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## Q&A#89 Man, Woman, Deception and Authority in 1 Timothy 2

November 4, 2018



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Today's question: "How do we explain 1 Timothy 2:14? On the one hand it appears to have a novel idea that Adam was not deceived in the fall. While on the other it appears to ground the submission of women in a tendency to be deceived. What's going on here?"

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## Transcript

Welcome back. Today's question is, how do we explain 1 Timothy 2, verse 14? On one hand, it seems to have a novel idea that Adam was not deceived in the fall, while on the other, it appears to ground the submission of women in a tendency to be deceived. What's going on here? I'll read the verses in question.

Therefore, I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in

silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression.

Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love and holiness with self-control. There are a number of things going on here. I think the main thing to recognise is that Paul is alluding to the Old Testament narrative of creation and fall in a very brief and summary fashion.

And a few other details to take into account that this is set in the context of worship, in the lifting up of holy hands and public prayer. And it's also in that context that the woman is forbidden in particular from exercising authority over a man. This isn't authority in general.

It's authority over a man. The reference back to the fall, the creation and fall, Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression.

What we see there is the reason given for it is the fall is Adam was formed first, then Eve. And then the second part, which is appended to that, it's not the main reason, but it's appended to it. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression.

What I think is being referred to here is the creation account of Genesis 1-2 and then the fall account of Genesis 3. The second part explains what went wrong and how that original order was disrupted. So what is the significance of the fact that the man was formed first? The man was formed after the animals. That doesn't mean that the animals have authority over the man.

What is Paul getting at here? I think we need to go back to Genesis 1-2 and 2 particularly and recognise that the creation of the man, the man is created in a liturgical setting, in the setting of worship, in the context of the sanctuary. So he's created, actually he's created first out in the world and then set within the context of the garden where God walks, where God is present, where there is the proper, the divine food in the centre of the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the man is set in the garden as the one who acts as the priest within it.

He's the one who has to uphold the boundaries between good and evil, to uphold and to teach the law, to guard and to serve the garden. So he maintains the boundaries and he serves the garden. And those are the same roles that we have for the priests and the Levites later on in Numbers and elsewhere.

So what the man is, the man is set up as a priest and then the man is equipped and appointed by God and God teaches him some basic tasks. So first of all, the man is set within the garden as a priestly calling. He's originally created to till the earth.

That's what he will end up doing. But he's placed within the garden first and within the garden he acts as priest. Then we have God bringing the animals to him to name.

And as part of that, as the culmination of that, God brings the woman to the man and the man names the woman. And that bringing of the man to the woman is something that she is brought under his protection and his care. He has to serve and guard her as he has to serve and guard the garden more generally.

The commands given concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are given to Adam in particular before Eve was created. But he relays those commands to Eve when Eve is tempted by the serpent. What the serpent does, the serpent takes information that Eve had received firsthand from God in Genesis chapter one, verse 29.

And God says, see, I have given you every herb that yields seed, which is on the face of all the earth and every tree whose fruit yields seed to you. It should be for food. And so the serpent says to the woman, has God indeed said you shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And then the woman responds to him.

But what the serpent has done is he has taken that one command that Eve received firsthand and he plays it off against the command that she received secondhand from Adam. And Adam is in the position of the priest. He's the one who guards and keeps the garden.

He's the one who has the peculiar responsibility to maintain the boundaries and uphold the order. And the serpent, it is not accidental that the serpent approaches the woman. She has not received the command firsthand.

And so she's in a position to be misled to a degree that the man is not. And what we see is that the woman is deceived by the serpent. And she says that as much, that the serpent deceived me and I ate.

Whereas the man just blames the woman for giving him the fruit. He doesn't say he was deceived because he wasn't deceived. He knew God's command concerning the tree.

And so there was no firsthand information that could be played off against secondhand information. It was all firsthand information for him. And when God challenges him, it's important to notice that God challenges Adam in particular about the command concerning the tree.

And on both occasions that he does so, he challenges him in verse 11 and in verse 17. And in both cases, he challenges him by saying the tree that I commanded you, you singular, you shall not eat of it. You singular again.

This is a command that was given very specifically to Adam. And of course, it applied to Eve as well, much as the commands that applied to the high priest applied to other

people who work alongside the high priest under his leadership. But this applied to the man in particular.

