

What is a Woman?

Recovering a stolen identity

By Shane Haffey

Part 1

There is an age-old saying you are probably familiar with when it comes to counterfeit currency: to detect the false note you must be familiar with the real note. Every so often I've paid for goods and services with a crisp \$100 bill. One of the first things the cashier does is hold that bill up to the light to see if it is authentic. So also, affirming biblical inerrancy carries the understanding that the Scripture is absolute infallible truth. Thus, to identify the error, you must start with the truth, and the more saturated with truth the more equipped to recognize what is false. Whatever the culture is handing us we must hold it against the light of God's inerrant, all-sufficient and authoritative Word to discern whether or not, and to what degree, it is true or counterfeit. When it comes to gender identity our culture is circulating mounds of counterfeit currency. Sexual confusion is at a fever pitch. Ideas, re-definitions, and newly invented words are utilized to undermine centuries of biblically rooted sexual identity markers. It has reached the point wherein the average person cannot even define what a man or a woman is. This confusion is the cumulative result of the generational decay of truth.

Our nation is staggering from the failure to believe truth. Centuries of progressive feminist ideology dovetailing into today's identity politics and gender policing have done incalculable mental, emotional and physical damage to a woman's identity. Consequently, there is widespread emotional, physical and functional abuse against women accompanied by sexual confusion leading to an array of false identity markers. The culture has been so fully led astray that a woman cannot or will not be defined in the public square.

What is a woman? Well-meaning conservatives, pastors, and teachers have attempted to shed light on this question and have helped diagnose the absurdity of so-called gender fluidity. But, many attempts to explain what a woman is, have come up dismally short. The reason why is the major premise of this article. Namely that the nature of a woman (biblical cosmology) as outlined in Genesis 1-3 is scarcely addressed in the church and thus it is unknown to the culture.

Before this present author begins, I wish to acknowledge that much of what will be addressed is compiled from a lecture given by Eowyn Stoddard entitled "The Stolen Identity of the Modern Woman." Mrs. Stoddard's research and precision in handling of the topic is nothing short of exemplary and proves to serve as a template for how to address a topic of biblical theology.

God defines Women - In the Holy Scripture. God tells why and to what ends He creates therefore, what a woman is, is rooted in the divine design and nature that God has given her. In Scripture God has much to say about the identity of a woman. But first, something needs to be said about God's purpose in all of creation. God has a *telos* (end, fulfillment, goal, or aim). If we don't understand the *telos* of the created object, we won't know its intended purpose and use. *Telos* implies a designer. The natural world continuously informs us that there is a master engineer involved in the creation (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Psalm 19:1; 33:6; 90:2; 139:14;

Nehemiah 9:6; John 1:3; Hebrews 11:3; Romans 11:36). Everything God creates is designed to glorify Him, therefore, God the infinitely intelligent designer has given a specific purpose and goal for how He will be glorified in every creative act. This means gender identity is near and dear to the heart of God[i]. The consequences of ignoring God's *telos* for the crown of His creation, mankind (Ps 8) are immense. The magnitude of loss is beyond calculation. Basic natural awareness present in even the smallest child turns chaotic. The moral ordering of societies is turned upside down. Nations have been torn apart and entire civilizations have been destroyed for ignoring God's plan for male and female (Gen.19:24-25). The stakes are incalculable and permeate every area of culture.

In Genesis 1-3, the idea of man and woman is conceptualized in the mind of God, and all the seeds of redemptive history are sown here – “In the beginning”[ii]. Genesis 1:27 states, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” This means God's glory and mankind's identity are inseparably woven together.

The glory of God in mankind has no less than three qualities:

I. Formal (physical) II. Functional (official) III. Ethical

It is imperative that one pay close attention to the interdependence men and women have in order to fulfill each of these three qualities. The flourishing of a sexed humanity cannot be attained without reliance upon one another[iii].

I. The formal or physical. Although God is Spirit our sexed bodies display something of the attributes of God. Male and female bodies are fitted by God in such a way as to fulfill their task of subduing, ruling, and filling. Fruitfulness, multiplication, and exercising dominion is humanity's assignment as God's kingly representatives (see Psalm 8). Our bodies are wonderfully made and intelligently designed to multiply and be fruitful which can only be done when we *fit* together. As the Apostle Paul indicates, “...neither is woman independent of man nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; ...” (1 Cor. 11:11-12).

The task of reproduction assumes both bodily equality and the polarity of the sexes. Created gender differences are defined both in relation to and in contrast with each other. Created on the final day of creation, the formation of man and woman constitute the climax of a series of physical binaries[iv]. God created the heavens and the earth (1:1). God separated the light from the darkness (1:5). God separated the atmospheric waters from the terrestrial waters (1:7). Sea and dry land, and day from night (1:10;14). This separation continues each of the six days with each separation *dependent* one upon another. As there are no heavens without earth and no dry land without the sea, there are no offspring without the binary of male and female. Male and female are not fluid constructs from below but represent the binary of life bestowed from above[v].

Enter the serpent. Satan is anti-binary. He seeks to remove the distinctions God has created. Consider the “Baphomet” Based on an 1856 sketch of the “Sabbatic Goat” by French occultist Éliphas Lévi. The statue is replete with occult symbolism representing the hermaphroditic union of binary opposites such as human and animal, male and female or good and evil[vi]. But despite Satan's attempts to pervert divine order, God's distinctions stand.

A woman's distinctiveness is stamped by God and cannot be erased or blended away. What makes a woman unique? Her unique traits result in a special *function*. Adam was formed (*ysr*) from the dust of the earth as were the animals. Eve was built (*bnh*) by God uniquely, from the man's body. Eve's body is special. Her body is akin to a home, or a temple, and her womb a sanctuary. The fact that her being was created from Adam's body does not diminish her essential equality with him. Though the manner of the creation of her body is subsumed from Adam, it reveals her physical and familial connectedness to an ontological equality with Adam who is the first representative of humanity[vii]. We would not say that a batch of banana bread is inferior because it was taken from a previous batch of banana bread. The woman is made from man, in relationship to man, and for the man (1 Cor. 11:9).

Adam and Eve's bodily existence and ontological experience are not parallel but deeply interwoven[viii]. Adam recognized the special distinctions of Eve when he saw her for the first time and emphatically rejoiced as if to say, 'Oh finally God!' He says, "This is *now* bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man" (2:23). The two together constitute an essential unity that Adam recognized immediately. The woman's body speaks to this unity and has the responsibility of representing the glorious image of God *through* man.

Eve represents God's image uniquely. The manner of Eve's creation reveals her physical and ontological distinctions. In what ways? **First**, her body is made differently. Eve bears God's image directly while simultaneously deriving it from Adam's flesh and blood. In other words, as *Adam* (son of the earth) is formed from the dust of the ground, Eve's ontological equality is derived from his body. **Second**, the place of her creation is different. Adam was made out of the earth, outside of the garden (Gen. 2:8;15). Eve was made inside the garden. Her association with the garden is made repeatedly in the Scripture. Of note is the inference found in John 20 – the woman was in the garden (Mary Magdalene) where she met the true gardener – The resurrected last Adam. In the Song of Songs, the woman's body is described as a beautiful garden sanctuary (4:12). The church, the bride of Christ, is described as a body with allusions to the eschatological temple adorned with Edenic imagery such as pomegranates and palm trees.

Third, the purpose of her creation is slightly different. Adam was created out of the earth's need – he was to till the earth. The woman was created out of the man's need – so that he would not be alone. **Fourth**, identity is found in her name. Her name corresponds to her purpose as "life-giver." This designation is given to her by Adam before she bears a child. She was to be the mother of all the living and therefore help Adam fulfill the command to be fruitful and multiply. She has the unique ability to be inhabited by another human being, and thus her contribution to filling the earth included incubating in her own body the glorious images of God who would in turn fill the earth[ix].

