

1 Cor. 11:2-16, Pt. 2, "Head-Covering"

For the Children: People often use head-coverings to show who is in charge. Kings wear bigger crowns than princes, and the ordinary people wear no crowns at all. It is almost the opposite way round with the Bible: Men exercising leadership in the life of the church were NOT to cover their heads; while women praying or prophesying were to cover theirs. We should be glad that God has made men the way they are and women the way they are. There are plenty of important things that both can do in the church. All of us should be happy with what the Lord has given us to do. **Questions:** What are some of things men can do in the church? What can women do? Are boys more important than girls, girls more important than boys – or both equally important?

Introduction:

First Point: What Is Required?

- 1) An "Ought": Paul makes the issue of covering/uncovering heads an "ought" (vss. 7,10). To ignore this is "disgraceful" (vss. 4,5,6). It is an application of the created order. It is also the practice of all the churches (v. 16). It is not merely cultural.
- 2) A Specific Context: The apostle only applies this to the acts of prophesying or praying (out loud). He does not narrow it down to worship services, as he will in v.17f. In vss.1-16, he is talking generally about imitating his behaviour.
- 3) Cultural Confusion: The situation must have been confusing for the Corinthians before this. Greeks, Romans and Jews normally expected women to wear a head-covering in public – especially married women. But those leading worship in Greek temples went unveiled (both men and women); while both went veiled in Roman temples. Jewish women could not lead in Temple-worship, but could prophesy or pray out loud in the outer precincts (Lk. 2:46f; cf. 1 Sam. 9:1ff).
- 4) Clearing the Confusion: In 1 Cor 14:34f, women are prohibited from teaching men in the worship services. In 1 Tim. 2:9f, this is extended to church-life in general. In 1 Cor. 11:2-16, men are told not to cover their heads when praying out loud or prophesying, while women doing the same things are to do so – without any restriction to the worship service. This would have applied to Christians who still visited the Temple – the women prophesying or praying out loud in the outer precincts. It is possible that female prophets were allowed to prophesy during Christian services, as an exception to the rule of 1 Cor. 14 and 1 Tim. 2. But since prophecy has now ceased, there is no longer any place for that in our worship services.

Second Point: How Is It Proven?

- 1) From the Headship Principle: As we saw last week, those who are equals in one sense, may still agree to have leadership and willing submission (v. 3). A man is to leave his head uncovered when he approaches God to pray in public or speaks from God as a prophet. A woman is to cover her head when doing the same. This is to symbolize the created order where man is the head and the woman accepts that – to illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church.
- 2) A Shameful Thing: It is shameful for a man to cover his head or a woman to uncover hers when engaged in these activities. It is shameful for a man to make himself look like a woman, or a woman like a man (Dt. 22:5). Shaving off a woman's hair is also associated with shame in Num. 5:11f. These are not cultural norms, but OT commands.
- 3) Because of Angels: The idea in v. 10 is probably that angels are observing our worship. If they are offended by what we do, then so is the Lord. See 1 Cor. 4:9, 1 Tim. 5:21.
- 4) From Nature: "Nature" itself teaches the distinction between male and female i.e., it reflects God's created order. One of these distinctions is that women generally have longer hair and men shorter hair. This is Nature's hint of the headship principle. There can be exceptions with this too e.g., Nazirites.
- 5) Common Practice: The fact that all the churches maintain this distinction between male and female shows it is not cultural, or just a "Corinthian Problem."

Conclusion:

