



1 Corinthians

11:2-16

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1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (KJV)

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 3 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. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. 5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 6 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. 7 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. 8 For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. 10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. 13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. 16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

The Five Principles

PRINCIPLE NO. 1: HEADSHIP

- **1 Cor. 11:3-5** teaches a woman ought to be covered when she prays or prophesies because of headship.
- Headship was established in the beginning (see **Gen. 2-3; Rom. 5:12-21**).
- Is man still the head of woman? The New Testament says YES.
 - Paul repeatedly affirms God's creation first of Adam and then of Eve and establishes requirements with regard to the man's headship (**1 Cor. 11:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:13**).
 - We see this hierarchy again in **Eph. 5:23**, where Paul writes that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.
 - This connotes both loving provision (**Eph. 5:25-29**) and authority (**Eph. 5:22**).
- The Bible says that if a woman prays to God uncovered, she dishonors her head (man).

The Five Principles

PRINCIPLE NO. 2: IMAGE AND GLORY

- **1 Cor. 11:7** teaches a man should not cover his head because he is the image and glory of God, while woman is the glory of the man.
- It appears this covering is symbolic of a woman's power and could be why Paul uses the word "power" (authority, ASV), to describe it in **v.10**.
 - In other words, a woman wears a covering on her head as a symbol of the power belonging to her husband, signifying her as "the glory of man" (**v.7b**).
- God created man in His own image, but created woman from man (**Gen. 1:26-27; 3:21-23**).
- Is woman still the glory of man? **1 Cor. 11:7** says YES.
 - We have no evidence to say anything has changed, meaning God still recognizes this principle when assigning men & women gender-specific responsibilities for serving Him.

The Five Principles

PRINCIPLE NO. 3: THE ORDER OF CREATION

- **1 Cor. 11:8-9** teaches a woman ought to wear the covering because of the order of creation.
- Is the order of creation still in effect? The New Testament says YES.
 - This appeal to the order of creation is used in **1 Tim. 2:11-13**, which teaches women should not be in authority over men.
 - Since the order of creation is the reason behind both commands, if the instruction for a woman to have her head covered does not apply anymore, then neither does the instruction for women to be in subjection to men.
- Women exercising authority over her head – man – is condemned due to God's order of creation. This is the exact same reason God commands a head covering for women.

The Five Principles

PRINCIPLE NO. 4: THE ANGELS

- **1 Cor. 11:10** teaches a woman ought to wear the covering because of the angels.
- In Paul's own words, it isn't because of modesty or tradition that a woman is veiled while praying. He says a woman should be covered "because of the angels."
- Is this principle still in effect?
 - Nobody even knows for sure exactly what this means, so how could we know this reason/rule doesn't apply anymore?
 - We do not know all of the "whys" of God's commands, but not understanding why God commands us to do / not do something does not excuse us from obeying Him.

The Five Principles

PRINCIPLE NO. 5: NATURE

- [1 Cor. 11:14-15](#) shows that nature teaches us women are required to have their heads covered with their natural coverings.
- Nature teaches us that it is a shame for a man to have long hair, but long hair on a woman is to her glory.
 - Nature teaches us that since women should have long hair all the time, they ought to wear an artificial covering whenever they pray or prophesy, and the opposite for men.
- Is the principle of nature still in effect? The New Testament says YES.
 - Elsewhere, Paul says nature teaches us that homosexuality is sinful ([Rom. 1:26-27](#)).
 - Homosexuality is condemned and the head covering requirement is commanded due to nature.

Shame: A Product of Not Covering

SHAME IS A RECURRING THEM IN THIS PASSAGE

“But if it be a **shame** for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered” (v.6b).

“Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a **shame** unto him?” (v.14).

