

AUTHORITY IN THE FAMILY

Christ has ordained a structure of authority for families, that if adhered to in obedience, will ensure His oversight and protection.

KEY BIBLE READINGS

Eph 5:22-27 *"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."*

Eph 6:1-4 *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*

Matt 8:5-9 *"Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.' And Jesus said to him, 'I will come and heal him.' The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*

STRUCTURE OF AUTHORITY IN THE FAMILY

The bible is consistent in its instruction concerning the structure of authority to apply in the family. The apostle Paul wrote, ***"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."*** 1 Corinthians 11:3. This principle is confirmed throughout the Key Bible Readings. ***"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord, For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church,"*** and ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord."***

The bible presents a clear chain of authority. Above all authority and power is God, and He is the head of Christ. Then in descending order, Christ is the head of man, man is the head of woman, and parents are the head of their children.

The basis for this headship is the same as for all spiritual headships. ***"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it."*** The one assuming the role of head is in fact assuming the role of a servant. He is to serve and be responsible for those under his headship.

THE OPERATION OF A CHAIN OF AUTHORITY

A model for the operation of a chain of authority is contained in the account of the centurion in Capernaum. The centurion approached Jesus and asked Him to heal his sick servant. When Jesus offered to go to his house the centurion demurred. ***"But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*** Matthew 8:8-9.

The centurion trusted Christ's authority because he was in a chain of authority himself. At the top of the chain was Caesar, followed by the Governor of his Province, and then the Tribune of his Legion. Below him was his company of soldiers and his household servants. When the centurion gave an order he knew that it would be obeyed, because behind it was the whole weight of the Roman Empire upholding his authority.

The centurion acknowledged Christ's position in a chain of authority when he said, **"I also am a man under authority,"** and **"only speak a word, and my servant will be healed."** In effect he acknowledged that behind Jesus was all the power and authority of Almighty God. The centurion assumed that Jesus had only to speak and the power of God would uphold Him. His confidence was not misplaced. **"And his servant was healed that same hour."** Matthew 8:13.

The thing that makes a chain of authority work is obedience. If there is obedience throughout the chain, each part will be upheld by the authority above it. Where there is obedience, each link in the chain of authority is a covering of protection for those links under it. Where there is disobedience in the chain, the authority of the disobedient is not upheld, and the chain loses its protective covering.

THE PRINCIPLE OF COVERING

The principle of spiritual covering is revealed by further study of 1 Corinthians 11. The apostle Paul began by establishing that there is a chain of authority: **"The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."** He continued by describing in symbolic terms how the headship provides spiritual covering between man and wife.

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head..... For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." 1 Cor 11:4-5, 7-10.

The question here is not whether a woman should wear a hat in church. The veil or head covering was traditionally worn by women at that time as a recognized symbol of marriage. It was a visible sign of a woman's submission to the authority or headship of her husband. (The man does not have his head covered because his head, who is Christ, is not physically present in the church).

This then is Paul's warning to the woman of the family; to maintain her spiritual covering through submission to the authority of her husband. **"(T)he woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels."** The words **"a symbol of"** have been added by the translators. A better understanding of the sense of the verse is gained by removing these words so that it states **"the woman ought to have authority on her head , because of the angels."** This is in fact the way it is written in the Authorized King James Version.

The authority that the woman should have on her head is the authority of her husband. Just as the women of the early church wore veils to show that they were married and submissive to their husbands, so should Christian women of this day have an attitude of submission to their husbands.

The **"angels"** involved here are both the angels of God who are charged to protect us, and the fallen angels of Satan. Demon spirits are always poised to take advantage of any disobedience to Christ's delegated authority in the family. The apostle Paul is warning women

that unless they have authority on their heads, they are vulnerable to attack by Satan. In other words, unless they are obedient to their husbands, they will lose their covering of God's protection.

APPLICATION OF THE CHAIN TO THE FAMILY

There are two conditions which must be fulfilled for the chain of authority to operate in the family situation. Firstly there must be a voluntary submission to the higher authority. If the husband is obedient to the headship of Christ and to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, then his position as head of the family will be upheld. If the wife is submissive to her husband, then both her position as a wife, and her position as a mother will be upheld. If the children are submissive to their parents, then they will know the nurture and protection of Christ.