Fifth, Eve is an image-bearer 'squared'. Not physically ladies, but because she can bear and give birth to more image bearers, therefore this would be one of the primary ways she contributes to the exercising of dominion over the earth[x].

II. Function: Woman is to be a helpmate. A suitable helper for the man. Eve's body is both like Adam's and yet different. Yet, their bodies are not merely compatible like a universal remote to a television. Instead, they are designed specifically to complement one another. Like a lock and key. Both by themselves their differences in design have little meaning. Yet, when *married* they 'unlock' the splendor of new life, intimacy, and communion. They are opposites yet, *fit* perfectly together. The woman then brings the fullness of what was previously lacking. It is in this way that woman is man's glory (1 Cor. 11:7). Being the climax of creation, Eve completed

Adam. The seventh day of rest could not have taken place without Eve's glorious contribution to a completed creation[xi].

The creation account can be divided into two main stages.

First, the *forming* stage – Naming, taming, dividing, and ruling. **Second**, the *filling* stage - glorifying, generating, establishing communion, and bringing forth new life (nourishing)[xii]. The woman is placed at the apex of the filling stage. She is primarily called to fill and glorify the structures man establishes and the world he subdues. Man builds the house, and the woman beautifies it and fills it with life. As he forms, names, tames, governs, establishes the foundations, and proclaims the knowledge of God while zealously guarding moral boundaries, she follows him by bringing life, intimacy, communion, nourishment, beautification, emotional vitality, joy, and completion. The woman completes the man so that neither sex accomplishes their task alone. They must rely upon, cooperate with and assist one another. Thus, it is important to note that their loving one-flesh relationship is ordered toward *mission*. This mission is to expand God's glory and fruitfulness into the world through *labor* and *offspring* [xiii].

It is God's purpose for humanity that men and women work together, and raise children and that God would graciously provide the means for them to do this through fertilization of both the *soil* and the *womb* [xiv]. Deuteronomy 7:13 states, "He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground..." In contrast to subjugation, she *willingly* places herself "sub-missio" offering up her body in submission to the task. We see then that the essence of the woman was perfectly crafted by God to reflect the essence of His character. God is a God on mission. As the Son willfully and joyfully submits to the Father in the Covenant of Redemption, the woman in like manner, as an act of reverence and worship to God submits to her husband in the covenant of marriage giving a beautiful mirror of the mission that is God's redemptive story.

How does she reflect God and demonstrate His character? All women are called to reflect the glory of God's essence and replicate the feminine virtues which God demonstrates towards His children (See 1 Peter 3; Titus 2; 1 Tim.2:9). God comes alongside us as a *Helper* so we might become fruitful for Him. The Holy Spirit is described as the helper (*paraclete*; Jn14:16,26). God is a life-giving God who feeds and nurtures us. God *communes* with us and shows us His faithfulness by employing "womb" and "rock" imagery. God indicts Israel for failing to embrace these obvious characteristics of His, "You neglected the Rock who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth" (Deuteronomy 32:18). God is depicted throughout Scripture as the rock of salvation while demonstrating nourishing, life-giving strength and safety[xv]. God gives His comforting and stable "womb" and "rock" advocacy through His Spirit. A woman is never more like God as when demonstrating His life-giving, gentle, and nourishing character. As we are seeing, the question, of "what is a woman." goes far beyond biology as her image-bearing is not limited to merely the physical expression of femaleness.

What is a Woman? PART II

Three main counterfeiters steal a woman's identity. These three thieves are present all the way back in the account of the fall. They have been and will be continuously pushing a counterfeit identity until Christ's return. They seek to destroy women through a common thread of lies. We must remember that the battle is always, for the mind (Romans 12:2).

These three thieves are: I. The Devil II. The Flesh III. The World

There of course is overlap here as these three thieves work in a coercive effort as every unbeliever has the devil for a spiritual father (Jn 8:44). The world is under the power of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19) and the flesh has an affinity for worldly appetites.

First, The devil. He's the oldest and most conniving of thieves. He is described as an angel of light, the twisted serpent, the father of lies, the deceiver of the whole world, full of malice, accusation, schemes, destruction, and murder (Jn 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:14; Rev. 12:9; Gen. 3:4-5; Eph. 6:11). His agenda is to destroy the seed of the woman. He hates God, the image of God, and the glory of God. Though he is not omniscient, he has been around at least since Adam so he's had thousands of years to devote to his tireless schemes against the woman and her seed. Though he is not omnipotent he is the most powerful being ever created, and God has allowed him to go "to and fro on the earth" (Job 1:7;2:2).

We are to be acutely aware of his nature and his schemes (Eph 6:11; 2 Cor 11:14). Satan is an 'identity thief' in that he believes equality with God is something to be attained. He abandoned his own identity to pursue another (Ezek. 28:17). He offered a living example of why and how one could imagine transcendence is within reach. He approached Eve with a lie that maligned the goodness of God by pretending to be more trustworthy than God Himself. He attacked Eve's finite reason by presenting her with a plausible exchange: God's truth for a lie (Rom.1:25). As the serpent spoke three little words, "hath God said," the seeds of distrust lodged in Eve's soul. You can almost hear these words being played over and over in her mind, "God doesn't have your best interest in mind. God is threatened by your potential for transcendence." "He created you to keep you down, elevate Himself and eventually destroy you." This same distrust is depicted in Israel's continuous irrational claims that Yahweh had brought them out from Egypt to kill them in the wilderness (Ex 13:3; Num. 11:4; 14:3).

Each aspect of the lie has a corresponding effect that can be traced throughout human history—up to the modern man and woman today. Satan's seeds of distrust can be summarized in the idea that humanity's good and God's glory are not compatible[xvi]. Therefore, since God does not have the creature's best interest in mind, mankind has a right to self-identification and self-determination. The devil's lie also implied that the woman could become her own master and that her 'true self' could only be obtained through rebellion. She could be 'like' God by shedding God's oppressive patriarchal standards. Feminism's insatiable quest for autonomy is lubricated by this lie today.

This lie also implied that liberty is achieved not by practical acknowledgment of God's created distinctions, but instead by the removal of the binaries which can be traced back to the most fundamental of all binaries, the distinction between God and the creation. This pantheistic lie has been the heart of paganism ever since—namely that the Creator and the creation are all one—sharing the same physical and ontological qualities.

In Eve's deception, it became manifest that the bond of intimacy she had with her God and her husband was not enough for her. She wanted more. This is the lie in seed form that the devil planted, and thus Eve was deceived by the allure of power and of independence from God. Her husband was no innocent bystander. He made the decision to stand by and watch the intellectual and emotional manipulation of his wife take place, therefore, failing in his task to ward off evil by crushing the serpent's head. Adam was fully capable and responsible for restraining the exploration of his wife's intuition (Gen 3:6;17), but he did not. Why did Adam abdicate his role of leader and protector? Was Adam driven into passivity by fear? We know Adam was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14). Therefore, Adam must have known God would

punish Eve by death, therefore, leaving him in the state that he was in before God created her, alone. Adam put His own self-interests before God and husbands have been doing this ever since. Satan's attack on the "weaker vessel" (1 Pet 3:7) tested both Adam and His wife, and both failed the test.

