

The Praise of an Apostle (1Cor 11)

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Introduction: The Corinthians wanted the praises of God.

- A. There were exceptions in the church. **(2 Cor 10:12, 18)**
 - 1. The praise of an apostle was equivalent to the praise of God. **(1 Jn 4:1, 6)**
 - 2. The church as a whole was interested in Paul's instruction as evidenced by their letter that Paul is continuing to answer. **(1 Cor 7:1, 1 Cor 11:2)**
 - 3. Who were the Corinthians going to seek answers from, men or God?
 - 4. Sadly, many Christians today are seeking answers to these same questions from the books of men. (Ex. Meeting of preachers in Birmingham)
- B. There are two questions answered in this chapter.
 - 1. One was an area of praise **(vv2-16)** and one was an area where no praise could be given **(vv17-34)**. **(1 Cor 11:2, 17)**
 - 2. Lets follow the good example and learn from the bad example.
- I. ***"Now I praise you..." - A Symbol of Subjection Observed. (vv2-16)***
 - A. Paul praised them for two things.
 - 1. "that you remember me in all things.." - Their letter showed their willingness!
 - 2. "and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you." - Note: These traditions were inspired, handed down from God! **(2 Thess 2:15, 3:6)**
 - 3. In this, being a "traditional Christian" believing the "old traditions" pleases God.
 - B. The reason for the question, more knowledge needed.
 - 1. Paul gave them what they needed. "But I want you to know ..." **(1 Cor 11:3)**
 - 1. Evidently they were keeping this tradition, but wanted a clearer understanding.
 - C. Why does the covering symbolize subjection? There are two reasonable possibilities:
 - 1. It is a divine tradition, given by God.
 - 2. It is a human custom that has been connected to a divine tradition.
 - D. What reasons did Paul give for women to be covered and men uncovered while praying or prophesying?
 - 1. Because of the dishonor of one's head.**(VV4-5)**
 - 2. Because of shame.**(v. 6)**
 - 3. Because of the glory of God **(v 7)**
 - 4. Because of creation. **(v 8-9)**
 - 5. Because of the angels **(v10)**
 - 6. Because of the illustration of nature. **(vv13-15)**
 - 7. Because of the uniform practice of the apostles and the churches of God. **(v16)**
 - E. Some questions considered:
 - 1. Is the covering here a product of human custom? If so, what was that custom?
 - 2. Are there one or two coverings in this passage?
 - 3. When is this command/custom(?) to be practiced? Is it only dealing with the assembly?
 - 4. What is the size of the covering?
 - 5. Are these regulations unique to spiritual gifts?

F. Further studies are encouraged!

II. “Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you....” - The Observance of the Lord’s Supper. (vv17-34)

- A. The Corinthians were physically partaking the elements of the Lord’s supper, but they were doing harm to their souls. **(v17, 27-30)**
 - 1. We cannot be wrong here! It is amazing to me that men are now teaching the very thing that Paul condemned.
- B. There no longer were partaking of the Lord’s supper because of these errors.
 - 1. They selfishly took their own supper to satisfy hunger and thirst. The assembly of the saints was not the place for this, they were to partake at home. **(1 Cor 11:22,34)**
 - 2. They showed disregard for both God and their brethren.
 - 3. Those who substitute their own supper or a supper to satisfy hunger for the Lord’s supper will divide themselves from those who seek the praise of an apostle. **(1 Cor 11:18-19; 1 Jn 3:18-19)**
- C. How we worship will determine how we are molded by God.
 - 1. We will become like what we worship. **(Psa 115:4-8; Psa 135:15-18)**
 - 2. What shall we discern, the Lord’s body on the cross or God’s people? We cannot get this answer wrong and be right with God.
 - 3. What are we doing when we “eat this bread and drink this cup?”
 - a. Whatever the cup points to the bread also points to! **(1 Cor 10:16)**
 - b. The Lord’s death is proclaimed not the Lord’s people. **(1 Cor 11:26)**
 - c. Why is this difficult to understand? **(Gal 3:1)**
- D. Do you really know how to worship? **(1 Cor 11:27-32)**
 - 1. It requires self-examination.
 - 2. It requires a clear understanding of the meaning of the act of worship.
 - 3. It requires a deep reverence for God.
 - 4. Some want to turn this occasion into a carnal supper to satisfy hunger and focus on other men and on one’s own carnal desires.
 - 5. Is this a place for casual conversation, laughing and spontaneous singing?
- E. There is a proper order to our assemblies. **(1 Cor 11:34; 14:40)**
 - 1. We should bring the right spirit and submit to the apostles instructions. **(Jn 4:23-24)**
 - 2. Are the assemblies boring to you? What is the right solution?
 - 3. Those who have never learned to worship are very susceptible to pursue “new ways.” (Ex. Pat Boone)

