

# Your Desire Will Be For Your Husband, and He Will Rule Over You

## 3: 16

**DIG:** How did things change for all **women** after the Fall? Which punishment would have been most difficult for Eve? Why? What does he shall rule over you mean? What is the critical question? What was Adam's responsibility before the Fall? What was Eve's responsibility? How did Christ love the Church? Why is there confusion today between man's **relationship** with his wife and his **responsibility** before God?

**REFLECT:** What does this passage say about what Elohim wants from both men and women? Why does God hold the man responsible for what goes on in the marriage? Do you think God's Word is just as true today as when it was first written? Why? Or does God's Word change when society changes (Hebrews 13:8)? Who do you believe?

Eve, as the representative of all **women**, received a twofold punishment. First, God said: **I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.** Eve did not give birth before the Fall. But if she would have, it would have been painless. After the Fall the birth process would be painful. God had said: **Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth (1:28).** So this was not a curse of infertility. However, the very point at which she received her greatest sense of fulfillment in life (according to emphases in the TaNaKh) would also be a point of suffering. But this punishment also has a positive side, since it would be through her pain and childbearing that Elohim will provide salvation for **the world (3:15)**.<sup>68</sup> In addition, Jesus said: **A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world (John 16:21).**

The Hebrew word used for the **woman's pain** is the same word used for the **man's work** after the Fall. ADONAI, God, took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it (2:15). It is *not* the usual Hebrew word for the **pain of childbirth**. It pointed to the greater **pain** of living this life after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Sin has consequences. It always takes you further than you want to go and costs you more than you want to pay. But it is not surprising that in this chapter we find the outline of salvation from the beginning of time. First, God reveals His Word. Then humans sin, but God reconciles and protects.

The rabbis teach that just as the serpent was cursed with ten curses, so was the woman. First, was menstruation, second, the bleeding of a virgin, third, the discomfort of pregnancy, fourth, miscarriage, fifth, the pain of childbirth, sixth, the anguish of raising children, seventh, the covering of her head in worship, eighth, subjection to her husband, ninth, being forbidden to testify in court under Jewish law, and tenth, physical death. This is why in rabbinic theology the woman must keep special commandments, three in particular. *Niddah*, the commandments of menstruation, *Challah*, laws concerning the portion of bread, and she is also responsible for lighting the Sabbath candles.

Second, Elohim said: **Your desire will be for your husband.** The Hebrew word for **desire** is *teshukah* and means *desire to possess*. The word occurs only two other times in the TaNaKh, in **Song of Solomon 7:10** and **Genesis 4:7**. The **Song of Solomon** passage does not fit the context here, but the **Genesis 4:7** passage helps us to understand how it is to be used here because Moses wrote both scriptures, so they are in the same context, judgment, and both verses are connected with the same verb *mashal*, which means *to rule over*. In **4:7** the LORD said to Cain: **If you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; and its desire is to possess you, but you should rule over it (NKJ).** Sin is pictured as an animal that *desires* to control and dominate Cain, but God challenged Cain *to rule over* the unrestrained desire to sin. Eve will **desire to rule over Adam**, just as sin *desires to rule over* Cain. So the verse can best be translated: **Your desire will be to rule over your husband.**

But God said: **he shall rule over you.** Adam was *to rule over Eve* as Cain was *to rule over* sin. This is a difficult passage. The fact that Adam was **to rule over Eve** is unquestioned. We must take God at His Word. However, the critical question for Eve and every other woman is *how shall he rule over you?* Some commentators go into detail here about whether this passage is prescriptive or descriptive. But I think that takes us down the wrong path. I believe the answer is found in God's Word.

Both Adam and Eve had different responsibilities before the Fall. Adam was placed in the garden to take care of it (*smr*), in the sense of *obedience*, to guard it. The same Hebrew word is used in 3:29 where the cherubim were placed to guard the way to the tree of life. And Eve was to be a helper suitable for him (*kenegdo*), and literally it means a helper like him, or a helper fitted to him, or a helper corresponding to him. In other words, she completed him. So aside from their different responsibilities, they were equals in every sense of the word, physically, socially, and spiritually. But after the Fall everything changed. Eve's desire would be *to rule over Adam*, but God said: **He shall rule over you.** How can we discover God the Holy Spirit's true meaning of this difficult passage? *It is through progressive revelation.* God did not reveal all that He had to say about any particular subject

in **Genesis**. There are 66 books in the Bible and by the time we get to **Revelation**, the things that are important for us to know are clear. The rest of the stuff will be cleared up when we get to heaven. In other words, the TaNaKh looks forward and the New Covenant looks back. Here we must look to the B'rit Chadashah for clearer light on *how* the **husband shall rule over his wife**. Ladies, don't use that clicker. Stay with me on this one!