Eve had received an identity as a unique image bearer of God with the capacity to bring forth more image bearers. After the fall she loses key aspects of her identity and would consequently bring forth more sons born in iniquity. A double or mutual enmity between the woman and the serpent would then ensue (Genesis 3:15). The enmity placed by God between Eve and the Serpent is the consequence of sin yet, it is also a form of protection from any long-term alliance between the two of them[xvii]. The serpent's seed and the woman's seed will always be at war. Why is that? Because Eve's creational identity stands in radical opposition to Satan's. She is life giver and he is life taker. She is helper, supporter, and nurturer. The evil one is nemesis, accuser, fault finder and defiler.

This enmity is thematic throughout the Bible's redemptive storyline. Her ability to bring life into the world is a threat to Satan's agenda. He knows that her life-giving ability will eventually bring about the "seed" that will bring about his destruction. The offspring of the serpent chasing the seed of the woman runs throughout Scripture, filling the grand *telos* of history, and if Satan cannot kill the seed, then he will attempt to steal her seed, the unregenerate, for his purposes[xviii].

Second, the flesh. This is mankind's fallen human nature. The flesh was and is confirmed in a state of hostility towards God after the fall. It rages against God and hates its dependency upon Him. "For the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot" (Rom 8:7). There is an innate unwillingness existing in the flesh to accept the identity God has assigned and the distinctions He has created. The Apostle John summarizes the flesh's character with a threefold categorical yet not comprehensive description. The lust of the eyes, the lust of sensual and seductive cravings (flesh), and the boastful pride of life. The flesh corrupts the image of God, and the quest for female autonomy is but one permutation of this rejection. Egalitarianism suggests that Eve's act of disobedience against God was not wrong, but instead was the act of a heroine.

Liberation through rebellion is sold to women daily with a bombardment of advertisements, media, and coffee shop chatter. Feminism has cohabitated with queer theology worming its way through the culture, and no doubt would applaud Eve as having 'found her voice' and liberated herself from the Heavenly Patriarch. More on this theme will be discussed in the section on the church's role in proclaiming the purpose and role of women.

Consider how Scripture describes Eve's first sin. When sinful desire grows full term in us it leads to death (James 1:14-15). When Eve's eyes were opened, she immediately realized that her quest for a self-made identity did not accomplish a quantum leap into a state of independence from God but instead brought guilt, shame, judgment, and death. In a moment of twisted irony, her experiment to thwart the creature-creator distinction led her into bondage. She would know good from evil by means of the forbidden fruit, yet to her shock, that knowledge she coveted made her a slave to darkness. Rather than a morally neutral observer conducting inquiry, she would know evil by becoming evil. Yielding to the insubordination counseled by the flesh robs women of their true identity. In the process, God's proper order becomes inverted. The serpent led the woman who then led her husband (Genesis 3:17). The judgment that follows is judgment through inversion. Rebellion brought God's judgment, and judgment brought conflict in the relationship between man and woman, conflict between Satan and the seed, and conflict between

the earth and man. Attempts to invert God's order lead to conflict, chaos, and suffering. In pain, she would bring forth children (Gen 3:16).

For the woman, what once was her strength as life-giver, now makes her vulnerable. Fallen humanity attacks the woman by minimizing and victimizing her through sinful men and fallen structures that were originally designed to protect her[xix]. After the fall, women began suffering immediate exposure. Some examples are polygamy, adultery, rape, and divorce. Before the fall she heard, 'you are my one and only'. After the fall she hears, 'you are my one of many'[xx]. Pornography, a 100 billion dollar financial empire is the rank subjectification of women as objects for self-serving sensual pleasure. In addition, prostitution is both a sinful self-preservation response to her vulnerability as well as the objectivization for filthy lucre. Forced servitude (chattelism).

When men fall away from their created calling, instead of crushing the serpent's head they give their wives up for selfish, self-serving interests and the crushing of women begins. Think of Abraham lying about his wife's identity to save his neck and then standing by while she was added to an Egyptian harem. The crushing of women is seen wherever women are regarded as second-class humans or sexual commodities. All over the world today these sinful structures manifest themselves in a myriad of ways such as sex-selective abortion and infanticide of female babies. Involuntary sterilization of women. Female genital mutilation such as breast augmentation. Rape. Domestic abuse. Violence against women. Pornography. Sex trafficking of women and girls.

III. The World. The world is that satanically energized system of covetousness, wickedness, coercion, envy, malice, manipulation, greed, idolatry, and self-orientation. The world seeks to 'free' the woman right out of her womanhood by claiming she will have much greater spiritual, civil, and familial success by becoming more like a man[xxi]. This way of thinking became more popular in the West in the 1960s wherein, being a woman in the traditional sense began to be regarded as a burden. The sexual revolution radically transformed how women were viewed. Confusion set in; women were told to give up their traditional identity for a more unconventional one. Women were encouraged by the world to embrace their sexuality detached from a creational identity. This allowed women to unhitch their creational ethic and permitted sinful promiscuity and sensual manipulation. Modest, quiet, and soft femininity was replaced by powerful and loud sexual expressions.

Women continue today to be encouraged to weaponize their sexuality to gain independence from oppressive societal structures. Feminism and liberation theology informs the culture that a woman's biology shackles her and that marriage, children, and God's standard for sexuality imprison her. Feminism asserts that a man's biology gives him preferential treatment and encourages women to abandon their burdens and adopt a masculine identity. The message was: the woman's body is no longer a beautifully adorned home that God lovingly built, but a horrible jail cell from which she must escape[xxii]. This new identity for women targeted specifically the differences between men and women and proposed that women should be as sexually free and promiscuous as men, without consequence. The sexual revolution was a destructive campaign against women energized by the Serpents seductive promise of liberation.

Furthermore, the lie included the idea that women, to find fulfillment, need to shake free of their identity to be more like men. Thus, liberty and fulfillment involve ridding oneself of fertility and interdependence with a man in the most fundamental human relationship ever, the covenant of marriage. Consequently, marriage has been degraded, children optional, and caring for the home archaic. We are told today that any attempt to marry and have children should be

treated as a distant second to professional or self-actualizing pursuits.

It is not hard then to see how in the case of abortion, freeing oneself has become the preferred ethic to murder. Liberation through the brave choice for self has become the new standard for morality. Self, over neighbor, establishes a new moral order replacing the oppressive and systemic Christian patriarchy that dominates our historic social structures. The newly assigned vocabulary has framed the argument. For, abortion has been dubbed “women’s reproductive health” or even “family care” assuming language deceptively synonymous with human rights. The world has destroyed its natural cosmological sense that a woman's differences are good and essential to a flourishing society. Like their first mother, women have been emotionally and intellectually deceived into believing that inner human impulses provide a promising new identity from divine purpose.

A second devastating evil along with abortion is the eradication of binary gender. Feminist and queer ideology seeks to remove any vestige of gender boundaries. Ironically it has led to the undoing and demise of their feminine ideology and underscores the irrationality of those that embrace dueling worldviews. What started as social justice for women has proven to trample itself for the even more progressive agenda of “one-ism”[xxiii], the destruction of the distinction between God and man. If a woman is a category that can no longer be defined – What is a woman? – Then her rights cannot be defended. There is a tragic irony here; the movement to liberate a woman comes to full flower in the loss of the definition of a woman. We are told that sex and gender don’t always match and that there are countless gender identities to explore and adopt as if sexual orientation were a limitless set of options like the color palette at the local paint store. Though disguised as pro-woman, today's generation is at its core the most anti-woman generation in this nation's history. Not only is a woman today carrying the burden of trying to be something she cannot be; a man. She is also shouldered with the additional weight of not merely permitting, but encouraging any man who wants to become a woman. It is hard to imagine a competing ideology today as destructively potent as the ideology of biological gender dysphoria. How difficult it is to live as a woman today.

