too much for what it says. I ask that you give careful consideration to the following report of the doctrinal review team and think through the questions along with us.

Joseph Tkach

In the beginning, God made humanity male and female, said Jesus (Matt. 19:4). This creation set a pattern for marriage, and it may also set a pattern for relationships between male and female.¹ We will examine what Genesis says verse by verse.

¹ The relationship between male and female in marriage is not automatically determinative for roles within the church. These spheres are related, but not identical. Although the focus of our study is roles within the church, we will look at the Old Testament passages to provide a background for New Testament passages, with the understanding that Old Testament society and worship is not necessarily a model for what the church should do today. Further, our conclusions about male-female relations within the church may or may not apply to relationships within marriages.

Genesis 1

The initial pattern is given in Genesis 1:26-27:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (NIV used throughout this paper, unless noted otherwise.)

There is a plural usage of the word “man.” The Hebrew moves without comment from the singular word “man” (*'adam*, which on the second occurrence has the definite article *ha*, meaning “the”) to the plural pronoun *them*, and explains that “man” means both male and female. “Humanity” is a better translation, for in this verse the word *'adam* clearly would include all humans, male and female alike. Genesis 5:2 also shows that the word *'adam* includes male and female.

Some scholars think it is significant that God names the human race by one sex, man.² In response, we note that *'adam* does not mean “male”; as noted above, it can also be used for females. Perhaps the best translation is “human,” and it is reasonable for God to name the first person “Human” without implying that all subsequent *males* represent the human race any more than females do. The fact that the same Hebrew word was used for the first male as for all humanity could be *consistent* with male authority, but if male authority is really God’s design, that should be demonstrated by more than a mere implication from the choice of terms.

Male and female alike are made in God’s image. Genesis 9:6 says, “Whoever sheds the blood of man [*ha'adam*], by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man [*ha'adam*].” The meaning here is not man as male, but “man” as male and female. The NRSV accurately renders the verse in this way: “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.” Although people

² Raymond C. Ortland, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” pages 95-112 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), pages 97, 480. This book is the most thorough defense of the conservative position.

might argue about what “the image of God” means,³ it is generally agreed among conservative and liberal scholars alike that men and women alike are made in the image of God. Most conservatives agree with Ortland when he says, “Both male and female display the glory of God’s image with equal brilliance.”⁴

Although men and women are made in the image of God, Paul writes, “A man [*anēr*, meaning a male] ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor. 11:7). We will discuss this passage in more detail in a later paper, but let us note for now the way that Paul reasons. He says that a woman should cover her head when she is prophesying (v. 6), but a man should not, for *the man* is the image and glory of God. The logic *might* imply that women are not the image and glory of God—but almost all scholars *reject* the conclusion that women are not made in the image of God.

Thomas R. Schreiner, a conservative, says, “Paul is not denying that women are created in God’s image, for he is referring to the creation accounts here and was well aware that Genesis teaches that both men and women are created in God’s image.”⁵ Schreiner focuses on the word *glory*, but does not discuss why Paul also includes the word *image*. Gordon D. Fee similarly concludes that “Paul’s own interest, however, is finally not in man as being God’s image, but in his being God’s glory. That is Paul’s own reflection on the creation of man, and it is the word that finally serves as the means of contrast between man and woman.”⁶ C.K. Barrett says, “Paul values the term image only as leading to the term glory.”⁷

³ This paper does not specify what the “image” is. An article on our website argues that Jesus reveals to us what the true image is—and the focal point, the characteristic of God that we need most to be conformed to, is love, not power or appearance. See <http://www.gci.org/humans/image>.

⁴ Ortland, 97. On page 98, Ortland speaks for the conservative consensus when he writes, “Who, I wonder, is teaching that men only bear God’s image? No contributor to this volume will be found saying that.”

⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” pages 124-39 in Piper and Grudem; here, pages 132-33.

⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 515.

⁷ C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Black’s New Testament Commentary; London: A&C Black, 1971), 252.

