

Chapter Thirteen

Does the Bible Condone Slavery and Sexism?

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Does the Bible condone slavery and sexism? Of course not! The suggestion is ridiculous, but we live in a world where absurd conclusions seem as rational as the truth is preposterous. All sorts of wicked ideas advance on the power of subtle insinuation and grow strong by the sneaking suggestion.

If there is a surface-level appearance that an allegation is true, the suggestions and insinuations appear plausible, perhaps even obviously correct. When we look beyond the surface, however, to what is really the case, suggestive insinuations are obliterated by reality. But how many people have the logical, theological, or biblical backbone to push past a veneer, to look past the surface, to think their way through the fog of falsehood to solid truth? This essay aims to get past surface-level indications of sexism and slavery to what the Bible really teaches about humans of all genders and races.

On the surface, the Bible *appears* to endorse sexism. Women are told to keep quiet in church (1 Cor 14:33–34), to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22–24), and they are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over men (1 Tim 2:12). Viewed from a certain perspective, this looks like sexism. One of my tasks in this essay is to show how it is not. But before we get to that, we need to make the other task of this essay just as hard.

The other task of this essay is to show how the Bible neither endorses nor condones slavery, and here again we have a set of statements that make it look like the Bible does just that. On the surface, Israel was given laws that regulated the treatment of slaves (e.g., Exod 21:1–11; Lev 25:6, 47–55; Deut 15:12–18), and both Paul and Peter told slaves to obey their masters (Eph 6:5–8; Col 3:22; 1 Tim 6:1–2; 1 Pet 2:18). How can it be denied that the Bible condones slavery?

This essay is not a sophisticated denial of reality. I hope to do more than acknowledge the evidence and say, “Nuh-uh.” I don’t want anyone to go away from this essay thinking that Hamilton has done nothing but insist that the Bible does not say what it obviously says.

With the Bible making these statements about women and slaves, how can anyone maintain that it doesn’t condone sexism and slavery? Because it can be shown that the Bible does not present the world as a place in which God intended people to be owned by other people or abused because of their sex. God did not make the world for slavers and sexists. This essay seeks to go beyond the surface level of what the Bible says about these matters into the “deep structure” of the Bible’s teaching about male and female, slave and free.¹

I contend that when we understand what the Bible teaches about how God made the world, the role of humans in the world, and the curse God visited in response to human sin, we see that God intends neither one gender to be subordinate to another nor one human to be enslaved to another.

This essay, then, is a foray into the realm of biblical theology.² The purpose of this reconnaissance mission to the thought-world of the Bible is to understand how the biblical authors understood relations between males and females, slaves and masters. To pursue a biblical theological understanding demands more than mere word studies, cataloguing of texts, or surveys of what previous scholars have said.³ I will be seeking to show that if we understand how the biblical authors viewed God, humanity, the world, and the plot of

¹ In these sentences I am drawing an equal sign between what the Bible teaches and what God intends, and this will continue throughout because I am convinced that God speaks in the Bible (cf., e.g., 2 Kgs 17:37; Ezra 7:6; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21). See further James M. Hamilton, “Still Sola Scriptura: An Evangelical View of Scripture,” in *The Sacred Text: Excavating the Texts, Exploring the Interpretations, and Engaging the Theologies of the Christian Scriptures* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2010), 215–40; and Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009).

² For a wider discussion of biblical theology, see my attempt to show that biblical theology has a center in *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). For a shorter, more introductory treatment, see my *What Is Biblical Theology?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013). Thomas R. Schreiner is correct that William J. Webb fundamentally fails to understand redemptive history (see Thomas R. Schreiner, “William J. Webb’s *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*: A Review Article,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 1 [2002]: 46–64).

³ Others have done this work well. See, e.g., John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity: A Traditio-Historical and Exegetical Examination*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); John Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008); Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ*, NSBT (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001).

world history, we will never conclude that the Bible condones slavery and sexism.

As we approach the Bible's presentation of humanity as it relates to slavery and sexism, we must distinguish between the way the world was when God created it good and the way it became after humans sinned and God leveled judgment and curse on both the transgressors and the world they inhabited.

Sexism?