Part III

As Christians, what can we do? The Church’s role in proclaiming the role of woman so that no sphere is untouched (church, family, society). As we have seen, God has made women unique and this is to be lived out practically in all three spheres of society – church, family, and culture. We have also seen that failing to honor God’s design for women by honoring her physical and emotional qualities as well as her strengths and limitations, leads to the dishonoring of women. A society that recognizes God’s grand cosmology for women will flourish, but building a society that fails to properly recognize gender roles dishonors women and leads to pain, suffering, confusion, isolation, and disintegration of her creational identity. This is precisely what we are seeing in our culture; the inability to answer the question: “What is a woman?” Consider the dishonor women receive in the church as they are encouraged to engage in authoritative positions that God lovingly forbids (1 Tim. 2:12). Or the dishonor women receive through attempting to fulfill leadership roles in the family they were not designed for. In all three spheres, the woman is dishonored and has become indistinct from men. All three pillars of society have become weakened as a result. Cementing the female identity in the foundational, God-given creational sense should be an enormous part of the church's ministry. Arresting as it is, we must face the fact that we are here today because of the failure of the visible church to hold the line on identity. The liberal church influenced first-wave feminism and has been

slipping her way down the slope ever since.

It is this author's conviction that the church has failed to lay the foundation of biblical manhood and womanhood at the level of *nature* (cosmology), and we are now paying an incalculable cost. That cost has caused women, often even Christian women, to cast about in a sea of confusion and fear with no compass. Where does the solution lie? Church leaders must gain a solid and serviceable understanding of the male and female binary. They must step up as worthy, approved workmen for Christ by acquiring a robust theology of the sexes founded on God's *telos* for a sexed humanity. Society's rebellion against God's design has led many in the church to embrace the unbelieving world's teaching that women should take on the same roles and duties as men rather than focusing upon her God-given orientation.

Christian scholarship and Bible commentaries are dominated by liberal feminist arguments that both husband and wife should mutually submit to one another. They teach that women may assume leadership roles in the church and that the Apostle Paul's teaching of men and women was merely limited to Greco-Roman culture and has been transcended by our unity in Christ. This failure to teach God's cosmological blueprint for women has hindered conservative churches and has led to so-called complementarian ideas popularized by men such as John Piper and Wayne Grudem that teach that men are to lead in the home and the church but fail to address the third critical component – the civil sphere.

A full treatment of male headship is beyond the scope of this essay. It is critical however that the church embrace a full-orbed understanding of male headship in all three spheres of society and how that relates to God's purpose for women. Zachary Garris in his book, "Masculine Christianity" points out that complementarian theology fails to explicitly root male and female roles to the distinct natures of male and female. It is therefore unsurprising that most complementarians today refuse to apply the differing roles of men and women to the civil sphere and instead relegate gender roles only to the home and church. Garris doesn't mince words when he flatly states,

Sadly, the modern church has traded the biblical worldview of patriarchy for that of our matriarchal and effeminate culture. The Bible calls for men to rule their households, the church, and society. Men are supposed to protect and provide for their families, which puts their wives in a place of honor. Feminism is rebellion against such God-given authority, and it has resulted in women acting like men and men acting like women. Without godly male rule, we are left with single mothers, fatherless children, promiscuity, cohabitation, abortion, rape, women "pastors", political correctness, and a father-usurping government that has duped people into thinking it will fix all our woes. Let us cast off such foolishness and restore our society to the rule of fathers. [xxiv]

Since the cosmology in which gender roles are rooted is ignored, many complementarians feel they cannot, or should not, speak on gender roles outside the home and church. I am not suggesting that only a handful of men bare the blame alone. The colossal failure to equip the church with a robust biblical cosmology is shared universally and has cost the church dearly. Consider that the self-authenticating character of general revelation is God's means of instructing without words (Ps. 19; Romans 1; 2:14-16; Acts 14:17). General revelation is God's testimony in creation and conscience. It points to God's infinite character, essence, and natural ordering of the creation. General revelation is not only inescapable to all men but clear enough to condemn them (Rom.1:20). All men are without excuse for their suppression of God's truth declared in physical and ontological realities. John Calvin said of general revelation, "We thus stress Paul's teaching

that all men do not have a mere capacity for but are in actual possession of the knowledge of God.” [xxv]

This begs the question if God holds unregenerate men accountable to recognize His natural order does Christ not expect the church who has the Spirit of wisdom to acknowledge the differing natures of the sexes and how that would apply in every area of life, not only corporate worship and at home? Herman Bavinck, a 19th-century Dutch Calvinist theologian puts a fine point on the differing natures of men and women when he writes, “Nature teaches this distinction, and no science or philosophy is needed to acquaint oneself with this. Man and woman differ in physical structure and physical strength, in psychological nature and psychological strength; thereby they naturally enjoy different rights and are called to different duties.”

Benjamin Morgan Palmer, a Southern Presbyterian theologian explicitly ties gender roles to these differing natures stating, “Woman is led to this submission by the instinct of her nature... Man is endowed with attributes that qualify him for his more obtrusive position. He is strong, forceful, massive, fond of adventure, and full of dash and courage. The woman is not equipped for her station by the qualities which distinguish her. She is endued with grace and beauty, to win rather than subdue... above all, crowned with that sense of dependence out of which submission springs as an instinct.”

This failure by Christian leadership, albeit by well-intentioned men, has led to an unhealthy spiritual imbalance in the home and the church. It is incompatible to accept patriarchal headship in two dimensions and simultaneously accept an egalitarian approach in the civil since these dimensions are a dynamic integration and not mere separate categories. Consequently, we find a weakened family unit and a weakened church that has embraced the spirit of the age in that women should be sent off like men to pursue careers, maintain political offices, join the military, and lead in the public square alongside men.

Has God determined that the home and the church are unequivocally patriarchal and yet the civil sphere egalitarian? Certainly not. The woman’s cosmology (*telos*) given to her by her Creator cannot lie. A woman’s nature cries out who she is, declaring God’s creational wisdom and plan. Consider this beautiful insight from Jonathan Edwards on the cosmological dance between men and women as it relates to courtship.

We may illustrate the nature of faith, a little consider what are those affections and motions of heart that are proper and suitable in a spouse toward her bridegroom, what are those conjugal motions of soul which are most agreeable to, and do most harmonize with, that relationship that she bears as a spouse. Now it is easy to everyone to know that when marriage is according to nature and God’s designation when a woman is married to a husband she receives him as a guide, as a protector, a safeguard and defense, a shelter from harm and dangers, a reliever from distresses, a comforter in afflictions, a support in discouragements. God has so designed it, and therefore has made man of a more robust [nature], and strong in body and mind, with more wisdom strength and courage, fit to protect and defend; but he has made woman weaker, more soft and tender, more fearful, and more affectionate, as a fit object of generous protection and defense. Hence it is, that it is natural in women to look most at valor and fortitude, wisdom, generosity, and greatness of soul: these virtues do—or at least ought, according to nature—move most upon the affections of the woman. Hence also it is, that man naturally looks most at a soft and tender disposition of mind, and those virtues and affections which spring from it, such as humility, modesty, purity, and chastity. And the affections which he most

naturally looks at in her are a sweet and entire confidence and trust, submission and resignation; for when he receives a woman as a wife, he receives her as an object of his guardianship and protection and therefore looks at those qualifications and dispositions which exert themselves in trust and confidence. Thus, it's against nature for a man to love a woman as wife that is rugged, daring and presumptuous, and trusts to herself, and thinks she is able to protect herself and needs none of her husband's defense or guidance. And it is impossible a woman should love a man as a husband, except she can confide in him, and sweetly rest in him as a safeguard. [xxvi]

The utter confusion of accepting a God-designed cosmology in some areas yet dismissing it in others is a catastrophic failure of the modern conservative church and has crippled her ability to be the pillar and buttress of truth in a culture that despises male headship. Given the current battering ram against patriarchy, this fissure has been easy for the devil to exploit and the church is now paying the price for exposing women to these deceptive and sinful societal structures. Consider that Christian fathers are sending their daughters away from their protective covering and into pagan universities to be exposed to raw egalitarianism and liberal feminist ideology. Women are being indoctrinated and brainwashed by liberal universities that teach women to hate men, become lesbians, and adopt masculine traits. Women in the church are entering the workforce at never seen before rates. Women are encouraged to enlist in the military under combat circumstances and are told their physical, emotional, and mental capacity is no different or poses no threat to others or themselves. This error has led to crass pragmatism that has, inevitably penetrated the two other spheres, the home, and the church. For a fuller treatment of the importance of honoring women in this third distinction of the civil sphere and how complementarian theology has impacted how the church views a woman's identity I recommend Garris' book, "Masculine Christianity." In particular, chapter 11 titled, "Masculine authority beyond the home and church."

