

# Asking Our Hard Questions of the Bible

May 22, 2006

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## Resurrection and Women Preachers

### I. Introduction

#### A. Announcements

1. Open with prayer
2. Any new people? If so, summarize need to bring paper, pen, and Bible (various versions OK for comparison, but NRSV will be main one for reading, NASB for studying).
3. Get list of names and how to contact (email preferred)
4. 90 minutes on 4th Mondays at 7 p.m.
5. Read passages (volunteers)

#### B. Does anyone have any questions for us to consider for next time?

1. .
2. .

#### C. In our study tonight, besides the conclusions we will develop, I also want us to pay attention to the tools or principles we have used all year, and will use again tonight, to help us reach those conclusions.

1. I've talked about them many times before, I know. But the reason I highlight them over and over again is because they are critically important for us to properly understand the Bible.
2. They are vital not only for our own Bible studies, but also for evaluating sermons and other forms of Bible teaching. They help us know whether or not what anyone tells us about the Bible has a solid basis.
3. It would be a lot easier for me to prepare these sessions with you if all I did was simply give you an answer. It may or may not satisfy you completely, but it would make our classes shorter and certainly easier to understand.
4. The problem is that just giving you my answer would not serve you well. You would not be able to analyze the next question you have, and you would become dependent upon me or some other real or supposed authority to tell you what the Bible says.
5. You would never really know whether or not it was true unless you had some idea of how to figure it out yourself, or at least check to see whether your teacher was on target or telling you something different than what the Bible really says.

#### D. There are a lot of principles that can help us, but here are some important, basic ones I want to be sure everyone knows:

1. The meaning of any passage is determined by the context.
  - a. If you hear any quote out of its context, do not simply accept whatever someone tells you it means.

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- b. *Always* look it up and read it in context to see if it really says what you are told it says.
  - c. In Acts 17:10-11 we read of Paul and Silas preaching in the city of Beroea (Berea). They said the people there “welcomed the message very eagerly and *examined the scriptures* every day to see whether these things were so.” They actually opened their Bibles in church to read for themselves what it said.
2. Meaning is found by *exegesis* and distorted by *eisegesis*.
  - a. *Exegesis* is trying to find out what the Scripture is saying to us; what the author intended. It literally means “reading out from” the text.
  - b. *Eisegesis* is the all-too-common mistake of “reading into” the text our own beliefs, ideas, and opinions. We change the meaning of the Scripture whenever we do this. We need to always ask ourselves what preconceived notions we have that could be distorting what we think the Bible is saying.
3. Meaning is revealed in repetition and patterns.
  - a. When you read or hear something from the Bible that is a lot like something else in the Bible, pay special attention.
  - b. This is the way the Bible emphasizes some things or tells us that there is a continuation of something important.
  - c. So, for example, when something similar happens to Joshua as happened to Moses, we know we are being told that Joshua is the legitimate inheritor of Moses’ mission and special relationship with God.
4. Meaning is shaped by the type of writing used in a particular part of the Bible.
  - a. The Bible contains different kinds of writing. There are historical narratives, poetry, didactic/teaching passages, apocryphal writing (highly symbolic/metaphorical), prophecy, parables, and more.
  - b. When Jesus tells a parable, he is teaching us a lesson not telling us history. When the apocryphal book Revelation tells us about 7 Trumpets or 1,000 years, it is metaphor not a specific count. When Chronicles or Kings or Judges tells us of something that happened, it is historical narrative, not instructions for us to do the same thing.
5. Meaning is clarified when we let scripture interpret scripture.
  - a. Difficult passages can be interpreted by other clearer passages on the same topic.
  - b. The Bible is consistent in what it says and teaches, though parts of it may *seem* to disagree with other parts. This can often be cleared