God made the world good. Genesis 1–2 is a picture of that world made good, and neither sexism nor slavery has any place in it. The sexists, whether male or female, do not find their agenda in Genesis 1–2. Modern feminism has an anti-male underbelly that is sexist.⁴ We don't find that in Genesis 1 and 2, nor do we find a neutered, de-stroginized androgyny. What we do find is a balanced complementarity, opposites in happy harmony. In what they are as human beings, man and woman enjoy ontological equality. In what they are given to do, man and woman enjoy functional subordination. The man and woman are equal in what they are as humans, but they are assigned different roles and relate to one another within a structure of God-ordained authority. Those who reject the possibility of ontological equality and functional subordination, and some do,⁵ are unwilling to grapple with the profound simplicity of the biblical evidence.

Note the ontological equality in Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female." Both man and woman are in the image of God. The woman is not less than the man as a human being. It is not the man alone who bears God's image and likeness. Both man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God.

With this ontological equality, however, there are clear indications of functional subordination. Genesis 2 presents a righteous hierarchy in edenic gender relations—pre-sin, pre-fall, pre-curse. We see the functional subordination of the woman to the man when we read that God made the man to work and keep the garden (Gen 2:15), the woman to help the man (2:18). The woman was not made to do what the man was made to do but to help him do what God made him

⁴ See Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake: The Radical Impact of Feminism on Church and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005).

⁵ E.g., Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 86, 131, 133.

to do. This indicates that within the ontological equality between the man and the woman, they are given different roles. The woman's role in helping the man is clearly subordinate to his role of working and keeping the garden. She does not have a specified task other than that of helping him in his work. Some egalitarians observe that God, too, is described as a helper, but this is hardly analogous. God is Creator, sovereign moral authority, and much else, so the fact that he, too, is a helper is irrelevant to the situation in the garden. The man's role is to work and keep, and the woman's role is to help the man. The tasks given to man and woman in the garden present a much narrower situation than we find when a man in need appeals to God to be his help. False analogy.

We also see a structure of authority reflected in the fact that God commanded the man not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil prior to the making of the woman (2:16–17). It was evidently the man's responsibility to communicate the command to the woman.

Then there are the differences in the descriptions of how the man and woman were made: the man was *formed* from *the dust* (2:7), while the woman was *fashioned* from the *man's rib* (2:22). I am not claiming that this communicates the man's authority, merely observing that while man and woman are both in the image of God, there are differences between them. The narrative does not present them being absolutely the same in every respect.

Then God brought the woman to the man, and the man exercised the same authority over the woman when he named her that God had exercised as he named creation in Genesis 1. God has the authority to name what he has made, but he delegates that authority to man when he brings the animals to him and allows him to name them. The man exercises this same authority over the woman.

Man's first poem powerfully communicates ontological equality and functional subordination. There is solidarity: the woman is bone of man's bone, flesh of his flesh. And there is authority: Adam announces that she will be called woman (2:23). Prior to sin, within righteous hierarchy, man and woman were unashamed and uninhibited in unfallen intimacy (2:25).

God created the world very good (Gen 1:31), and God, not popular culture, defines goodness. The world might not call ontological equality with functional subordination good, but that remains the picture given to us by the Bible. It is not a sexist picture. The man

and woman were to cooperate together to “be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it” (1:28). They were to do this as the man worked and kept with the woman’s help, as the two became one flesh to be fruitful and multiply. Before we reject all hierarchy, all authority, all subordination, we should try to imagine a righteous, holy, God-like exercise of authority within a hierarchy in which women accept the leadership of (i.e., are functionally subordinate to) men who protect, provide, and love those under their care. This is what we see in Genesis 1–2.

Slavery?

Before we pass on to sin and its consequences in Genesis 3, we should observe that there is not even a whisper of slavery in Genesis 1–2. Male and female are made in God’s image (Gen 1:26–27), are blessed by God, are told to fill and subdue the land, and are given dominion over fish, birds, and all creeping critters (1:28). They have the plants for food (1:29), and all is very good (1:31). God gives no authorization for one human to own another as property, and there is no indication that anything of the kind was ever his intention.

