

## The Biblical Wife (I)

*If women do not fulfil their God-given calling, it leaves a void in the fibre of society which nothing else can fill. Ruth Prince.*

### The Biblical Wife:

- \* She was “made in the image of God” (Gen.1:27). Thus she has the value and dignity of her husband.
- \* “I will make him a helper suitable for him” (Gen.2:18). “Helper” in the Hebrew (“Ezer”) means “help, assist, aid.”
- \* Your Biblical calling as a wife? A professional “husband-helper,” helping him to:
  - a) Subdue and have dominion, in whatever is his field of endeavour (Gen.1:26-28).
  - b) Train the children to do likewise.

### The Biblical Principles are:

- a) Dominion by servanthood & submission- Mat.20:25-28.
- b) Submission leads to significance- Phil.2:5-11.

*Eve was his “helpmeet,” to use a common term (Genesis 2:20). Actually, the King James Version never uses “helpmeet.” That is a word which developed from the King James phrase, “an help meet for him.” What the phrase really meant was “a helper fit for him,” or better yet, “designed for him.” Eve was designed to complement Adam and make his work more efficient. Adam was limited from the start, an incomplete creation, just as the earth was an incomplete creation. Adam needed Eve. He needed her to work better, enjoy life better, procreate children, and most important of all, better reflect God’s image.<sup>1</sup>*

In September 2007, Dr Thomas Kossman, a German trauma surgeon working at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne Australia since 2001, was told by the hospital’s CEO, that he was under investigation for shoddy surgery, and for rorting the public purse. The allegations nearly destroyed him, and his career. He said, “I was on my knees. I broke down twice, which is something I don’t do. I had depression, sleeping pills, weight loss-you name it, I had it. The stress was so great my wife thought I wouldn’t make it.”

Thomas had one great person on his side-his wife, Cristina. He said of her,

*I was struggling; my wife kept me alive. She fed me, she loved me, she invited me to lunch with her...and every day she has continued to walk into that place with her head held high.*

Cristina said at the time, “I am sure the sun will shine again on our family.”<sup>2</sup>

Not every husband is accused or faces public ignominy like Thomas Kossman. But over the life of a marriage there are generally enough challenges, for a prudent man to realise just how much his wife can be a help to him.

Helping some men isn’t easy, but this is the calling of every godly wife. Ask God to make you that person, and take the opportunities that He sends along! Then, go to your husband, and ask him how you can help him in the future!

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<sup>1</sup> Gary North, “Unconditional Surrender,” 2010, p.29-30.

<sup>2</sup> “The Weekend Australian Magazine,” August 16-17, 2008, p.18. Kossman was later exonerated.

## *The Biblical Wife (II)*

The Christian Woman Must Resolve the Issue of Her Identity:

*True identity has nothing to do with:*

\* *Your family background. Judges 11.* Some things we cannot change. Jephthah was the son of a harlot. Yes, his brothers used his mother's status as a means of depriving him of his inheritance, but God had another plan for him, to be judge over Israel. Did God care about his origins? God called the son of a harlot to lead His people as a means of rebuke for them, when they had been guilty of spiritual harlotry (see Judges 10). Jephthah put aside his family background which wasn't glorious, to obey God's call, as a judge and a warrior. Whatever your family background, God wants you to put it aside.

\* *Your past. Heb.11:31; Acts 8:1.* You've made some mistakes in life? Rahab wasn't merely a harlot's child, like Jephthah. She was a harlot! Nevertheless, God saved her, used her to shelter the two spies that came to Jericho, and then graciously granted her the capacity to be King David's great-grandmother, and part of the lineage of Jesus Christ (Mat.1:5-6). She shared in the privilege that comes from God's grace.

The apostle Paul is well known to most of us. What we don't discuss that much, is that before he was converted, Saul participated in the murder of Stephen, and persecuted other Christians (Phil.3:6). The devil will try and make us believe we are disqualified because of our mistakes. But Jesus has come, to free us from condemnation, so we can serve Him joyfully! (Ro.8:1) Like Paul, we cannot let the mistakes of the past (and we all have made them) determine our future, in the service of Jesus Christ. God's grace is bigger than our past.

\* *Your appearance. I Sam.16:7(b); Prov.31:30.*

We all know how much importance western culture attaches to womens' appearance. Womens' pursuit of beauty has spawned an industry worth billions. But beauty is a bonus; not a necessity. Furthermore, outward appearances of people can be deceiving, as the prophet Samuel discovered, when he was called to anoint the new king of Israel. Even he had to be reproved by the Lord, for he was visually impressed by Eliab, David's brother. But Eliab wasn't the man of God's choice: David was. Jesus Himself wasn't particularly appealing to look at (Isa. 53:2). Let's remember that "man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart" (I Sam.16:7). Are you keeping your appearance in proper perspective? It's of little significance to God. It mustn't be too important to us.

\* *Apparent qualifications. Phil.3:8.*

Qualifications can be a help, but they can be overrated. Some "qualified" people are utter fools. Joseph Goebbels was the only leading Nazi with a university degree, but this only assisted him to be more evil. I have some university qualifications; my wife has none. Does that make me better than her? No. I may have knowledge in areas she doesn't, but she has wisdom in areas, that I don't. A married couple should pool their talents, anyway. All that matters, is "*What has God called us to?*" That is what we are to prepare for. A woman's Christian maturity whatever the context, is always an enormous asset.

\* *What your friends think of you. Isa.53:3*

What did Mary's friends think when she indicated to them, that she was pregnant, and that the father wasn't Joseph? Yes, Christian people do need to listen to the opinions of others. But the overwhelming issue for them, must always be, "*What does Jesus Christ want me to do?*" People come-people go; but God's Word stands forever.

We should not think that our friends will always understand the choices we wish to make, or the way God is leading us. We have all been subject to cultural and church indoctrination. Florence Nightingale's parents, coming from a wealthy family, were perplexed that she believed God wanted her to serve as a nurse, at a time when nursing as a profession, was considered little better than prostitution. But she believed that God had spoken to her.

Our family background, our past, appearance, apparent qualifications, and what our friends think, may seem important to us, at different times.

*But the fact is, our true identity comes only from Christ!*

We are to fear Him, hope in Him, rest in Him, and wait upon Him. If we do these things, we will have a future with Him. "A woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov.31:30).

## *The Biblical Wife (III)*

*Zipporah: (Ex.4:24-26)*

Wouldn't it be nice if life had no drama, upsets or heartache for couples! But this is not reality, and we must not think that a pain-free family life is the norm: it's not. The Bible is not about people who lived a care-free life, without adversity. The patriarchs, along with their wives and families, all had a tough life. We are called of God to love and serve Him, in the midst of the awkward and humbling difficulties of marriage that are from time to time, part of life.

Moses had married Zipporah when he fled from Pharaoh in Egypt, and settled in Midian (Ex.2:15-22). She had born him 2 sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Ex.4:19-20; 18:1-4), who by now may well have been men in their thirties. Now, God had called Moses to return to Egypt with his family, and lead His people out. But there was a problem. The God who had called him to lead His people out of Egypt, had also commanded that circumcision take place for the sons of Israel, on their eighth day (Gen.17:9-14). Zipporah would have known this, as a descendent of Abraham herself (Gen 25:1-2).

