



### Isn't man the "head" of the woman?

**Yes, but probably not how you think!** We need to dig into the Greek context of Paul's first century audience to see how they understood the word "head" (*kephale*). Let's look at 1 Corinthians 11:3.

*"Now I want you to realize that the **head** of every man is Christ, and the **head** of the woman is man, and the **head** of Christ is God."*

#### Key Term

# κεφαλη

*kephale = head*

#### Context matters!

Paul was not speaking to people in 21st century U.S., China, or Zimbabwe. We need to understand how 1st century Greek-speakers thought about Paul's word choice. What did *they* think of when Paul used *kephale* three times? Jesus is certainly King of Kings and Lords of Lords. We are not doubting Jesus' authority! But does the Greek word *kephale* mean "Master, Leader, Authority" or something else in this context to the Corinthian church?

### KEPHALE = HEAD

#### **Kephale... does it mean "physical head", "boss", or "source" in this passage?**

The most common use of *kephale* was a literal, physical head. For example, Jesus wore a crown of thorns on his *kephale*. But with figurative definitions, options abound!\* What happens if we presume that *kephale* figuratively means "boss, authority, or superior." When we substitute the word "authority," for *kephale*, 1 Cor. 11:3 reads:

*"Now I want you to realize that the **authority** of every man is Christ, and the **authority** of the woman is man, and the **authority** of Christ is God."*

1. Does Christ currently rule in every man? (Currently do all men follow Jesus as Lord?) 2. Is every man the authority of every woman (In marriage? The Church? At what age do sons begin to rule over their moms?) 3. Is God the authority of Christ for eternity? Is the Trinity ranked in a hierarchy of differing authority? (Careful! This understanding was ruled as a heresy in the 4th century). "Authority" as a figurative definition poses some obvious difficulties.

However, another figurative definition yields a different understanding that fits the overall context much better. When we substitute "where something comes/flows from" or "source" for head/*kephale* the verse reads:

*"Now I want you to realize that the **source** of every man is Christ, and the **source** of the woman is man, and the **source** of Christ is God."*

#### Ranked by chronology, not authority

Christ	is the source of	Man
The Man	is the source of	A Woman
God	is the source of	Christ

#### Conclusion

Does "source" flow logically? Yes. Does it make sense theologically? Yes. Does it fit 1st century Greek? Absolutely. **Paul's audience knew man was created first chronologically, then "a woman" originated from the man, and finally Christ came from God (John 6:41-42). Therefore, no one is independent, and "everything comes from God" (1 Cor. 11:11-12)! Kephale rarely means "authority," but "source" makes perfect sense.**

#### \* Dictionaries

**No ancient dictionary offered "boss/superior" as a possible definition of *kephale*.** The 1843 & 1967 *Greek-English Lexicon* by Liddell, Scott, Jones listed **48** figurative definitions, **ZERO** were "superior rank." Schlier's *Theological Dictionary* gave **27** options, and **NONE** conveyed the idea of "authority." At long last, in 1976 Bauer's *Greek English Lexicon* listed "superior rank" as the 2nd definition of *kephale*. To illustrate, Bauer used two supporting Greek examples, but neither example point toward "superior rank" for 1st century use.

#### 4 Crucial Questions

1. What does this teach us about **GOD**?
2. What does this teach us about **PEOPLE**?
3. What command should I **OBEY**?
4. With whom can I **SHARE** this?