God made the world as a cosmic temple, a place in which he would be known, served, worshipped, and present with his image bearers.⁶ Charging them to “fill the earth and subdue it,” God apparently wanted them to make all the dry land like the garden, a place where his glory was known and enjoyed (cf. Num 14:21; Ps 72:19; Isa 11:9; Hab 2:1). Because *all* humans are made in God’s image (Gen 1:28), God’s glory is not advanced by the unrighteous abuse of one gender by another, nor is his glory shown when one human enslaves another.

Sin

God did not intend humans to practice sexism or slavery, so how did these specters come to haunt the world? Sin. When Adam and Eve sinned by eating forbidden fruit, God cursed the serpent, and he made the roles of the man and woman more difficult (Gen 3:16–19).

⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).

Sin and Sexism

The woman's role was to help the man work and keep the garden and to multiply with him. God did not curse her like he cursed the serpent (3:14–15), but he did give her pain in childbearing and a “desire for” her husband (3:16). Those who refuse to obey God forfeit their right to God's goodness and suffer the penalty of his justice.

Sexism enters the world when God tells the woman that her desire will be for her husband, but he will rule over her. What does this mean? The same language is used in Genesis 4:7 when God tells Cain that sin's desire is for him, but he must rule over it. Sin desires Cain in the sense that it wants to control Cain's actions, and if Cain is to overcome, he must be ruthless against sin. Cain needs to “rule over” sin in a take-no-prisoners, zero-tolerance kind of way. From the use of the same language of “desiring” and “ruling over” in Genesis 3:16 and 4:7, it seems that what God says to the woman in Genesis 3:16 means that she will want to control the actions of her husband the way sin wants to control Cain's; further, her husband will rule over her the way Cain should rule over sin.

If we believe what the Bible tells us, we must conclude that human sin is responsible for sexism. One of Dictionary.com's definitions of sexism goes like this: “attitudes or behavior based on traditional stereotypes of sexual roles.” But neither tradition nor stereotypes are the real problem. The real problem derives from human sin. Both feminism, the female desire to control, and chauvinism, harsh male abuse of females, result from sin. Articulated in God's words in Genesis 3:16, sexism entered the world as a judgment against sin. It was not part of God's good creation. Sexism can take on different forms, but in any form it will be the opposite of love for God expressed in appropriate gender relations. Appropriate gender relations, again, are defined by the Bible, which stands over and against both tradition and the way people typically behave. It is clear from Genesis 3:16 that conflict between the genders is a punishment, a curse, a judgment that makes it difficult for humans to experience God's original, good intention.

Does the Bible condone sexism? Let's compare sexism, which is a punishment, with another punishment: death also results from sin. Death also entered the world as a visitation of God's justice against sin. Does the Bible condone death? The Bible says that all people are sinners, so all people will die; but the Bible also tells of the One who triumphed over death. Through his death and resurrection Jesus

opened the way to life. Similarly, we can say that all people are sinners, so all people will suffer the consequences of sexism (this is not to say that all people are sexist all the time, any more than all people are dead all the time). Just as the Bible points to the defeat of death, the Bible points to the defeat of sexism through what Jesus has accomplished.

In a renewal of edenic harmony the rollback of the curse through the defeat of sexism brings about a situation like the one in Eden, where there was equality and subordination. This involves men sacrificing themselves for their wives the way Christ sacrificed himself for the church, and it involves women submitting to their husbands the way the church submits to Christ (Eph 5:22–33).⁷ Sexism will not be conquered by either secular feminism or chauvinism, nor will it be overcome by an unbiblical evangelical egalitarianism. Sexism will be overcome by those who live out the gospel as they relate to members of the opposite sex, whether in marriage (Eph 5:22–33) or in the family of the faith (e.g., 1 Tim 5:1–2). The Bible does not teach that gender will be obliterated but redeemed and made new.

Sin and Slavery

We don't know exactly when slavery was first practiced,⁸ but the first mention of it in the Bible comes when Noah curses the descendants of his youngest son: "Canaan will be cursed. He will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers" (Gen 9:25). This shows that slavery was not part of God's original good creation. Rather, slavery is mentioned in response to the sin of Ham.

