

Junia: male or female?

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Rm 16:7

Why this is important

A debate has raged about this question for decades. The reason is that it has been used by feminists to defend the idea that church leaders can be female. With no NT apologetic for female church leaders, this person has become the champion of feminists who claim that it is certainly a female.

Oddly, many evangelicals have claimed that this person is a female apostle, without realising the door of error that they open up.

We need to finally put this matter to rest.

Textual issues

Exactly what is the name in the Greek text? Some people claim that the name is really Junias, and therefore a female gender. Some translations use 'Junias'; such as: ASV, NAS, NAB, RSV, Darby. In other words, Alexandrian text based versions.

The eclectic (Alexandrian) Greek text says, 'Iouinia/n or *Iounian*. This is an accusative, masculine, singular noun derived from the masculine *Junias*. It is a masculine name.¹

The Byzantine Greek text says *VIounia/n* also.

So both the Alexandrian and Byzantine text use a masculine accusative form of the word Junias.² Despite this some suggest that the name could also be feminine (including Robertson and Vincent, in the past Origen and Chrysostom).

For me the masculine form is conclusive; but let us presume that the matter is still open.

The name

The name Junia and the form Junias were used of males. The masculine text proves this. However, it was also an abbreviation (or contraction) of the longer name, 'Junianus'³ or

¹ According to the Friberg Greek Lexicon. This is a more modern lexicon with better data than the much earlier Robertson and Vincent (see two paragraphs later).

² See argument by Michaelis in Pott's *Sylloge*, 7, 128.

³ Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Bible Comm.

Junilius,⁴ both are masculine names. It could also be derived from Junius, the name of a Roman family.⁵

So the use of the word for males in Greece and the Roman Empire (using a Greek lingua franca) at that time is also conclusive.

[Although Andronicus and Junia were Jews in Rome, there was a very strong Hellenistic influence in Judaea. This even led to a Hellenistic party in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1). Hellenism was extremely popular and fashionable in Jewish society. Using Greek names was common.]

The author context

We cannot make an interpretation that contradicts the teaching, practice and theology of the author, Paul the apostle of Christ.

What was Paul's view of female church leaders? It was completely anathema.

Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 1 Tim 2:11-14

Firstly, a woman was to be silent in the churches. This is in the context of teaching, authority and giving an authoritative interpretation. Paul says elsewhere that a woman could pray or prophesy (1 Cor 11:5). So a woman could contribute but not speak with authority.

Secondly, a woman could not teach in the church because this implies authority over men. Regarding teaching and authority, she is to be silent and submissive.

Thirdly, women are more prone to deception than men. This is because Eve was deceived by the serpent while Adam made a choice and was not deceived by what the serpent whispered in Eve's ear. Church history proves that this is correct.

So,

- A woman cannot teach.
- A woman cannot have authority over men.
- Women are more easily deceived.

The conclusion, therefore, is that a woman could not be an apostle.

Although an apostle has no leadership authority whatsoever in the home church (unless he is an elder as well, like Peter) he does have leadership authority over a newly planted church until elders are appointed, who then take charge. Therefore, a woman could not be appointed as an apostle (a church planter or missionary).

⁴ John Gill Bible Comm.

⁵ Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature.

Options

There are three options to explain this name. They are:

- It refers to a male apostle.
- It refers to a female apostle.
- It refers to the sister or wife of Andronicus.

Since Paul does not advocate female leaders in churches, if the name is feminine, then it refers to the sister or wife of Andronicus. If the name is masculine than it refers to a male apostle.

There is no reason whatsoever to state that this is a female apostle. There are no grounds to use Junia as a platform for feminism in the church.

Conclusion

The weight of evidence is that the name is masculine and therefore Junia was a male apostle. However, even if the name was feminine, this would then mean that Junia was the wife or sister of Andronicus because a woman cannot be an apostle.

There is no basis here for an apologetic for women church leaders.

The matter is settled.

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