

Deborah & Esther: Are They Precedents for a Female President?

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From the **TeachingtheWord** Bible Knowledgebase

Christians must approach this question on the basis of Scripture alone, not emotion or expediency.

A Disclaimer and a Question

Let me begin with a disclaimer: TeachingTheWord Ministries does not (and legally cannot) engage in political advocacy, and we have no desire to do so. That is not why we exist. But we do believe that God's people must be a Scripture-driven people in every area of life, and that includes politics. God's inspired, inerrant Word must be our sole authority, and our infallible critic, in our political thinking just as in every other area of thought and action.

This article is an update of one that we originally published some time ago in response to a question we received: "Would it be Biblical to elect a woman as President of the United States?"

During the past several election cycles there was been very little genuine discussion of this question among Christians. Most simply ignored it. The discussion instead focused on the merits of potential female candidates for President, including former Alaska governor Sarah Palin, former Minnesota Representative Michele Bachmann, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, former California Senator and now Vice President Kamala Harris, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, Hawaii Representative Tulsi Gabbard, New York Representative Elise Stefanik, and Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene. The fact that some of these women - Palin, Bachmann, Noem, and Greene - profess to be Evangelical Christians has been of particular interest to some evangelicals.

Many people representing the so-called "evangelical left" touted the candidacies of Clinton, Harris, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, and Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar in view of their liberal positions on abortion, the LGBTQ movement, and what has come to be called "economic justice" and "environmental justice".

What Say the Scriptures?

But what does Scripture say? The Word of God is clear: It is foreign to God's ordained authority structure for a woman to rule a nation. Therefore, to advocate or work for the election of a woman as leader of the nation is un-Biblical - regardless of the woman's political positions.

This is a subject, like so many others in our time, that begs for rational discussion by Christians. By "rational discussion" I mean the examination of various positions to determine which one agrees with Scripture. The Bible tells us clearly that God has ordained male headship, and female submission to that headship, in the home, in the church, and in government. This does not mean that women are in any sense second-class citizens in the eyes of God, but He has lovingly ordained a role, responsibilities, and relationship to men for them. In that relationship, men are responsible to protect women from harm of all kinds, to cherish them, and to nurture them in their God-given role. (This is a responsibility that many Christian men sinfully neglect today, to say nothing of the unsaved world.) Because this is God's ordained order, Christians must not seek to put a woman in the place of national rulership, no matter how much we may agree with her ideologically. To do so is, in fact, sin in the eyes of God.

Doubtless some - perhaps many - who are reading this will disagree with the last paragraph. But please permit me to draw your attention to Scripture, point by point.

1. God has ordained male headship in the home:

"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)

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 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 everything." (Ephesians 5:22-24)

"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward -arranging the hair, wearing gold, or

putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror." (1 Peter 3:1-6)

2. God has ordained male headship in the church:

"I desire therefore 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." (1 Timothy 2:8-15) ["Saved in childbearing" is literally, "saved in *the* childbearing." The connection, in context, is to Eve, who though she was the first to fall into sin, is saved "by the childbearing" - a reference to Christ as the promised seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15.]

3. God has ordained male headship in government, and it is a shame upon a nation and an indication of a ruined state to have a woman rule over it, even though God may bring it about as a judgment:

"For behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stock and the store, the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water; the mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, and the diviner and the elder; the captain of fifty and the honorable man, the counselor and the skillful artisan, and the expert enchanter.

"I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable. When a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying, 'You have clothing; you be our ruler, and let these ruins be under your power,' in that day he will protest, saying, 'I cannot cure your ills, for in my house is neither food nor clothing; do not make me a ruler of the people.'

"For Jerusalem stumbled, and Judah is fallen, because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of His glory. The look on their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.

"Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him. As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths." (Isaiah 3:1-12)

4. Women are not second-class citizens in the eyes of God, but He has lovingly ordained a role, responsibilities, and relationship to men for them. That relationship is to be one of men protecting women from harm of all kinds, and nurturing and cherishing them in their God-given role.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own

wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

(Ephesians 5:25-33)

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them." (Colossians 3:19)

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." (1 Peter 3:7)

5. Because male headship is God's ordained order in all three spheres, Christians should not seek to put a woman in the place of national rulership, no matter how much we may agree with her ideologically. That is not God's ordained place for her. Christian men and women, we need to pray that God will be merciful to us and turn the heart of the man in office to Himself (He is able!), or raise up another man who will lead this country once more in paths of righteousness. (See Romans 13:1-7, Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13-14, James 5:16.)

What About Deborah and Esther?

Perhaps some readers are saying, "What about Deborah and Esther? Aren't they examples of female rulers ordained by God? Don't they set a precedent?"

First of all, an exception does not invalidate a rule. But there is more. Let's see what Scripture says.

Deborah did what she did (Judges chapter four) because the men of Israel had become cowards who shirked their duty. Furthermore, in the Song of Deborah, the Biblical heroine herself says this: "Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7). The original Hebrew wording in context indicates that normal family life, including God-given roles within the family, had disintegrated as Israel had embraced the idolatry of the Canaanites - a paganism in which, not coincidentally, the worship of female deities played a major role.

The account of Esther provides even less justification for a woman ruling a nation. Esther is a great Biblical heroine, but she was not a civil ruler. We need to understand the account of God's deliverance of Israel through Esther in terms of the historical and cultural setting. To be a queen in the Middle Eastern kingdom of Media-Persia did not mean being a civil ruler.

It meant being the leading woman of the royal harem; this arrangement is described in Esther chapter two. "Service" to the king was not voluntary, and a woman could be put to death at his whim.

Esther had no civil authority; she was an exceedingly well-treated harem slave with high domestic privileges as the most favored among the king's many wives and concubines. God in His providence placed Esther in the harem so that she could be instrumental in saving her people, who were, like herself, captives. She did so by appealing, on her knees and in tears, and at the risk of her life, to the despot on the throne (see Esther 8:3). And in the end it was her uncle Mordecai, not Esther, who became second-in-command to the king and exercised civil authority, replacing Haman.

Scripture, Not Expediency

We need to make sure we are clear about what Scripture actually says on these matters, lest we twist God's Word in support of political expediency.

But let me end by saying that the foregoing is not a back-door endorsement of anyone for the office of President. Americans are living in a time when even the best candidates for the nation's highest office are deeply flawed and in many cases openly sinful. But let us remember that "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men" (Daniel 4:17). Christ is on the throne, and He will be glorified. May the Lord protect us from the evil of expediency, and may He in mercy turn and deliver this nation from its present rebellion against Him. And may Christians set the example by submitting to the authority of God's Word in every area of life and ministry.

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