It is interesting to observe that after the sin narrated in Genesis 3, only the serpent is directly cursed (Gen 3:14). Then God speaks the same words to Cain in Genesis 4:11 that he had spoken to the serpent, "You are cursed." Ham is cursed, and then God tells Abram that he will curse those who dishonor him (12:3). Like the curse on gender relations that results in sexism (3:16), then, slavery first appears in the Bible in a curse spoken in response to sin (9:25).

⁷ See my essay, "The Mystery of Marriage," in *For the Fame of God's Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 253–71.

⁸ For discussion of slavery in the ancient Near East and in ancient Israel, see Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, 37–47; Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, JSOTSupp (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

In Genesis 12:1–3 God makes promises to Abraham that answer the curses of Genesis 3:14–19 point for point.⁹ This means that God promises to overcome the distortion of human relationships that result in slavery and sexism through the blessing of Abraham. God made the world good. Sin brought the curse of death into the world, along with the curses of slavery and sexism. God promised to overcome curses with blessings. God promised to redeem and renew. The Bible’s statements about women and slaves are best understood when considered in light of God’s purpose to redeem and renew relations between genders and peoples.

Redemption

Having forfeited Eden, humanity faces life in a world cursed because of sin. The instructions in the Old and New Testaments about women and slaves are given to address life in this world.

The statements on slaves in the Pentateuch are given to limit the evil of a wicked human practice. Douglas Stuart observes, “The various Hebrew terms translated by terms such as ‘servant,’ ‘slave,’ ‘maidservant,’ occur more than a thousand times in the Old Testament.”¹⁰ Any Israelite whose economic situation became desperate could engage in what amounted to a contract to serve another Israelite until the next sabbatical year, and if he chose to stay for life with that particular household, he could do so (Exod 21:1–6). The laws make it so that everyone knows what the rules are, which protects both servants and masters. Daughters of poorer families were protected by these regulations (21:7–11), and Kenneth Laing Harris observes that “[a]lthough the restitution for slaves is governed by their social situation, their identity as full human beings, rather than mere possessions, is assumed, since they are not included in the laws governing the loss of property (see Exod 21:33–22:15).”¹¹ Stuart rightly observes that slavery in ancient Israel is very different from what has been practiced in the modern west and that Israel’s regulations on the practice are consistently set against their own experience in Egypt, where they were themselves mistreated.¹²

⁹ For a full explanation, see James M. Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007): 253–73.

¹⁰ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 474. Also, see his excellent excursus, “Slavery and Slave Laws in Ancient Israel,” 474–76.

¹¹ Kenneth Laing Harris, “Exodus,” in *The ESV Study Bible*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 177, note on Exod 21:2–11.

¹² Stuart, *Exodus*, 475–76.

The statements on women in the Pentateuch are similar to the statements on slaves/servants in that they protect the vulnerable in a world where women need men to protect and provide for them.¹³ These statutes and commands regarding the treatment of women and slaves were not addressed to people living in Eden before the fall but to people living outside Eden after the curse. The commands and statutes themselves do not restore an edenic way of life, but they are meant to limit human evil until God accomplishes redemption.

Under the Old Covenant the people of God are a nation with boundaries and ethnic identity. This results in regulations on both slavery and marriage that reflect ethnic and political concerns. Members of the covenant people, the Israelites, relate to one another in ways that they do not relate to outsiders.

Under the New Covenant the people of God are not a nation with boundaries but are trans-national, from every tribe. Moreover, Christians are repeatedly instructed to submit to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–14). It is in this context that we must understand the New Testament instructions for slaves to submit to their masters (Eph 6:5; 1 Pet 2:18).

Slavery in the New Testament

The authors of the New Testament are not out to revolutionize the existing social order but to make disciples of Jesus. They are not trying to overthrow governments or renovate social relations but make the gospel attractive. This is explicit in 1 Timothy 6:1, where having commanded slaves to regard their masters as worthy of all honor, Paul explains that this is “so that God’s name and His teaching will not be blasphemed.” The same thing is seen in Titus 2:9–10, where slaves are to be obedient and trustworthy “so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything.” The gospel is the issue, not social justice. A day will come when social justice will be achieved, when Jesus will establish his kingdom, but the authors of the New Testament expect tribulation and affliction, the messianic woes, until that day comes.¹⁴

Slaves who become believers are to find their identity in Christ and not be worried about their slavery, though if they can get their

¹³ For a good discussion of these realities, see Sandra Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 25–46.