The broad consensus is that Genesis teaches that women are made in the image of God, and it is a mistake to interpret Paul as contradicting that conclusion. This verse shows that it is a mistake to use Paul's arguments (designed for a different situation) to interpret Genesis. When Paul uses Genesis as a supporting rationale, he may be giving only a narrow slice of the situation, only as it applies to his immediate concern, rather than giving a complete statement on what Genesis teaches. Paul uses Genesis to support his argument, but it is hazardous for us to make inferences from his argument to interpret Genesis. When we read between the lines, we may be reading more into it than Paul intended. We will see this illustrated again later in this paper.

As our last comment on Genesis 1:26, we note that male and female alike were assigned to rule over the earth and its animals; although God made male and female distinct and different from one another, this chapter says nothing about male and female having different roles. Verses 28-29 say:

God blessed them and said *to them*, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you [plural] every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.” And it was so.

The instructions are given equally to male and female—both were given the command to reproduce and rule. Both were allowed to eat from every fruit-bearing tree.

Genesis 2

The second chapter focuses on the creation of human beings—it begins with a barren land, without rain, plants or humans (v. 5). So God “formed the man [*ha'adam*, the human one] from the dust of the ground [*ha'adamah*, a feminine word]” (v. 6). God planted a garden, made trees grow in it, and put the man there to take care of the garden (vv. 8-9, 15). Then God warned the human not to eat from one particular tree (v. 16).

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (v. 18). In contrast to all other creation being “good,”

Scripture highlights that it was *not* good for the human to be by himself. God wants humans to be social and sexual.

Does “suitable helper” imply that the woman was made as a *servant* to the man? No, the Hebrew word “helper” is more commonly used for *God* as a helper of humans (e.g., Ex. 18:4)—the word does not presume lesser authority. The woman could “help” the man by working as his equal just as much as by working subordinately to him. The point being made in Genesis is simply that the woman is “suitable” for the man—that is, she is the same kind of being. Gordon J. Wenham writes, “The compound prepositional phrase ‘matching him,’ [*kenegdo*] literally, ‘like opposite him,’ is found only here. It seems to express the notion of complementarity rather than identity. As Delitsch (1:140) observes, if identity were meant, the more natural phrase would be ‘like him.’”⁸

Is it significant that Eve was made “for” the man? The Hebrew preposition does not presume lesser authority—the point being made in Genesis is that the man was incomplete without the woman. This verse says nothing about authority. Paul likewise notes that the woman was made *for* the man (1 Cor. 11:9), but then concludes that men and women are mutually dependent (v. 11)—the word “for” does not imply inferiority or hierarchy.

Genesis explains that God had created animals, and “he brought them to the man to see what he would name them” (v. 19). So the first human named the animals (v. 20). But no “suitable helper” was found for the solitary human. None of the animals was an appropriate partner. God had known this ahead of time, of course, but the exercise of naming the animals helped the first human be aware 1) that he was not like any other animal, and 2) that he (unlike the animals previously created) did not have a partner.

Once the man was aware of his need, God put him to sleep, took one of his ribs,⁹ and from it fashioned a woman (vv. 21-22). Although the first human was made from the ground (just like the animals were—v. 19), the woman had a

⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary 1; Waco: Word, 1987), 68.

⁹ Many interpreters have offered suggestions about the symbolism implied in the rib. For example, Matthew Henry wrote, “Woman is not made of a man’s head to climb over him, she is not made of his feet to be trampled on, but from his rib to be by his side as an equal, under his arm to be protected and close to his heart to be loved.” No matter how appealing this symbolism is, it cannot be proven that this was the original intent.

human origin, apparently to emphasize her organic unity with the man. God brought the woman to the man, and the man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ [’*ishshah*], for she was taken out of man [’*iysh*]” (v. 23). This poetic expression—the first recorded words of any human—are an expression of joy at discovering the suitable partner that the man needed. The two people, although different, were the same flesh.