Conclusion: Let us carefully consider the divine traditions of God.

- 1. In doing this one day God Himself will praise us. **(2 Cor 10:18)**
- 2. Let us read the Bible to make our conclusions and not the writings of men in the fields of science or history.
- 3. Can you from the text clearly see and explain what God wants you to do?

Command or Custom
An Exposition of I Corinthians 11:1-16
Hiram Hutto

The first sixteen verses of the eleventh chapter of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth have been the subject of much controversy. Some say the passage has to do with customs and/or circumstances of a people long since dead and is not binding today. Still others insist the passage does not deal simply with customs and circumstances of days gone by, but rather constitute a command to be observed throughout this dispensation. Since this is in the word of God, it cannot teach both. Let our study always be to let God be true no matter what man may say. As we study the passage, let us keep some things clearly in mind.

1. This is a discussion concerning men and women as they pray or prophesy. The discussion does not concern men and women in their everyday activities nor how they ordinarily appear in public, but how they appear when they pray or prophesy. It may be, as some contend, that women of Paul's day when appearing in public always wore a veil, though Smith Bible dictionary says

"Much of the scrupulousness in respect of the use of the veil dates from the promulgation of the Koran",

and that was not in the 1st century! but in the 7th. [HOH] Still this is not the subject the apostle discusses in these verses. His discussion concerns praying, or prophesying. Hence any reference to what men and women did or did not in their ordinary activities of life is completely beside the point and a reference to such is not pertinent to the issue. This passage discusses worship-life, not everyday life.

2. All we know about the subject of covered and uncovered heads while praying or prophesying is found in these sixteen verses. It may be that other passages deal with the headship of Christ, the relationship of man and woman, the wearing of veils, and numerous other things, but no other passage in the Bible deals with the subject of covered and uncovered heads while praying or prophesying except 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. Hence to this passage we must go to find the truth on the subject.

With this brief introduction in mind, please read 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 in your Bible.

VERSE ONE

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

In all probability this verse belongs as the last verse of the argument in chapter 10, and the American Standard Version (ASV) so places it.

VERSE TWO

"Now I praise your brethren that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you."

The ordinances here spoken of are "the particular injunctions of Paul's instructions" (Thayer), hence the will of God as expressed through the inspired apostle. Certainly those who keep such should be "praised".

VERSE THREE

"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."

The relationships here described are as unchangeable as God himself. They are not based on "custom" nor upon anything else except the word of God Almighty. Christ is not man's head because custom made it so, but because God made it so. Man is not woman's head because custom so ordered, but because God so ordered. This is the divine order and has nothing to do with custom. Custom did not make these relationships, and custom cannot change them with God. Yet it is upon the high doctrine here asserted that the rest of the argument is based. This is the very foundation of the apostle's argument and without it the rest is meaningless. Since then the very foundation transcends custom, would it not be passing strange if all the rest is completely customs

VERSE FOUR

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head"

This verse grows out of and is based upon the relationship laid down in verse 3, viz. "Christ is the head of man". But verse three is not founded on custom, and therefore neither is this verse. Just as long as Christ remains the head of man, just that long will man dishonor Christ by praying with his head covered. Since man has no head between himself and Christ, for a man to cover his physical head while praying or prophesying would be to dishonor his spiritual head, Christ. As will be seen in subsequent verses, the covering under consideration is an artificial one, such as a veil, a turban, a shawl, a hat, etc. Man may not cover his head with any of these when he prays to God. He may have it covered at other times, but not when he prays or prophesies. This in itself suggests a covering that is to be "on" at certain times (when praying or prophesying), but may be "off" at other times.

