

Reflection - Rebellious Women?

Korah, Dathan and Abiram were rebellious men. They opposed Moses and Aaron wanting their position of authority, and rose up against them. They were moved by jealousy and dissatisfaction. This is what God did about it: "...the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them..." (Numbers 16:1-32)

Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah were five sister in Israel, daughters of Zelophehad. (Numbers 27:1-7) And they came across as rebellious. They opposed everybody. They wanted an equal inheritance as that of the men, which was something their culture did not allow. Their father had died leaving no sons, and the five sisters wanted to be his heirs. But in their society all possessions belonged only to a woman's father if she was single or to her husband if she was married. This created a disadvantage for the five sisters because they were going to be robbed of their inheritance in the name of tradition.

Moses had designated groups of men under himself to resolve problems among the people. Only difficult cases would be brought to him. The case of the five sisters should have been put to rest way down the line of authority, but these ladies were determined not to be left with the bitter taste of injustice; and refusing to take no for an answer, they appealed their cause. But again their struggle proved fruitless. The only recourse left to the five sisters was to appeal to Moses himself.

From our viewpoint the case should have been easy to resolve by giving the sisters what was theirs by right. But from the viewpoint of the society of their day, it was the women who were being difficult, perhaps even starting some kind of women's liberation movement. Yet all the false claims against them would only serve to divert the minds of the people from the real issue: The women were victims desperately seeking justice.

Present in the Tent of Meeting were Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders and the whole assembly of men. But these determined, non-submissive ladies marched right to them and said, "Our father died in the desert... and left no sons. Give us property among our father's relatives." They did not say "please" or "it would be nice of you," but only the assertive request, "Give us property."

Moses brought their case before the Lord, and the Lord said, "What Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and turn their father's inheritance over to them." (Numbers 27:1-7) And so it was that their cause proved not to be a women's liberation movement after all, and neither did the ground open up under them and swallow them. On the contrary: God sided with the five sisters.

Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church want an equal inheritance of the pulpit. Are they like Korah, Dathan and Abiram? Or, are they like the five sisters, daughters of Zelophehad? Unlike Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who craved the positions held by Moses, our women are not seeking to replace Ellen G. White. Unlike in old Israel where the positions in the priesthood were limited, the Gospel is lacking laborers. Unlike those who rebelled against Moses, our women are not moved by jealousy or dissatisfaction. Theirs is not an act of

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rebellion. Rather, it is the eleventh hour, the Landowner has gone out seeking more laborers, (Matthew 20:1-16) and these women are answering the call to work in God's vineyard. That's all.

No one is fit for God's work, but God makes us fit. I'll paraphrase:

"Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel... '...take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these [wo]men... keep away from these [wo]men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of [wo]men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.'" (Acts 5:34-39, NKJV)

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