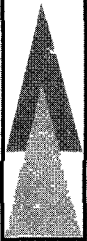




Because of the Angels

A Word on
Head Coverings



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Because of the Angels

1 Corinthians 11:3-16

“BUT I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to

have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." 1 Cor. 11:3-16.

This portion of God's Word, which is of great practical importance, is often misunderstood. If God speaks on any subject, it must be because we need to know it. And when God has spoken, we should be ready to heed what He has said. Furthermore, it must be conceded that God is capable of making His meaning clear and plain beyond any doubt. If in any case we do not understand, it is quite probable that the trouble lies with us. Either we have not read it carefully, we are prejudiced by some preconceived idea, or, still worse, we do not see because we are wilful and do not want it to be that way.

God's Order for the Man and Woman

Now in verse 3 the Spirit of God through the Apostle says that “the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” This then is God’s order of power. God has a place for each (man and woman) and surely it is not grievous to abide in that place. Man has his place as God’s representative on earth—“the image and glory of God.” The woman also has a distinctive place—not the place of prominence, but the place of subjection according to God’s order. She can, however, glorify God in her appointed place. Man can, and alas does, sadly fail in properly filling his place, but he is in it just the same. He should seek to act **before God** in his place, and she should be happy to fill hers. Each should deem it a privilege to occupy the place assigned by God.

God has established a certain order throughout His creation. Christian men and women are not to neglect this order, but to remember that they are a divinely appointed spectacle—yes, a spectacle even to angels (v. 10). Angels are learning the wisdom of God, being spectators of His

ways. The fact that they witness God's ways down here is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 4:9 and Ephesians 3:10.

Now there is a very simple rule to follow which will demonstrate the place the man has. He is **not** to pray or prophesy (communicate the mind of God to others) **with a covering on his head**. To have his head covered would spoil the demonstration before others of God's appointed place for him. It would be the mark of his abandoning the place of authority, and would leave no visible head.

It is not a matter of superiority and inferiority but of relative positions in the creation

The rule for the woman is just as simple; she is **not** to pray or prophesy **without having a covering** on her head. If she prays without a covering on her head, she dishonors her head. It would be disorder, to be witnessed by angels. The covering on her head is the outward sign of her subjection. A sister's prophesying, of course, is restricted by other scriptures.

She must not do so in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34), neither is she to teach nor to usurp authority over the man (1 Tim. 2:12).

The fact that the simple direction about covering the head is generally disregarded in Christendom does not excuse any from following it. Some turn this portion aside by ascribing its authorship to Paul, but the Spirit of God was the divine Author, and Paul only the penman. He said that the things he wrote "are the commandments of the Lord." 1 Cor. 14:37. If this be true, then it is a serious matter to resist them.

Listen to the strong language used:

"For if a woman be not covered, let her hair also be cut off. But if it be shameful to a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, let her be covered." v. 6 JND.

What woman would want her head shaved! She would be publicly disgraced and would hide herself. Well then, says the Word of God, let her put a covering on her head **when praying or prophesying**.

It is not a matter of superiority and inferiority but of relative positions in the creation. God in His wisdom has assigned a place to each as it has pleased Him, and blessed are they who acknowledge such and seek wisdom and direction from His Word for becoming conduct in that place.

The Apostle, by the Spirit, went back to the creation to establish God's order from the beginning. The order and purpose of the creation is set forth as the ground for woman's subjection to man (vv. 8,9). Then in verses 14 and 15 he appeals to what we learn from observing nature. This shows the appropriateness of a woman's having her head covered when praying. Nature teaches that long hair is a glory to a

Her long hair simply marked a certain subordinate, retiring place

woman (how sad when Christian women cut it to be like the world), and signified a certain place of retirement. She was not to show herself with the boldness of men. Her hair was given her "in lieu of a veil" (v. 15 JND). It marked a retiring, subordinate place in God's creation. This was God's doing, and has its own blessing where it is not set aside by the will of men. We must remember that in the "new creation" there is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus. That, however, is not the

point here, but the respective places of each in this world before the eyes of others—even of angels.