Just why the covering is required at these two specific times but not at other times, the passage does not say. A number of possibilities suggest themselves:

A. It may be that prayer and prophecy are elliptical expressions for the whole of public worship, in which case only two acts are mentioned but all acts are included (its in Acts 20:7 only one, the breaking of bread, is mentioned by synecdoche and includes the cup; or as in 1 Cor. 13:8-10 only three spiritual gifts are said to cease yet all are meant). When Jesus cast those out of the temple who were selling, he said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matt. 21:13) . Isn't prayer here simply an elliptical expression for worship? Should Jesus have driven them out if they had been studying God's word or singing his praise? Also, the Pulpit Comm. Vol. 6 page 399 says of prophesy, "*sometimes, it seems to stand, in a very general way, for sharing, in religious worship*".

B. If it is assumed that prophecy always means inspired speech, another possibility is that in prayer and prophecy, a person is in direct communication with God (in prophecy, God speaks to man; in prayer man speaks to God), hence the special need for significance during such.

C. If prophecy always means inspired speech, another possibility would be: the covering, applies whether in inspired activity (prophecy) or uninspired (prayer).

D. Still another: some are of the opinion that the women, thinking that since they are one in Christ with the man are not therefore in subjection to him, were removing the covering at these specific times. All of these are interesting, but the fact is: we are not told why at these times but not at other times.

It is important to note that the injunctions of the passage do not deal with women only but include men as well. As can be seen from the next verse, whatever covering that this verse forbids a man's wearing, verse five commands a woman to wear. Whatever covering man must leave off, a woman must put on.

[For a discussion of whether or not the word "prophesy" limits the application to people with inspired gifts, see Objection No. 3]

VERSE FIVE

"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is an one as if she were shaven".

Again, we make the observation: This verse grows out of and is based upon verse three, and since the relationship described there is not custom, neither is the statement made here. And as long as man remains the "head of woman" just that long will woman dishonor man when she prays with her head uncovered. And not only so, but in dishonoring her "head" (man), woman dishonors herself and God who made man the head of woman. So the woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered" dishonors herself, man, and God. It is as much a shame for her to pray uncovered as it would be for her head to be shaved. So says the word of God in this verse, Women, think it over. If you would be ashamed to have your head shaved, God says in this verse, you ought to be ashamed to pray uncovered. Please read the verse again.

VERSE SIX

"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".

In other words, if a woman will not cover her head, she might as well get her hair cut off, for to be uncovered is just as much a shame as to be shorn. Paul is not actually urging these women to get their hair cut off. He is saying that logically they might as well do that. He knew that they would not think of doing the latter (Cutting off their hair), so they ought not to think of doing the former (being uncovered), Why? Because one is as much a shame as the other.

Let us pause here for a moment. (God is saying that a woman who is not covered might as well get her hair cut off or get her head shaved. He also says, though, that if a woman would be ashamed to be shorn or shaven she ought to be covered. Now women ask yourselves this question: "Would you be ashamed to appear with your head shaved?" Be honest, now. Would you be ashamed to appear with all your hair cut off or shaved? A bald-headed woman! If you would be ashamed, God says you ought to be just as ashamed to pray with your head uncovered. Think it over and I am sure you will know what to do.

Again, the passage deals with men and women when they pray or prophesy. Women must not be uncovered then. They may be uncovered at other times, but not when praying or prophesying. The covering under consideration therefore is "put-on-able" and "take-off-able". It is removable or an artificial one.

[For a discussion of what is meant by 'cover' and whether the covering must be a veil or something that hangs down from the head, see Objection No 6.]

The word shear means "cut short" (Thayer), or "crop" (Expositors' Greek Testament).