*There had to be the covenantal mark on Moses' son to identify him as one of the Israelites. The land of Egypt was under a curse because of the blood of the drowned male children eighty years earlier. God was about to unleash the angelic avenger of blood against the firstborn of all those dwelling in Egypt. This angelic destroyer was waiting for him when he re-entered Egypt. There had to be a blood covering in Moses' family. His son had to be circumcised.<sup>1</sup>*

God has sent him back to Pharaoh to be an instrument of judgment against Pharaoh and Egypt, and for the deliverance of His people, but Moses God's servant, had not obeyed God. If the standard-bearer himself, the one chosen by God to teach His law to the people, by his own negligence should misrepresent God, he too will certainly be subject to judgment. The teacher has to begin with himself (James 3:1).

The dictionary defines a reproof as "a rebuke or expression of blame." The Bible says that "...reproofs for discipline are the way of life" (Prov.6:23), "...he that hates reproof is stupid" (Prov.12:1a), but that "...he who regards reproof will be honoured" (Prov.13:18b). The Psalmist's appeal to God, is "let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; it is oil upon my head; do not let my head refuse it" (Ps.141:5).

Moses has nearly been killed by God, through his negligence (v.24). Zipporah could have lost her husband, and her sons their father. On his behalf she interposes, and circumcises her son herself, saying "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me" (Ex.4:25).<sup>2</sup> Modern translations indicate that Zipporah threw the foreskin at Moses' feet, but *Moses* is not in the original. In publicly displaying her son's bloody state, she protects him from the angel of death over her household, exactly as the Israelites were soon to do on the night of the Passover.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gary North, "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb," in James Jordan, "The Reconstruction of the Church," 1985, p.219.

<sup>2</sup> "The Hebrew word for bridegroom means 'the circumcised.'" (Rousas Rushdoony, "The Institutes of Biblical Law," 1973, p.344.) Zipporah had not only saved Gershom's life; she had also prepared him for marriage.

<sup>3</sup> James Jordan refers to this incident of the life-saving circumcision of Moses' son, as the proleptic Passover. (See James Jordan, "The Law of the Covenant: an Exposition of Exodus 21-23," 1984, Appendix F.)

Zipporah's actions compensated for her husband's failures as a godly husband and father. The breach of covenant has been restored. Now, God lets him live.

Married couples are not independent persons-that was never God's purpose in marriage. A couple's fortunes rise and fall with each other. It is in each other's interests, that husbands and wives are able to "speak the truth in love" (Eph.4:15) to one another, and because of our nature, that won't always be complementary, and nor should men hope it will be. Zipporah was a good woman helping her husband and family, no doubt hoping to prevent such mistakes in future. Moses was the richer for her.

## *The Biblical Wife (IV)*

### *Manoah's Wife :(Judges 13:21-24)*

Having had a visitation from an angel, Manoah was dreadfully afraid: "We will surely die," he said, "for we have seen God" (v.22).

His wife however, did not share this conviction. Now, the angel had visited her twice, and spoken to her about her future son. Yes, her husband was in a fearful panic, but she saw things differently. In fact, she was optimistic that the future would work out well for them, despite her husband's fears.

Many years ago a friend of mine had subordinate pastoral responsibilities in a good sized Australian church. He was under the authority of the Senior Pastor, but this Senior Pastor had for some time been engaged in some activities, that my friend had serious reservations about. Yes, my friend was a man under authority; but he had a nagging suspicion, that something was wrong at The Top. One aspect of Biblical truth said, "*submit to authority,*" but another said, "*You'd better get onto this.*"

What was he to do, in this state of anguish, being torn between conflicting loyalties? Having been trained for many years by that Senior Pastor to be a submissive, obliging, deferent person, he couldn't easily reconcile himself to anything else. In a state of great inner turmoil, my friend went on for months, then he made a momentous decision. He talked this over with his wife, a very perceptive woman (as many wives are).

She smelt a RAT. "*You're being used,*" she said. "*You're being manipulated by that man. He's taking advantage of you, and you'd better do something about this.*"

My friend listened to his wife. He confronted the Senior Pastor, who admitted he had done wrong, and forced him to face the elders of the church, who later required his resignation.

Yes, women are to be submissive to their husbands, but this does not mean that they are unable to speak the truth to them. Why? Because no one on earth holds their authority unconditionally. Obedience to all human authorities must never be unconditional, otherwise we give people in authority the place of God.

Like my friend, Manoah had a wife who pointed out to him an aspect of the truth he hadn't seen before, brought him back to reality, and did him good.

A true husband helper!

## *The Biblical Wife (V)*

*Michal: (I Sam.19:10-17)*

David had made a big impression since he'd killed Goliath, and he was a hero-everybody loved him. Well, everybody, that is, except the insecure king of Israel, Saul. Success can have a downside.

Some irregularities had been developing in David's relationship with his father-in-law. These have been growing for some time, but of course, David has probably wanted to ignore them, or at least, down-play them. They are embarrassing to him, for they reflect badly on the King, and he doesn't want to dwell on, or highlight the faults of someone in such a position, who also happens to be his wife's father. His desire to preserve the honour the king is good; but he'd better be careful.

Things come to a head quickly. Saul tries to kill David with a spear, but David escapes to his home. Is he safe here? It seems as though he is, but he has some nagging concerns about King Saul, which he would rather ignore. Nonetheless, he talks about this with Michal. Hasn't a pattern developed now? She knows her father, and she has heard all the talk in the community, ever since David's stunning battlefield triumph. "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (I Sam.18:7). Like David, she knows there's a problem. But unlike David, (who is perhaps, in this tenuous relationship with her father, inclined to vacillate) she knows the solution. She has one sentence of blunt advice for her husband: "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death" (v.11).

*[the authority of the husband] extends over all departments, but is limited in all; first, by the nature of the relation; and secondly, by the higher authority of God. No superior, whether master, parent, husband or magistrate, can make it obligatory on us either to do what God forbids, or not do what God commands.<sup>2</sup>*

In order for any woman to verbally help her husband, two things have to happen. Firstly, she has to be willing to speak what is on her mind to him. Yes, she has a responsibility to submit to him, but that is not the end of the story. She has it in her heart from God, the way she was made, TO HELP HIM, and there is more to helping, than just submission. A woman has a perspective on life issues, that may be from God, that her husband does not have, and he is a fool, if he ignores the fact, that from the beginning, God said that "it isn't good for a man to be alone" (Gen.2:18). God said that man alone (that is, without others), is in a "not good" state. That's what she's there for! To "do him good..." (Prov.31:12).

Secondly, he has to be willing to listen to her. Will she always be right? Probably not. She, after all, is as human as he is. She makes mistakes, too. The headship, decision-making and ultimate responsibility is with him, but he has her with him, she is "one flesh" with him, as a First Confidant and Counselor.

David listens to her. Michal helps him out the window, and he escapes. Next day, Saul's messengers come to get David, but Saul has been outsmarted. By David? Well, in the context of "one flesh," you could say that. But the credit (truth be known), lay with his husband-helping wife! One advisory sentence saved him. There's a message there for every husband, and every wife. Will we hear it?

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<sup>2</sup> Hodge, C., (1950) quoted in Rousas Rushdoony, "Salvation and Godly Rule," 1983, p.390.

## The Biblical Wife (VI)

### Abigail : Part 1(I Samuel 25)

Nabal wasn't a local; he lived in Maon (v.2). He seems to have viewed his business activities at Carmel without much understanding of any social obligations. He's come to Carmel for the shearing, and with three thousand sheep (presuming he was to shear them all at once), that could have taken many weeks. But this is an agricultural community, where there are aspects of relationship and interdependence between the locals which Nabal is either ignorant of, or chooses to ignore.