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- up by comparing two or more passages on the same or similar topic. We will do that today.
6. Meaning can be made clearer by an understanding of the time, place, people, and culture to which the Scripture was first addressed.
    - a. Our knowledge of such circumstances is imperfect and often changing, so this is not as critical as the first five principles, but it can help us.
    - b. If we know, for example, that pagan religion in ancient Corinth involved excesses of eating and drinking, we can understand a little better why they were taken to task for the way they ate and drank at the Lord's Supper.<sup>1</sup>
- E. Tonight we will use nearly all of these principles.
1. Context, exegesis, and cultural beliefs will be key to understanding the passages.
  2. We should note, however, that the writing style is primarily didactic. It is meant to teach.
  3. Also, although repetition is not an issue here, we will compare similar passages, or passages dealing with similar issues, in order to clarify the meaning of each.
- II. Let's begin with our more difficult, or at least more controversial question. Does the Bible forbid women to be preachers and religious teachers?
- A. There is a larger possible question about the role of women in the church generally, but let's limit ourselves this time to just the role of preaching and teaching in the church.
1. It would take more than one session to deal with all the passages on the issues of women wearing head coverings, avoiding jewelry, being silent in church, and the ever-popular submission to their husbands.
  2. Those are all important and well worth talking about, but please save those for another time so we can focus on our particular question tonight.
- B. Please read 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2
1. **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:1-8** (for some of the context)
  2. **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:9-15** (for our central focus)
- C. At first glance, it seems pretty clear, doesn't it?
1. In fact, the vast majority of churches throughout Christian history have steadfastly taken this passage at face value and consistently forbidden women to be pastors.

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<sup>1</sup>1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17-33

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2. It is only in the last century or less that it has become a major issue in American churches as the roles of women in the society at large have undergone great changes.
  3. So the question became, “should the Church change just because society does? Or should the Church hold fast to what it has always believed and taught?”
- D. Denominations, churches, and even families have fought over this for many decades now.
1. United Methodists and other older mainline denominations have decided for change. Unfortunately, the change has largely been effected by discrediting passages in the Bible like 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2, rather than by a careful study using the kinds of principles I have outlined tonight.
  2. Other churches and denominations have stood firm against women preaching. Unfortunately, they have done so by simply applying 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2 without fully following those same principles.
  3. The result has been division, anger, and not a little name-calling.
  4. It is neither fair, nor graciously Christian to condemn Christians who hold one position or the other. Instead, with respect and charity towards all, let’s try to find what the Bible says and obey it as the Word of God.
- E. To begin with, let’s look at some other passages that talk about women in church-leadership roles so we can compare them to 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2.
1. There were women traveling with Jesus and learning from him, just like the male disciples.
    - a. **Matt 12:48-50** (Jesus gestures to his *disciples* and says “Here are my *mother* and brothers.” So some must have been women.)
    - b. **Luke 8:1-3** (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many others)
    - c. **Luke 10:39-42** (Mary listening at the Lord’s feet in the posture of a disciple.) In the gospels, it is women who teach about the meaning of Jesus birth and the fact of his resurrection.
    - d. **Luke 1:46-55** Mary’s *magnificat* shows her teaching that Jesus’ birth is a fulfillment of God’s promise.
    - e. **John 20:16-18** Mary Magdalene is the first person to announce (teach) that Jesus had risen from the dead.
  2. In the early Church (post-resurrection), there were women described as disciples and teachers.
    - a. **Acts 9:36** Tabitha (a.k.a. Dorcas/Gazelle) at Joppa was a disciple.
    - b. **Acts 18:24-26** *Priscilla* and Aquila taught Apollos more about Jesus. Some have claimed that Aquila must have been the real teacher, but then why would Priscilla have been listed?
  3. There were also women prophets who proclaimed (taught/preached) the Word of God.