VERSE SEVEN

"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".

Please observe the God - given reason for a man not to cover his head: "he is the image and glory of God". Paul does not say nor even hint that a man ought not to cover his head because of some custom of the day. Note this contrast between what man says and what God says.

WHY SHOULD A MAN NOT COVER HIS HEAD?

Man: Forasmuch as it is a custom.

God: Forasmuch as man is the image and glory of God.

See the difference between those two statements? Which will you accept? Which will you believe? One is in the Bible, the other is not. Since Paul did not base his statement on "custom", why would men today do what Paul did not, and say what Paul said not? Was man's being in the image and glory of God a custom? Is not man still TODAY in the "image and glory of God"? If he is, God says he ought to cover his head because of it.

VERSES EIGHT, NINE. AND TEN

"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".

In the creation, God made woman from man's rib. She was made for him, and Paul uses this as "cause" for the woman to be covered. For what cause? Does Paul say, "Because of custom"? He does not! He says because of the situation that existed when God created woman she ought to have "power on her head" or "a sign of authority on her head" (ASV). Again, notice the contrast between what man says and what God says:

WHY SHOULD A WOMAN BE COVERED?

Man: Because of custom

God: Because woman was created for man.

See the difference between these two statements? One of them is based on the authority of man; the other is based on a plain, positive statement in the word of God. Which will you accept? Which will you believe? Why should a woman be covered? Not simply because a covering may be pretty, but because of her God-ordained station in creation--"for man". Such is an expression of her very woman-hood, and she should understand that to the extent that she fulfills her role as a woman, she is honored. There is nothing degrading about being subjected to someone. Christ is subject to God. Man is subject to Christ. A woman may rule the home (I Tim. 5:14). And all of us are to be subject to the powers that be (Rom. 13:1). There is nothing belittling about being subject. She best serves herself and God (and so does man) by delighting in the proper role that God has assigned. After all, it is He that made both, and knows what each is best suited for. A proper appreciation of this will surely make happier people. On the other hand for either to despise his or her proper sphere and seek to nullify it is an effort, however unwitting it may be, to frustrate the will of God. And this may well serve to introduce the next phrase.

Because of the angels. While one may not know everything connected with this statement, it is given nonetheless as an inducement for a woman to cover her head when "praying or prophesying". One explanation that seems plausible is this. Paul has been urging man to respect his proper sphere and for woman to respect hers. And in connection with people keeping their proper roles, notice Jude 6. "And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day". When the angels left their proper place they got

into trouble, and when man or woman leaves his or her proper place, they too will get into trouble. A woman leaves her place when she is not in subjection to man. A sign that she is in subjection is for her to be covered. If this is not what "because of the angels" means, this explanation certainly does no violence to the context.

Another explanation that has been given is this: Angels, who "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14), are interested in the affairs of this life and are offended at any breach of the ordinances.

In any case, Paul said that a woman ought to be covered "because of the angels". This certainly was not a custom. Angels existed then, and angels exist now. Luke 20:36 shows that angels cannot die. Whatever the expression "because of the angels" means, it meant for a woman to cover her head, and since angels exist today it should compel women now to cover their heads. If not, why not?

VERSES ELEVEN AND TWELVE

"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 by the woman; but all things of God".

Some men get the idea that they are more important than women; that she is some kind of second-class citizen. This verse shows that neither man nor woman should think of themselves too highly nor become egotistical. God deems one just as important as the other, and they are mutually dependent on each other for existence and sustenance. There is neither male nor female in Christ (Gal. 3:28). God took a rib from man and with it he made woman (Gen. 2 21-ff), hence woman is "of the man", but now in the natural order of things, man is "born of woman" (Job 14:1), hence he is "by the woman". But "all things are of God".