This was given to the man. This was his particular task to guard the garden. He was set in the garden to guard and to keep it.

The woman was there as a helper. But the whole concept of helper involves being a helper and a task that is or some concern that is that of another. And so the primary calling belongs to the man.

The woman is given to the man as a helper. The man is formed first and then the woman. That does not mean that the woman is less than the man or is subjugated by the man.

But it does mean that the man's vocation takes the priority. It's the one that comes first. The man has the calling and the woman is there to help the man in his wider calling within the world and for his greater purpose.

Now, that does not mean that she does not have a calling of her own. It does not mean that there's not greater calling that they share. But it does mean that the man's calling comes first and the man's calling does not mean that the man is greater than the woman.

Rather, it means that in the order of God's in the order of service, the man's calling comes first. Now, what that means is similar to a master commanding two servants and the master commissioning one servant with a primary task. And then the second servant creating that second servant to help the primary servant.

That does not mean that the primary servant is the boss over the secondary servant, the one that's supposed to help him in his task. They're both under the authority of their master. But there is an order to their tasks and there's a priority to the task of the man in this situation.

So the man is created first. He's placed in the garden. He's given a priestly role of guarding and serving the garden.

And the woman is not given that role in the same way. And this is important when we come to issues of authority within the church, the home and other situations like that, because the garden situation is a paradigmatic situation. This is not just a random place.

It's a temple sanctuary type context. It's the place where God walks. It's the place where there's the holy food in the center.

It's the place where God's presence is found. It's the place where there is the order of the sanctuary. And so the man is particularly responsible for guarding this and upholding

this, for representing God's authority in the world.

And this is one of the reasons why the task of naming is particularly given to the man. The animals are brought to the man to name. He's the one who commissions, who is the key authority figure.

He represents God's rule in the world in a particular way, in a way that the woman does not to the same extent. The woman represents the filling tasks that we see in the second three days of creation, more than the forming tasks. The forming tasks, establishing the boundaries, upholding the boundaries, naming, taming, ordering, dividing, those tasks primarily fall to the man.

He's the one who guards the boundaries of the garden. He's the one who will lead in the task of ordering and taming the world. And he's the one who leads in the task of naming.

God named on the first three days. And then the task of naming the animals and creatures of the next set of three days falls to the man. And so God is apprenticing the man in his calling.

God is father. The man is son. And God and God as father brings a woman to the man, to his son as a bride.

He's God. The father is the one who trains his son, Adam, to do his work within the world, to follow his model. And there are very distinct gender differences within the context of the Genesis account.

And people tend to zoom in on isolated texts like the concept of helper and abstract that from its original context and think about concepts of God being helper, these sorts of things. But we need to place these things in the original context. See what God is doing.

See the differences between the way the man and the woman are formed. See the way that the forming and filling tasks of the original creation are recapitulated in the second account and the way that the man and the woman play a role in that. And there is a distinct weight of these callings that fall differently upon man and woman.

And this is one of the reasons why we need to be very careful about taking certain concepts and abstracting them from context. So, for instance, the image of God is particularly focused upon the man. Now, people are shocked by that because the image of God concept is the concept that we use to define humanity and within many evangelical contexts and conservative contexts.

But within its original context, it's very much focused on the relationship between father and son. The son is the image of the father. He represents the father's authority, power within the world.

He's the one who acts in the father's authority. He symbolizes the father and he's the one who upholds the order. And so the image is particularly focused upon the man.

And this is something that we see more generally in scripture. The concept of image is focused on Christ, the son. And Seth is the image of his father.

And when Adam begets Seth, Seth is begotten in the image of his father. He represents his father's authority. He symbolizes his father's rule.

And that relationship is a very key one. That father-son relationship is a lot of what's taking place in Genesis chapter 2. The father who creates a son in his image, who trains him in, who commissions him to God, his inheritance, his territory, and who trains him in his work and who brings a bride to him. And so these are very gendered concepts of the human calling.

So the man being created first is Paul's shorthand of speaking of this broader creation order. And then the woman is brought to the man and the woman brings filling, glory, perfection, all these sorts of things. And this is something, again, we see more generally in scripture that the man is created very much to, he's associated with authority and rule.