*Neighbours have an incentive to reduce crime in the neighbourhood. This was especially true in agricultural ancient Israel. Rural neighbours are more dependent on each other than urban neighbours are...rural residents have a unique economic incentive to preserve the wealth of their neighbours...when neighbours can be trusted to care for each other's goods, a society probably has a strong covenantal bond.<sup>1</sup>*

Clearly Saul's mental instability, and the fact that he is now known to be taking vengeance on any he believes to be his enemies (see I Sam.22), has quite possibly produced a level of apprehension in the Israelite community. At this time, while David has been a fugitive from Saul, David's men have been acting like de facto security staff, for Nabal.

To understand this chapter and the outcome, verse 3 is very important:

*the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in his dealings.*

David's appeal to Nabal was not a request to a rich man for charity from poor people. It is important to note that David expressly asks Nabal, to "ask your young men, and they will tell you" (v.8). In David's mind, a favour to Nabal has been done, that must be made known to him. It is true that not all favours demand an immediate response, but David thought he was owed something, and the time was opportune.

Yes, David is in need, but David is implicitly saying to Nabal:

*We understand that you're not a local, and you may not know what's been going on around here for some time. We've been looking after your men and your sheep. We could have taken advantage of you Nabal, and your men, but we haven't done so. Now, we'd be grateful if you would return the favour.*

It is significant that Nabal makes a unilateral decision, in relation to this request. He does not make any enquiry to see if the claim of the servants of David can actually be substantiated.

Of course, he has been rather surprised by this request. It would have meant extra costs that he had not planned or budgeted for, and more work on the part of his men, to obtain extra supplies to make up for the loss. He ignores the subsequent Biblical warnings, that "every prudent man acts with knowledge" (Prov.13:16), and that "wisdom is with those who receive counsel" (Prov.14:10).

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<sup>1</sup> Gary North, "Tools of Dominion," 1990, p.612.

A critical and most revealing aspect of the chapter, is when one of Nabal's servants informs Abigail of the outcome of the interview between the servants of David, and Nabal (v.14-17). Nabal did not care to receive a report on David's men, so she is given an unsolicited one. Clearly, Nabal has made a foolish, presumptuous assumption.

When he spoke to Abigail, Nabal's servant did verify that the servants of David "were very good to us...they were a wall to us by night and day" (v.15-16). Then he concluded with a grim warning:

*Now make up your mind, consider what you should do, for there is trouble brewing against our master and all his household-such an ill-tempered creature he is, no one can say a word to him!* (Moffatt's version.)

Tension and apprehension are now rapidly building in Abigail's household. David's men have been sent away rebuffed. Abigail has been informed of the incident, and probable outcome. Implicit in the servant's statement, is an appeal for her help. She has some urgent decisions to make.

If we only had the story so far in the Bible, up to verse 17, what would you think a godly wife like Abigail should do? Should she say,

*Oh well. My husband isn't always very diplomatic. Nabal's his name, and Nabal's his nature. He may have gotten us into a predicament right now, but what can I do? After all, I'm only a woman. I can't take much initiative around here. That could get him into a rage, again. I'll just submit, and hope for the best.*

Or, should her response be entirely different? Why?

## The Biblical Wife (VII)

### *Abigail :Part 2 (I Sam.25)*

When her husband had abruptly sent David's servants away, and she knows from the servant's report what has taken place, Abigail knows she has little time. Her response to this escalating drama (I Samuel 25:14-17), is remarkably reminiscent of Rebekah's, in Genesis 27:41-46: when unnecessary domestic bloodshed is threatening which the male head of the household is blissfully unaware of, his godly wife must take action.

Furthermore, v.18-19, is reminiscent of Gen.32; 6-7, 13-21: Jacob's decision to placate Esau, who he has heard is coming, with "400 men." Jacob and Abigail both understood, that "a gift in secret subdues anger, and a bribe in the bosom, strong wrath" (Prov.21:14).

Within a space of hours, Abigail has prepared her donkeys, left home, and met up with David and his war-party of 400 (v.13). She had prepared a substantial gift for him and his men (v.18). In this, she is like the wise woman of Proverbs 9:1-2, who "has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table." But just as importantly, she has also prepared her thoughts, for an absolutely critical *intercessory mission*. The life of many innocent people of her household now depends on her success.

Matthew Henry points out over 8 verses, Abigail makes ten specific points in her appeal to David:

- 1) Twelve times she respectfully refers to him, as "My lord." This is a sharp contrast to Nabal's contemptuous attitude: "Who is David?" (v.10)
- 2) She takes the blame for the rude treatment of David's messengers, upon herself. "On me alone, my lord, be the blame" (v.24).
- 3) She excuses her husband's fault by attributing it to his natural weakness (v.25).
- 4) She pleads her own ignorance in what has taken place (v.25).
- 5) She separates herself in attitude, from Nabal (v.26).
- 6) She indicates (by inference), that the gift she has brought is for those who were sent away by Nabal, as a means of placating them (v.27).
- 7) She asks for forgiveness, and commends David, for "fighting the battles of the Lord" (v.28).
- 8) She expresses hope that David will soon be king over Israel (v.30).
- 9) She proposes that a peaceable outcome to this offence, will be so much better than to "shed blood without cause" (v.31).
- 10) She asks that he remember her, when God has dealt well with him (v.31).

Some men like Nabal in their folly can't be helped, whatever their wives do for them. This man was a clear illustration, that "he who returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house" (Prov.17:13). The last words Nabal heard in this life, were from his wise and responsible wife (v.37). Abigail is vindicated for her initiative and prudence, firstly by the Lord when Nabal dies, and secondly by David, who commended her for her "discernment" (v.33), and ultimately married her.

### Conclusion:

Abigail in her brave initiative, lived out Biblical practice, as "she looked well to the ways of her household" (Prov.31:27). She showed that she had a true servant's heart towards those she cared

for (v.41). This gem of a woman is a picture of the greater son of David, Jesus Christ, in His intercession before the throne of an aggrieved, just and righteous God for sinful, weak, defenceless people (Heb.7:24-25). But she is perhaps best of all, a classic example of what a great and responsible woman can do, as she cares for those under her charge, with a view to protecting and providing for them.

Will you follow her example?

## *The Biblical Wife (VIII)*

### *The Shunammite Woman: (II Kings 4:8-37)*

The Shunammite woman quite early, worked out what sort of man Elisha was. She had been prepared to regularly provide him with a meal, but when she determined that “this is a holy man of God” (v.9), she resolved to expand her hospitality. Quite properly, demonstrating her attitude towards her husband and Elisha, she asked her husband if they could prepare a furnished room for him. She would “*neither lay out his money nor invite strangers to his house, without consent asked or obtained.*”<sup>3</sup>

Elisha appreciated her hospitality, and said so. Could he do her a favour? She had no requests. Gehazi pointed out to Elisha that she had no son. For any childless woman, with an aging husband (v.14), this was a source of great anguish. When he promised her that “at this season next year you will embrace a son,” she said to Elisha, “No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant” (v.16).

To receive a son miraculously when her husband was old and childless, would be a dramatic instance of God’s saving power, demonstrated to Abraham, Isaac, Manoah and Elkanah. Abraham in entertaining angels, had received the promise of a son (Gen.18:10). Now, she who had received a prophet in the Name of the Lord, received a prophet’s reward.

The subsequent death of the boy was doubly galling for this woman, who had become a mother miraculously. Yes, she had lost her son. But she had originally received this son, through a promise from God, via a prophet. The promised son, is now a dead son!

