

Answering Christian Feminists: The greek word “kephale” and it’s true meaning



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Answering feminism in christianity

In 1998 Christian scholar Dr Wayne Grudem wrote an open letter to egalitarians (feminists) challenging them to answer six simple questions. The questions are still unanswered. One of the six questions appears below. At the end of the question and comments made by Dr Wayne Grudem, i will add my own comments to Dr Wayne Grudem's text, to refute the christian feminist claim completely with more evidences.

Ephesians 5:23

For the husband is the head (kephale) of the wife, even as Christ is the head (kephale) of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

The meaning of the greek word “kephale” used in Ephesians 5:23

Dr Wayne Grudem wrote: Where the Bible says that the husband is the "head" (*kephale*) of the wife as Christ is the "head" (*kephale*) of the church (Eph. 5:23), and that the head of the woman is the man (1 Cor. 11:3), you tell us that "head" here means "source" and not "person in authority over (someone)." In fact, as far as we can tell, your interpretation depends on the claim that *kephale* means "source without the idea of authority." But we have never been able to find any text in ancient Greek literature that gives support to your interpretation. Wherever one person is said to be the "head" of another person (or persons), the person who is called the "head" is always the one in authority (such as the general of an army, the Roman emperor, Christ, the heads of the tribes of Israel, David as head of the nations, etc.) Specifically, we cannot find any text where person A is called the "head" of person or persons B, and is not in a position of authority over that person or persons. So we find no evidence for your claim that "head" can mean "source without authority."

Does any such evidence exist? We would be happy to look at any Greek text that you could show us from the 8th century B.C. to the 4th century A.D. (a span of 12 centuries). In all of that literature, our question of fact is this: Will you please show us one example in all of ancient Greek where this word for "head" (*kephale*) is used to say that person A is the "head" of person or persons B, and means what you claim, namely, "non-authoritative source"? If you can show us one example, we would be happy to consider your interpretation further. But if you cannot, then we suggest that you have no factual basis for your interpretation of these key verses, and we respectfully ask that you stop writing and speaking as if such factual basis existed. We would also respectfully ask that you also reconsider your understanding of these verses.

My comments:

When we look at the context of the scripture, and the meaning of the word “kephale” in other verses, we clearly see that it refers to a physical head or the one who has authority over the other. The next passage makes this moreover clear without doubt:

Eph 1:22

And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head (kephale) over all [things] to the church,

The word “kephale” is here clearly a metaphor, and it occurs in a context dealing with Christ's authority "over all things" and the fact that God according to the bible "has put all things under his feet". It is hard to avoid the sense of "authority over" or "ruler" in this case, since the fact of Christ's universal authority is so clearly mentioned in the very sentence in which the word occurs. Similarly, Colossians 2:10 says that Christ is "the *head* of all rule and authority"---- clearly implying that Christ is the greater leader or authority over all other authorities in the universe. Moreover, in a context in which Paul says that "the church is subject to Christ," he says that "Christ is the *head* of the church" (Ephesians 5:23-24). The bible in each case here clearly refers to authority

In Plutarch, *Cicero* 14.4, the word “kephale” (head) is used as a metaphor for the Roman emperor . In the LXX (Septuagint), the Greek translation of the Old Testament, with which Paul was familiar, we see that *kephale* means "authority" every time.

The evidence is overwhelming contextually, linguistically, and theologically that the only proper meaning of *kephale* (head) in Ephesians 5:23 as well as in I Corinthians 11:3 is "authority over" or "superior rank." Grudem concludes that the lexicon editor's letter, "... seems to indicate that there is no 'battle of the lexicons' over the meaning of *kephale*, but that the authors and editors of all (emphasis added) the lexicons for the ancient Greek now agree: (1) that the meaning 'Leader, chief, person in authority' clearly exists for *kephale*, and (2) that the meaning 'source' does not exist."

Source:

Grudem, *Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, December 1997, Vol. 2, No. 5, p.8 For further confirmation that *kephale* (head) means "authority over" and not "source" read Grudem's article "The Meaning of *kephale* ("head"): A Response to Recent Studies, Appendix, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), pp. 425-468.

According to the Greek-English Lexicon by Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *kephale* means, "in the case of living beings, to denote *superior* rank . . . of the husband in relationship to his wife I Cor. 11:3b; Eph. 5:32a. Of Christ in relationship to the church Eph. 4:15; 5:23b."

Source:

Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 431.

Wayne Grudem has given a telling response to the teaching that *kephale* means "source." In his article "The Meaning Source 'Does Not Exist,' Liddell-Scott Editor Rejects Egalitarian Interpretation of 'Head'" (*kephale*), he writes, "A recent letter from one of the world's leading Greek lexicographers, P.G.W. Glare, has undermined a foundational building block in the Egalitarian view of marriage. Glare denies that the word 'head' ever (emphasis added) had the meaning 'source' in ancient Greek literature. Yet this meaning is essential to Egalitarian interpretations of Scripture regarding marriage."