¹⁴ See Table 6.2, “The Messianic Woes in the Old and New Testaments,” in Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 493.

freedom they should do so (1 Cor 7:21). The Lord has set them truly free to be slaves of Christ (1 Cor 7:22), and those who have been bought by Christ should “not become slaves of men” (7:23).¹⁵ Along these lines, Paul calls on Philemon to receive Onesimus back no longer as a slave but as a brother (Phlm 16). Since slavery was no part of God’s good created order, Paul’s instructions to Philemon provide an example of how relationships within the family of God can overcome evil with good.

Gender Relations in the New Testament

When we consider the New Testament’s instructions on gender relations, we are dealing with a different animal than slavery. Slavery has no place in the garden of Eden, nothing being said about it in Genesis 1–2. Sexism has no place in Eden, either, though gender roles have a place there, and this indicates that gender roles within a hierarchy of authority is not the same thing as sexism. There are indications of how the male and female related to one another in Genesis 1–2. This shows us that while male and female gender roles are part of God’s good creation, slave and master roles are not. Slave and master roles result from the altered state of the world once sin, curse, death, and slavery have been introduced.¹⁶

The difference between male and female, slave and free on this point appears to result in a difference in the way these issues are treated in the New Testament. Again, male and female roles are part of God’s good creation, slave and master roles are not. So we are dealing with one good thing that has been corrupted (male/female roles and relations), and one bad thing whose evil is being mitigated (slave/master roles and relations).

When we consider the New Testament calls for women to submit to male leadership and authority, again and again the original order of creation is appealed to as the basis for the instruction. We see this in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul explains that man is the head of woman (1 Cor 11:3), which means that women should cover their heads when they pray or prophesy in church (11:4–6). Paul then appeals to the Eden narratives of Genesis 1–2, explaining that woman is the glory of man (11:7), that woman was made from man

¹⁵ See the excellent summary of the NT’s teaching on slavery in Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 794–800.

¹⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 436.

(11:8), and that woman was made for man (11:9). These ideas seem to be what he has in mind when he later says that women “should be submissive, as the law also says” (14:34). Paul appeals to the created order in a similar way to explain his prohibition of women teaching or exercising authority over men in 1 Timothy 2:9–15.¹⁷

Here too the concern is for the advance of the gospel. Paul explains in Ephesians 5 that marriage exists to display the relationship between Christ and the church (esp. Eph 5:32).¹⁸ Wives are to submit and husbands are to lay down their lives so that they can display the gospel. Peter, too, calls for women to submit to their husbands “so that . . . they may be won” to the gospel (1 Pet 3:1–6), and he calls husbands to be Christ-like as they relate to their wives (3:7).¹⁹

What about Galatians 3:28? Paul writes, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NKJV). This statement has to be understood in context. Paul has asserted that the blessings to Abraham were not made to many seeds but to one, “who is Christ” (Gal 3:16). He then explains the relationship between the promises to Abraham and the Law of Moses (cf. 3:15–25), before asserting that “you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (3:26). This means that all who trust Christ have the status of sonship, and Paul declares that union with Christ makes this possible in 3:27: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ like a garment.” This is the reason for the declaration in Galatians 3:28—those who are united to Christ by faith, who have been baptized into him, “are all one in Christ Jesus.” And this means that what Paul said in 3:16 about the promise to the one seed, “who is Christ,” applies to them: “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise” (3:29).

Galatians 3:28 no more does away with gender roles than it does away with slave status. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, and Titus after he wrote Galatians, and in every one of those letters he makes statements about slaves obeying their masters and about women submitting to the authority of men. Paul’s concern in Galatians 3:28 is not the obliteration of gender

¹⁷ See further James M. Hamilton, “What Women Can Do in Ministry: Full Participation within Biblical Boundaries,” in *Women, Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms*, ed. Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 32–52.