Woman's Hair Not Her Covering

Some, in resisting Scripture, have wrested it by seeking to prove that a woman's hair is the covering that is required. The attempt to **misuse** the divine instruction should be so plain as to scarcely deserve comment. But for some who may have been misled by this strange twisting, it is well to call attention to some points. If a woman's covering could be deduced to mean her hair, then a man's hair would be his covering also. Now this evidently could not be the meaning in **his** case. What man would have his head shaved to be devoid of a covering? Even nature indicates only "short hair" for him. And he, who is supposed to have "short hair," is not "**to cover** his head" when speaking to God or for God.

"For a man indeed ought not **to cover** his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God." v. 7.

How could “**not to cover**” possibly mean to not let his hair grow long like a woman’s when he is praying? The words of this verse express action or lack of action at the time of prayer. It is an act which he is **not** to do when praying. He may cover his head at other times, but these instructions refer to the time of “praying or prophesying.” How could anyone think otherwise? Therefore, we see that in a man’s case his hair is not the covering spoken of; he is not to put a hat or other covering on his head at this designated time.

*For her to be without a covering
would be a sign of her having taken
the place of authority,
and having left her own position*

Notice again the sixth verse. To make a woman’s hair her covering, instead of a hat or some other object, would make something quite ridiculous out of it. Such reasoning would make that verse say that if a woman did not have any hair on her head, then her hair was to be cut off—an obvious impossibility. The folly of seeking

to prove that a woman's hair is her covering, should be apparent. In verse 15 it should read, "in lieu of a veil." Her long hair simply marked in nature a certain subordinate, retiring place.

Some in Christendom have written, in an effort to turn aside the plain directions, saying that it means "her **long hair**" is the covering, and that it simply amounts to a ban against having her hair cut short. Now it is sad when a Christian woman cuts her glory, and in doing so is "conformed to this world." But how could she have short hair the rest of the time, and make it long when praying? It is a question of her showing and acknowledging her divinely appointed place **when** speaking to God or for God. This is to be done by placing a covering on her head at that time. Obviously if she has long hair all the time, there is still something to be done **when praying**. As we noticed in the case of a man, God spoke specifically about an act not to be done **at the time of prayer**. A woman already has a place of retirement in nature, already has long hair which marks her position, and now is to place a covering on her head to signify her subjection in that place. Is not that simple enough? For her to be without a covering would be a sign of her having taken the place of authority, and

having left her own position. It would be confusion of God's order, witnessed by angels. God has gone to great lengths to show the reasons for such a rule. Why should any labor to make something else out of it? It is to be feared that the refusal to show the outward mark of subordination is merely the indication that the God-given place itself is refused.



When is Head Covering Appropriate?

Others have sought to set aside the general application of this divine instruction by saying that it only applies to the time when all are together in the assembly. This is a great mistake, and is easily discerned by noticing that a woman is not permitted to speak in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34); how then could she be given instruction how to act when prophesying in the assembly? The one verse would contradict and nullify the other if it meant that her head was only to be covered when in a meeting. The instruction of this portion is for men and women at any time, and in any place. It would be just as wrong for a man to pray to God with his

hat on in the privacy of his own room as it would be in public, and likewise it would be out of order for a woman to pray without having her head covered even when all alone at home.

Verse 16 strengthens the divine instructions. What was to be done in the assembly at Corinth was the same in all assemblies; it was not to be left to individual opinions, nor to local decisions. And there was no room for anyone to contend—there simply was no allowance of any other practice or custom. The case was closed and not open for argument.

Ever since Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden aspired to be “as gods” and fell, self-exaltation has been one of the worst weeds in the human heart. The first couple were not content with their lot and, seeking to exalt themselves, brought in ruin and misery. Blessed contrast in the second man—the Lord from heaven! He humbled Himself to the very depths, and now God has highly exalted Him. (See Phil. 2.) Blessed Saviour, may we all learn more of Thee!

One more word as to covering the head—may the Lord exercise Christian women to select millinery which is a “covering” when it is to be used for this purpose. How needful it is that we should be before the Lord as to

the purchase of a hat, or “whatsoever” we do, that all may be pleasing to Him.

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