

# Unbiblical Headship and Related Heresies – Phil 2:1-11

## *The Glorious Mystery that is Marriage VIII*

**Introduction** – Wives are to submit to their husbands because the husband is the head of the wife (Eph 5:22-23a). But there is an underlying premise, for the husband is the head of the wife *"just as Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body"* (rest of 5:23). Those who call themselves "evangelical egalitarians" claim that we miss the meaning of Paul's use of the word "head" but their arguments are spurious. And yet, the way these verses are applied often reveals that something is amiss. These verses imply that husbands are to reflect Christ in the way they relate as a head over their wives. This requires that we carefully understand what biblical headship is...and what it is not.

**Overview of Phil 2:1-11** – Because of all we have in Christ (v1), Paul exhorts the Philippian church to make him happy by loving one another like Christ with a common purpose (v2). Rather than acting out of selfishness, we are to act out of humble submission to the Father and consider others better than ourselves (v3). We all automatically consider our own interests; we are to be careful never to forget the interests of others (v4). This is the way of Christ (v5), who humbled Himself even though He was equal with God (vv6-7). He did so in the incarnation and in His obedience to the Father even to the point of death (v8). For this reason, God exalted Him far above all things, magnifying the Son's glory to the glory of the Father (vv9-11).

**Our Triune God** – God is Three Persons and One God. Our Creeds summarize the teachings of Scripture. All three Persons are fully and eternally God, and there is but one God. The distinctions speak to their work and roles but not to any ontological inequality. Jesus was and is fully God (inferred in v6) but was willing to submit to the will of the Father (vv7-8). When Jesus humbled Himself, He was revealing what the Father is like, for this is what Jesus does (John 6:46, 12:45, Col 1:15, Heb 1:3). Jesus Christ is not a substitute for the Father. He brings us to the Father; He reveals the Father to us. When Jesus humbles Himself, He reveals the mutual, self-giving nature of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At the same time, in relation to the Father, the Son submits to His Head (1 Cor 11:3).

**Two Trinitarian Heresies** – Psalm 115 warns us that we become like what we worship. In the marriage relationship, therefore, it is imperative that we do not fall into one of two Trinitarian heresies. The first, Arianism (or Subordinationism), teaches that it is illogical to have three gods and one God and that it follows that the Son and the Spirit are subordinate deities to the Father. If Jesus was submissive to the Father, it must mean that He is less than the Father. Relationally, this also distances the Father from the Son. In the end, there is a Unitarian-like god, "the Father," who is on top...and alone. The second is Modalism, which teaches that if there is real equality among the Persons, there could not be real submission, no real role distinctions, and in the end, no real distinct Persons. Again, the teaching leads to the idea that there is really only one Person who reveals Himself in different modes, or "masks" to communicate with us.

But God reveals Himself in Scripture to us as triune. There are three equal persons of the Trinity who do not fight over glory; genuine submission occurs within the Trinity. Now we can see how these heresies affect the application of headship and submission in the marriage roles.

**Arian Husbands** – These husbands see submission-texts (of which there are many) as subordination declarations and it shows in the way they demand the submission of their wives and children. Whether he consciously believes it or not, he acts as though she is inferior to him. He cannot find passages which teach this, but he operates, like an Arian, under the premise that "if she is called to submit to me she must therefore be inferior to me." Some Arian husbands are cruel despots who rule in such a way as to make it a living hell in the home for all. Others can be nice, getting away with their condescending comments about their "little woman" and often women in general. She is sweet, in his mind, but could never amount to much, at least much like him.

**Modalist Husbands** – Reacting to this heresy, egalitarian feminists reject this and cry for equality, which of course in their minds must mean that there is no real submission at all. These husbands take no responsibility for their homes, for in their minds (and theologies) they have entered into an enlightened roommate, 50/50 relationship. But since there are just equals, there is no deference to one another without other forms of manipulation and emotional tyrannies. Operating more like a contract than a covenant, there is less and less experience of mutual indwelling, less and less one-ness of the two. Finger-pointing and blaming, the relationship becomes miserable, defensive, and separate over time.

**Theology Out Your Fingertips** – And so we should see that our understanding of what God is like works itself out into how we live. And so, let us apply some of this to husbands and wives: *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"* –

**Husbands** – You are the head of your wife, and Christ is the head of every man. Is Christ tyrannical and blustery? Is He distant and unsympathetic? Is He a wimp, abdicating all authority away in the name of "love and equality?" Your place of authority is a place to sacrifice, like Christ, your head.

**Wives** – Imitate the humility of Christ, and so first look to the relationship of the Son to the Father. In addition, the man to watch as to how this humility is manifest in your home is your husband.