

Christi hymn, also asserts, “Paul clearly thinks of Christ as having been with God from the very beginning (cf. Phil 2:5-11).”¹²²

Paul summarizes a number of the terrible things which befell Ancient Israel during the wilderness sojourn, as critical lessons for followers of Israel’s Messiah to take instructive warnings from (1 Corinthians 10:5-8). 1 Corinthians 10:9, as it appears in a version like the NASU, reads, “Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.” There is a notable textual difference in 1 Corinthians 10:9, appearing in a variety of modern versions (NRSV, ESV, HCSB, TNIV, 2011 NIV), which rather than reading with “Lord,” instead read as “Christ”¹²³: “We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes” (TNIV). The principal scene is recorded in Numbers 21:6, although the act of testing or tempting is something witnessed in Exodus 17:7 and Deuteronomy 6:16, with the waters coming out of the rock at Massah and Meribah.

The reading of 1 Corinthians 10:9 with “Christ” rather than “Lord,” is the more difficult of the two, as it poses some more questions about the Messiah’s pre-existence, as He has previously just been considered the Rock which followed the Israelites in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:4). If the reading of “Christ” in 1 Corinthians 10:9 is the older and more authentic reading, then it only adds to the high Christology held by Paul, who would affirm that Yeshua of Nazareth is none other than the Lord of the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema* (1 Corinthians 8:6). Paul could have said in 1 Corinthians 10:9 that the Corinthians were not to put the Messiah to the test, as the wilderness generation put the Lord to the test. But the evidence indeed supports “And let us not put the Messiah to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes” (CJB/CJSB). Fee further observes,

“[He] refers to it as putting *Christ* to the test. That ‘Christ,’ not ‘Lord,’ is the word used in the original text is almost certain. That means that Paul once again, as in v. 4, is purposely tying the situations of Israel and Corinth together christologically. It was Christ whom Israel was testing in the desert. At the same time it is Christ whom the Corinthian are putting to the test by trying to eat both at his table and at the table of demons.”¹²⁴

1 Corinthians 11:3

“Messiah is the head of every man...God is the head of Messiah”

“But I want you to understand that Messiah is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Messiah.”

The Apostle Paul opens his argument about heads and hair on men and women in the assembly, in what has become a very dissected and debated statement in recent theological discussion.¹²⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:3 appears in most English Bibles along the lines of, **“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Messiah, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Messiah is God”** (TLV). 1 Corinthians 11:3 is frequently viewed from the perspective of a hierarchical order to be present between God, the Messiah, males, and females.¹²⁶ A frequent conclusion drawn is that Yeshua the Son is permanently (or even

¹²² Sampley, in *NIB*, 10:915.

¹²³ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 560; Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), pp 506-507.

¹²⁴ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 457.

¹²⁵ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

¹²⁶ There are indeed versions which reflect this, including: “But I want you to understand that Christ is supreme over every man, the husband is supreme over his wife, and God is supreme over Christ” (Good News Bible); “In a marriage

The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

eternally) subordinate to God the Father (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:28), and that females are permanently subordinate to males. While Messianic readers of 1 Corinthians 11:3 might not be too sure over the relationship of the Father and Son in this verse, it is safe to say that most would definitely assert that, at least as a broad rule from this verse, that females are to be subordinate to males.

Within the past several decades, in evangelical Christian examination of 1 Corinthians 11:3, there has been considerable disagreement as to whether Paul is even presenting some kind of hierarchical order. If a hierarchical order involving God and human beings were the issue, then why does 1 Corinthians 11:3 not include some kind of descending or ascending order, such as: God, Messiah, males, females? 1 Corinthians 11:3 notably **does not say**, “God is the *leader/authority* of Christ, Christ is the *leader/authority* of every man, and the man is the *leader/authority* of a woman.” Instead, what is encountered are three pairs of relationships expressed, which are intended to convey something to the Corinthian audience:

hoti pantos andros hē kephalē ho Christos estin, kephalē de gunaikos ho anēr, kephalē de tou Christou ho Theos

(ὅτι παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστίν, κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ, κεφαλὴ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ θεός)