IV. The Restoration of Woman's Identity

We know that God's purposes for His creation cannot be thwarted. His natural law stands and His ultimate purpose for women will not return to Him void. How do we know this? Because God has built the purposes for His creation, including womanhood, into the grand story of redemption and this leads us to the centerpiece of this essay and the fourth and final point, the restoration of woman's identity. How does God do it? The gospel message of redemption and renewal restores the stolen identity of women from counterfeit thieves in a most peculiar way. Christ the conqueror unmasks the three wicked outlaws of a counterfeit identity and not only restores the female identity and calling but also expands it[xxvii].

How does He do it? First, from the devil. After Adam and Eve's fall into sin, the remainder of the Old Testament's story of redemption is rooted in the enmity theme between the woman, her seed, and the Serpent. Before the new creational identity can be finally realized with the New Heavens and the New Earth God wants us to see how He does it by highlighting the antithesis of the ultimate divine conflict. God versus the Devil. Ironically, in a twist of divine providence, though the Devil deceived the woman to accomplish his purposes, God deceives the Devil in a demonstration of His superior power and wisdom. God has used women in tremendous ways to accomplish His purposes in bringing about redemption for His people.

Run your mind through the progressive revelation of Scripture. Think of the Hebrew midwives who deceived Pharaoh and were used by God to avert the destruction of God's people.

Think of Jochebed, Moses' mother who like the midwives, refused to follow Pharaoh's edict and hid Moses for three months because she recognized that God's plan of redemption included her 'beautiful' offspring (Heb. 11:23). Consider Rahab's deceit to save the Israelite spies in Jericho. Or recall Esther's cunning to avert genocide and save the Jewish people[xxviii]. Or think of Jael who tricked Sisera by luring him into her tent and then while he was asleep, drove a tent peg through his skull. Though not the final conquest of the serpent, these accounts are harbingers of the promise of Genesis 3:15 – Though the devil bruise the heel of the seed, a reference to the crucifixion, the seed of the woman will one day crush the head of the serpent.

God has used women time and time again to thwart the devil's murderous ways. So it is, Christ comes as the fulfillment of the promise made to Eve. He is the promised seed of the woman. He was born by miraculous conception to the woman who nursed Him on her breast. He went to the cross to boldly face the oldest and most powerful nemesis head-on. In our Lord's crucifixion, He lifted the curse of sin and death. On that cross by His death, He crushes Satan's head while receiving a mortal wound to his heel. In one victorious act on that cross, Christ conquered all three thieves. **First**, the devil - by destroying his plan to stop the seed from bringing about redemption. **Second**, the flesh – by liberating God's offspring through the New Birth from the power of sin and the fear of eternal death (Romans 6; Hebrews 2:14-15). Third, the world – by protecting His offspring from worldly pleasures, philosophies, lies, schemes and destructive false gospels (Colossians 2:8).

This does not mean Satan won't continue to attempt to thwart God's redemptive plan and attack His offspring. We see his fiery darts thrown in myriads of ways. Infanticide is one way. Detach the woman from her protective head, expose her to lies, then go into her womb before birth, a place of protection and nourishment and destroy the seed within her. If the devil can't get to the offspring in the womb, then he will attack the womb itself. Legislative bills are being introduced that would allow for sex change operations to confused children that include double mastectomies for pre-pubescent girls ensuring they will never be able to bear children. And if that doesn't work, there are puberty blockers, hormones, and birth control pills to cut off the ability to conceive. The devil will sling his arrows at the level of education through wicked doctrines that create gender confusion and identity crises among the youngest and most vulnerable. Toddlers are being exposed to 'drag queen' story time events in public libraries. We live in this already, not yet time in redemptive history and Satan is raging because he knows his time is short.

How does Jesus redeem woman and restore her identity? Jesus redeems the woman by revealing the sinfulness of her own heart and by giving her a new identity through regeneration. Though she may still struggle with her sinful lower nature, Christ has broken the controlling power of sin in her life. She now has a new master and a new lover of her soul. This does not mean women won't face particular struggles. She may struggle with singleness or a difficult marriage. However, where sin still manifests the redeemed woman can have confidence that wherever the challenges may lie, she is freed from the dominion of sin to bring forth spiritual fruit for God.

God honors the woman's new spiritual creational identity in that He associates woman with His chosen people. Historically, Israel was often called a woman. Israel is depicted as God's precious wife who was so often oppressed by her sin and who suffers the consequences of self-inflicted wounds. Yahweh describes Himself as Israel's husband who in His condescension made a covenant with her despite her unfaithfulness[xxix]. God judged her for her idolatry, for she went so far as to sacrifice her children to false gods. He could, however, not be angry with her

forever. He promised to liberate her from her oppression by establishing an everlasting covenant with her and by taking her into marriage (see: Hosea).

Marriage between a man and woman today is designed to reflect this everlasting covenant as demonstrated at every wedding by the words, “till death do us part.” When Jesus began His ministry, He understood Himself to be the bridegroom to resurrect His dead bride. John the Baptist, the forerunner spoken of in the Old Testament also recognized Jesus' unique role as husband by declaring, “The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice...” (John 3:29). This marrying of the perfect Son of God with His defiled bride provides the main characters in the greatest love story ever told. The Son of God willingly left His heavenly home and came to earth to seek His lost bride to deliver her from the enemies of her soul and to bring her into a proper relationship with Himself.

He provides the best wine at her wedding signifying the new creation had arrived. He seeks her out at Jacob's well, the historic place of Old Testament engagements to give her pure living water and free her from her sin and oppression. In touching his garment He heals her bleeding and unclean body as the only one fit to cleanse her of her stains. He frees her from demonic oppression and sickness and disease (Lk8:2-3). He blesses her and restores her for service to Him in worship by giving her the privilege of anointing Him with costly perfume and washing His feet with her tears. She is the first to personally see Him after His resurrection and the first to embrace Him. The King redeems his bride by sacrificing His life for her and ransom's her at a great price, the price of His blood.

Jesus treats every woman He encounters with gentleness and the utmost respect and in all purity. His actions stood in stark contrast to the times which viewed the exploitation and abuse of women as deeply engrained into the fabric of the culture. Jesus' disciples were often astonished to see Jesus stooping so low as to even speak to a foreign woman. These are representative encounters of Christ with His beloved bride that demonstrate the tender, loving, protective, and concerned actions of a holy husband.