There is another aspect to this drama. Yes, her husband was the father, but she knew he could have no role in bringing him back to life. The boy had been conceived miraculously; now, he had to be resurrected miraculously. Her only hope was God, and His prophet Elisha. When this woman sets out to find the prophet,

*she deliberately hid the death of her son from her husband and servants. If the death became public, Elisha’s miracle and the Lord’s blessing would have been widely defamed. Privately, she was blunt with Elisha to the point of rudeness. Publicly, she was totally concerned with his good name and the honour of the Lord. She was a woman who was a strong, if not a difficult friend, and one who would make a dangerous enemy.*<sup>4</sup>

When the Shunammite woman finds Elisha, she has a few words to say. Her attitude was:

- 1) *You and your God gave me this son. I did not ask for him.*
- 2) *Remember when I told you, ‘Don’t deceive me?’*
- 3) *What have you done?*
- 4) *I’m holding you and your God accountable.*
- 5) *Now give him back to me alive!*

*She clearly implied that, by giving her a son and then taking him away, the Lord and Elisha had deceived her. She was very close to blasphemy, but Elisha did*

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Bible, 1709, Vol. 2, p.726.

<sup>4</sup> Rousas Rushdoony, “Chariots of Prophetic Fire,” 2003, p.99.

*not rebuke her...in spite of her bluntness, the woman clung to Elisha as her one hope.*<sup>5</sup>

It is impossible not to be full of respect for this plain-spoken and forthright woman. Like the woman who fell at Jesus' feet weeping, washed them with her tears, and kissed them in appreciation (Luke 7:38), when the Lord restored the boy to life through Elisha, she "fell at his [Elisha's] feet and bowed herself to the ground, and she took up her son and went out" (v.37).

*An amazing woman, this Shunammite, and the story crackles with the strong reality of her presence, still alive in its impact across the centuries. She believed the honour of God was at stake in her distress, and she acted accordingly. Her reward was in harmony with her faith. She loved her son as much as her life and more, but it was the honour of God that governed her actions.*<sup>6</sup>

Wouldn't you want to be like her?

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<sup>5</sup> Rushdoony, p.99.

<sup>6</sup> Rushdoony, p.99-100.

## *The Biblical Wife (IX)*

### *Rebekah :Part A (Gen.25:19-34; Ch.27)*

As a girl, Rebekah went out to the spring to get water one afternoon at her home in Mesopotamia. She innocently provided water for a complete stranger, who had asked her for a drink from her jar. She then, in a typical display of eastern hospitality, offers to draw water for his ten camels. Her willingness to help this stranger happens to be an answer to his prayers, and will lead to an immediate and dramatic change in her life.

The next day, with the blessing of her family (Gen.24:59-60), she is on the back of one of these camels with her maids, heading away from home to her future husband, whom she has never seen.

“According to J. A. Thompson, writing in the Near East had been in common use for well over a thousand years before Moses.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, we read that “Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord” (Ex.24:4), and that “he took the book of the covenant...” (Ex.24:7).

Furthermore, there was certainly oral history. Rebekah would have known of the great flood, as Noah lived for many years after Abraham was born. She would also have heard of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which took place about fifty years before her marriage to Isaac; Abraham, her father-in-law was an eyewitness (Gen.19:27-28). More than that, she would have known why these momentous events took place. God was bringing a permanent separation between good and evil people.

After marrying Isaac, Rebekah waited twenty years to conceive (Gen.25:20, 26). While pregnant, when the twins struggled within her, God spoke to her, revealing to her that,

*two nations are in your womb, and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.*

This was not normal, but in this case, God had chosen to reverse the order, which was not uncommon. Many other first-born sons in Genesis, such as Cain, Ishmael, Reuben and Manasseh, forfeited their inheritance. God knew what the two men would be like, even whilst in the womb, and had told Rebekah of His plan for them. Jacob was redeemed; Esau was not.<sup>8</sup> Later, God said that “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (Mal.1:2-3).

There is every reason to believe that Rebekah would have understood the implications of God’s Word to her. Yes, the news about the elder son was not positive. But she is not the sentimental type, who believes the nonsense that God just loves everybody.<sup>9</sup> When blessed in leaving her home to marry Isaac, it was said of her, “...may your descendents possess the gate of those who hate them” (Gen.24:60). She understands that in God’s economy blessing and cursing are facts of life. In receiving the Word of God, she knows now where God’s plan is heading, and that as a responsible mother, she has a part to play.

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<sup>7</sup> Rousas Rushdoony, “Deuteronomy,” 2008, p.485. Quoting J. Thompson, “Deuteronomy,” 1978, p.291.

<sup>8</sup> Gary North, “The Dominion Mandate,” 1987, p.187. The chapter entitled “The Uses of Deception,” deals with this exhaustively.

<sup>9</sup> For more on this subject, see my paper, “God’s Love: Holy or Unconditional?”

When they grew up, Rebekah (in harmony with God's Word to her), loved the younger son Jacob, but Isaac loved Esau. Esau could provide him with game, which he was fond of. Esau was the eldest son, but the incident with the stew that Jacob had cooked (Gen.25:27-34), indicated that Esau was remarkably contemptuous towards his birthright; as the elder son it normally would have been his. Esau was not tricked, as he later complained to Isaac (Gen.27:36). He had sworn to part with his birthright willingly. He lived for the present. His stomach (the now) was more important to him than his birthright (the future).

This was a sobering lesson to Isaac and Rebekah about the foreknowledge of God, and the character of their sons. In fact, in selling his birthright for a single meal to Jacob, the Bible later described him, as a "godless man" (Heb.12:15-17). This should have reinforced to both his parents, that Esau should not inherit his father's blessing.

When Esau married two Hittite women, who "brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah" (Gen.26:34-35), his character and outlook on life should have been painfully evident to his parents. They now had three aspects of evidence to convince them that Esau was clearly unsuited to be their legitimate and rightful heir; a triple witness:

- 1) God's Word to Rebekah, while the twins were in her womb.
- 2) Esau's contemptuous forfeiture of his birthright to Jacob.
- 3) His marriage to two Hittite women.

God declared in His Word that this was more than sufficient to convict a person of criminal behaviour: "on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed" (Deut.19:15).

Now when Isaac indicated he wanted to bless Esau, he revealed three things to Rebekah:

- a) He was ignoring (or had forgotten), God's revealed plan for their sons.
- b) He was being utterly self-indulgent and thinking only of his stomach, and the venison he hoped Esau could bring him.
- c) He was strangely indifferent to their sons' moral standing before God, and in particular, to what sort of man Esau really was. (Does this tell us why Abraham had been unwilling to send Isaac off alone to seek a wife, over sixty years earlier?)

Isaac was about to defy God, cheat Jacob, and bless the elder, godless son. Like Esau, Isaac was guilty of the sin of honouring his belly more than God's promises, almost like the belly-worshipping sinners criticised by Paul (Phil.3:18-19).<sup>10</sup> Rebekah knew they were now in the midst of a family crisis. Isaac was blundering into a disaster of his own making.

*It is in matters of thoughtlessness, pride, and small selfishness where we most frequently offend one another, and none of us are free from these offenses. It is in these critical areas where most of all grace and forbearance are required. Husbands and wives frequently grate on one another with their set and determined ways, but, with love, these very minor but very real faults not only are bearable but sometimes amusing and endearing. Within the family of God, where love abounds, it does indeed "cover a multitude of sins" (Prov.10:12). ... This is the area where Christians most commonly offend one another. Our trespasses are most offensive to others and least discernible to ourselves.*<sup>11</sup>

What should Rebekah do?

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p.189.

<sup>11</sup> Rousas Rushdoony, "Salvation and Godly Rule," 1983, p.301.