Within discussions and debates over 1 Corinthians 11:3, no factor has become more pronounced than over the correct meaning of the Greek term *kephalē* (κεφαλὴ), which would literally mean “head.” Obviously, in the various uses which follow in 1 Corinthians 11:4-16, that *kephalē* or “head” pertains to the physical head of a man or woman is contextually obvious. Strong debates take place in contemporary scholarship over what *kephalē* means in 1 Corinthians 11:3, specifically whether it means “authority” or “leader”—as the term “head” frequently can mean in English—or whether it means something else, particularly “source” or “origin,” akin to the “headwaters” of a river. An unambiguous term that Paul could have used, if “authority” were expressly intended in 1 Corinthians 11:3, is *exousia* (ἐξουσία), appearing in 1 Corinthians 11:10. Another term which could have been employed, witnessed in 1 Corinthians for sure (1 Corinthians 2:6, 8), is *archōn* (ἄρχων), “a ruler, commander, chief, captain” (LS).¹²⁷

Most people, in today’s broad Messianic movement you will encounter, will just assume that there is no other meaning for “head” than “authority” or “leader”¹²⁸—especially given widespread English usage of the term “head” akin to “leader.” However, a brief survey of some scholastic examination of 1 Corinthians 11:3 has demonstrated greater variance than the average reader may know. Some general resources for popular distribution, such as the 1996 *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, certainly does include some deliberation over whether or not *kephalē* means “authority over” or “source,” with “source” definitely preferred.¹²⁹ Unfortunately, one of the major drawbacks regarding *kephalē* meaning “source” or “origin,” as noted by Garland (who is notably not favorable to it), is that “no Greek lexicon offers this as an option.”¹³⁰ What is more

relationship, there is authority from Christ to husband, and from husband to wife. The authority of Christ is the authority of God” (The Message).

¹²⁷ LS, 122.

¹²⁸ A possible exception to this might be seen in the footnote offered on 1 Corinthians 11:3 in the public domain resource, Michael Paul Johnson and Wayne Mitchell, eds., *World Messianic Bible* (n.d., 2015) [eBook for Amazon Kindle], which does state, “or, origin.”

¹²⁹ Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), pp 599-602.

¹³⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 515.

the case, is that some of the major tools available to Bible students, do not offer the definition of “source” or “origin” for *kephalē*. The unabridged Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie lexicon, inaccessible to most, does include the definition “source, origin” for *kephalē*.¹³¹ More accessible is the intermediate Liddell-Scott lexicon, which does state how *kephalē* can mean “the head or source of a river” (LS).¹³²

There has actually been a considerable amount of ink spilled defending the view that *kephalē* (κεφαλή) should be viewed as “source” in some key Pauline texts describing gender roles,¹³³ and strong rebuttals issued holding to the position that *kephalē* means “authority.”¹³⁴ Fairer discussions as to whether or not *kephalē* means “authority” or “source,” are more often to be found in 1 Corinthians commentaries, among other studies (also notably including commentaries on Ephesians 5:23), because the textual usage of *kephalē* has to be evaluated. As is seen, there there a fair number of examiners in agreement that *kephalē* does not at all have to mean “authority” in 1 Corinthians 11:3—and this will notably include complementarian theologians, who are widely unfavorable toward women serving on a more level playing field with men in the Body of Messiah.

Bruce was a relatively early commentator who remarked, “By **head** in this context we are probably to understand not, as has frequently been suggested, ‘chief’ or ‘ruler’ but rather ‘source’ or ‘origin’—a sense well attested for Gk *kephalē*.”¹³⁵ Morris would also have to indicate, “‘Head’ was used of the ‘source’ (as ‘head’ of a river)...Paul is saying that the woman derives her being from man (Gn. 2:21-22), as man does from Christ and Christ from God. But we must be cautious in pressing these words, for none of the relationships mentioned is exactly the same as either of the others.”¹³⁶ And other commentators, who to various degrees do believe in a hierarchical order present in 1 Corinthians 11:3, have had to acknowledge how *kephalē* could mean “source” or “origin.”¹³⁷ In his 1994 volume in the *NIV Application Commentary* series, Blomberg usefully indicates, “The order of the three parts of verse 3...proves significant. Some commentators stress that the sequence does not set up a chain of command, as if Paul had written, ‘The head of the woman is man, the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.’” He goes on to conclude, though, “the vast majority of all church history has understood ‘head’ as ‘authority’...[W]eighted arguments are needed to overthrow it.”¹³⁸ The considerable bulk of data which has been put together, by mainly evangelical examiners, in support of the term *kephalē* meaning “source” or “origin,” has been witnessed in the 2000s and 2010s.¹³⁹

While lexical debates over the meaning of the term *kephalē* will probably never end, what is notably changed if *kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3 does not mean “authority” or “leader,” as it has

¹³¹ BibleWorks 9.0: LSM Lexicon (Unabridged).