A woman's God-given qualities make her simultaneously valuable and vulnerable at the same time as we have seen. Jesus recognizes her vulnerability and seeks to protect, care for, and honor her while at the same time providing her a context for accentuating and adorning her feminine qualities. In Christ, women find healing and hope for their future. The cross of Christ is antithetical to human reason. For women, the picture is this, Christ takes what society has cast away or deemed second class and through His Spirit breathes into her life. He restores women to their original creative purpose and renews them by giving them His own life. This glorifies God and provides her with an everlasting source of enjoyment and fulfillment.

Jesus affirmed the purpose of womanhood by expanding that purpose into His kingdom in which women will bare their female identity forever. Jesus affirmed the physical and earthly purposes for a woman in marriage by declaring that marriage is between a man and woman and that no man should separate. Jesus also takes the woman's purpose and greatly expands it beyond the physical and into the spiritual. For example, In Luke 11:27-28 Jesus teaches the spiritual relationship of which holy women are part and parcel, which goes far beyond the maternal. “As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!’” But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” Jesus' statement does not minimize the importance of Mary's role in the miraculous conception at the incarnation. It does however speak to the reality that Mary's ultimate purpose is established through hearing and keeping His Word.

This loving correction Jesus gives is filled with incredible promise. God's plan for women would ensure not only that there would continue to be physical offspring made possible by the preservation of women but that she would continue to bear spiritual offspring by nourishing her children unto obedience to the Word of God. Jesus' emphatic statement demonstrates that a woman's purpose is not merely for temporal utility but instead is joined to God's covenant purposes of redemption. This eternal hope for women is wonderfully articulated in the account of a young woman who had her eyes fixed upon her glorious groom.

In 1859 the great Presbyterian preacher James Henley Thornwell had the opportunity to announce the wedding of his daughter, Nancy. In the weeks leading up to this event, the hundreds traveling would end up at a funeral, not a wedding as she took ill from cholera and typhoid and began a rapid demise. Thornwell, overcome, came to his daughter's bedside in her waning moments and said, "Oh my dear daughter, such tragedy!" She replied, "Father, do not weep. I know my Savior." He said, "But this was to be your wedding, your whole life now before you." She, the youth, yet with greater maturity said, "Father, but I now go to a greater Groom that I am prepared to meet." Nancy Witherspoon Thornwell was laid to rest in a wedding gown, and the tombstone reads: "As a bride prepared for her Groom." [xxx]

Under the New Covenant which Christ inaugurated, a change took place for women. "Go and make disciples of every nation" is a call to fill the earth with spiritual offspring. The Apostle Paul operating within this framework says to the Galatians in 4:19, "my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!" This demonstrates that the entire bridal community has been given the task of raising spiritual offspring in all four corners to populate the earth [xxxi]. Jesus honors the identity and telos of women by assigning that identity to His bride, the church. As such, Christ deals with the counterfeits of this present evil age by dignifying His created binaries. He does so by employing the grand story of redemption to which the binary of man and woman points.

The Apostle Peter recognizing the fallen tendencies that still reside in sanctified men, instructs husbands to 'honor' their wives as an equal but weaker vessel. Honor in this sense means to live in a continuous state of recognition of her feminine cosmology. Honor includes the idea of showcasing her femininity and providing an environment where her quiet and submissive spirit will flourish in reflecting her creator's character. Worthy of our notice is the striking marital imagery coming through in Ezekiel 16:7-14 as God describes Israel metaphorically in the formation of his bride.

I made you flourish like a plant of the field. And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full adornment. Your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown, yet you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and saw you behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord GOD, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus, you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. And your renown went forth among the nations because of your

beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD.

This passage in Ezekiel gives us an already not yet view of the New Creation. Think of the unfathomable privilege bestowed on the church, the bride of Christ, born as it was floundering in her own blood. Consider that as a sole act of sovereign grace, God seeks His spiritually dead and defiled bride out and adopts her by betrothing her to His Son forever. Yet, before the final eschatological wedding is consummated (Rev.21), the wedding to end all weddings, she would be nourished by the Holy Spirit in a divine beautification process through cleansing and purification—her divine groom progressively sanctifying her until that great cosmic wedding of which all earthly weddings typify. "...that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:27). "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2)." She will be a spotless bride for the spotless lamb of God.

In redemption, she receives a new heart through the indwelling Spirit that enables her to reciprocate the love she's been given from her Lord and Savior (Ezekiel 36:25-27). "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). These 'seedling' clues are spread throughout the tapestry of the Old Testament that when mined out provide nourishing food for our souls. You can feel the wonder of the Apostle Paul when he writes "this mystery is profound" as he traces earthly marriage back to its source, a far grander love story between Christ and His church. It is no coincidence that the Apostle quotes what Jesus had said in His ministry as both Jesus and Paul quote Genesis 2:24, "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh... this mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31-32). What Paul is saying to the Ephesians is that the first relationship, a covenant, is a physical picture or enactment of the covenantal relationship Christ enjoys with His bride.

It is amazing to consider, that the plot line established with the first two human beings predated their existence. For, Adam is a type of Christ, and Eve is a type of the church[xxxii]. As this grandeur of redemptive history unfolded, according to the Apostle, it becomes discernable under the New Covenant. Our Lord left His heavenly home and entered our fallen world becoming forever joined to our nature to redeem for Himself an eternal bride. Divine nature became forever 'wed' to human nature in the eternal Person of Christ so that we can glorify the Triune God of the universe in this forever union. Now contrast this holy love story with the counterfeit horror story attempted by Satan back in Genesis 6 which produced a catastrophic flood of divine judgment. Fallen angels who 'left their abode' came to earth to take on the form of human flesh to take human wives for themselves so that they may populate the earth for their lord's purposes. What subterfuge by the devil to produce such an unholy marriage! Yet God's plan to wed His Son to His elect bride would not be thwarted. As the seed would be preserved through the redemption of 8 people (1 Peter 3:20).

In speaking of this great mystery of an eternal union between the incarnate Christ and His bride, Jonathan Edwards puts it this way. "God created the world for His Son, that He might prepare a spouse or bride for Him to bestow His love upon her so that the mutual joys between his bride and bridegroom will consummate the end of creation." Not only will they consummate the end of creation, but they will inaugurate the New Creation ushering in an eternal blissful euphoria. The New Heavens and the New Earth is a place of endless joy where Christ and His

bride, the church, are eternally inseparable unto the glory of God. As mentor and disciple-maker Jay Wegter explains,

The greatest wedding in the cosmos is yet future. All the elect before us prepared for it. Heaven itself is defined by this cosmic union yet to come. Redeemed individuals shall be seated above angels in glory as God's eternal companions and as Christ's beloved bride. The great marriage supper of the Lamb will inaugurate the consummation of God's purposes in salvation (Rev. 19:7-9). We shall be raised to the honor and glory of Christ's estate by virtue of our union with Him (2 Thess 2:14). On that day, all of the bride's distressing corruptions will fall to the ground in an instant. She will be clothed in white and will be without spot or wrinkle. God the Father will present her clothed in splendor and glory, spotless, made ready for her husband. She will be given to the Son of God in a cosmic wedding ceremony to be witnessed by the holy rational universe. Christian marriage is God's object lesson on earth of redemption.[xxxiii]

God's glory story of redemption is the crescendo of all of Scripture. As we see God's plan unfold from seed form in Genesis to an explosion of glory in the book of Revelation we must see how womanhood is thus typological of how God's blessings flow to His bride. Women play a glorious role in God's plan to secure Himself a bride. Through redemption in Christ, there are at least **8** parallels we can find in woman's creational identity, with the bride of Christ.