## *The Biblical Wife (X)*

*Rebekah: Part 2 (Gen. 25:19-34; Ch.27)*

Clearly, Isaac was about to make a terrible mistake. He intended to give Esau such a great blessing that he would put Jacob permanently under the dominion of the evil elder brother.<sup>1</sup> Isaac was behaving like a silly old fool. But worse than that, Isaac was at enmity with God. Many Bible commentators are highly critical of Jacob and Rebekah's behaviour, but none of the New Testament writers are.

*Rebekah instigated the deception, not Jacob. She was a lawful authority in the home, and she had been told directly by God about the future of the two sons and the future of their heirs. She sided with the son favoured by God. She sided with the covenant line. Thus, Jacob did not unilaterally decide to thwart the desires of his parents; he decided to follow the advice of one of them—the one who was conforming her actions to the prophecy of God... Jacob was unquestionably following the orders of a lawful superior... Rebekah was clearly more future-oriented than her husband, for she took seriously the promise of God concerning the future of Jacob's side of the family—the covenant line which would ultimately bring forth the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>*

After this incident, when it becomes known to her that Esau is harbouring murderous intent towards Jacob, Rebekah intervenes again, firstly with Jacob, and subsequently with Isaac, to send Jacob away. The two pivotable conversations which Rebekah has had with Jacob, and her choice of words, are most significant. When she knows that Isaac plans to bless Esau, she commands Jacob, "Now therefore my son, listen to me as I command you...only obey my voice, and go, get them [the young goats] for me." (Gen.27:8, 13)

When she knows of Esau's murderous intent towards Jacob, she says to Jacob, "Now, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!" (Gen.27:43) Rebekah's instructions on both occasions, are absolutely imperative in nature to Jacob, a man in his seventies. She had no qualms about forcibly intervening in the life of her grown son. Why? She was the one whom God had originally spoken to; she was the custodian of God's Word, for a reason, and would give an account to Him, for her obedience to it.

Furthermore, she is one flesh with her husband (Gen.2:24), and so any mistakes he makes, (that she is a party to) she will have to give an account for. Furthermore, she and Isaac will have to live with their errors. Her fortunes (like all wives) must rise and fall with his. Knowing their domestic tone and situation better than blind Isaac (as women mostly do) she knows that Jacob, at her instigation, must act immediately in both cases.

In all of this, what has been in Rebekah's mind? Firstly, she knew that she was married to a significant man the son of Abraham, and that God had made great covenantal promises to him, and blessed him (Gen.25:11).

Secondly, she has realised, after over 60 years with this man, that her husband has his weaknesses, as every husband does, and as every wife knows.

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<sup>1</sup> Gary North, "The Dominion Covenant," 1987, p.188.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.188.

*Marriage is a quick indoctrination course in the sins, faults and imperfections of the person we have married. What does not come as quickly to us as it does to others is a knowledge of our own sins and failings.<sup>1</sup>*

Rebekah knew this, but she was not fatalistic about the outcome. She did not say, “Oh well, ‘what will be, will be.’ Sometimes my husband seems a bit dumb, but that’s men, and that’s life. I guess I can’t do anything about it.”

Third, she did not accept the foolish notion of unconditional or unthinking obedience to any form of human authority, which in itself is blasphemy and idolatry.

Rushdoony has commented that

*the Puritan wives were not given to servile obedience, and they provided the strong-willed help meets necessary to the conquest of a continent. The Puritan men held that the Kingship of Christ was the only absolute power, and they acted on that principle.<sup>3</sup>*

Fourth, Rebekah realised Isaac was making a dreadful mistake in planning to bless Esau, and so she submitted to, and acted under her highest authority-God Himself. She knew her husband was falling, but in her understanding way, she would be there to lift him up (Ecc.4:9-10). Out of her knowledge of God’s Word, her love for her husband, and for Jacob, she took a responsible (if unusual) course of action.

Fifth, Rebekah did what was in her power, to bring about the purpose of God for herself, her husband, and her children. This seems to have been habitual for her, from the beginning, when as a girl, over sixty years earlier (Gen.24:16), she uttered those three fateful and remarkable words to her mother, her brother, and Abraham’s servant, in Mesopotamia: “I will go” (Gen.24:58). She operated in total accountability to God.

What was central to this purpose? In her own unusual way, (which Isaac clearly did not understand at the time) her goal had always been the same: to help her husband. She showed that “house and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord” (Prov.19:14).

When Jacob returned, some thirty years later, his circumstances had radically changed. He had fled the tent with nothing, except the promises of God. Now (with the death of his beloved Rachel), he had three wives, twelve sons and a daughter, along with great flocks and herds (Gen.30:43). Now, God spoke to him:

*I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you (Gen.35:11-12).*

What had been accomplished in Jacob’s lifetime, with the assistance of his prudent, far-seeing, responsible mother? She appears to have died in his absence, but through her

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<sup>1</sup> Rousas Rushdoony, “Salvation and Godly Rule,” 1983, p.80.

<sup>3</sup> Rushdoony, p.392.

diligence she had ensured, in accordance with the Word of God given to her, *covenantal continuation* within her family, from which the Messiah would ultimately come. As a result, she had acted prudently to ensure that Jacob (the son she knew from God from the beginning, to be their rightful heir) would gain his inheritance.

This should be the goal of every godly mother and father, so that subsequent generations can inherit the promises of God. “A wise woman builds her house...” (Prov.14:1).

Is that your goal too?

## *The Biblical Wife (XI)*

### *Belshazzar's wife: (Dan.5)*

The contribution of Belshazzar's wife to her husband, was remarkable. When God's handwriting appeared on the wall, "the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together ...[he] was greatly alarmed, and his face grew even paler" (v.6,9). Then she entered the banquet hall. She then gave him a detailed history lesson, explaining how Daniel had been of great assistance to his father, that he had been a man of "illumination, insight and wisdom," (v.11) and concludes her message to her husband, by saying, "let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation" (v.12).

When Daniel comes, he is able to do, exactly what she had predicted. God gives him insight into the situation, and he is rewarded by the king. But the unsung hero, who few pay any attention to, was Belshazzar's wife, who recommended him in the first place. What a helper she had been to him!

### *Pilate's wife, (Mat.27:15-20):*

Pilate's wife also greatly contributed to her husband, warning him to "have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him" (v.19)

*Pilate's lady sent him this warning, out of the love she had for him; she feared not a rebuke from him for meddling with that which belonged not to her; but, let him take it how he would, she would give him the caution. Note, it is an instance of true love to our friends and relations, to do what we can to keep them from sin, and the nearer any are to us, and the greater affection we have for them, the more solicitous we should be not to suffer sin to come or lie upon them.<sup>1</sup>*

It is difficult to determine how much her message impacted her husband; suffice to say, that 5 verses later, he washed his hands of the responsibility for the execution of Jesus Christ, saying "I am innocent of this Man's blood." At the very least, she had faithfully delivered her message to her husband.

We do not know if either of these women were believers. But the important thing about them, is that they knew they had a role to help, and as a result they were willing to speak their mind at a critical phase of their husband's life. And (speaking as a man), this is what every godly wife must do, in order to fulfil her role as a "husband helper." Will you?

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible, 1721, Vol.V, p. 418.

## *The Biblical Wife (XII)*

*Esther:*

### *I. A Book Summary:*

King Ahaseurus is Esther's husband, and Mordecai is her uncle, functioning as her step-father (Ch.2:5-7).