- In v.6, we learn if a woman does not cover her head when she prays or prophesies, it is one and the same as shaving her head.
 - NIV – “**For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.**”
 - GNT – “**If the woman does not cover her head, she might as well cut her hair. And since it is a shameful thing for a woman to shave her head or cut her hair, she should cover her head.**”
 - NLT – “**Yes, if she refuses to wear a head covering, she should cut off all her hair! But since it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut or her head shaved, she should wear a covering.**”

Two Coverings

SOME CONTEND THERE IS ONLY ONE COVERING UNDER CONSIDERATION - HAIR

- If that were so, the three phrases “praying or prophesying” found in **v. 4, 5, and 13** would have no real significance. These three phrases tell us when women must be covered and when men must not be covered.
 - This clear distinction rules out the view that the long hair is the only covering required by the text because the woman’s long hair covering is worn all the time.
- There are two distinct types of coverings referenced in the original Greek.
 - “katakalupto” – refers to the covering a woman wears as a symbol of her subjection to man to glorify him and not herself (**v.5, 6, 7**).
 - “peribolaion” – refers to the woman’s hair, which is the covering she wears daily and is her glory (**v.15**).

Two Coverings

SOME CONTEND THERE IS ONLY ONE COVERING UNDER CONSIDERATION – HAIR (Cont.)

- Hair is most certainly given to woman as a means for covering, but remember what Paul says in [v.15](#):
 - “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.”
 - That the hair is regarded by Paul as a covering in v. 15 is not necessarily an argument that the hair is the same as the head covering that he is describing in the earlier verses (esp. v. 10). Throughout this unit of material, Paul points out the similarities of long hair with a head covering. But his doing so seems to suggest that the two are not to be identified with each other. Precisely because they are similar they do not appear to be identical (cf. vv. 5, 6, 7, 10, 13). If head covering = long hair, then what does v. 6 mean (“For if a woman will not cover her head, she should cut off her hair”)? This suggests that the covering is not the same as the hair itself (NET Translator Footnotes).

Two Coverings

SOME CONTEND THERE IS ONLY ONE COVERING UNDER CONSIDERATION – HAIR (Cont.)

- Hair is most certainly given to woman as a means for covering, but remember what Paul says in [v.15](#):
 - “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.”
 - The verse does not say long hair is “the” covering, but “a” covering.
- There are two different coverings women are expected to adorn themselves with.
 - Her natural covering is for her own glory (her physical head).
 - The artificial covering is for her spiritual head’s glory (man).

Hair – Our Responsibilities

- 1 Cor. 11:14-15 is very clear regarding the length of hair, i.e. our natural coverings.
 - "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering" (NKJV).
 - Seems pretty cut and dry, doesn't it? "Long" hair is dishonorable on a man, but "long" hair is a glory to woman.
 - Why then do so many Christian women not have "long" hair?
 - And why do so many Christian men have "long" hair?

Hair – Our Responsibilities

- Many attempt to justify women not growing their hair long by arguing that no clear measurement is given in [1 Cor. 11](#) to determine what constitutes "long hair."
 - We are never told in the Bible how long our prayers need to be, but we all recognize that does not excuse us from praying.
 - We also are not told how much time we should dedicate to singing, preaching, teaching, etc., but we all still recognize God requires us to do these things.
 - We comply with these commands even without clear definitions for how long we should participate.
- The contention "how long is long" just proves that most people understand what [1 Cor. 11:14-15](#) says, but simply are not willing to accept and put the command into practice.

Hair – Our Responsibilities

WOMEN

- Whereas the woman's artificial covering in **1 Cor. 11** serves to bring to glory to the man (**v.7-10**), God has given women their natural covering as a means for bringing glory to themselves, completely set apart from glorifying anyone and anything else.
 - **WHY WOULDN'T A PERSON WANT TO PURSUE GLORY?**
- **1 Cor. 11:14-15** plainly teaches that women must have "long hair," thus ruling out all other types of hair, including short, medium, and "long enough to distinguish her from men."
 - No words other than "long hair" are used to describe the hair God requires of women.
 - Therefore, a woman must not have short hair, medium length hair, or hair that is long enough to distinguish her from men, but she instead must have "long hair."
- God has given the command - it is our responsibility to comply.

