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“Follow the way of love and **eagerly desire spiritual gifts, ESPECIALLY THE GIFT OF PROPHECY.** For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him, he utters mysteries with his spirit. But **everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort... he who prophesies edifies the church... I would rather you have prophecy**” (I Corinthians 14:1-5).

The gift of prophecy is the **ability to understand all of God’s secret plans and possess all knowledge** (I Corinthians 13:2). This gift will increase specifically to men and women in the 21st century nations of Israel. “And afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. **YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHECY**, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on My menservants and maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29).

This surge in understanding the mysteries of God and increase in His knowledge will take place in the last days (Acts 2:17). During times of great persecution, the mysteries of the gospel will go out to all the world. Into the 21st century, through the established use of the digital infrastructure and platforms, ordinary men and women are able to easily share their studies. God does not limit sharing to only men. “**Every woman who prays or prophesies** with her head uncovered dishonors her head” (I Corinthians 11:5). God reminds women to have longer hair than men because she images the faithful church who needs a covering for sin, that is, Christ. Men are reminded to keep their hair short because they image Christ who does not need a covering for sin. God wants to preserve the imagery of the purpose of creating the genders, once a mystery, to provide a clear example of this very important teaching. Both men and women pray to God and prophesy (I Corinthians 11:4-5).

The mysteries of God are truths for all mankind, which detail their salvation and every step along the way. The mysteries also include the history of God’s people, their rebellious choices, their long-awaited repentance, their acceptance of grace and their return to their God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The mysteries include the wonder of eternity and the rich rewards our

Father in heaven has saved for the repentant creation on earth. The mysteries reveal the restoration of all things, the who and the how this will be achieved.

This activity of prophesying is a group effort of every member of the body of Christ. "Prophecy is for believers, not for unbelievers... If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in **while everybody is prophesying**, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So, he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (I Corinthians 14:22b, 24-25)

The Apostle Paul encouraged men and women to share the word of God, reach as many people as possible and take the gospel to the whole world. The translation of some of Apostle Paul's writings have led to some confusion, in particular, I Corinthians 14:34-35. "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church."

After the Apostle Paul provided instruction on how a man and woman should prophesy, that is, men should have short hair and the woman should have longer hair because of the spiritual imaging of each gender, he responded to their question, which he quoted in I Corinthians 14:34-35. To these men, he responded, "Has the word of God gone out from you? Or has it come to you only?" (I Corinthians 14:36) and he concluded, "So, **my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy**, and don't forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (I Corinthians 14:39-40).

Misunderstandings are often held for a long time because the imagery that God wove into the genders remains hidden. In I Timothy 2, the Apostle Paul addressed another critical issue for the faithful church about her conduct and learning from Christ. It is a difficult teaching into the 21st century because the Apostle Paul used God's imagery to explain the teaching. The use of this imagery is not a common understanding even among 21st century Christians.

The Apostle Paul began by reminding the Corinthians of the basics: one God and one mediator. "For there is **one God** and **one mediator** between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time" (I Timothy 2:5). Paul continued to write working hard to preserve the example that God established in the genders. On religious matters, the male gender pictures Christ and the woman pictures the church.

The Apostle Paul urged men and women to live this example. "I want men everywhere to lift up **holy** hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, **appropriate for women who profess to worship God**" (I Timothy 2:8-10).

The image of a humble, faithful church should be visible in a woman's modest dress, supporting ways and serving her family and the man, living the ways of Christ, sacrificing himself for his wife and family.

The Apostle Paul further expounded on their spiritual learning, using the same imagery in the verses following I Timothy 2:10.

- “For Adam was formed first, then Eve”: Christ existed before the church. The genders were specifically created in that order to teach mankind about Christ and the church. It is a unique relationship where Christ has preeminence over the church.
- “For Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner”: Physical Adam sinned knowingly. This “Adam” that the Apostle Paul is referring to is the “last Adam”—Jesus Christ who never sinned; the church and all of mankind—men and women alike, have all sinned through deception.
- “But women will be saved through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety”: All of mankind are saved from the blood of Christ, but the church will be saved through rearing a holy congregation fit for the kingdom of God. Churches who do not teach the pure word of God and produce a wayward and sinful congregation will not be saved. Of the seven churches of Revelation, only those that overcome their wayward teachings will be saved.
- “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent”: The ministry of the church should learn in quietness and full submission to Christ, the man. The ministry is not to teach Christ or to have authority over Christ. The ministry must not argue doctrines with Christ, but rather be silent accepting his interpretation without debate.

God’s faithful body of people have ONE teacher, Jesus Christ—the head of the body. The body of the church does not comprise of hierarchical compartments of men separated from women but a family of brothers and sisters. “Don’t let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' for YOU HAVE ONLY ONE TEACHER, and ALL OF YOU ARE EQUAL AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS. And do not call anyone on earth your father, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, that is, Christ” (Matthew 23:8, 10).

All these mysteries will come to full light as God pours out His Holy Spirit like a flood over the earth. **“Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face.** Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (I Corinthians 13:12). However, of all the wonderful gifts that come from God, the greatest is love. Love one another.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).

The honor that comes from all the other gifts will disappear as each gift is used up, but love is the only gift that lasts forever; the only gift that has eternal value, honor and respect.

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