

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – Leaders in Israel – 21-27 December 2019

Christ would have us learn lessons from the leadership in ancient Israel. Nehemiah and Ezra fed the people with the word of God. We read of this: “And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them” (Nehemiah 8:12).

True leaders are compared to shepherds. “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1). The word “Shepherd” is rendered from feeding. A sheep, of all other domestic animals, requires gentle treatment; harsh usage disconcerts it. It cannot be driven, but must be led; and only the one who feeds and cares for it can lead it. From the fact that the two greatest leaders in Israel – Moses and David – were shepherds, and that the King of the universe is the “Great Shepherd,” we may know God’s idea of royal authority, of fitness to lead. In God’s plan, to lead is not to domineer, but to offer service. Christ feeds the flock with His own body, and thus demonstrates His right to lead. The problem in Israel was bad leaders, but as that apply to us, ours is not only bad leaders but also a reversal of leadership role. Of leaders in Israel, read the Lesson, as we turn to the thorny issue of women versus men leaders in Adventism.

It is important to note that the leadership role as ordained by God was a male role from creation and God has never changed His will. From creation, men and women were distinct. God tells us how He feels when gender lines are ignored. “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God” (Deuteronomy 22:5). God did not create men and women in the same way. God made man out of dust, and He made woman out of man. “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Genesis 2:21, 22).

God named man, whereas man named woman. “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23). “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20). God established that husbands should be the servant-leaders of the home. “Unto the woman he said, ... thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16). Now, we must not rush past this verse. Some have argued that the passages regarding man’s leadership role reflect the biases of a male-dominant culture. But notice that the command in Genesis 3:16 came directly from God, not from John or Paul.

The Lesson on the Sunday section includes a woman, Deborah, on the list of leaders in Israel. The context of Deborah is clear. God tells us that women should not rule over men. “I suffer [permit] not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man” (1 Timothy 2:12). The only times when women ruled over God’s people were when men were too fearful and weak to lead as in the case of Deborah when Barak failed his man-role (Judge 4:8-9) or in times of apostasy (Jezebel and Athaliah). But it was not pleasing to God, as He lamented: “As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths” (Isaiah 3:12). In Adventism, Ellen White was not a leader; she said: “I want it to be understood that I have no ambition to have the name of leader, or any other name that may be given me, except that of a messenger of God; I claim no other name or position” (Letter 320, 1905; 5MR 439.1).

God’s Word equates the authority of man over woman with the authority of Christ over man. “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3). Christian wives should willingly acknowledge the headship of their husbands. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Ephesians 5:23, 24). “Teach the young women to be ... discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:4, 5). “Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement” (1 Peter 3:6). Marriage is not a dictatorship, but a partnership where the husband fills the role as a

senior partner. Husbands are to be servant-leaders in the home in the same way Jesus came to love, serve, and lead His church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). Male leadership is not a license for tyranny. God will judge those churlish men as He did Nabal (1 Samuel 25:3, 10, 25, 38).

But what about equality? We need to discern the great truth of true equality as it is in Jesus, for He is our great example. The Jews of His day said Jesus made "himself equal with God" (John 5:18) by saying that God was His Father. Jesus was equal with God His Father because He "received all things" from His Father (John 13:3, 35; Matthew 11:27; 1 Corinthians 15:24, 27). All things: His life (John 5:26; 6:57), His name (Hebrews 1:4; Philippians 2:9; Exodus 23:21-23), His glory (John 17:22), His throne (Revelation 3:21), and His power of authority (John 10:18; Matthew 28:18). All things, Christ has received from God the Father "the great Source of all" (DA 21.2). The Son of God is equal with God because God is His Father and therefore "by inheritance" (Hebrews 1:4) Christ has the same divine nature, "being in the form of God" He is "equal with God" (Philippians 2:6). So also, men and women are equal in human nature; they are "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). And just as "the head of the woman is the man" so also "the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). Men are to give all things to the women they love except the headship decided by God.

The root cause of women's equality crisis in Adventism is the natural result of accepting the absolute co-equality of a triune deity which must deny the true Father and the true literal Son. The trinity doctrine that teaches the error of absolute co-equality between the Father and the Son is the root cause of women ordination crisis. The equality crisis started in heaven when Satan, knowing fully well that Christ was the literal Son of God and that Christ had no absolute co-equality with His Father, knowing the Father only is without beginning, Satan despised the equal authority of his creator and Son of God. We are told how it was resolved: "The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself that Christ, His Son, should be equal with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was His Son to work in union with Himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out His will and His purposes but would do nothing of Himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in Him" (1SP 17.2).

Prior to the crisis in heaven, the order of heaven was this: first in authority was God the Father, next was the Son, and next was Satan. "The Son of God was next in authority to the great Lawgiver" (2SP 9.1; LHU 24.2). "Satan's position in heaven had been next to the Son of God. He was first among the angels" (1SM 341.4). "Satan, the chief of the fallen angels, once had an exalted position in Heaven. He was next in honor to Christ" (RH, 24 February 1874). Christ was next in authority behind His Father, and the third highest being was none other than Satan himself. To maintain his third position, Satan has since created the trinity, and to "be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:14) Satan has declared an absolute co-equality of a triune deity which must role-play the Father and Son. Having distorted the true order of divinity, by the error of absolute co-equality between Father and Son, Satan has distorted the true order of humanity by the same error of absolute co-equality between man and woman. As Adventists, we accepted this error through the trinity. The absolute co-equality of the trinity rejects the headship of the Father to His Son, then reject the headship of man to woman. We are seeing the predictable consequences of rejecting our original Fundamental Principles (RH 22 August 1912, Par 4) in favour of new beliefs (now include the trinity).

We thought the new beliefs that make the Son and Father of the same co-equal age of existence with absolute co-equality, despite Jesus Himself having said plainly "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), would provide us with more acceptable position with the rest of the Christian world. But this absolute co-equality we bestowed upon "another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:4) has resonated with women to also demand absolute co-equality in headship offices contrary to the design of God that "the head of the woman is the man" as "the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). With the women equality crisis having long split the unity in our church, we are now reaping what we have sown. It is not yet too late to recognise "the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (LS 196.2).