Hair – Our Responsibilities

MEN

- Men, if they have long hair, bring "dishonor" (NKJV) on themselves.
 - "Nature" teaches us this truth (v.14).
 - Just as nature teaches us that homosexuality is a sin and an act of "dishonoring" oneself (Rom. 1:24-26, ESV), nature also tells us it is unnatural and dishonorable for men to have long hair.
- Since the commands regarding hair length and homosexuality are both rooted in the principle of "nature," if we say it is not a sin for men to have long hair (and women to have anything other than "long" hair), then we must also say homosexuality is not a sin.
 - Consistency demands it!

Hair – Our Responsibilities

MEN

- Just like the case with women's hair length, after reading [1 Cor. 11:14](#), many will attempt to justify men having long hair by arguing that no clear measurement is given to determine what is long and what is short.
 - Yet, I'm not sure that we can fully define what all constitutes "modest apparel" ([1 Tim. 2:9](#)), but we recognize we must still comply with this command and our response to the command to dress modestly should err on the side of caution. In other words, we should leave no room for doubt that we are dressing modestly.
 - **WE SHOULD HAVE THIS SAME ATTITUDE WHEN IT COMES TO HAIR LENGTH.**
- God has clearly stated men should not have long hair.
 - God has given the command – it is our responsibility to comply.

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARGUMENT

- Some claim “prayer” refers to miraculous prayer. However, this is an assumption that simply cannot be contextually proven.
 - NOTE:** I do not deny that “prophecy” refers to miraculous teaching (see 1 Cor. 12-14).
- The context implies non-miraculous prayer since Paul predicates his instruction by saying in v.3: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." This tells us that the instructions apply to everyone, regardless if they performed spiritual gifts or not.
- Not all Corinthians could prophesy (1 Cor. 12:29-30), yet this instruction was given to every Christian (v.3). Therefore, the only logical conclusion is that this instruction was applicable to non-miraculous activities (i.e. praying) that everyone could do.

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARGUMENT (Cont.)

- Many say [1 Cor. 11:2-16](#) does not apply since prophecy is a gift of inspiration we do not possess today.
- Yet, there are passages which mention “prophecy” along side things which do not involve inspiration which we are still bound to perform today ([see Rom. 12:6-8](#)).
- If we conclude that the covering does not apply since prophecy was a spiritual gift we cannot perform, we must say the following for consistency:
 - Any time a command is given in the context of spiritual gifts, no application of the instructions can be made today.
 - This is the only consistent conclusion to draw!

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARGUMENT (Cont.)

- If we conclude that the covering does not apply since prophecy was a spiritual gift we cannot perform, we must say the following for consistency: Any time a command is given in the context of spiritual gifts, no application of the instructions can be made today.
- Yet, this conclusion is not applied to the Lord's Supper (see Acts 20:7).
 - Paul was an inspired preacher; his sermon was inspired by God, which is a spiritual gift we no longer have today. Furthermore, Paul exercised a second spiritual gift that same night when he raised Eutychus from the dead (v.9-10).
 - If we conclude that commands given during the context of spiritual gifts are not binding today, then the "upon the first day of the week" portion of Acts 20:7 is no longer binding for us in regards to when we partake of the Lord's Supper.
 - Consistency demands it!

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARGUMENT (Cont.)

- If we conclude that the covering does not apply since prophecy was a spiritual gift we cannot perform, we must say the following for consistency: Any time a command is given in the context of spiritual gifts, no application of the instructions can be made today.
- Yet, this conclusion is not applied in to conducting worship “in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).
 - The previous 39 verses speak about the use of spiritual gifts during the assembly, but we do not throw away v.40, which says, “Let all things be done decently and in order” since the command is given in the context of spiritual gifts.
 - Consistency would demand us to throw away this command if we go under the pretense that no application of scriptural instructions can be made today if given in the context of spiritual gifts.