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- a. **Acts 21:7-9** Four daughters of Philip the Evangelist had the gift of prophecy.
  - b. **1 Cor. 11:4-5** Women are given instructions about covering their heads when they prophesy. So there were clearly women prophets in Corinth.
  4. There were even women who were deacons and elders.
    - a. **Romans 16:1** Phoebe was a church deacon
    - b. **Romans 16:7** Paul said that Andronicus and Junias are of note among the Apostles.
    - c. In the KJV they are called Paul's *kinsmen*. This is a case of even Bible translators falling prey to the error of *eisegesis*.
    - d. Junias is a female name. Because of this, there are some who try to turn the name Junias into a man's name in order to deny that a woman could have been held in such high regard as an Apostle, by the Apostle Paul himself.
    - e. In addition, if we look in other versions (and in the original Greek) and the word *men* is not in there at all. The Greek word is *soong-gen-ace'* (συνγγενις), and it simply means a blood relative.
  5. These passages are all only descriptive. They don't tell us what *should* be, only what was. None of them clearly state that women can and should be teachers, preachers, elders, prophets, and deacons.
    - a. But **nowhere** are there any criticisms of them being such Christian leaders, either. Every mention is either neutral or positive.
    - b. While there are not many women leaders mentioned, given what we know about the highly male-centered cultures of the time, it is amazing and instructive that there are any women listed at all.
  6. But there is one powerful passage that pulls it all together and states clearly the revolution in the status of women that Christ brought about.
    - a. In Galatians there is a long discourse about the divisions between Jews and Gentiles, law and faith.
    - b. Then the revolution is announced. **Read Galatians 3:27-28.**
    - c. There is no difference. In Christ we are all equal.
  7. All of these passages, and especially Gal. 3:28, in some way run counter to what it says in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2.
    - a. That should raise some questions in our minds about what is being said there.
    - b. Why would it contradict all the other indicators in the New Testament?
- III. The book, or letter, of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy was written as instructions to a particular church in Ephesus where Timothy was the pastor. (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:3)
- A. It was designed to address the issues of that church at that time.

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1. We can learn from it, but we cannot properly understand it apart from its original purpose.
  2. We also need to pay attention to what we know about the people to whom it was originally written.
  3. It is well documented that the status of women in the Rome Empire was clearly subservient to men.
    - a. And of course, the Roman colony of Israel/Judah was, if anything, even more committed to male-only leadership—especially in any and all religious functions.
    - b. The Greek city of Ephesus, as part of the Roman Empire had the same laws and traditions. This letter, we know, was written to a church in that city.
  4. Given all that, wouldn't you think that everyone in the church there would simply assume that women would not be teachers or preachers?
    - a. Why would this even be something they would have to be told?
    - b. I can't prove this, but it seems to me given what else the Bible has said about women and equality in Christ, that the women there had taken it to heart and had rushed into the opportunities that they now saw open to them. Can you blame them?
    - c. Perhaps they had read or heard the letter to the Galatians.
- B. This book of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy is known as one of the "Pastoral Letters," because it is written as one pastor to another with instructions for Christian ministry.
1. There are a number of different issues addressed, but for our study let's look at a particular issue that comes up again and again. In fact, it is the very first thing mentioned after the greeting.
  2. Read **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:3-4**. Here is the problem. People in the church are being misled by false doctrines and myths.
    - a. This can always happen when there are new Christians or when there are Christians who don't know the Bible and history of the faith very well.
    - b. Is this still a problem for us today? Any examples? (e.g., cults)
    - c. Just this week a movie opened that is confusing many, many people who don't really know the truth of the Bible or Christian history. The things Paul writes to Timothy could well instruct anyone who is misled by the *Da Vinci Code* and other popular myths.
  3. The letter continues with something very important for our study in **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:6-7**.
    - a. Notice the serious problem in v. 7. (People want to be teachers, when they themselves don't know the truth.)