Esther is a queen, but also a subject. Like all other subjects, she could in theory be summarily executed, if on entering the king's courts, the king does not hold out the golden sceptre to her (Ch.4:11).

a) Mordecai functions as Esther's intelligence officer. At his prompting, she warns the king of a plot to take his life (Ch.2:21-23). This grants Mordecai credibility, and the details of his action are recorded (Ch.6:1-3).

b) Esther agrees to fast for 3 days, and encourages Mordecai and the Jews to join her, presumably to seek God's deliverance from the crisis brought on by Haman (Ch.4:16).

c) Esther exposes Haman's wicked plot to kill the Jews, and he is executed (Ch.7:10).

d) Mordecai is made 2<sup>nd</sup> only to the king (Ch.10:3).

### *Some Observations:*

1. The king accepted Haman's plan to kill the Jews, unaware of the implications. This itself shows us how needy he really was. Men are not the repository of all wisdom and knowledge; God described Adam alone, as being "not good" (Gen.2:18). Men are completed in their headship, when they have the whole-hearted contribution of their "husband-helper." Thus it is incumbent on husbands to understand and respect their wife, and to make room for the way she can minister in the home and family and within her husband's responsibilities (Prov.31:11-12). Otherwise they will miss out on the blessing that comes from being "one flesh" with their wife.

"One flesh" is made legal on the couple's marriage day, but it is a state that requires individual growth and maturity, if the respective spouses are to benefit. The blessings are not automatic. The husband and wife both need to understand their individual roles, whilst they accept and make way for the God-given role of their spouse.

2. Esther's relationship with the king and with Mordecai, is quite proper. Most wives, at least in the earlier years of their marriage, have a father. Mordecai, in his function as an intelligence gatherer for Esther, is indirectly serving the king, and manages to thwart a plot against him. In the context of her home and husband, Esther is faithful and submissive. In relation to her people, she accepts another aspect of faithfulness and obligation, so that innocent blood is not shed.

3. Esther manages to carefully consider and direct her allegiances. She did "leave and cleave" (Gen.2:24), and her heart is with her husband the king. Esther has formed a new family, but this does not mean the dissolving of all past associations, affiliations and relationships. She does not neglect her responsibilities toward Mordecai, her step-father, and her people. She is mindful of the commandment to "Honour your father and mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Ex.20:12). She is also conscious that, "as for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight" (Ps.16:3).

Jesus gave His disciples a stern warning: "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). This is *not* an indication that believers are to be hostile to their families; but in our relationship with Him, we are to ensure that He has first claim on us. Once this priority

is clearly established, we can then enjoy a happy relationship with our family. Is this priority clearly established in your mind?

4. Esther is aware that she does have two legitimate allegiances, but she retains her faithfulness to her husband the king, and to her people in their crisis and time of need. The allegiances are not competitive, or mutually exclusive. In this context, she works with Mordecai to bring about an excellent result, so that the conspiracy against the Jews is thwarted.

5. Not only is she able to successfully intercede with her husband the king, to ensure the welfare and protection of her people, but one of them (who happens to be her step-father) is subsequently promoted to be 2<sup>nd</sup> only to the king, for his prudence and initiative.

Conclusion:

Esther is an excellent woman and wife:

- 1) She has been prepared to accede to her husband's wishes (Ch.2:14, 17).
- 2) With Mordecai's assistance, she has protected her husband the king from a murderous conspiracy (Ch.2:21-23).
- 3) She has saved her people from slaughter (Ch.7).
- 4) Her prudence has led to a godly man being promoted, to be second only to the king. (Ch.10:3)

Wouldn't you want to be like her?

*An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain (Prov.31:10-11).*

## *The Biblical Wife (XIII)*

### *Achsah: (Joshua 15:13-19)*

For forty five years Caleb had waited till his opportunity came to possess his inheritance. The ten unbelieving spies who had entered the land with he and Joshua had died, along with all of that evil, unbelieving generation. Now his opportunity had come, and he said to Joshua, “Now then, give me this hill country which the Lord spoke about on that day...” (Joshua 14:12).

Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to him as his inheritance, and Caleb drove out the 3 sons of Anak. Next, he faced the inhabitants of Debir, which was formerly called Kiriath-sepher.

Does he continue with the same pattern, going into battle himself? No, for he considers that the next generation of the children of Israel must learn to fight too, just as he has. He doesn't want them to be like the ten spies who had originally accompanied him: a bunch of unbelieving weaklings who haven't learned to forcibly take possession of what rightfully belongs to them.

God later said that the nations that were left were there for a reason: “...in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war...” (Judges 3:2). So he promises, “the one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife.” His nephew Othniel, the son of Caleb's brother Kenaz, rose to the challenge and captured it, and gained the hand of Achsah.

At the point of their marriage, Achsah shows she is a woman of foresight, and the crown of her husband (Prov. 12:4a). There is nothing to suggest that she is any different to Sarah, calling her husband lord (I Pet. 3:6), but she obviously doesn't subscribe to the view that her calling from God as Othniel's wife, restricts her to a role of passive, silent submission. This girl was made of stouter stuff than that. She encourages Othniel that he “ask her father for a field.” Significantly, Othniel then charges her with the task of bringing Caleb their request.

Why? Othniel recognised that as Caleb's daughter, Achsah would be closer to Caleb's affections than he, and would thus have a better chance of obtaining the desired inheritance. This is not emotional manipulation on the part of these two; this is wisdom. Caleb, who had waited forty five years to see the fulfilment of the promise of God for himself, now receives a request from his newly married daughter, similar to the one Caleb himself had made: “give me a blessing: since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water” (Joshua 15:19).

Matthew Henry's comments here are helpful:

*It is no breach of the tenth commandment moderately to desire those comforts and conveniences of this life which we see attainable in a fair and regular way ...husbands and wives should mutually advise, and jointly agree, about that which is for the common good of their family; and much more should they concur in asking of their heavenly Father the best blessings...parents must never think that lost which is bestowed upon their children for their real advantage, but must be free in giving them portions as well as maintenance,*

*especially when they are dutiful. Caleb had sons (I Chron.4:15), and yet gave liberally to his daughter.*<sup>12</sup>

Achsah's request to Caleb is reminiscent of Jabez's request to God: "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it might not pain me" (I Chron.4:10). Our Heavenly Father commanded Jesus: "ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession" (Ps.2:8). The Bible warns us that "you do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2).

Rushdoony identifies a more modern example:

*John Adams was a man still close to the Puritan world. Howe, the British viscount and general, proved to be alternately good and bad. Adams remarked, "a smart wife would have put Howe in possession of Philadelphia a long time ago." To many, Adam's comment make no sense, but to Adams, who knew men as power centres whose wives are powerful aides, the meaning was clear.*<sup>13</sup>

*Conclusion:*

In marrying Achsah, Othniel gained an immediate but unexpected blessing, which arose from her forethought and initiative. The scriptures tell us that "he that finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the Lord" (Prov.18:22).

Every wife should be honoured and respected by her husband "as a fellow heir of the grace of life..." (I Pet.3:7). The woman of Proverbs 31:16 "considers a field and buys it," but Achsah was able to do even better; she obtained the desired field without money.

Othniel later became Israel's first judge (Judges 3:9-11). What a blessed man, with a wife like that!

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible, Vol. (II), p.82.

<sup>13</sup> Adam's comments found in Ann Douglas, "The Feminisation of American Culture," 1978, p.62. Quoted in Rousas Rushdoony, "Deuteronomy," 2008, p.96-97.

## *The Biblical Wife (XIV)*

### *Jael: (Judges 4 & 5)*

Godly wives are remarkable people. Like us men, they were “made in the image of God” (Gen.1:26), yet they are so different to us. They were designed to complement (not necessarily compliment) us. Complement means, “that which completes.” When husbands and wives understand each other’s capacities, they are better able to function in unity.