He's the one who the task of dominion chiefly falls to the man. And this is something that we see on the first three days. Those three days are primarily associated with that.

The second three days, the days of filling, glorification, perfection, days of establishing communion, life, and children, offspring that will inherit. It's about forming a situation where there is a filling out of the order that has already been established. So, for instance, we see the children appointed to God, the inheritance, to protect the inheritance on the fourth and the sixth days, particularly.

So the sun and the moon in the heavens and the man and the woman on the earth. And then when we read the concept of the image of God, in the image of God, God created man in his image. In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them. This follows the logic of Genesis chapter two. The man, the humankind is created in God's image.

And that's the man in particular. The man is the paradigmatic human. He's the one who represents humanity.

We don't talk about Adamic, Evian humanity. We talk about Adamic humanity because humanity finds its source and its primary symbol in the man, whether that's Adam or whether it's Christ. And the woman is the one that fills and glorifies and perfects and brings that to its completion.

But the primary symbol, the primary source of humanity, the primary image is associated with the man. Now, what we have then is the filling out of that. And within Genesis chapter two, the woman is created to bring glory and life and all these other things that the man cannot bring.

If the man were left alone in the world, he could represent his father's authority, but there'd be no filling out and glorifying the world. The world would, there would be some order within the garden, but there'd be nothing of glory and filling and communion and life to be present within it. And that's what the woman brings in particular.

And again, we need to notice the relationship between man and woman and the way that that plays into the order of Genesis one with the first three days, second three days, and then how that relates to the work of Christ and the work of the spirit. The work of the spirit is particularly associated with the work of women in various ways. The spirit is the one who brings glory, life, communion, the future.

The spirit is the one who generates and regenerates. The spirit is the one who groans and birth pangs within us. The spirit is the one by whom Christ is conceived in the womb of Mary.

The spirit is the one who is associated with the bride. The spirit is the one who forms the bride. The spirit is the site of communion.

The spirit is the one who forms God's home with us. The spirit is the one who fills. The spirit is the one who establishes children and heirs.

And in all of these respects, we see that God's own creative work is reflected in the work of man and woman, but in a differentiated way. The man is particularly associated with the primary tasks of the beginning, the forming tasks that begin the calling. And it's worth remembering that these tasks correspond to the original problem of creation, that the earth is formless and void.

And what do you do with something formless and void? You give it form and then you fill it. And so the first three days are days of forming. And then the next three days are days of filling.

And in Christ's work, we see Christ forming, naming, taming, ordering, dividing, conquering, establishing. And then the spirit is the one who fills, who gives life, who perfects, who glorifies, who brings beauty, who brings life and wholeness and all these sorts of things. And completes what Christ has started.

And so the first word, the beginning, is associated with the man, the one that gives the foundational word, who upholds the boundaries. The authority comes from the man. The authority is particularly associated with the word of the father and the power of the son.

Now, what we have at the end is a movement towards the spirit and a movement towards the bride. So we start off with Adam in the garden and then we end up with the revelation of the bride. The man created in the garden is created as the image of God, as a union of heaven and earth.

And then the woman is formed out of his side. So the man is created first as the image of God. And then the woman is created as a second stage.

So God created man in his image, humanity. In his image, he created him. Him, singular.

The man, Adam. Adam is the singular man that comes first. And then male and female, he created them as a second act.

God creates the woman out of the man's side and creates them as a pairing. But the man comes first. And the man is not just, the original creature is not just a generic human being that is then divided into two separate human beings that are distinct from the original.

The original human being is Adam. Adam is created first. And we see this even within the original account that the man, the male, is treated as the agent to whom God has revealed things that he hasn't revealed to the woman.

So the order concerning the tree, the commission to God and to serve the garden. Again, that's given specifically to the man. Now, getting into Genesis chapter three, what we see is the overturning of this order.

That the man who's supposed to be guarding the garden, who's supposed to be serving and upholding that order and protecting his wife, he allows his wife to be deceived, perhaps to use her as a guinea pig. He is not deceived. He has received the command firsthand from God.

What he is doing is not being deceived, but directly rebelling against the command of God. And so these are very different situations. What we have after this is the condemnation of the man for his failure.