First, Eve was made in the image of God through the body of Adam. He took on a death-like sleep for His bride to be formed, and from his life, she is created and is organically connected and united[xxxiv]. **Second**, the Church arises through the death of Christ's body and is organically connected to Him, her head. **Third**, Eve was made in the image of the man of dust and the church is remade in the image of the man in heaven. **Fourth**, Eve received her name from Adam and the Church receives her new name from Christ, the last Adam. **Fifth**, Eve receives her life-giving purpose as she is both filled and fills, bearing fruit and bringing glory into the world through her body. The church is the fullness of Christ, His body, bearing fruit for Him and bringing glory to God through the Spirit which indwells her. **Sixth**, in union with and submission to her bridegroom, Eve is given a mission mandate at his side to be fruitful and multiply. The church is given the mandate, the Great Commission, to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth by making disciples of all nations. The bride of Christ produces spiritual offspring born into the world through the agency of churches. **Seventh**, the imagery continues in the order of creation.

Adam existed first and then Eve. This however does not imply inferiority. God builds Eve not from the feet to be trampled on by Adam. Nor from the head to rule over him but instead from the side of Adam demonstrating Eve to be a co-image bearer, equal in worth and dignity. Christ eternally begotten of God comes to earth first, then the Church is created from Him and for Him. Though the Church is inferior to Christ in every way, Christ does not treat her as inferior Lording it over her. In her submission to Him, she finds His yoke is easy and His burden is light. **Eighth**, Eve was made in the filling stage of creation and on the penultimate (second to last) day, before the Sabbath. In like manner, the church is made in the filling stage of the Spirit on the penultimate stage of redemptive history before the Sabbath rest of the New Heavens and the New Earth (Hebrews 4:4;9; Revelation 21:4)[xxxv].

There are two central reasons why Eve is created second. First, Adam needed someone to complement him and help him in his mission. **Second**, Eve, as a type of the church demonstrates her love, respect, and honor to her head. She, therefore, reflects the spiritual

redemptive purpose of the church, to love, respect, and honor her husband which her temporal purpose prefigures. This ‘marriage’ or union is part and parcel to how God has determined to give a physical picture of a spiritual reality, namely that God through His gospel is uniting humanity in Himself, to Himself, and for Himself through redemption (Colossians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Romans 11:36). The fullness and manifold wisdom of God through a sexed humanity is then demonstrated through Christ and His bride (Eph 3:10). Only the infinite wisdom of God could assign such a glorious identity to His creation. It is good to be a woman. Embrace your womanhood!

We need to respect these connections as being typological, that is in shadow form. They are not exact parallels. We must understand that Christ does not need a bride like Adam needed Eve, as if God were somehow lacking in something. Instead, God chooses her to be at His side on His mission. The taking of a bride for His Son is how God will fill the earth through redeemed glory pointers that give a living illustration of God's holy character. These specks of dust turned into radiant stars demonstrate the unfathomable wisdom and power of God in that He takes the most invaluable part of the creation, dust particles from the earth, and transforms them into His elect bride, taking her literally from dust to glory. The prophet Daniel encapsulates the vision, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever” (Dan 12:2-3 NKJV).

Another way to view the wisdom of God in redemption is through the eyes of holy angels. God has determined to demonstrate His power, wisdom, mercy, and grace by taking a God-hating defiled people and sovereignly turning their hearts to Him through the power of regeneration. This redemptive plan is thus witnessed by a celestial community culminating in the cosmically displayed union of Christ and His bride. Holy angels, therefore, witness the otherwise ‘hidden through the ages’ attributes of God by the unfolding of the redemptive storyline, therefore, fulfilling God’s purpose to reveal the fullness of His essence to the angelic hosts who are consumed with the glory of God (Eph. 3:9; 1 Cor. 11:10). This cosmic demonstration to a watching celestial and terrestrial audience is one way the church fills the earth with the knowledge of God. As we are seeing, this reality is accentuated by the high calling of women as this grand redemptive purpose is only made possible through the woman and her seed. What confidence can we have in God’s plan, for in the recognition of the order of creation—the same order is seen in redemption!

Meditating on these realities provides much-needed motivation for the church to live out her responsibility of filling the earth with the knowledge of God including the knowledge of God’s wonderful binary plan for the sexes. This wisdom of God will disarm the three counterfeit thieves that look to rob, kill and destroy the female identity. We must be aware that there are spiritual realities that are major shapers of human existence. For one, the serpent went after Eve, not Adam. The inference is that Adam left a fissure for the enemy to exploit by either not translating properly, or not emphasizing the importance to his wife what God had communicated regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam was to declare the knowledge of God to His wife. Compare Genesis 2:17 with 3:2-3. God said, “but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

The next verse (18), informs us that woman was not yet created when Adam received this Word from the Lord. Later, when the woman responds to the serpent, she says, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God

said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’” She had added to the Word of the Lord indicating that she did not have clear and firm communication with her husband. Interestingly, Paul, the Apostle says that husbands are to love their wives as Christ the Savior loves His church, His body. This includes the idea of being a source of protection by “washing their wives with the Word.” A woman that has been saturated with the Word of God is protected from the enemy’s attacks which seek to exploit her vulnerability.

Fast forward and we can see how this pervasive attack on the sexes is seen in first-wave feminism in the mid-1800s. But, this initial feminist attack was not so much war declared upon patriarchy as it was an attack on the identity of the woman. The evil one’s strategy in these attacks is to separate the woman from her head. A severing of the woman from male headship would ultimately lead to a severing of the knowledge of God. Adam was expected by God to communicate God’s Word to His wife. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians describes what orderly worship consists of declaring, “Women are to be silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak but must be in submission... If they wish to inquire about something, they are to ask their husbands at home...” (1 Tim. 2:12-13). Paul was ordering corporate worship while simultaneously highlighting the familial primacy of God’s order in the communication of His Word. This of course does not mean that a wife cannot read the Word of God or pray by herself. It does however reflect the cosmology by which God’s Word is to be transmitted. Adam, to the rest of the creation. The order for the proclamation of God’s revealed Word was to move from Adam to His wife then, outside the garden. This inside-out pattern would follow in God’s instructions to Israel, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut 6:6-9).

Genesis 3:17 says, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you...” God had given the commandment to Adam, not Eve. Instead, Adam listened not to God but to His wife. This inverted order before the fall led to an inversion after the fall. Specific sin leads to a specific corresponding judgment. The earth would no longer willingly produce for Adam and His wife would no longer willingly submit (Gen. 3:16). God’s pattern has been the same ever since. God’s Word is to be expressed in a patriarchal fashion, from the inside out. That is first to his wife and children, to his extended family, neighbors, and sphere of immediate influence, and then, in the public square. A woman’s sanctification is tied to her receiving the Word of God from her head (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:35; Eph. 5:25-33; Acts 16:31; 2 Cor 11:2).

In the New Covenant, the church takes on the identity of Christ’s beloved, His bride, and the mother of all the faithful. As one reformer puts it,

In this spiritual union, on the one side is Christ in the place of the male and on the other side, the holy church in the place of the female. In Eve’s place who was created of Adam’s side or ‘rib.’ For Christ, the second Adam is the church’s head, her savior, from whose side the church is taken. For He makes the church fruitful by the implantation in her soul of the seed of His Word and by the Holy Spirit, therefore He deservedly occupies the role of a husband. Truly the church has the role of the female and the wife for she is subject to Christ, receives from Christ the spiritual seed, and with her help begets for Himself many sons (Girolamo Zanchi). [xxxvi]

What are the implications of the false identity (or stolen identity) of the modern woman?