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE CUSTOM ARGUMENT

Some use [1 Cor. 11:16](#) to say God's covering instruction was just a custom of that time and locality and, therefore, is not binding today, but notice the following scholars who say the custom of those times was different than what Paul taught in this passage:

- Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges – “In 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 particularly to Christians.”
- W.E. Vine – “Among [the Jews](#) the heads of the men [were covered](#) in the synagogue. Among [the Greeks](#) both men and women were uncovered.”
- Vincent's Word Studies – “[The Romans \[men\], like the Jews, prayed with the head veiled.](#)”
- Pulpit Commentary – “Having his head covered . . . [The Jewish worshipper in praying always covers his head with his Tallith.](#)”

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE CUSTOM ARGUMENT (Cont.)

Some use [1 Cor. 11:16](#) to say God's covering instruction was just a custom of that time and locality and, therefore, is not binding today, but notice the following scholars who say the custom of those times was different than what Paul taught in this passage:

- [Head Covering for Christian Women \(Wikipedia\)](#) – When Paul the Apostle commanded women to be veiled in 1 Corinthians, [the surrounding pagan Greek women did not wear headcoverings; as such, the practice of Christian headcovering was countercultural in the Apostolic Era, being a biblical ordinance rather than a cultural tradition \[five sources cited\]](#) . . . Christian headcovering with a cloth veil was the practice of the early Church, being universally taught by the Church Fathers and practiced by Christian women throughout history [\[four sources cited\]](#) continuing to be the ordinary practice among Christians in many parts of the world .

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE CUSTOM ARGUMENT (Cont.)

- We know the church at Corinth was made up of both Jews and Gentiles.
 - Jews – “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1-2).
 - Gentiles/Greeks – “Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led” (1 Cor. 12:2); “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks . . . And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:4-8).
- With all of this under consideration, how could Paul be referring to a local custom when the church would have been filled with multiple “customs?”

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE CUSTOM ARGUMENT (Cont.)

- Consider various other translations of **1 Cor. 11:16** which disprove the custom argument.
 - Amplified Bible – “Now if anyone is inclined to be contentious [about this], **we have no other practice** [in worship than this], nor do the churches of God [in general].”
 - NET– “If anyone intends to quarrel about this, **we have no other practice**, nor do the churches of God.”
 - NIV – “If anyone wants to be contentious about this, **we have no other practice** – nor do the churches of God.”
 - RSV – “If any one is disposed to be contentious, **we recognize no other practice**, nor do the churches of God.”
 - GNT – “But if anyone wants to argue about it, all I have to say is that **neither we nor the churches of God have any other custom** in worship.”
 - NLT – “But if anyone wants to argue about this, I simply say that **we have no other custom than this**, and neither do God’s other churches.”

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE CUSTOM ARGUMENT (Cont.)

- Quite far away from the covering being “just cultural” in nature, we know this requirement was uniform throughout all the churches everywhere.
 - 1 Cor. 4:17 – “As I teach every where in every church.”
 - 1 Cor. 7:17 – “And so ordain I in all churches.”
 - 1 Cor. 14:33 – “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”
- So, just a local practice or custom? Just the opposite.
 - 1 Cor. 11:2-16 was written “unto the church of God which is at Corinth . . . with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:2).

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE TRADITION ARGUMENT

- Similar to the custom argument, some argue the covering was just a tradition (1 Cor. 11:2), and we are not bound to keep traditions.
- The word translated ordinance/tradition is the Greek word “paradosis,” which Thayer defines as “what is delivered, the substance of teaching . . . to deliver in teaching. A tradition, doctrine or injunction delivered or communicated from one to another whether divine (1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6) or human (Matt 15:2,3,6; Gal 1:14; Col 2:8).”
 - In Col. 2:8, we see an example of human traditions.
 - “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition [human traditions, ESV] of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
 - Human traditions are not what we see in 1 Cor. 11 because Paul praised them for keeping this tradition (v.2).