The Bible gives us some important background to these two chapters. Firstly, the Lord had directed that Judah go up first against the Canaanites. God had given the land into his hand (Judges 1:1-3). Secondly, “the descendants of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up from the city of palms with the sons of Judah...and they went and lived among the people” (Judges 1:16). Clearly, the Kenites were in a covenantal relationship with God’s people.

The scripture then hints of a problem in Judges 4:11: “Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites... and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanannim, which is near Kedesh,” and then the Bible informs us that “there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite” (Judges 4:17). Heber, in distancing himself from his tribe and their relationship with Judah, had involved himself in a foolish liason with Jabin, a Canaanite (4:2).

God had warned His people, “watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst” (Ex.34:12). We must understand in this, that “the Biblical position with regard to alliances is that alliances are religious acts...a common cause and a common faith motivates the allies.”<sup>1</sup>

Heber had decided he wanted to have (as we say in Australia) an “each-way bet.” But his alliance with Jabin, had made him “an enemy of God” (James 4:4), and had endangered him and his family, for the people of God were at war against God’s enemies. He was more intent on playing power politics than obeying the God of Israel. Heber was married to Jael, his “a fellow heir of the grace of life” (I Pet.3:7), but she soon showed greater obedience than her husband.

A battle had raged between Jabin’s soldiers with their nine hundred iron chariots, and the ten thousand soldiers, under Barak. This was a life or death struggle for Barak and his men. Sisera, Jabin’s army commander, had seen his army totally destroyed at the hands of God and Barak’s soldiers (4:15). As the only survivor, Sisera was fleeing; a desperate man, running for his life from a God-ordained judgment.

We have no idea of the whereabouts of Heber, but at her tent door, Jael sees Sisera coming, and greets him: “Turn aside my master, turn aside to me!” she says (ch. 4:18). What are we to make of this greeting, with its overtones of submission and cordiality? Initially, it seems strange, or even contradictory, but remember: there has been a battle raging.

Furthermore, there is no mention of there being any others present; Jael may well have been alone. This helps us understand her tactics. Any other strategy could have been fatal for her, alone with a fugitive soldier. If she was cold, showed fear, suspicion or even reluctance at the appearance of this desperate intruder, he would quickly realise her true attitude, and probably kill her.

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<sup>1</sup> Rousas Rushdoony, “Salvation and Godly Rule,” 1983, p.89.

Staying one step ahead, she invites Sisera into her tent, but clearly this lady, who is “as bold as a lion” (Prov.28:1), hasn’t put all her cards on the table. She’s now ready to hatch a plan.

The fugitive Sisera wanted Jael to lie for him, and protect him: ‘Stand in the doorway of the tent, and it shall be if anyone comes and inquires of you, and says, ‘Is there anyone here?’ that you shall say, ‘No’ ’ (v.20). Now, she knows he’s on the run.

He wanted her to be his guardian, and he thought he had safe-haven. Jael goes along with his request. “Do not be afraid,” she confidently reassures him. After refreshing himself with a drink of milk, Sisera, the enemy of God, lies peaceably, sleeping in her tent, under her rug. “Now I feel so much better. Isn’t it great that she was here to care for me?” Sisera probably thinks, as he goes off to sleep.

Will she continue this ruse of protection? Her husband has covenanted with this man’s superior, and Sisera obviously believes he will be safe. Now, some would say, “shouldn’t she have shown hospitality to this man?” Not to an enemy of God (see II Jn. 9-11). This was war. Today, Sisera would be considered in the category of a violent gaol escapee, or an enemy agent.

Jael knows her husband’s alliance with Sisera was really an unwarranted compromise with the enemies of God. Now, the evil man, the representative of her husband’s ally, is in her tent, dependent on her help. Faithful Jael clearly knows where she stands, covenantally. She identifies with God and His people in their battle. Now, a war has been raging, and she has been confronted with this man’s intrusion. She has the opportunity to bring her husband’s foolish and dangerous alliance to a sharp and sudden end.

If Jael was faced with a dilemma, in regard to her husband’s “peace” with Jabin and Sisera, she quickly and firmly resolved it. “The description of a virtuous woman, or a godly wife, in Proverbs 31:10-31 is not of a helpless slave nor of a petty parasite, but rather of a very competent wife, manager, business-woman, and mother-a person of real authority.”<sup>1</sup>

Others would say, “*is it right for a wife to disobey her lord?*” (I Pet.3:6) Certainly it is on some occasions, for every Christian woman must put God before her own husband and family.”<sup>2</sup> This is the whole point of Mat.10:34-37, and Luke 14:26.

Brave but prudent Jael bided her time. She’s no “*squeamish lily,*” or “*fainting violet.*” He who had “oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years” (ch.4:3), was now in her power. Now, she has a job to do.

Waiting till Sisera had gathered his breath, until he was “sound asleep and exhausted,” she took up her hammer and tent-peg, crept up to him, and hammered it through his temple and killed him. In fact, she struck the peg so hard, “it went through into the ground” (4:21).

In a moment, the residue of her husband’s evil alliance with a Canaanite king was destroyed. After all, “what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?” (II Cor.6:14-15) Jael had fulfilled Deborah’s prophecy, that “the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman” (4:9).

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<sup>1</sup> Rousas Rushdoony, “The Institutes of Biblical Law,” 1973, p.164.

<sup>2</sup> James Jordan, “Judges: God’s War on Humanism,” 1985, p.87.

Like Rahab (Joshua 2), Jael identified with Israel's cause, and her God. Like Rahab, and the Hebrew mid-wives (Ex.1:15-21), Jael lied. Rahab lied to protect the godly spies, the mid-wives lied to protect the Hebrew baby boys from Pharaoh, whilst Jael lied to trap and kill the ungodly soldier. Rahab, the mid-wives, and Jael's works are all plainly celebrated in scripture (Heb.11:31; James 2:25; Ex.1:20, 21; Judges 5:24-27), and hence have Biblical legitimacy.

This shows how a person's work (in this case, Jael's skill and strength at erecting tents) in God's eyes, is an important area of dominion for them. "Come," she said to Barak, when he arrived. "I will show you the man whom you are seeking" (4:22).

*What did she do? She unilaterally broke her husband's treaty with the defeated nation. She crushed [Sisera's] head by pounding a nail through his temples and literally nailing him to the ground (4:21)... What is the Bible's judgment concerning her disobedience to her husband, her active deception, her lies, and her murder? "Most blessed of women is Jael" (Judg. 5:24).*

*Deborah's song of praise to Jael catalogues her deceptions and praises them (4:25-27). Jael's nail has provided exegetical headaches for legalistic commentators ever since.<sup>1</sup>*

God's promise since the Fall, was that "the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent" (Gen.3:15). Women are as heavily involved in the work of God as men, but not normally in leadership.<sup>2</sup> "Christ has crushed Satan's head definitively in His victory on the cross. Christ's people are called to join with Him in this victory, and the promise is that we too shall crush Satan's head, in union with Christ (Ro.16:20)."<sup>3</sup>

#### Conclusion:

Judges 4 and 5 are testimonies of the Lord's deliverance. But they also contain two significant sub-plots: firstly, a warning for men if they are compromising (such as Heber), weak (such as Barak) or faithless (such as the town of Meroz). Secondly, these chapters are an encouragement to women (like Deborah and Jael), to be faithful and fearless in the service of their families, preventing incursions from the enemies of God.