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- b. If the teachers are misled, they will seriously mislead the congregation. This is a critical issue.
  - 4. The concern about people falling for, or teaching, falsehood and error comes up again and again. So there is an emphasis on *truth*.
    - a. **1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:18-19** rejecting faith and good conscience
    - b. **1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 2:4-7** God wants *truth*; Paul not lie; teaches *faith & truth*
    - c. **1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3:14-15** church as pillar and bulwark of *truth*
    - d. **1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 4:1-3, 6-7, 16** paying attention to deceitful spirits, hypocrisy, liars; words of faith & sound teaching, myths & old wives' tales; pay close attention to your teaching.
    - e. **1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 6:12** fight for the faith.
  - 5. It's pretty clear then, that the issue of the integrity of the truth of the faith is at stake. It is a central issue in this whole letter/book.
- IV. Now we have the context and background we need to look at our passage in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:11-15.
- A. Remember the central concern at the 1<sup>st</sup> Church of Ephesus about false teachers.
    - 1. Two men, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20), were kicked out of the church for it.
    - 2. But there are also indications that it is especially a problem among the women. Remember what we read in 4:7 about "old wives' tales."
    - 3. There is also a concern about young, widowed women in **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:11-13**. (Turn to idleness, gossip, being busybodies.)
    - 4. Keep this in mind as we examine our passage.
  - B. 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:13 gives the theological reason for not letting the women be teachers.
    - 1. What is the reason? (Adam formed first and was not the one deceived.)
    - 2. Here is where the problem of *eisegesis* comes in. We automatically read this as an issue of men versus women, but is it really?
  - C. To get it fresh in our minds, let's read some quotes from Genesis about Adam and Eve.
    - 1. **Gen 1:27** Here there is no hierarchy given or implied. God created male and female both in the image of God.
    - 2. **Gen 2:20-23**. Adam was created first, but notice the symbolic lesson included here. Eve was not created from Adam's head or she would be above him. She was not created from his feet or she would be beneath him. She was created from his side, so she was equal to him. Just because Adam was first made no difference; they were equal.
    - 3. **Gen 3:1-7** Here is what we know as "The Fall," or the beginning of sin.
      - a. Eve was the one deceived, but there is no indication that it was *because* she was female.

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- b. Look back to where God first gave instructions about the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. **Gen 2:15-17**
- c. Who did God tell about not eating from that tree? (Adam only.)
- d. In Gen. 3, Eve seemed to have some idea about it, which she must have heard from Adam, but she was young and it wasn't too clear to her yet. That's why she could be deceived. Her knowledge and experience was less than Adam's (because she came after Adam).
- 4. Here is the lesson from The Fall: The one whose knowledge and faith is incomplete, less fully formed is more easily led astray.
- 5. There is another tidbit here. Eve not only was herself deceived, but she in turn apparently indicated to Adam that it was ok to eat from that tree. So he learned the wrong lesson by listening to the wrong teacher.
- 6. The issue in Genesis was not who was male and who was female. We have already seen that they are equal. The issue was who was the first to learn and should be the teacher, and who was second and should be the student.
- D. Now let's turn back to our passage in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2 again.
  - 1. Remember what we talked about earlier about the educational practices of the ancient world? Who was it who learned to read and write? Who was it that studied and memorized Scripture? (Men, not women.)
  - 2. So who should be the teachers and who should be the students?
  - 3. This time read 11-14 replacing the words "Adam" and "man" with "teacher" and the words "woman" and "Eve" with "student."
  - 4. This is the real lesson here. We can see it when we read *out from* scripture, rather than reading our cultural controversies *into* the scripture.

## V. Conclusions

- A. In cultures with male predominance, or in changing cultures like ours in which the balance is being shifted, it is very easy to read this passage as endorsing male-only leadership in the Church.
  - 1. But we have seen that male and female are created equal.
  - 2. We have seen that Jesus and the early church went directly, though not antagonistically, against their culture in accepting and expecting women to become spiritual leaders, too.
  - 3. And now we have seen—in this, the *only* passage in the New Testament that seems to say women should not preach and teach in the Church—that the real issue is not chromosomes, but an educated and developed faith.
  - 4. So I ask you, should we have any concerns about having a faithful, Christian, seminary-trained, and experienced woman as our pastor?
  - 5. Absolutely not! Let's rejoice in our choice and welcome her as our sister in Christ, our pastor, and our teacher.