VERSE THIRTEEN

"Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered"

Having established positively what God's will is in this matter, he now appeals to them to corroborate that revelation by their judgment of what is comely. Later (pages 24-26) it will be shown that the word here translated "comely" is not dealing with custom or good taste. Rather, the word has to do with what is appropriate and fitting depending on the nature and character of the person or thing involved. Notice, Paul does not say it is uncomely to pray uncovered. In fact, he requires some to pray uncovered--the men. What he does say is: It is uncomely that a woman pray uncovered. What is there about the nature and character of a woman that makes her praying uncovered uncomely? She was created for man (vs. 9); she is of man (vs. 8); she is the glory of man (vs. 7); man is her head (vs. 3). The covering of her head in prayer is an expression of that relationship, an expression of her very womanhood. With that impression having been made on their minds, they could be expected to "judge" her praying uncovered to be an uncomely act. But if God expected them to judge such to be uncomely--and surely he did; since women today have the same fundamental nature and character and relationship to man (man is still her head, etc.), does he not expect us to make the same judgment today: It is uncomely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

[For an extended discussion of whether their being called upon to "judge the comeliness of the covering" was based upon custom, see pages 24-26, Objections No. 8 & 9].

VERSES FOURTEEN AND FIFTEEN

"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".

First of all, it should be noted that "nature" is not introduced to establish the practice of covering the head when praying or prophesying. Revelation has already done that in verses 5-12. Rather, nature is called upon to confirm what revelation is saying; namely, that it is a glory for a woman to be covered, and a shame for her to be uncovered. Nature confirms revelation's teaching about the glory of a covered woman. And how does nature do that? By giving to woman a glory, which is long hair. And why is long hair a glory Because it is a covering. Note: if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her; for (because, Gk. *hotos*) it is a covering. Since her hair is a glory because it is a covering, it follows necessarily that it is a glory for her to be covered. And that is what both nature and revelation teach. They teach it, however, with two different coverings: Revelation's covering to be "on" when praying or prophesying; and nature's covering (her hair) to be "on" all the time.

Sometimes it is thought that the statement "her hair is given her for a covering" means that her hair is the only covering that is required or that is being discussed in this passage. It might be well to point out that the word in this verse that is translated "covering" is a completely different word from the word that is translated "cover" in the rest of the passage. This suggests that there are two coverings being discussed, does it not? Although the subject of length of hair is brought up as a matter of confirmation of the glory of a covered woman, nonetheless the passage shows plainly that there should be a distinction made in the length of hair for men and women. A person ought to be able to look at the hair of another person and tell whether he is looking at a man or woman. The practice of long hair on men and short hair on women is not approved by God. It ought also to be apparent that the pictures so often seen in which Jesus is portrayed with long hair are certainly in error. Would he do that which was said here to be "a shame"? Of course, not.

For further discussion of whether the hair is the only covering that is needed to carry out the requirements of the passage see pages 21-23, Objection No. 7].

VERSE SIXTEEN

"But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God".

--Consider the word "contentious". [The word that is here translated "contentious" appears in Ezek. 3:7 where it is translated "stubborn" in Bagster's Sept.] Suppose someone at Corinth had insisted, in agreement with Paul, that women were to be covered and men uncovered. Would this person have been contentious? Of course not. On the other hand, suppose someone had insisted, in opposition to Paul, that it was right for women to pray uncovered and men to pray covered. Would not this person have been contentious and caused contention? Of course he would? So Paul is saying: If any man seem to be contentious (by contending for uncovered women and covered men), we have no such custom as the one he is contending for. Neither do the Churches of God have his custom of uncovered women and covered men. He has no apostolic precedent, nor do any of the churches of God condone his custom. He is alone in his contention.

Since Paul has shown that none of his associates nor any church of God would agree with the man who contended for uncovered women and covered men. Should we not still today say of that man's contention (bareheaded women and covered men), "we have no such custom, neither the churches of God"?

[For a consideration of the argument that we have no such custom" means that the whole discussion is merely about matters of custom, see OBJECTION 11. pages 31-35].