Christian liberty is never a licence to do as one pleases. For every believer all of our life is to be spent in the service of Jesus Christ, and His Lordship over all is a non-negotiable issue. Idolatry is merely the placing of something or somebody before God. Husbands must realise that their wives have unique gifts and capacities of service to bring to their family, and others. These are from God, and are first of all for His service and worship. A woman must understand how God has planned how her role as a "helpmeet" is to be defined.

Paul declares to us, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Ro.11:33) Jael's work in killing Sisera is plainly celebrated in scripture (Judges 5:24-27). She may have "girded herself with strength, and made her arms strong" (Prov.31:7), for purposes that she or Heber had not contemplated in her service towards her family, but God had.

What a gem! What a girl!

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<sup>1</sup> Gary North, "The Dominion Mandate," 1987, p.185-186.

<sup>2</sup> This passage highlights a significant theme in Judges, and other parts of scripture: godly women decisively involved in the destruction of the head of evil-doers. See Judges 9:50-54, II Sam.18:14-22.

<sup>3</sup> Jordan, p.86.

## The Biblical Wife (XV)

Sue and I have three sons: Jonathan, Benjamin and Philip. Sue completed her education at Year 10 level, but with my assistance from 1990-2003, supervised the three boys in their education at home, through to the completion of their Year 12 Certificates. This process of having the children at home for those years, with their mother in particular, has in my opinion, made a major difference to their outlook on life. They have all appreciated it.

### Can a Mother Teach her Children?

The Bible has a lot to say about a mother being a teacher:

- \* “Listen my son...do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Prov.1:8).
- \* “My son...do not forsake the teaching of your mother” (Prov.6:20).
- \* “The sayings of King Lemuel, an oracle which his mother taught him” (Prov.31:1).
- \* “She speaks with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue” (Prov.31:26).
- \* “I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother, who used to instruct me” (Song of Solomon 8:2).

Clearly, the Biblical picture of a wife and mother, requires her to be intimately involved in the training of her children.

\* Noah Webster, in his Dictionary of 1828, defined Education as:

*The bringing up, as of a child; instruction; formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and for the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties.*

### So, What Could Education Involve?

1. The fear of the Lord. Ps.34:11; Prov.31:30.
2. Loving and serving Jesus Christ.
3. The Ten Commandments, (as a beginning).
4. Christian responsibilities of home and family. Tit.2:4-5; I Tim.5:14.
5. Academics, theology and church history. (Depending on abilities, these may primarily be the husband’s responsibility, but his wife can certainly participate.)
6. How to: budget, shop, cook, do banking, clean the house, use a computer, drive a car, provide health and medical care, and the use of First Aid.
7. Whatever are her areas of capability: sewing, gardening, music, art, etc.
8. The ethics of work and labour. Prov.31:27. Luther said, “A housemaid who does her work is no farther away from God than the priest in his pulpit”... [and] Zwingli and Calvin believed that “work was connected with the joy of creating and exploring even the wonders of creation.”<sup>1</sup>
9. The necessity for entrepreneurial activity. Prov.31:16, 24.  
“If your careful to bring them up diligently in proper business, [the Puritan, Benjamin Wadsworth advised parents] you take a good method for their comfortable subsistence in the

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<sup>1</sup> Bell, quoted in Rousas Rushdoony, “Salvation and Godly Rule,” 1983, p.374.

World (and for their being serviceable in their Generation) you do better for them, than if you should bring them up idly, and yet leave them great estates.”<sup>2</sup>

10. Hospitality and care for the needy. Prov.31:20.

11. Good manners and social etiquette. Prov.16:24; I Cor.11:20; 13:5.

This is not an exhaustive list, but is the beginnings of what a woman can engage in, in the process of discipling her children.

*Two Biblical Examples-Rachel and Leah:*

- \* Not outwardly or publicly prominent women.
- \* They were faithful with what they had been given.
- \* They raised Jacob’s sons to be patriarchs.
- \* Joseph, (the only son Rachel trained) ultimately proved to be the family’s deliverer.
- \* These two women “built up the house of Israel.” Ruth 4:11.
- \* (What could be more important than raising godly children?)

*Conclusion:*

Christian women need to understand that God has big plans for them, with their children! This involves training and discipleship, so that the process of the Great Commission (Mat.28:18-20), begins at home, with the family. “The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil, all the days of her life...her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her, saying, ‘many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all’” (Prov.31:11-12, 28-29).

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<sup>2</sup> E. Morgan, “The Puritan Family, Religion & Domestic Relations in 17<sup>th</sup> Century New England,” 1966, p.66.

## *The Biblical Wife -Conclusion*

We have seen that it is part of a wife's internal constitution, to want to help her husband. Even ungodly women (like Jezebel, and Haman's wife), in their fallen and perverse way, tried to do this. Every wife is structured by God this way, but through a misunderstanding of the nature of subjection, inhibition, or even intimidation, it won't always happen. Some men (I regret to say) are afraid of their wife being forthright and confident in their expressions of support, as though this represents some form of threat to their leadership.

Fundamentalist churches have sometimes been afraid of assertive, confident females, as though they were merely manifesting feminism, and thus, humanism. This is understandable, but unfortunate: it is a matter of the woman's motivation. Abigail wasn't a feminist; neither was Rebekah, or any of the women we have looked at. A confident woman with the capacity to take initiative, whilst in subjection to her husband's lawful authority, will always be a great asset to her family, and church. The critical attribute is, *strength in submission*.

*It's striking to note how many of the Bible stories featuring women pivot around each woman's willingness and ability to speak, and speak well. From Esther's boldness and tactfulness, to Rebekah's initiative to be warm and gracious, to Abigail's diplomacy and winsomeness, to Ruth's respectful but bold address, to Deborah's good counsel, and more, the communication skills of biblical women are often in fact a major plot point — and point of praise. The aptness, eloquence and poetry of their words are striking examples in themselves.<sup>14</sup>*

Belshazzar's wife, and Pilate's wife (along with all the women described here), had a number of desirable things in common:

- 1) *They were trying to help their husband.*
- 2) *They had significant wisdom and insight into their husband's situation.*
- 3) *Somehow (perhaps it is a woman's intuition!), they knew something about their husband's responsibilities, that their husband had no knowledge of.*
- 4) *They were powerful, influential women.*
- 5) *Their contribution was sometimes great: they were history makers.*

Now, if only one of these womens' stories were recorded in scripture, we could be forgiven for thinking, "Well, she was rather different, wasn't she? But she's not an example that people can follow today." But God, (through His Holy Spirit's inspiration), has chosen to record the conversations and interactions of these *many* couples, spaced over some 2,000 years of Biblical history.

Why?

I believe that He has gone to some pains, to show us how godly wives in history have behaved, and consequently, how they should behave today! What would have happened, for instance, if Abigail had not acted as she did? No sensibleman wants to be married to a woman without an opinion—a contribution to make. Women are to be "husband-helpers," but that doesn't mean they are to be subservient door-mats: they are to be women with initiative, forethought and great

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<sup>14</sup> The Bodkin daughters: [www.VisionaryDaughters.com](http://www.VisionaryDaughters.com)

wisdom, coupled with propriety, in their service of God and their family. “Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future” (Prov.31:25).

*Conclusion:*

Whoever said, “Oh well, I’m just a wife?” Why should you, as a godly wife today, be any different in your influence and legitimate power, to any of these wonderful women? Speak to your husband about these issues, and refer them to him. Then ask God, to give you the grace, to help your husband and family. They were not meant to be without your help, and by His grace, you can help them!

*A wise woman builds her house (Prov.14:1).*