

Jewett, Paul K. *Man as Male and Female*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975. 200 pp.

Reviewed by: Michelle Myers, *Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*

Introduction

Paul King Jewett wrote *Man as Male and Female* in 1975, and it is considered to be a landmark publication of male-female relationships in egalitarian works. Essentially, Jewett argues that biblical principles regarding manhood and womanhood are no longer relevant. In order to thrive in being redeemed through Christ, according to Jewett, one should embrace the roles accented in the culture today rather than what the Scripture teaches. He rejects the hierarchical relationship of male to female and claims the marriage role is one of gender-free partnership. At the time of publication, Jewett was teaching systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary and serving as the Dean of the Young Life Institute.

Summary

Jewett provides a brief summary of the different views of sexuality within the Christian community. Jewett criticizes the complementarian writings of theologians like Karl Barth, who believed that in God's view, men and women were created equally with unique purposes. The basis for Jewett's claim rests in Mark 12:15, when Jesus claims that marriage and the like will disappear with the resurrection. In his interpretation of this text, he believes that in heaven, God does not distinguish between male and female, and our differences are only seen on earth.

Going back to Genesis, Jewett also believes that the account of creation does not overlap with male and female roles within marriage. He writes, “The former (meaning creation) involves an act of God; the latter (meaning marriage) an act of man.” He also argues that hierarchy is not required in Genesis 2, but must be read into the text.

In examining Jesus’ relationship with women, Jewett acknowledges that Jesus treated women with respect and treated them as equals. Through bold teachings, such as describing lust as adultery of the heart, Jesus protected women. He witnessed to them, even if that meant breaking custom laws of speaking to a woman in public, such as when he confronted the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus loved people, and he did not discriminate between men and women in his actions. His argument stems from the fact that because Jesus behaved this way, he must believe that there are no distinct differences in the roles of men and women since there are examples in both the Old Testament and New Testament and women being treated poorly by men, sometimes even men who were leaders of the faith.

In one of his more radical statements, Jewett claims that based on Galatians 3:28, if one believes that the abolition of slavery was ordained by freedom in Christ, then one should also hold the belief that women should be liberated in today’s times and not be restricted by first-century customs.

Critical Evaluation

Jewett is very clear and concise. His thoughts are well organized, and his ideas transition smoothly throughout his work. He is able to take a scholarly subject and present it in a way that is understandable to a variety of audiences. He is very thorough in his arguments. When he does not have a theological basis for his claims, he is honest in

stating that his thoughts do not align with Scripture but are of his own mind.

The main difficulty with Jewett's book is not related to his opinion regarding whether women can or cannot preach, whether God is male or female, or how creation order relates to today's roles for men and women. Ultimately, Jewett is rejecting the inerrancy of Scripture. He is belittling God and His Word by making himself the judge and the authority over which parts of the text he chooses to believe and which he chooses not to believe.

Some of the discrepancy found within this work may be able to be cleared up by some simple definitions and biblical truths. While arguments could be made on specific claims regarding these specific issues, these issues are deep-rooted in spiritual problems that far exceed the gender battle.

First, Jewett acknowledges that in Scripture, woman was created to be man's partner. Jewett views this as secondary role. However, partners are equal, so an argument at this point doesn't seem necessary. Also, men and women are clearly given separate roles. Just because they are given different assignments, nowhere in Scripture is more importance placed on a specific gender. God recognizes and is pleased with the creation of male and female for their uniqueness, and both are appreciated equivalently.

Next, taking a closer look at Jewett's interpretation of Jesus' interactions with women, Jewett was attempting to argue that believers of the Old Testament and New Testament did not always follow the same pattern that Jesus did. Frequently, in biblical days and today, women were and are treated as second-class citizens and unequal to men. However, this has nothing to do with Jesus behaving in a way that is not contra to Scripture. It has everything to do with the fact that Jesus lived a perfect and blameless

life, while humans “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Also, in dealing with some of the gender passages in Scripture, there are many authors who twist words and misinterpret the text. Jewett does not manipulate the text to make it say what he believes. For example, in I Timothy 2:11-12 when Paul writes that a woman should learn in silence and not have authority over a man, Jewett believes Paul meant just what he wrote. However, Jewett also states that he believes Paul is wrong. That is a very bold statement. It leads one to wonder if Jewett believes Paul was also wrong when he wrote in II Timothy 3:16 that “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” Therefore, Jewett crosses the line from examining application for the Bible and abolishing the inerrancy of Scripture.

Conclusion

While Jewett has addressed issues within the book that are relevant to today’s culture, it is unfortunate that he has compromised God’s Word to appease a sinful world. Believers have a responsibility to uphold the entire truth laid out for them in the Scriptures, not just the parts that make us feel good or are easy to hear. There are plenty of teachings in the Bible that were unpopular when they were written over two thousand years ago and are still unpopular today. Jesus was frequently rejected, and those who follow Him must expect the same treatment. If one doubts a single passage that is hard to handle, will “errors” suddenly emerge each time something displeasing appears in the text? In His supremacy, God eliminated any doubt of the truth expressed in the Bible in John 10:35 which states that “Scripture cannot be broken.” Believers can rest in the fact that every passage of God’s word is certain, authoritative, factual, and reliable.