The man is particularly culpable. The sin of humanity is the sin of Adam in particular, even though the woman took of the tree first. It is Adam's sin because Adam was the priest.

Adam was the one who was supposed to guard the garden, who was supposed to protect it, who was supposed to uphold its order. And he was created for that task. He was created with that rule and that authority.

To represent God within the world and his authority, to symbolize God's rule. And when he failed, the whole order broke down. That enabled his wife to be deceived because he



didn't intervene.

He didn't guard the garden and protect its boundaries. He allowed the serpent in unhindered and unaccompanied. And he allowed the serpent to speak to the woman and to mislead her.

And he took the fruit himself. Without any question, he just meekly goes along. And so the sin is particularly that of Adam.

And when the sin is challenged, it is Adam in particular who receives the condemnation. It's Adam in particular who receives the blame for what takes place. The woman is associated with the promise.

Adam in particular is the one who dies. The woman is the one who is associated with life thereafter. She is the one from whom the promise seed will come.

She is looking for a man from the Lord, as we see later on when Cain is born, because her man, Adam, has died. He's not going to be the one that's going to bring her salvation. Rather, she's waiting for seed, someone from whom promise and life and victory of the serpent is going to come.

And so in this situation, there's a breakdown of the order. And the breakdown of the order comes from the man failing to go first, failing to exercise authority in the garden. And it comes from a situation where the woman takes the lead.

And this is within the context of a sanctuary garden, in the context of original worship type context where God is present. And so Paul relates this to the context of worship in 1st Timothy 2, because it's a very apt connection. And this connection is found in creation itself.

The woman was deceived because the man did not uphold the order of creation. And so Paul is very concerned that the order of creation be upheld. And the point is not that the woman is more easily deceived just as an individual, but rather the social order is threatened when men are not in that position, where men are not guarding the boundaries and women are vulnerable and men are culpable in this situation.

And so a woman exercising authority over a man is a problematic position. It's a situation where we're recapitulating the order of the fall. And that is a concern for Paul.

And so he alludes to the context of creation. And then he also alludes to, in the process of the woman being deceived, the man not being deceived. These are themes that are played out throughout the Old Testament.

These aren't just novel themes to 1st Timothy chapter 2. We see throughout the Old Testament this theme of the woman deceiving the serpent, the tyrant. And that is

precisely a poetic reversal of the original theme. The point is that the woman is getting her own back on the serpent.

And if the woman had not been deceived, then that would not make sense. And the whole point is the woman was deceived in a way that the man was not. The man knew what was going on.

He knew the commandment. And so he could not be deceived concerning it. The has God really said Adam knew full well what God had really said.

The woman did not. And so the serpent had that leverage over her that he did not have over the man. And we need to recognize that in establishing that original order, in the order of creating the man first, in the order of training the man in the task of placing the man in the garden first to God and to serve it, and then training the man in the task of naming and ordering the creation and giving the man the particular calling to till the earth that God was establishing a difference that needs to be maintained within the creation more generally.

This needs to be maintained in the new creation as well. This is not something that just goes away in the church that we can leave behind. This is the way God created things.

It's not just something that arrives after the fall. Then Paul goes on to say that these themes that he explores in Genesis don't end with the fall of the woman and the man and the woman being deceived. It ends on the note of promise that, as I mentioned yesterday, I think it was.

Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love and holiness with self-control. And so he's been talking about Eve and he's continuing to talk about Eve. She shall be saved in.

She shall be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith. And so Eve is connected with her daughters. Eve is the one who fell in deception.

And now her daughters, in the context of First Timothy, are tempted to repeat her sin in different ways. But they need to rather take hold of the promise that was given to Eve. That Eve would be at the very heart of the salvation.

That Eve would be the one that would bring the seed. And that promise is still associated with the work of women in particular. If we look throughout the Old Testament, we see the themes of the seed of the woman, the serpent and the woman in that struggle.

That's a theme that continues throughout. Whether it's Pharaoh seeking to kill the baby boys and the women, whether that's the Hebrew midwives or whether it's Jochebed or Miriam deceiving him. Or whether it's figures like Michael protecting the seed David and against the serpent Saul.