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE TRADITION ARGUMENT (Cont.)

- These ordinances/traditions that Paul spoke of were of the Lord, not man (1 Cor. 14:37).
- The covering is an inspired tradition, something we also see exemplified in 2 Thess. 2:15:
 - “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or by our epistle.”
 - Paul refers to divine tradition and apostolic example which we realize is binding for us today.
- Also consider 2 Thess. 3:6:
 - “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”
- In all of these verses, you can substitute “command” for tradition and the point would remain the same.

Examining Arguments Against the Covering Still Being Binding Today

THE “JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES” ARGUMENT

- Some also say the covering is not required since Paul says we are to “judge” for ourselves (1 Cor. 11:13).
 - This is said is after Paul gave the command, and he essentially asks: “Now, what do you think?” or . . . “In light of everything I have said, does it sound like women should have their heads covered or uncovered?”
- The Corinthians were earlier called upon to “judge” about another matter.
 - “Judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ” (1 Cor. 10:15-16).
- The command to “judge” does not imply we judge for ourselves what is right in our own eyes, but judge what is right in the eyes of God (see Deut. 12:8; Ezra 7:18).
 - If God left us to make judgment in our own eyes concerning head coverings, then God would be a God of confusion, which He is not! (1 Cor. 14:33)

Is “Praying or Prophesying” a Synecdoche?

- Some (most?) people argue the full context of [1 Cor. 11](#) indicates the phrase “praying or prophesying” is a synecdoche, which is a figure of speech where a part stands for the whole.
 - They contend praying and prophesying are “part” of the public worship and the “whole” is the church/worship service, so the covering requirement is only required in the public assembly when the church comes together.
- Although the covering instruction is given among various instructions specific to the worship service, the phrase “when you come together” never appears in [1 Cor. 11:2-16](#) to indicate a church service is under consideration.
 - This phrase appears in one form or another five times in [v.17-34](#).
- This argument is problematic considering women cannot speak or prophesy (teach) during the public assembly ([1 Cor. 14:34-35](#); [1 Tim. 2:11-12](#)). First century women could not prophesy in the public assembly when the whole church is together in one place, so why would God give an instruction strictly limited for the public assembly when that particular act (women speaking via prophesy) could not be done in the public assembly?

Is “Praying or Prophesying” a Synecdoche?

- The principles upon which the head covering requirement is commanded apply at all times.
 - Headship, Image and Glory, the Order of Creation, the Angels (? I assume), and Nature are all universal principles that do not stop being true once the public worship stops, so why would the head covering requirement stop once the church service ends?
- If the female head covering requirement was only limited to the church assembly, that would mean the men’s requirement found in [1 Cor. 11:4](#) would also be limited to the assembly.
- Isn’t it more likely that “pray or prophesy” means just what it says?
- It is an inference to conclude “pray or prophesy” is a synecdoche.
 - With all of this under consideration, are we confident that such an inference is a necessary inference?

Conclusion

- To say the covering instruction is not binding today, we must do the following:
 - Ignore all five principles.
 - Throw out every command contained within a passage that mentions spiritual gifts.
 - Disregard commands pertaining to when/how we partake of the Lord's Supper, order during the worship service, women's subjection, and homosexuality.
 - Ignore the fact that Paul's teaching went against the clearly documented customs of both the Jews and Gentiles who made up the church at Corinth.
 - Conflate human traditions with apostolic traditions.
 - We cannot truthfully say/do any of these things, so the command must still apply.
- We must beware the temptation to treat any New Testament command like one from the Old Testament. We cannot disregard the command and instead say the principle(s) are only what apply today.
- Let's accept God's commands on this part of His Word just as we do His other commands.