¹⁸ For a full exposition, see Hamilton, “The Mystery of Marriage.”

¹⁹ For a wider discussion of the New Testament’s teaching on women, marriage/divorce, and parenting/children, see Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 768–86.

and societal realities but the reality of union with Christ. Those who believe are one in Christ Jesus, but from Paul's statements elsewhere we know that he expects Christians to continue to live in ways appropriate to their gender and societal status.²⁰

Renewal

Gender roles, then, are about the gospel. The relations between male and female, husband and wife, are to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church. The relationship between Yahweh and Israel was treated as a marriage, prompting the charges the prophets make of spiritual adultery—these can be seen most prominently in Jeremiah and Hosea. The relationship between Christ and the church is also treated as a marriage, and the curse that led to sexism has been overcome by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Its effects are also being overcome as Christians live out the gospel as they relate to members of the opposite sex. When we are finally freed from our bondage to corruption, sexism will be no more. All things will be fulfilled in Christ. Though in the resurrection man and woman will no longer marry (Mark 12:25), the resurrected Christ remains a man, so we cannot conclude that gender will be nullified by the resurrection.

Sexism is a distortion, a perversion of something good. That good will be restored at “the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19 NKJV), when “the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (8:21 NKJV).

Slavery, too, is a distortion. The reality is that all people belong to God. Even when humans rebelled against their Creator and found themselves in bondage to one another, God redeemed a people for himself. That people, Israel, was to serve God freely, willingly.²¹ They rebelled because humans are not merely enslaved to one another but to sin. Through the death of the Lamb of God, Jesus, God redeemed people from sin. Just as Christ became a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13), he took on the form of a slave to redeem us from slavery (Phil 2:7–8).²² Here again the idea is that people will no longer be slaves of sin but slaves of righteousness (cf. Rom

²⁰ Similarly *ibid.*, 796.

²¹ For a discussion of “The Exodus as the Source of Enslavement to God,” see Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, 47–54.

²² See the full discussion of Phil 2:6–11 as it relates to this issue in *ibid.*, 156–80.

6:15–23). One day those redeemed from slavery to sin will also be redeemed from bondage to corruption (8:21), and when our bodies are redeemed (8:23) we will serve God perfectly.

Conclusion

The Bible has instructions for males and females, masters and slaves, but the Bible does not condone slavery and sexism. The Bible has a vision of male and female relations that are harmonious and beautiful, appropriate and fitting, and it teaches neither androgynous egalitarianism nor chauvinistic sexism. The Bible's teaching on how males and females relate enables people to live in ways that adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ, and these realities point forward to the consummation and fulfillment of marriage and gender relations at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

Similarly, the Bible has instructions for slaves and masters, but the Bible does not condone slavery. God did not create humans to be slaves but to serve him freely. God redeemed slaves, set them free, broke the yoke from upon them, and made them walk erect that they might serve him in dignified freedom. Those who trust in Christ are no longer slaves of sin but slaves of God (Rom 6:18, 22). Even if they are enslaved in the present, their identity is to be found in their union with Christ by faith (Gal 3:28), by which they are sons of God (3:26). This will enable them to rise above the burden of slavery, which they should cast off if they can (1 Cor 7:21).

The distortion of human relations that is slavery will not be perpetuated in the future. The statements in texts such as Isaiah 14:1–2 are about the triumph of the people of God over their enemies rather than the continuation of slavery. There is reason to think that Isaiah is describing the future with the terms and categories known by himself and his contemporaries, for he speaks of the new heavens and earth as including death and sinners (Isa 65:17, 20), even as he also points to the resurrection (26:19). This would seem to indicate that the statement that the nations will be slaves in Isaiah 14:2 is about the people of Israel taking “captive those who were their captors” (ESV), while the statement that “the young man shall die a hundred years old” (ESV) is about long life, and the statement that “the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed” (ESV) is about the joy and blessing of righteousness.

Those who do not repent and believe will be enslaved to their torment forever. Those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus will

perfectly obey the dictates of righteousness as they serve God, and they will experience the joy and fulfillment of appropriate gender relationships when the bridegroom returns for the bride who has made herself ready.