The words are an expression of similarity, not of hierarchy. However, it is often noted that the man *named* the woman, just as he had earlier named the animals, and the simple act of giving a name is supposedly an indicator of authority.¹⁰ But this is not necessarily so.¹¹ Hagar gave God a name: “The God who sees me”—a name that God apparently accepted, for it is in Scripture (Gen. 16:13). Naming does not always indicate authority.¹² In the naming of the animals narrative, the literary context has nothing to do with authority over the animals; it is about the creation of woman and Adam’s appreciation of her. When Adam named the woman, the point being emphasized in the text is how much *like* Adam she was.

The Bible then concludes from the essential similarity of man and woman: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Curiously, it is the man who is said to leave—this is not said (though it is probably assumed¹³) for the woman. The couple become a new family, not under the authority of the man’s father and mother. This indicates that, no matter where they live, the man’s primary responsibility is to his wife, not his parents, and similarly, the woman’s primary responsibility is to her husband, not her parents. But the verse presumes nothing

¹⁰ “Though they are equal in nature, that man names woman (cf. 3:20) indicates that she is expected to be subordinate to him, an important presupposition in the ensuing narrative” (Wenham, 70). See also Schreiner, 207.

¹¹ Linda Belleville writes, “Naming in antiquity was a way of memorializing an event or capturing a distinctive attribute. It was not an act of control or power” (chapter 2 in Beck and Blomberg, p. 143).

¹² Leah and Rachel named the sons of Jacob; only Benjamin was named by Jacob (Gen. 29-30; 35:18). Moses and Samuel were also named by women (Ex. 2:10; 1 Sam. 1:20).

¹³ “Israelite marriage was usually patrilocal, that is, the man continued to live in or near his parents’ home” (Wenham, 70). Psalm 45:10 advises the woman to leave her parents.

about the authority of one person over another.

Genesis 2 (unlike Genesis 1) makes distinctions between male and female. The male was made first, given a job in the garden, warned about the forbidden fruit, told to name the animals, and he responds with joy to his God-given companion. The woman does not do anything in this chapter, nor is anything said about why one was made before the other. Richard Davidson writes, “The movement in Genesis 2...is not from superior to inferior, but from incompleteness to completeness.”¹⁴

However, the next chapter shows that the woman was aware of the forbidden fruit—the silence of chapter 2 does not mean that she was not told.¹⁵ Genesis does not tell us who told her about it, whether it was God or Adam. *Who* told her apparently did not matter. Likewise, we cannot put much significance on the silence of chapter 2 on other issues.

The man was created first, and it is often concluded from this that God thereby gave him authority over the woman.¹⁶ However, this should not be assumed. For example, plants do not have authority over animals, and animals do not rule humans. Throughout Genesis, we see that the firstborn does not always rule over the younger siblings. Beck and Blomberg write, “One wonders if a hypothetical ‘first-time’ reader of Genesis 1-3, even in the ancient Jewish world, would have picked up any of the six indications of female subordination [such as priority of the male] that Schreiner discusses.”¹⁷ This comment suggests that a definitive answer must come from the New Testament; the discussion of Genesis is only a preliminary study. For a conclusion, we need other biblical evidence, and the writings of Paul are relevant for this point.

¹⁴ Richard M. Davidson, “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” pp. 259-95 in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (edited by Nancy Vyhmeister; Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press), 261.

¹⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner has no evidence to suggest that “God likely commissioned Adam to instruct Eve about this command” (chapter 4 of *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg [Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan], 203).

¹⁶ Schreiner argues that Hebrew readers would assume the laws of primogeniture (*ibid.*).

¹⁷ Beck and Blomberg, “Reflections on Complementarian Essays,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 312.

Paul's comments on creation

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul says that a woman should cover her head when prophesying, but a man should not, for “woman is the glory of man. For man [*anēr*] did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (vv. 8-9). There are numerous questions about the way that Paul reasons in this chapter, and a later paper will discuss them in more detail. But here we can note that Paul uses the creation priority of the man in support of the the *cultural* custom of women covering their heads. Paul can use the creation account to argue for a temporary custom.