¹³² LS, 430.

¹³³ “1 Corinthians 11:2-3: Head/Source Relationships,” in Payne, pp 117-139; specifically his fifteen reasons on why *kephalē* does not exclusively mean “authority.”

¹³⁴ Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of *Kephalē* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), pp 425-468.

¹³⁵ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 103.

¹³⁶ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 149.

¹³⁷ Cf. Prior, 181.

¹³⁸ Blomberg, 209.

¹³⁹ For a summary of views surrounding the term *kephalē*, consult C.C. Kroeger, “Head,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 375-377; Thiselton, 812-822; Alan F. Johnson, “A Meta-Study of the Debate over the Meaning of ‘Head’ (*Kephalē*) in Paul’s Writings,” *Priscilla Papers* Issue 20:4, Autumn 2006; Lynn H. Cohick, “Headship,” in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, pp 349-350; Richard S. Cervin, “On the Significance of Κεφαλή (Head): A Study of the Abuse of One Greek Word,” *Missing Voices: A special edition journal of Christians for Biblical Equality* 2014.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

been traditionally approached? Fee draws out how when *kephalē* is approached as “source” in 1 Corinthians 11:3, the relationships of the different parties, with one originating from another, are necessarily highlighted:

“The metaphor itself is often understood to be hierarchical, setting up structures of authority. But nothing in the passage suggests as much; in that the only appearance of the word *exousia* [ἐξουσία] (‘authority’) refers to the woman’s own authority (v. 10). Moreover, vv. 11-12 explicitly qualify vv. 8-9 so that they will *not* be understood in this way. Indeed, the metaphorical use of *kephalē* [κεφαλή] to mean ‘chief’ or ‘the person of the highest rank’ is rare in Greek literature—so much so that even though the Hebrew word *rō’s* [רֹאשׁ] often carried this sense, the Greek translators of the LXX, who ordinarily used *kephalē* to transate *rō’s* when the physical ‘head’ was intended, almost never did so when ‘ruler’ was intended....Paul’s understanding of the metaphor...and almost certainly the only one the Corinthians would have grasped, is ‘head’ as ‘source,’ especially ‘source of life’...Thus Paul’s concern is not hierarchical (who has authority over whom), but relational (the unique relationships that are predicated on one’s being the source of the other’s existence).”¹⁴⁰

With physical head ornamentation on men and women to be discussed in the verses which follow (1 Corinthians 11:4-15), “the man is the head/*kephalē* of a woman” expressing origins, necessarily directs people to how Eve came from Adam (1 Corinthians 11:8), and how there were gender distinctions to be properly maintained in the Body of Messiah, although there is notably also an interdependence of both genders (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). If particular sorts of physical head ornamentation conveyed an inappropriate message for the assembly—such as men identifying as homosexuals or females as prostitutes—than an affirmation on where human beings come from, and what they stand in relation to, should be in order. As Thiselton directs,

“Paul’s concern is not with subordination but with gender distinction. He expresses no less disquiet (probably indeed more) about men whose style is effeminate with possible hints of a quasihomosexual blurring of male gender than about women who likewise reject the use of signals of respectable and respected gender distinctiveness.”¹⁴¹

Of course, concurrent with woman originating from man, would be how *kephalē* concerns the relationship of Yeshua the Son to God the Father. While the Son is certainly witnessed in other passages as being submissive to the Father, particularly involving His agency—is the Son the Father’s permanent subordinate, and possibly a lesser supernatural being than He, rather than His equal (cf. Philippians 2:6)? This does not need to be a conclusion drawn from 1 Corinthians 11:3. When *kephalē* is approached as “source” or “origin,” the statement “Messiah is the *kephalē* of every man” concerns the Messiah’s role in the Creation of Adam. When *kephalē* is approached as “source” or “origin,” the statement “God is the *kephalē* of Messiah” is more appropriately to be approached as “The Godhead is the source of Messiah,” given the presence of the definite article in *ho Theos* (ὁ θεός), and would be appropriately viewed as the Messiah’s Incarnation.