One of the most important passages regarding **the husband and wife** relationship is **Ephesians 5:22-33** because it is also a picture of **Christ and the Church**. Rabbi Sha'ul addresses **the wives** first and says: **Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything (Ephesians 5:22-24)**. Now husbands love to quote this verse, and they usually stop reading right there! But Paul goes on: **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (Ephesians 25-27)**. **So the critical question for both men and women is this: How did Christ love the Church?** Was there anything He would not do for the Church? What was his attitude toward the Church? Did He boss the Church around? Did He think of Himself first? Or did He die for the Church?

Mark answers these questions like this: **For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)**. So if the husband puts his wife first in everything, thinking of her first, making sure all her needs are met by serving her, that is pretty easy to submit to. But this kind of a relationship seems a lot different from: **he shall rule over you**, doesn't it? That sounds pretty harsh, not like a servant at all. Which is it? Does he come to **serve** or **rule**? If you think this is confusing, just look at the state of marital roles. It is one of the most confused areas in and out of **the Church** today. The main problem is confusion between **man's relationship** with his wife, and his **responsibility** with what goes on in the marriage.

Let's look at **relationship** first. The Bible clearly teaches that **men** and **women** are equals socially, psychologically, and spiritually. In other words, **they** are equals in **their** relationship with each other. **God** created us as equals (**1:27-28**), and we are to be one when married (**2:24**). We are equally sinful (**Romans 3:23**), and equally saved (**John 1:12-13; Second Corinthians 5:17; First Peter 3:7**). **Husbands and wives** are to submit to each other sexually (**First Corinthians 7:2-5**), and socially (**Ephesians 5:21**). Furthermore, the Bible teaches that there shall be no sexual discrimination (**Galatians 3:28**). **Men** and **women** are equally dependent on **God** (**First Corinthians 11:11-12**), accepted equally as believers (**Acts**

5:14), and co-laborers for Him (Romans 16:1, 3-6; Philippians 4:3). So in their relationship, men and women are equals. There is no doubt about that. But there is another area that we need to look at.

The second area the Bible teaches us about is **responsibility**. *Even though men and women are equal in their relationship to one another, men are ultimately held responsible for what goes on in the marriage.* The Bible tells us that when Abram lied about Sarai being his wife, Pharaoh held Abram responsible (12:17-20). Later, after God changed their names, Abraham and Sarah did the same thing again and Abimelech held Abraham responsible (20:9). And it seems the apple didn't fall too far from the tree, as Abraham's son Isaac was held responsible for the lie about Rebekah (26:9). Much later, God held David responsible for his sin with Bathsheba and sent the prophet Nathan to rebuke him. Here, Adam and Eve both ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; in fact Eve led the way, but God held Adam responsible (3:9). This principle is not only taught in the TaNaKh, but also in the Renewed Covenant where Paul tell us that through one man sin entered the world (Romans 5:12, 14 and 17). Responsibility begs for accountability, and God held Adam responsible. Not only was the responsibility not the same for Adam and Eve, neither were their consequences. God said to Eve that Adam would rule over her. There are other passages that reflect the same teaching, saying that wives should submit and be obedient to their husbands (1 Peter 3:1; Titus 2:5; Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; 1 Cor 11:3) because the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23).

So with this understanding, we come back to the original question: *how shall Adam rule over Eve? He rules over her* in the sense that if they are still at an impasse, he is ultimately going to be held responsible for the decision. How he handles the situation, how he listens to his wife and takes her feelings and opinions into consideration are important. She needs to be heard. Husbands who do not listen to their wives are fools, because Elohim made her a helper suitable for him (2:18). If the wife does not feel like she is being heard or has any input in the marriage, it will crush her spirit and/or drive her away (physically and/or emotionally). Husbands and wives should make decisions together as a team, but if they cannot agree, he has to make the call because he is responsible before God.

When things go bad at work, nobody wants to be in charge when the boss walks in and says, "All right, who is in charge of this mess?" *And all eyes are on you.* It is much more comforting to be able to point at someone else, anyone else, and say, "Here's the one!" It is in that sense that Adam would rule over Eve. It is in that sense that Eve should submit and be obedient to Adam; not in their relationship, because they are equals. But Adam is responsible for what goes on in the marriage. Decision making can be fun without accountability. If it works, you get all the credit, and if it doesn't, just try something else.

It just doesn't matter. But decision making with eternal consequences is quite a different story. The order of **their sin**, the serpent sinned first, then **the woman**, and then **the man**, would be the same order of their judgment. We have seen the serpent and **the woman** judged, so now **God** turns **His** attention to **the man**.