Or whether it's someone like Esther with Haman or whether it's all these different figures that we see within the Old Testament, Rahab and the men of Jericho. These different accounts are associated with the seed of the woman, the serpent and the woman in struggle. And we see that theme again in Revelation chapter 12.

And so the woman is in many of these cases very strongly associated with childbearing. Now, if we were telling the story of salvation, we would tend to begin with the man coming on the scene, the deliverer figure, the one who's going to win the victory, all these sorts of things. And he goes out and he fights these battles, things like that.

But God's stories of salvation begin in a different place. The story of the Exodus begins with Jochebed, with the Hebrew midwives, with Miriam. The story of the kingdom begins with Hannah.

The story of the gospel begins with Elizabeth and with Mary. And this is not accidental. That the faithful calling of these women is the means by which God's salvation is brought into the world.

God's way of telling the story of salvation is one in which women receive a very prominent role at this very key pivotal points. And precisely because this task of childbearing is seen as freighted with the greatest weight of the promise. This is the means by which God is going to defeat the serpent, by the woman's bearing the seed and protecting that seed.

It's what we see in the story of Ruth, that Ruth's ingenuity and Naomi's ingenuity in this plan and the marriage to Boaz, that that is a means by which the seed will come about. It's what we see in a number of occasions in scripture that the calling of childbearing is not this sideline thing, but is rather front and center of God's redemptive purposes. And putting all of this together, Paul is suggesting that the order of creation is not just abandoned in the new covenant.

Rather, there is a re-declaration, this renewed declaration of the order of creation within the context of Christ's work. That within the church, this order should be restored, not just overcome or rejected. And so the calling of women to bear children, and that is not just women stay at home and bear children, that sort of thing, and stay out of the public square.

That's not the point that Paul's making. And part of what we can see here is that he's saying that she will be saved in childbearing if they continue. What he's doing is he's connecting the women in that context and their childbearing with the great promise given to Eve.

The original promise of the gospel that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. And he's saying that this promise has not ended. And the promise that was given

to Eve, she will be saved through her daughters as they live out this calling.

And so he's not sidelining these figures. Rather, he's giving a significance to this task of childbearing that it does not otherwise have. And within our society, it can often be marginalised.

And the significance that it has is huge within scripture. And Paul's restating that. It has not ceased to have that significance.

And just because Christ has come, that does not mean that the whole concept of seed just ends at that point. Rather, the seed of the woman are still, there's still the seed of the woman being formed. And that seed of the woman is particularly related to the church now.

But the seed of women as they bear children are taken up into the life of the church. One of the reasons why we celebrate infant baptism, because we do not believe that the promise given to Eve has just found its complete terminus in the story of the work of Christ. But it's something that's worked out in the rest of the woman's children.

There are a lot of things going on there. I could flesh out another point. But what we see here, I think, is a deep drawing upon the Genesis narrative.

An allusion to it in a very sketched out form. But recognising that there's a lot going on in that story. And when we pay attention to it, we will see why Paul is speaking about women in the church and authority and these sorts of themes in the way that he is.

Why he's referencing childbearing and giving that specific significance. Because childbearing or the childbearing is associated with the seed of the woman that will defeat the serpent. And that's Christ, but it's also the church.

I mean, if we look in Romans chapter 16, Paul talks about the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. That the promise is not just the seed of being Christ, the Messiah. It's the seed as everyone who belongs to the Messiah.

This seed of the woman more generally. And so Paul is referring to this original order, both in its original created state, in its fallen dysfunction. And how that dysfunction reveals why we should not repeat that dysfunction.

And then in the promise that follows after the breaking down of the order. And the promise of salvation that continues to be in effect. And as women live out this calling, they will overcome the tyrant.

They will defeat the serpent. And they will be saved in this task as they continue as the daughters of Eve. So I think there's a lot of things going on here.

I think it helps to explain why Paul speaks in the way that he does. And it also helps to

draw our attention back to Genesis. Because there's a lot of things going on in Genesis that we generally don't pay attention to.

Because we're not thinking about the narrative, we're thinking about just isolated verses from it. And so I suggest go back to the narrative of Genesis 1 to 3. Read it very carefully. And then read Paul.

And I think Paul would make a lot more sense at that point. Thank you very much for the question. If you have any further questions, please leave them on my Curious Cat account.

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