With *kephalē* approached as “source” or “origin” in 1 Corinthians 11:3, rather than some sort of hierarchical relationship involving God-Messiah-males-females, we instead see three pairs of relationships present, both beginning and ending with an emphasis on the Messiah. It begins with the place of the Messiah in creation, the origin of woman from man, and it ends with the place of the Messiah in His Incarnation and redemption. Between the Messiah as

¹⁴⁰ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, pp 502-503.

¹⁴¹ Thiselton, 805.

Creator and Redeemer sit the man and the woman, who indeed have Divinely-granted differences of gender. Evangelical Christian egalitarians, who do interpret the Scriptures as presenting a trajectory of a level playing field for men and women as co-leaders in the family and the Body of Messiah, do not at all conclude that the Bible presents men and women as eventually merging into some kind of unisex. Woman does originate from man, but both genders are interconnected (1 Corinthians 11:11).

A rendering of 1 Corinthians 11:3, with all possibilities represented, is offered by Thiselton in his commentary: "However, I want you to understand that while Christ is preeminent (or *head? source?*) for man, man is foremost (or *head? source?*) in relation to woman, and God is preeminent (or *head? source?*) in relation to Christ."¹⁴² The aptly titled *Source New Testament* by A. Nyland actually does have, "Now, I want you to know that the source of every man is the Anointed One, the source of woman is man, and the source of the Anointed One is God,"¹⁴³ for 1 Corinthians 11:3. A recognition that *kephalē* can indeed mean "source" or "origin," as such *ho Theos* or "the Godhead" is the origin of the Messiah's Incarnation, should lead to 1 Corinthians 11:3 being legitimately approached as, **"But I want you to understand that the source of every man is Messiah, and the source of the woman is the man, and the source of Messiah is the Godhead"** (PME).¹⁴⁴

The advantage of approaching *kephalē* from the perspective of it being "source" or "origin" in 1 Corinthians 11:3, is how it would decisively place the discussion of head ornamentation on men and women, within the venue of Creation-humankind-redemption. The relationship of man and woman in the Body of Messiah, involves a wider place for humanity's relationship with the Messiah who created them, the same Messiah who took on humanity to be sacrificed for their sins. As Payne excellently summarizes in his resource *Man and Woman, One in Christ*,

"God is the κεφαλή [*kephalē*] of Christ' anchors Paul's concern in the Godhead. This most naturally refers to Christ's source as from God in the incarnation...This explains the order of these three κεφαλή [*kephalē*] (source) relationships as chronological: the creation of man, the creation of woman, and the incarnation...Preceding the statement, 'the man is the source of woman,' is an affirmation of Christ's role in creation as the source of every man. Following it is an affirmation of Christ's role in redemption, since this is implied by the reference to God as the κεφαλή [*kephalē*] (source) of Christ in the incarnation. This bracketing suggests that Paul desired the Corinthians to view the relationship of man and woman in light of two pivotal events, creation and redemption. These two pivotal events are the keys to understanding natural and special revelation. The creation of humankind in the image of God and God's provision for redemption through his very Son provide the two pillars that uphold both the value of human life and the respect that people should show to each other."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Thiselton, 800.

¹⁴³ A. Nyland, trans., *The Source New Testament* (Australia: Smith and Stirling Publishing, 2007), 323.

¹⁴⁴ Other passages to be considered, where *kephalē* appears, would include: Ephesians 1:21-22; 5:22-23; Colossians 1:18; 2:10.

¹⁴⁵ Payne, pp 138-139.

The author's commentary *1 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic* further defends, for 1 Corinthians 11:4-16, that the major issue detailed has nothing to do with head covering garments, but instead ancient hairstyles, which either communicated piety or lewdness. Also consult the FAQ, "Headcovering Garments."