

The Building of Woman

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One of the stories which have excited the ridicule of the critics of the Bible is the account of the creation of woman. If a rib was taken out of man to form a woman, why, we are asked, is not one still missing? Foolish as such an objection seems on the surface (for the loss of more important members of the body are not transmitted by generation) it challenges us to a look into the Scripture more carefully. It is difficult to see any particular reason why a rib should be chosen for this purpose. Was it really a rib, or may the word be understood of some other part of Adam's body?

The Hebrew word here rendered "*rib*," though it occurs over forty times, is nowhere else so translated. It is not the Hebrew equivalent of the Chaldee *galag* (Dan.7:5), the only other word which may be rendered "*rib*."

Our translators have sometimes given it as *side* or *side chamber*, as well as *corner*, *board*, *plank*, *leaves* and *halting*. Many of these, it must be conceded, have some semblance to a rib.

The word is almost always used in connection with the temple or the tabernacle. A knowledge of the structure of these buildings will help us to discover its true meaning.

Ezekiel describes the millennial temple as having *side chambers* in the walls (Ezekiel 41:5-26). Their size, and how they increase in width as the walls of the building decreased, their number and how they were connected – all these architectural details leave us in no doubt that the word here means a *cell*, or *vault*, an enclosed space.

When we transfer this meaning to the tabernacle structure, it seems to fail utterly; but this is because the tabernacle walls themselves are not correctly described.

Of the four Hebrew words translated "*board*," one is used exclusively of the "*boards*" of the tabernacle, except a single occurrence where it is rendered "*benches*" (Ezekiel 27:6). It is not

at all likely, however, that *benches* were made of ivory. Rather the *pro* of the ship was made of this precious substance. The word has the meaning of a taper, and the “boards” of the tabernacle were in shape like an inverted V. Every detail of measurement and design confirms this fact. The walls of the tabernacle were hollow.

Coming back to the Hebrew word *tzehlag*, which is here found to mean a *cell* or *vault*, we now have no difficulty in applying it to the “sides” of the tabernacle, for these enclosed a tapered vault. The bars which ran through from end to end were inside of this tapered vault, as well as the rings through which they passed.

These two examples are sufficient to establish the basic signification of the word. It is a *hollow cell*. There is no reason for calling it a rib, unless we slavishly follow the *Septuagint*, which is not consistent in its renderings.

Having arrived at the conclusion that it was not a rib but a cell of some kind, it behooves us to inquire from the Scriptures themselves what its nature was, and also to seek corroboration for our position in the facts found in our physical frames. We need not fear any disagreement between scriptural truth and physical fact: they must and do agree. If they do not, we are wrong. If they coincide in our interpretation of their testimony, we are probably in possession of the truth.

It is a notable fact which is usually overlooked that humanity was *created male and female* (Genesis 1:27). The sexes were combined in one individual. Adam was first formed, then Eve. There was an interval between the creation of the man and the building of the woman. *After* the creation of Adam God planted a garden eastward in Eden. He put the man in the garden to dress it and keep it. He commanded the man as to what he was and was not to eat, and He brought every animal of the field to Adam, who gave them their names.

Let us press the fact, which is repeated in the fifth chapter that “*In the day that God created man ... male and female created He them ... and called their name Adam in the day when they were created.*” It is evident that the Scriptures are true, in a much stricter sense than many suppose, that the woman was taken out of man. Nothing new was *created* when the woman was built. The man permanently lost part of his structure which God removed when He created his helpmeet. In other words, the sexes were separated and Adam retained only masculine functions and Eve was built from the feminine. Do not the facts of the physical world perfectly confirm this interpretation? How could the removal of a rib change Adam from a hermaphrodite to the exclusively masculine structure of his descendants? Such a combination of the sexes is true today of most plants and some worms and mollusks.

It seems most reasonable, then, to believe, on the evidence of Scripture as well as nature, that woman was not a separate creation from man, but was built from that part of his original structure which he now lacks.

This is fraught with much beautiful material for reflection. Man, once complete in himself, is now but a part of his original self. The primal perfection can only be attained by the union of the two. They are in very deed one flesh. The One who severed them from one another in that deep sleep which fell upon Adam is the One who yokes them together in holy wedlock.

Is not this the key to our Lord's discourse against divorce? He is very emphatic. "From the **beginning** of creation He makes them male and female." This can refer only to the time when both were included in the one human being, Adam. Hence, "**On this account** a man will be leaving his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will be for one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Then that which God yokes together let no man be severing."

Here, indeed, we have the divine illustration of our union with Christ. Though it seems beyond belief, He is incomplete without us. We were chosen in Him before the disruption and now we become one with Him in redemption. Here there is no divorce possible. The ecclesia is His complement or fullness. It takes both to make a perfect Body for the Christ. The transcendent nature of this grace can only be absorbed by mature meditation. May we have grace to enjoy it fully!

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Postscript:

Concordant Version Note on Genesis 2:21

This stem is rendered "beam," "board," "chamber," "corner," "leaf," "plank" and "side" in the A.V. Only here is it "*rib*." It denotes an angular enclosed space. The "boards" of the tabernacle consisted of two planks, forming an angular vault. Here the female parts of humanity are severed from the male, to build the woman. The breasts of the male are a vestigial reminder that humanity was originally bisexual.

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