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- VI. Now let's take a brief look at our second question: Are believers in Christ resurrected from the dead with a body or as a spirit?
- A. It would take a longer study to discuss all the things the Bible says about resurrection from the dead, so this will be a very limited and focused study. Let's first simply take it as our foundation that:
1. Jesus was raised from the dead to live again, and still lives.
  2. Jesus was raised with a body.
  3. Though it had some different qualities than before his death, it was indeed Jesus' body, and he could be recognized whenever Jesus allowed it.
- B. The Bible also tells us that, because of Jesus' death to atone for our sins, we, too, will be raised from the dead.
1. One of the religious groups in Judah/Israel during Jesus' ministry—the Sadducees—taught that there was no such thing as a resurrection from the dead. (Matthew 22:23-33). Jesus made it clear that they were wrong. (**Mt. 22:31-32**).
  2. In one of his most memorable statements recorded in Scripture, Jesus reinforced Martha's belief in resurrection. **John 11:21-27**
  3. The apostles Peter and John proclaimed it, too, after Jesus' own resurrection. **Acts 4:1-2**
  4. And Paul wrote eloquently about our resurrection in **1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13-18**, a very important passage.
  5. The question remaining, then, is "will we have bodies like Jesus?"
- C. Let's look at what the Bible says.
1. **1<sup>st</sup> John 3:1-2** "We will be like him." This could be interpreted in several ways, perhaps. We could be like him in body, . . . or in holiness, . . . or in being alive forever. But this is just one piece of the puzzle.
  2. **Philippians 3:20-21** makes it more explicit. Christ will *transform* our bodies *to be like his*. That's clearer, isn't it?
- D. But the most complete explanation comes in **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15**.
1. The chapter begins by telling about Jesus' resurrection (vv. 1-11) Let's read **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:3-8**. The evidence from so many witnesses is overwhelming.
  2. The next section (vv. 12-34) affirms that we, too, will be resurrected from the dead. Let's read part of it: **1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:16-26** Jesus will destroy death itself, and we will live.
  3. Now we get to the heart of our question in **1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:35-44**
    - a. We will have a spiritual body, not simply a spirit, but a new kind of transformed body.
    - b. What does the text say are the qualities of the new body? (Imperishable, glorious, powerful.)

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4. It goes on to say that our body will be like Jesus' resurrection body. Read the comparison between Adam (the "man of dust") and Jesus (the "man of heaven") **1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:47-49**
  - a. Questions are sometimes raised about what happens to those whose bodies were destroyed in fire, explosions, or other disasters. Well, in fact, all our physical bodies will decay and fall apart. As it said in Genesis, "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust and to dust you shall return."<sup>2</sup>
  - b. But speaking of Adam, and of course, of Eve, where did their bodies come from?
  - c. Cannot the Lord who assembled their physical bodies also assemble our spiritual ones? Of course!
5. Yet some people still will be alive in our mortal bodies when the Lord comes again. What of them?
6. Let's read the conclusion. **1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:50-56**
7. Our bodies will be changed. Remember what we read in 1<sup>st</sup> John? "We are God's children now. What we shall be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when [Christ] is revealed *we shall be like him.*"
8. I believe in the resurrection of the body—our bodies. I hope you do now, too.

## VII. Summary

- A. Our goals today were to learn what the Bible teaches us about the role of women in preaching and teaching in the Church, in every way as men do, and to find what Scripture reveals to us about the resurrection of, not just Jesus' body, but of our bodies as well.
  1. Have we done that satisfactorily?
  2. Have these studies been helpful?
  3. Would you like to have them continue next year?
- B. Next meeting: September 25, 2006
- C. Closing prayer
- D. Let me conclude this study and our year of studies with the final verse of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15. "**My beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**"
- E. **Archives of class notes can be found online at:**  
[www.fumcwa.org/classes/wdbsa](http://www.fumcwa.org/classes/wdbsa)

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<sup>2</sup>Genesis 3:19