The second condition is that there must be an acceptance of the responsibility of headship. The husband must accept that he is responsible for the spiritual well being of his family, and exercise his headship. ***"for the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church."*** Ephesians 5:23. In the same way that Christ is head of the church, (i.e. With the same responsibility for oversight and protection), so the husband is head of his wife. Likewise parents must accept and exercise their responsibility as head of their children. Where there is no spirit of headship, there is no position for the Lord to uphold, and He cannot provide the required wisdom to rule well.

Where there is proper headship and submission, the Lord upholds the whole family. This particularly applies to protecting children from the wiles of Satan. The devil seeks to draw them to their complete moral and physical destruction. Headship and submission to it are vital elements in the protection of the family and its spiritual well being. Because headship is so important, Antichrist has launched a powerful attempt to undermine it.

The attack of Antichrist has been directed at two main areas. One area concerns children and their 'rights' under the law. Proper legal protection is appropriate in preventing physical abuse and economic exploitation of children. However, parents and teachers are now being placed under increasing restraints, limiting their proper functions of oversight and discipline.

There has been a worldwide program to 'protect children's rights.' The word 'protect' in this context really means to promote, and 'rights' extends to children being encouraged to make 'major life decisions' on their own. The excessive freedom (or lawlessness) created by these 'reforms' has been initiated by the spirit of antichrist. It is a direct attack aimed at removing Christ's headship and protection of the family unit.

The other area of attack has been against the spiritual position of women outlined in the bible. The modern era has witnessed an unprecedented assault on the position of women in the family. This is reflected in the church, with pressure to ordain women in leadership roles. It is also observed in the world, with pressure on women to conform to 'career paths', and to compete with men. We should understand that this feminist assault is the work of Antichrist, and that one of the targets is spiritual authority in the family.

The resulting state of lawlessness is described by the prophet Isaiah. ***"As for My people, children are their oppressors, And women rule over them. My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, And destroy the way of your paths."*** Isaiah 3:12.

THE COMPLEMENTARY POSITIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN

The fact is that women occupy a different position relative to men, both in the home and in the church. However the deception propagated by the spirit of antichrist is that women are therefore inferior to men. It is a mistake to assume from the Key Bible Readings that the

husband is better than the wife, or to dismiss the apostle Paul as a disgruntled old bachelor with a prejudice against women.

It was the same Paul who wrote, ***"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*** Galatians 3:28. The different positions of men and women relate to their different functions, and not to their spiritual worth. God has equipped men and women to fulfill separate but complementary functions.

The principle of headship is not designed to maneuver the male sex into a position of advantage. Rather, it is God's way to ensure that the family is functioning properly, and that it has the protective covering of Christ. Paul wrote, ***"Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as the woman was from the man, even so the man also is through the woman; but all things are from God."*** 1 Corinthians 11:11-12.

There is a great deal of confusion concerning this issue. So many men have abdicated their role of spiritual headship in the home and in the church that many women have felt obliged to 'step up into the breach.' This is an understandable reaction, but it is fraught with danger. It may seem to be 'filling the gap,' but in reality it removes Christ's covering from the circumstances. Without the oversight of the man, the family is in real danger of manipulation and oppression by Satan. However, having said this, male headship is a principle rather than an arbitrary law. There may be cases in Christ where a woman has to take headship for the sake of her children, and if this is in the will of the Lord she will know His covering.

THAT WOMAN JEZEBEL

In the letter to the church of Thyatira, Jesus specifically directed a warning to women who assume a position of false authority. ***"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds."*** Revelation 2:20-22.

The book of Revelation is a book of symbols, and so it is necessary to examine the scriptures to understand what ***"that woman Jezebel"*** represents. Certainly this reading is not referring to an actual woman called Jezebel who was seducing the men of the congregation. Instead, it is a reference to Queen Jezebel of the Old Testament, who was the wife of King Ahab of Israel.