Paul is saying that men and women in Corinthian society of his day may prophesy, but they must do it in slightly different ways. He is not addressing the relative authority of men and women,¹⁸ nor the authority of what they say, but only the appearance of the person saying it. He also weakens the significance of the priority of the first man by observing that male-female relationships are transformed in the Lord: “In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman” (vv. 11-12).¹⁹ These verses strike a note of equality in the Lord, and they remind us that although the first woman came from the first man, all subsequent men have come from women, and the argument from priority is inconclusive.

So what does this passage tell us about the meaning of Genesis 2? It means that Genesis 2 can be used to argue for a cultural custom, but it also shows us that an argument for authority based on priority has a logical weakness. The passage does not prove that men are given authority over women, for that is not Paul's purpose in this passage. Rather, he allows women to do the *same* as men, advising appropriate conformity with cultural norms.

¹⁸ When Paul says that “the head of woman is man” (v. 3), Paul may be *referring* to authority (that is a question for a later paper), but the rest of the passage argues on the basis of honor and dishonor, not of authority. Men and women have an equal right to prophesy, and their prophecies are of equal authority; the only question in this passage is the *manner* in which they prophesy. That is why we say above that Paul is not *addressing* the authority of men and women. That is at best a tangential comment, not the main subject.

¹⁹ Beck and Blomberg note that “verses 11-12 may suggest that the new creation in Christ goes beyond God's original creation. Clearly it will in the world to come” (312).

To illustrate, we might paraphrase the logic of 1 Corinthians 11 in this way: Women should cover their heads when prophesying because men were created first. Genesis itself does not say that, of course, and it is not self-evident as to how Paul went from premise to conclusion; this may indicate that he was reasoning based on a practice found in his own culture.

The argument of creation priority also appears in 1 Timothy 2:13, and again, a full discussion will have to wait for another paper. Verse 12 says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” Then verse 13 gives this rationale: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” But as we have already seen, the priority of Adam could be used to argue for a *cultural* custom, and therefore the fact that this passage argues for women’s subordination does not in itself tell us whether that role was a cultural one, or a timeless, normative one.

Similarly, 1 Timothy 2 says that women should not teach or have authority over men because men were created first. Again, Genesis 1-3 does not say that, and it is possible that Paul went from premise to conclusion by an assumption of culture. Both passages *use* the creation account, but neither is an attempt to tell us what Genesis means.

Both New Testament passages are easily read with the understanding that the creation priority of man gives men some sort of authority over women. However, they may also be read with an assumption of equality; we will address them in more detail in later papers.

The evidence of Genesis 1 leans toward equal roles, and the evidence of Genesis 2 would *allow* for different roles. However, neither chapter directly addresses the question of authority that we might bring to them, so we must be cautious about conclusions that we draw. The evidence of Genesis 2 is tempered by the following observations:

- 1) Our goal in the church is not always to imitate the original, pre-Fall creation. We do not suggest that people remove their clothes, for example!
- 2) New Testament scriptures may override the conclusions that we draw from Genesis. Genesis 1-2 are not addressing the question of authority and we must not try to *infer* something from these chapters beyond what

- they directly say.
- 3) Scriptural finding relevant to gender authority may not provide a full parallel to questions about church leadership. For example, gender authority in the family structure would not necessarily carry over into the church structure.
 - 4) The New Testament may give us additional insights, since some New Testament verses address the question of church leadership more directly.

Genesis 3

Sin enters the story in chapter 3, beginning with the crafty serpent. The serpent spoke to the woman—even though the man was with her (v. 6). Why did the serpent speak to the woman rather than the man? The text does not say. What the text does say is that both ate it. Eve was deceived by the serpent and Adam went along with her.

The serpent flatly contradicted what God had said, and the woman wanted what the serpent offered, so she ate. She apparently wanted the man to be wise, too, so she gave him some fruit, and he ate. For some unexplained reason, they became ashamed of their nakedness and hid from God even though they had made something to cover their nakedness (vv. 7-8).