SUMMARY

The doctrine of the passage is clear. In the divine arrangement, there are different levels of service and authority. This is true both in Deity (God is the head of Christ) and in humanity (Christ is the head of man; man is the head of woman). In humanity, These different levels are to be appropriately designated when engaged in certain activities; namely, while praying or prophesying. For man, he is to pray or prophesy with his head uncovered. The woman, on the other hand, is to be covered. For either to do otherwise is to dishonor their respective heads. While there is no particular shape or size of covering specified, as long as it covers, it is one that may be put on at times (while praying or prophesying), but is not required to be on all the time. Hence, not just the hair nor even long hair. There are many articles that will cover.

The text not only inculcates this practice and attaches this stigma to those who violate it, it also gives a number of reasons underlying the whole. In the case of man: (1) He is the image and glory of God. (2) He was first in creation; she was created for him. In the case of woman: (3) She is the glory of the man. (4) She was created for him. [Both of these are aspects of her relationship to man, of her very womanhood]. (5) Because of the angels. The Corinthians are called upon to confirm this teaching in that they would (3) judge a praying woman to be uncomely if uncovered. (7) Nature itself confirms the correctness of the requirement. Finally, (8) there is no sanction for the contrary practice, either from an apostle or any congregation of God's people.

Perhaps it should be noted that Paul did not give these reasons to establish the principle of headship and subjection. No, he gave these reasons to prompt an action, and that action was the covering and the uncovering of the head. It should be further noted that in obtaining this action. Paul had made no appeal to transitory custom. Instead he appealed to such basic and fundamental things as the very constitution of manhood and womanhood. Men are to be uncovered because of the very nature of man. Women are to be covered because of their very nature as woman. Paul could have said: Corinth has a custom about the covering of the head, and we don't want to offend their custom. Instead, he said: Man ought not to be covered because he is the image and glory of God. Woman ought to be covered because of the nature of her creation; because of the angels. It cannot be proved that he based a single argument on custom.

OBJECTIONS

Objections have been made against almost every Bible teaching, and this one is no exception. We notice some of the ones we have most often heard.

OBJECTION NO. 1: God chose the covering to show subjection--NOT because of His universal law, but because by local usage and custom the covered head already signified subjection, and the lack of it was a shame. Today, an uncovered woman is not considered shameful nor out of subjection. A hat today just does not mean to a woman what a veil meant when Paul wrote these lines.

ANSWER: It is purely an assertion that by local usage and custom the covered head already signified subjection. (See the next section). Second, it is not being taught that a woman must wear a hat. The Bible says "cover", and there are many articles that will do that. Third, perhaps a covering does not mean to some people what it did when Paul wrote, but the reason it does not is because people have failed to teach

what a covering should mean. The fault does not lie in changing times and customs. but in the failure to teach faithfully God's Word on the subject.

But on the basis that a covering does not mean today what it meant in Paul's day, most every Bible doctrine could be set aside. For example, a Methodist Bishop has endorsed the use of a hamburger and Coca-Cola in the Lord's Supper because he says that the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine had significance then, but not now. Who believes that? None of my brethren. Yet it is the same argument. And marriage does not mean today, to some people, what it meant then. not does baptism. nor 100 other things that might be mentioned Shall we discontinue these because "they had meaning then that they do not have to many people today"? Not What we should do is teach the truth on these and the covered head as well. To the properly informed person today, the covered head of a woman as in 1 Cor. 11 still means today what it meant then. assertions to the contrary notwithstanding.

OBJECTION NO. 2: Most scholars say that the instructions here are simply the customs of that day and are not binding on us today since we do not have that custom.

ANSWER: No doubt there are some scholars who say that Paul is simply teaching the customs of the day, and that women always appeared in public with heads covered. On the other hand, there are other scholars just as weighty, if not more so, who definitely do not say this. In fact, I am convinced that the preponderance of the evidence is otherwise. Consider these quotations:

Cambridge Bible for Schools and College: "N. the remarkable fact that the practice here enjoined is neither Jewish, which required men to be veiled in prayer, nor Greek which required both men and women to be unveiled, but peculiar to Christians."

Morris in Tyndale Series: "Jewish men always prayed with their heads covered (as they still do). Greek women, as well as their men folk, prayed with head uncovered."