She corrupted her husband's kingdom by introducing her native pagan religions of Baal and Asherah. She also persecuted the Jewish prophets, with particular animosity towards Elijah for his faithfulness to God. However it is Jezebel's behaviour towards her husband that is most relevant. It is useful to read the story of the seizure of Naboth's vineyard in full in order to appreciate the extent to which Jezebel dominated her husband.

"And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money. But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!" So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed, and

turned away his face, and would eat no food. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, "Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?" He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" Then Jezebel his wife said to him, "You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, "You have blasphemed God and the king." Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die. So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!" Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." I King 21:1-16.

It is apparent from this reading that Jezebel usurped the authority of her husband the king. An example of this is her blatant use of his royal seal to fulfill her purposes. The fact is that Jezebel is the epitome of witchcraft. Her witchcraft is recognized by the reference to ***"the prostitutions of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft."*** 2 Kings 9:22 This is not the type of witchcraft that engages in occultist rituals and open worship of Satan. Instead it is the assumption of false authority in order to dominate or manipulate the lives of others. The desire to control people is at the foundation of all witchcraft.

THE SPIRIT OF WITCHCRAFT

At this point it is necessary to open our hearts to accept new truth. We need to open our eyes to see what is really happening to the church and our families. Remember that we are engaged in spiritual warfare, ***"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*** Ephesians 6:12.

All the powers of darkness at Satan's command are at the disposal of Antichrist. In this particular case, the spirit of Antichrist is directing the power of witchcraft in an all out assault on our families and the church. This may seem an improbable concept at first, but we cannot dismiss it. The fact is that the power of witchcraft is having a devastating effect in destroying families and church congregations.

The spirit of witchcraft is closely associated with rebellion, ***"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft."*** 1 Samuel 15:23. This spirit directs its power at women and accuses them of inferiority and worthlessness. The result is discontent and resentment at their perceived circumstances, which in turn incites a demand for 'equality' with men. The spirit of witchcraft is based on the deception that women are inferior. This deception is at the root of all feminist demands; no matter how reasonable those demands might appear on the surface.

A family under the power of a spirit of witchcraft displays quite recognizable symptoms, many of which are only too familiar in the church today. Basically the wife 'wears the pants,' and has her own way in most things, through domination or more subtle manipulation. There are excessive reactions to decisions which do not go her way, and the family is wary of opposing her will.

In this family the wife has usurped the spiritual headship of the household, and the husband is reduced to seeking his fulfillment through worldly pursuits. The children are dominated by their mother, who attempts to mould them into a predetermined image. The inevitable result in the children is repression, frustration, resentment, and finally rebellion. As a consequence of this they are often drawn into lawlessness and immorality.

This rebellion takes place because the spiritual covering of Christ's protection has been removed. The chain of authority is reversed with the wife ruling over the husband, and the children ruling over the parents. ***"As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them."*** These depressing symptoms are all too often present in the families of church members. They exist despite God's consistent promises to bless and protect all those who obey Him.

THE JUDGMENT OF JEZEBEL

An additional consequence of the lack of spiritual covering is that there is often a lot of sickness in the household. Many Christian families are prevented from receiving their inheritance of health and healing in Jesus Christ ***"by whose stripes you were healed."*** 1 Peter 2:24. This is because Satan, who is a legalist, is able to point to the spirit of witchcraft as evidence of disobedience and rebellion against God's specific instructions concerning the family.

The Lord has declared His judgment on the woman Jezebel and her admirers. ***"Indeed I will cast her into a sick-bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds."*** This is a clear warning that sickness and distress will afflict all those who submit to the power of witchcraft. ***"And I will kill her children with death."*** Revelation 2:23.

Both men and women are held accountable in this area. God's judgment was not only pronounced on Queen Jezebel. The prophet Elijah declared to King Ahab, ***"Thus says the Lord, 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.' And concerning Jezebel the Lord also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.'"*** 1 Kings 21:19, 23.

God's judgment falls equally on men and women. It falls on women who have usurped the role of headship by opening the doorway to them being invested with a spirit of witchcraft. It also falls on men who fail to take up their proper position of headship in the family or the church. As well as becoming dominated or manipulated, their spiritual growth is impeded. God condemned ***"Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up."*** 1 Kings 21:15.