

The Pronouncements in Genesis 3:14-19

How should the pronouncements in Genesis 3:14-19 be understood? Are they descriptions, telling what will happen? Or, are they better understood as commands, telling what must happen? Decide which of these two options makes better sense of the passage.

We read these as ~~descriptions~~ descriptions

- 1. "I will put enmity between you and the woman."
 - Must a woman never own a snake, be a pet store owner, or be a herpetologist?
- 2. "He (the man) shall bruise your head."
 - Must a man never pass by an opportunity to kill a snake?
- 3. "Pain in childbearing"
 - Must a woman never take drugs to ease the pain of childbirth?

Read as Command

- 4. "He shall rule over you."
 - Must a woman never rule over a man (no female mayors, senators, doctors, principals, managers, voters, etc.)?

Read as description

- 5. "Cursed is the ground."
 - Must a man never attempt to improve the soil (e.g., add fertilizer)?
- 6. "In toil you shall eat of it." "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread."
 - Must a man never lessen the toil of tilling the ground (e.g., by using a tractor)?
- 7. "Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth."
 - Must a man never use herbicides?

Scriptures with Female Imagery for God¹

Old Testament

<u>Text</u>	<u>Image</u>
1. Numbers 11:11-12	Pregnant, childbearing, nursing mother
2. Deuteronomy 32:11	Eagle
3. Deuteronomy 32:13b, 18b	Nursing and childbearing mother
4. Job 38:29-30	Woman who gives birth
5. Psalm 22:9-10	Midwife
6. Psalm 71:6	Midwife
7. Psalm 123:2	Woman of the house
8. Isaiah 42:14	Mother in childbirth
9. Isaiah 45:9-10	Mother who gives birth
10. Isaiah 49:14-15	Nursing mother
11. Isaiah 66:13	Mother who comforts
12. Hosea 13:8	Mother bear

New Testament

<u>Text</u>	<u>Image</u>
13. Matthew 23:37/Luke 13:34	Mother hen
14. Luke 15:8-10	Woman searching for a lost coin
15. John 3:3-6	Mother who gives birth

¹ It is interesting that Paul sometimes describes his own ministry with female imagery; see 1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Galatians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:7.

Male and Female Pairings in Luke¹

Luke emphasizes the inclusive nature of the gospel by pairing accounts of men and women. In other words, Luke often joins a story about a man with a corresponding story about a woman, and vice versa. It is significant that sixteen of these pairs are only in Luke: for eight of these pairs, both parts are unique to Luke; for the other eight pairs, Luke more often adds a woman to create the pairing. This feature pervades Luke, as the following list shows:

1. Zechariah and Mary (1:5-25, 26-38)
2. Simeon and Anna (2:25-35, 36-38)
3. Herod and Herodias (3:19)
4. The widow of Zarephath and Naaman (4:25-26, 27)
5. The demoniac and Simon's mother-in-law (4:33-37, 38-39)
6. The centurion's slave and the widow of Nain (7:1-10, 11-17)
7. Simon the Pharisee and the forgiven woman (7:36-50)
8. The Twelve and the women disciples (8:1, 2-3)
9. Jairus and the sick women (8:40-56)
10. The good Samaritan, and Mary and Martha (10:29-37, 38-42)
11. The man with an unclean spirit and the woman in the crowd (11:24-26, 27-28)
12. The Queen of the South and the men of Nineveh (11:31, 32)
13. Male servants and female servants (12:45)
14. The father/son and mother/daughter pairs (12:53a, 53b)
15. The Sabbath healing of a woman and a man (13:10-17; 14:1-6)
16. The man with the mustard seed and the woman with leaven (13:18-19, 20-21)
17. The man who lost a sheep and the woman who lost a coin (15:3-7, 8-10)
18. The man in a field and Lot's wife (17:31, 32)
19. The two men in bed and the two women at the mill (17:34, 35)
20. The importunate widow and the Pharisee/tax collector parable (18:1-8, 9-18)
21. Scribes and a widow (20:45-47; 21:1-4)
22. Simon of Cyrene and the women who lament (23:26, 27-31)
23. Jesus' acquaintances and the women who followed Jesus (23:49a, 49b)
24. The women witnesses and the two men on the road to Emmaus (24:1-11, 12-24)

¹Adapted from R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1.132-139; B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 128-130; A. Black, *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 1.446-450. Compare Luke 8:19-21, in which he removes "sisters" (Matt 12:50; Mark 3:35). Perhaps one can also add those who accuse Peter (Luke 22:56-58).

Women Unique to the Gospel of Luke

More than any of the other Gospels, Luke stresses the contributions of women in the life and ministry of Jesus. First of all, Luke mentions more women than the other Gospel writers. Second, when describing women mentioned in the other Gospels, Luke often expands their importance in his own narrative (e.g., Mary in 1:26-56; 2:1-52). Third, compared to Matthew and Mark, Luke is the only Gospel that mentions the following women:

1. Elizabeth (1:5-25, 36, 39-60)
2. The daughters of Aaron (1:5)
3. All women (1:42)
4. Anna (2:36-38)
5. Many widows in Israel (4:25)
6. The widow of Zarephath (4:25-26)
7. The widow of Nain (7:11-17)
8. Wisdom (7:35)
9. The forgiven woman (7:36-50)
10. The women with Jesus: Joanna, Susanna, and many others (8:1-3)
11. Mary and Martha (10:38-42)
12. The woman who praises Jesus' mother (11:27-28)
13. Maidservants (12:45)
14. The crippled woman (13:10-17)
15. A newlywed wife (14:20)
16. Wife and sisters (14:26)
17. The woman who lost a coin (15:8-10)
18. Prostitutes (15:30)
19. Lot's wife (17:32)
20. The importunate widow (18:1-8)
21. A wife left for the sake of the kingdom (18:29)
22. Parents who deliver their children (21:16a)
23. The women ("daughters of Jerusalem") who wail at the crucifixion (23:27-31)
24. Barren women (23:29-30)