They responded equally to the sin: “The eyes of *both* of them were opened, and *they* realized they were naked; so *they* sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.... *They* hid from the LORD God.” Genesis does not assign significance to which person sinned first – theologically, it does not matter, for the point is that they both sinned.

God called out to the man (v. 9). Why the man rather than the woman? The text does not say. Adam said he hid because he was naked, and God asked him whether he had eaten from the forbidden tree.²⁰ The man blamed the woman, and the woman blamed the serpent. So God cursed the serpent (vv. 14-15).

The word “curse” is not used for the humans, but God described some

²⁰ When God pronounced a punishment on Adam, he did not hold Adam accountable for what Eve had done—Eve had to give account for herself (Mary Seltzer, “Women Elders...Sinners or Saints?,” 59; unpublished paper).

unpleasant consequences for them. He told the woman, “I will greatly increase your pains [*itstsabon*] in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

Why did God pronounce the punishment on the woman first? The text does not say—it may be for literary style. The sequence goes back and forth: 1) serpent, woman, man; 2) man, woman, serpent; 3) serpent, woman, man. The most significant curse – death – seems to be reserved for last, in the punishment pronounced for the man.

To the serpent, God predicted conflict with the female and conflict with a male offspring; to the woman, God predicted conflict with her husband; and to the man, God predicted conflict with the soil—and the soil would triumph.

Sin affected the relationships between the sexes. God told the woman that “your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” The precise meaning of “desire” is debated, but is not essential for our study.²¹

In Genesis 3, God made gender distinctions, and he said that husbands would rule their wives. At this point in the story, Adam represents subsequent men, and Eve represents subsequent women.

When God explained the consequences of sin, some things remained the same, and others changed. When God said that the woman’s sorrow would increase in childbearing, he was not creating a new role for the woman, but predicting a change in the role he had already designed for her.

When God said that the husband would rule over the woman, was he predicting a change? The word “rule” in Gen. 3:16 is from the Hebrew word *mashal*, which *can* be used for oppressive rule, but rule itself does not imply oppression.²² Since *mashal* is not necessarily a negative form of rule, it seems that

²¹ The Hebrew word is also used in Gen. 4:7 and Song of Solomon 7:10. Susan Foh, a conservative, argues that God is predicting that even though women will desire to master their husbands, the men will continue to rule over the women. (*Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1979], 68-69). Ortlund also accepts this view (108-9). The more traditional interpretation is that women will want the companionship and protection of men despite the sorrow involved in childbirth.

²² *Mashal* is used for the sun and moon ruling over the day and night (Gen. 1:18), for Joseph ruling over Egypt (45:8), and for Israel to rule over other nations (Deut. 15:6). The Israelites requested Gideon to *mashal* over them, and he replied that God would *mashal* over them. “The

either 1) the fact of male rule is not new, but now that sin has entered the picture male rule will be tainted with sin, or 2) the fact of male rule is new; it is in itself one of the consequences of sin. However, since Genesis has said nothing before this about one sex ruling the other, a change seems to be implied.²³

To the man, God said,

Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat of it,” cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil [*itstsabon*] you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

The man would suffer because he had listened to his wife. Did this mean that he was not supposed to listen to her before? No, the problem is not in who he listened to, but that he listened (in the sense of obeying) *when she suggested what was, in fact, a sin*. There would be nothing wrong with a man listening to his wife if she suggested that he sample a strawberry. Listening is a problem only if sin is being suggested; this verse does not imply anything about God’s original design for male-female roles.

Because of sin, the earth is cursed, and the man’s work would be greatly increased. Food would become hard to get, and the man would eventually die and return to the ground.²⁴ At least the latter part of the prediction applies to women as well as men, and in many cultures, women have to toil for food as much as men

precise nature of the rule is as various as the real situations in which the action or state so designated occur” (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:534).

²³ William Webb points out that biblical curses often include a change of status vis-à-vis other people, creating a hierarchy where none existed before (*Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity], 117-19). The word “curse” is not always used in these, just as it is not for Eve and Adam.