First – the identity of the woman was thought of and created by God Himself. Her identity is not a social construct or an idea from an impotent false god who ‘made a mistake.’ Her identity is fixed and is tied to God’s redemptive purpose for all of humanity, reflecting His life-giving purposes for the world. If you are a woman that struggles with your identity or certain aspects of how God has made you, take heart that your heavenly husband knows you better than you know yourself. He can take what is broken, battered, or worn out, and make whole. You are called to be an overcomer but you do not bear this calling alone. Christ has supplied you with His power to realize the full potential of His calling for you. Whether you are single, married, widowed, a grandmother or great-grandmother, as His bride, He does not call you to anything that He has not fitted you for. You can reclaim and embrace your female identity including your body, regardless of what stage or age you’re in or what has happened to you.[xxxvii] Your innate beauty from within will be united with an external beauty in glory. Thus, completing the whole woman. You are a woman, not just in this world but for all eternity. God is glorified when we embrace His distinctions, celebrate them and live them out, even if we are flawed and living in a decaying temporary tent.

Women need to know that Jesus is not embarrassed that his bride is wrinkled or bearing the marks of an unredeemed world. Instead, He has promised to present His bride unwrinkled before God (Ephesians 5:27). Jesus sees the heart which He has miraculously replaced in the new birth. He is not a respecter of the external qualities that fallen men praise. Thus, if God so values the feminine identity so much as to call His church, His bride, and entrust to her His task, how much more should the church herself be a witness to the world about how female image bearers are treated in her midst?

God’s fashioning of women should result in utter respect of the woman's personhood, body, and sexuality. What an unequivocal condemnation of physical abuse. This includes the need to protect the womb as a safe place for future image-bearers to grow and be nourished. For, rape, abortion, and prostitution breach that holy space in demonic and destructive ways[xxxviii]. Even for fallen human beings, there are glorious implications for marriage in this already not-yet phase of redemptive history. Marriage is still and will remain the most accurate and revelatory picture of Christ and His church. How it is lived out will impact outside observers in how they understand the gospel. Christ’s love and sacrifice for His church is the model for husbands to display love for their bride. The church's respect and honoring of Christ are reflected in wifely submission[xxxix]. Both partners submit to Christ in these differing ways for the sake of union, harmonious companionship, and fruitful mission. This picture does have its limitations as they are at best a reflection. This means we should use this typology faithfully and with caution, being careful not to abuse it or take it to self-motivated extremes. However, the order of this institution cannot be reversed by man’s laws or by individual quests for autonomy which would bear false testimony to the gospel.

We are not surprised that the enemy of our souls is focusing his efforts on destroying the family design. For the family is to provide an organic picture of God’s redemptive plan. What does it mean that Christ loves His bride? Well, I see what that looks like with my neighbor who loves and dotes on His bride. He does not dishonor His bride by berating her or speaking negatively about her to others. In like manner, she provides a picture of the love she has received from Christ through her willing, loving, and respectful conduct toward her husband. This gospel portrait provides an example the devil wants desperately to remove.

Husbands and wives are to maintain unity despite the innate and external challenges with

one another for two central reasons. First, because they are ‘one flesh’ (Genesis 2:24). The fact that the woman was part of Adam’s body is part of the basis for saying that a “man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” Since Adam and Eve were one, all subsequent marriages ought to strive to model the same unity. Second, and primary to the purpose of marriage, Paul in Ephesians 5:28-33 reflects this one-flesh union of husband and wife in Genesis 2:24 as the basis for husbands loving their wives.[xl] The reality that Christ loves His bride and zealously guards that unity provides not just the motivation but also the mystical power of Christ to, in fact, maintain that unity despite all external and internal powers that seek to destroy it.

Christ fits His people with the necessary means by which they will glorify Him.

Christ treats His Church as a treasured gift, most precious in His eyes, and to be guarded, protected, cherished, and nourished. Therefore, wives are to be recognized and treated as the treasured gift that they are to their husbands. Until glory, every Christian marriage is to view their marriage in this manner. Husbands should sacrifice for their wives to reflect Christ’s sacrifice for His bride and wives should fearlessly trust their husbands to reflect what the church does with Christ. It is impossible to define what a woman is without demonstrating her divine purpose in marriage.

Finally, Christ in His sacrificial death and resurrection has inaugurated a new creational identity—for the redeemed constitute a new humanity, created anew to be the bride of the Son of God. A spiritually vibrant church and a spiritually healthy society can only happen if there are spiritually mature families. It is by God’s design that families represent the spiritual building blocks of any society. (Genesis 18:19; Malachi 4:6; Luke 1:17; Psalm 128:3; Acts 16:31-34; 1 Corinthians 11:3). The ministry of Christ’s church on earth ought to concern itself with the wondrous purpose of God in creating and redeeming man and woman. For too long evangelicals have been remiss in guarding by teaching and imbuing by instruction, and modeling by example, God’s plan for male and female. For only in patiently and repeatedly laying this foundation will she properly embrace the family as the organic gospel portrait of a world devoid of a God-given identity.

[i] Jay Wegter, Article of the Month - "Make Your Wife Glorious".

[ii] Eowyn Stoddard: "The Stolen Identity of the Modern Woman" Premiered September 29th, 2022 – TruthXChange – a ministry of Peter Jones.

[iii] Ibid.

[iv] Ibid.

[v] Ibid.

[vi] Bauer, Pat. "Baphomet". Encyclopedia Britannica, Invalid Date, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Baphomet>. Accessed 4 January 2023.

[vii] Eowyn Stoddard: "The Stolen Identity of the Modern Woman" Premiered September 29th, 2022 – TruthXChange – a ministry of Peter Jones.

[viii] Ibid.

[ix] Ibid.

[x] Ibid.

[xi] Ibid.

- [xii] Ibid.
- [xiii] Ibid.
- [xiv] Ibid.
- [xv] Ibid.
- [xvi] Jay Wegter
- [xvii] Eowyn Stoddard: "The Stolen Identity of the Modern Woman" Premiered September 29th, 2022 – TruthXChange – a ministry of Peter Jones.
- [xviii] Ibid.
- [xix] Ibid.
- [xx] Ibid.
- [xxi] Ibid.
- [xxii] Ibid.
- [xxiii] Peter Jones – "One or Two: Seeing a World of Difference" 2010
- [xxiv] Zachary M. Garris "Masculine Christianity" pg.101
- [xxv] Cornelius Van Til "An Introduction to Systematic Theology" Chapter 8 Section B (John Calvin)
- [xxvi] A Jonathan Edwards Reader (Yale Nota Bene) Pg. 37 – March 11, 2003
- [xxvii] Eowyn Stoddard: "The Stolen Identity of the Modern Woman" Premiered September 29th, 2022 – TruthXChange – a ministry of Peter Jones.
- [xxviii] Ibid.
- [xxix] Ibid.
- [xxx] <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/song-solomon>
- [xxxi] Eowyn Stoddard: "The Stolen Identity of the Modern Woman" Premiered September 29th, 2022 – TruthXChange – a ministry of Peter Jones.
- [xxxii] Ibid.
- [xxxiii] Jay Wegter, article of the month – "Make Your Wife Glorious".
- [xxxiv] Ibid.
- [xxxv] Eowyn Stoddard: "The Stolen Identity of the Modern Woman" Premiered September 29th, 2022 – TruthXChange – a ministry of Peter Jones.
- [xxxvi] Vol. 24, No. 3, Autumn, 1993The Sixteenth Century Journal, Published by: Sixteenth Century Journal
- [xxxvii] Eowyn Stoddard: "The Stolen Identity of the Modern Woman" Premiered September 29th, 2022 – TruthXChange – a ministry of Peter Jones.
- [xxxviii] Ibid.
- [xxxix] G.K Beale "A New Testament Bilical Theology (pg. 883-4)"
- [xl] Ibid.