Source:

Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, December 1997, Vol. 2, No. 5, p. 1.

It's important to note that the bible made men "kephale" (head) over women as a punishment for eve's/woman's fault/sin:

Genesis 3:16:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee

As a punishment for her transgression men were made "kephale" (head) over women. It's clear, the bible from the beginning made women under rule of men. Men's position as "kephale" (head) over women has therefor in Christianity nothing to with the nature or physical make-up of each gender. The bible clearly teaches us that this role distinction was made as a punishment for women, since it was Eve according to the bible who was deceived and not Adam (see "1 Timothy 2:1-14"). Therefor the husband was made "ruler over her", or in other words men were made "kephale" (head) over women, as expressed by Paul in the New Testament.

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown: "Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible", Genesis Book 3

16. unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow

She was doomed as a wife and mother to suffer pain of body and distress of mind. From being the help meet of man and the partner of his affections [Genesis 2:18,23], her condition would henceforth be that of humble subjection.¹

Matthew Henry Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible, Genesis Chapter 3:

Verse 16 -

We have here the sentence passed upon the woman for her sin. Two things she is condemned to: a state of sorrow, and a state of subjection, proper punishments of a sin in which she had gratified her pleasure and her pride. I. She is here put into a state of sorrow, one particular of which only is specified, that in bringing forth children; but it includes all those impressions of grief and fear which the mind of that tender sex is most apt to receive, and all the common calamities which they are liable to. Note, Sin brought sorrow into the world; it was this that made the world a vale of tears, brought showers of trouble upon our heads, and opened springs of sorrows in our hearts, and so deluged the world: had we known no guilt, we should have known no grief. The pains of child-bearing, which are great to a proverb, a scripture proverb, are the effect of sin; every pang and every groan of the travailing woman speak aloud the fatal consequences of sin: this comes of eating forbidden fruit. Observe, 1. The sorrows are here said to be multiplied, *greatly multiplied*. All the sorrows of this present time are so; many are the calamities which human life is liable to, of various kinds, and often repeated, the clouds returning after the rain, and no marvel that our sorrows are multiplied when our sins are: both are innumerable evils. The sorrows of child-bearing are multiplied; for they include, not only the travailing throes, but the indispositions before (it is sorrow from the conception), and the nursing toils and vexations after; and after all, if the children prove wicked and foolish, they are, more than ever, the heaviness of her that bore them. Thus are the sorrows multiplied; as one grief is over, another succeeds in this world. 2. It is God that multiplies our sorrows: *I will do it*. God, as a righteous Judge, does it, which ought to silence us under all our sorrows; as many as they are, we have deserved them all, and more: nay, God, as a tender Father, does it for our necessary correction, that we may be humbled for sin, and weaned from the world by all our sorrows; and the good we get by them, with the comfort we have under them, will abundantly balance our sorrows, how greatly soever they are multiplied. II. She is here put into a state of subjection. *The whole sex, which by creation was equal with man, is, for sin, made inferior*, and forbidden to *usurp authority*, 1 Tim. 2:11, 12. The wife particularly is hereby put under the dominion of her husband, and is not *sui juris*—*at her own disposal*, of which see an instance in that law, Num. 30:6-8, where the husband is empowered, if he please, to disannul the vows made by the wife. This sentence amounts only to that command, *Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands*; but the entrance of sin has made that duty a punishment, which otherwise it would not have been. If man had not sinned, he would always have ruled with wisdom and love; and, if the woman had not sinned, she would always have obeyed with humility and meekness; and then the dominion would have been no grievance: but our own sin and folly make our yoke heavy. If Eve had not eaten forbidden fruit herself, and tempted her husband to eat it, she would never have complained of her subjection; therefore it ought never to be complained of, though harsh; but sin must be complained of, that made it so. Those wives who not only despise and disobey their husbands, but domineer over them, do not consider that they not only violate a divine law, but thwart a divine sentence. III. Observe here how mercy is mixed with wrath in this sentence. The woman shall have sorrow, but it shall be in bringing forth children, and the sorrow shall be *forgotten for joy that a child is born*, Jn. 16:21. She shall be subject, but it shall be to her own husband that loves her, not to a stranger, or an enemy: the sentence was not a curse, to bring her to ruin, but a chastisement, to bring her to repentance. It was well that enmity was not put between the man and the woman, as there was between the serpent and the woman.²

Sources:

1:

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/JamiesonFaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=ge&chapter=003>

2:

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/MatthewHenryComplete/mhc-com.cgi?book=ge&chapter=003>