²⁴ The death sentence applied to both men and women, so why was it given to the man only? Linda Belleville suggests a plausible literary reason: “The impact on the man is related to the ground from which he was taken.... The impact on the woman is related to the man from whose rib she was formed” (*Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* [Baker, 1999], 104; several Hebrew words have been deleted from the quote without indicating the omissions by ellipses.

do, or even more. The negative consequences on family life—although given to the woman—would also affect the man. Both Adam’s curse and Eve’s curse contained elements applicable to the other.

When God told the woman about the marital consequences of sin, it was not because she represented family life more than the man did; similarly, when God told the man about death, it was not because he represented humanity more than the woman did. Genesis makes the point that the man and woman both sinned, and both suffered the consequences. Genesis does not say that there is any significance to which sex sinned first.

Paul’s comments on the first sin

Romans 5:12-19 teaches that all humanity was sentenced to death because of Adam’s sin; it is sometimes said that this shows that Adam represented humanity, not only because he was first, but because he was *male*, implying male authority over females. However, this makes the mistake mentioned earlier: When Paul uses Genesis to support his point, it is hazardous for us to try to use his point to interpret what else Genesis means, because Paul is not intending to explain Genesis. Rather, he is using small portions of Genesis to make his specific point, and we are misusing his words if we try to turn them into something Paul did not intend, i.e., a commentary on Genesis.

In verse 12, Paul says that sin entered the world through one *anthrōpos*, which means a human, either male or female. Paul could have easily used *anēr*, which means a male, but he did not, showing that he is not concerned about the sex of the first sinner. For Paul’s purpose, gender is irrelevant. In the last part of verse 12, Paul uses the plural of *anthrōpos* to make his point: death spread to all humans, because all [humans] sinned, including Adam and Eve, who sinned *essentially at the same time*.

Paul then says that death reigned from Adam until Moses (v. 14). He is not saying that Adam was the first person to die. He may be alluding to the fact that Adam was the person to whom humanity’s death sentence was given, but more likely, he is referring to Adam as the first *human*. He is designating a time period, from creation to Moses, and he does so by naming the first person, Adam. Paul focuses on Adam because he is using him as an antetype, or analogy for Christ. The first human, Adam, foreshadowed the first of God’s *new* humanity, Christ.

The analogy would be unnecessarily complicated if Paul had used both Adam and Eve.

In verses 15-18, Paul says that the many (i.e., all humanity) died because of the trespass of “the one,” apparently referring to the transgression of Adam mentioned in v. 14. In Genesis 3, humanity’s death sentence was given *to Adam*, even though it applied to Eve as well, and Eve was subject to the death penalty from the instant she sinned.

Throughout this discussion, Paul says nothing to indicate that Adam represented humanity because he was *male*. His theological point is different: Adam is contrasted with Christ, his sin is contrasted with Christ’s righteousness, and the death sentence given to humanity through Adam contrasts with the free gift of righteousness given through Christ. Adam is the point of contrast that Paul uses to preach Christ as the solution to the death sentence that applies to all humanity, without respect to sex.

Summary

What does Genesis 3 tell us about male-female relations? Very little, directly—its focus is on how sin entered the human race. Here is what it tells us:

- 1) The woman was deceived in some way and sinned by eating the forbidden fruit. The man, instead of resisting the sin, ignored God’s warning, ate the fruit and blamed his wife.
- 2) The text also shows that God makes some gender distinctions, although their full significance is not made clear in Genesis.
- 3) Sin affected the roles of male and female, and verse 16 tells us that the man would rule the woman.

Genesis 1 gives both male and female rule over creation. Genesis 2 describes what Adam did before Eve was created, and then describes the woman as similar to the man; it says nothing directly about one person having authority over another. Genesis 3, however, tells us that the man would rule the woman. The chapter concludes by saying that Adam named his wife Eve, and God gave them animal skins for clothing and expelled them from the garden.

In our next paper, we will examine what the rest of the Pentateuch says about male and female roles.