

THE WOMAN'S COVERING

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16

INTRO: Our subject is one that has caused concern among brethren and others for generations. It is a Bible subject, therefore the answers must be found by looking into the Scriptures, that we may see what God has said regarding the subject. It is not my purpose to cause any trouble, nor to attempt to force any individual to submit to my convictions in regard to this matter. My only purpose is to consider with you what the Bible says on this subject. We will seek to ask and answer a few questions.

I. WHY WAS THE COVERING REQUIRED/ADVISED?

A. Custom? vs. 13, 14, 16

1. Some argue that the covering was nothing more than a local Corinthian custom. The argument is based on the words “comly,” “nature,” and “custom,” (KJV).
2. We might note that Paul does not say “only” nature teaches you, but EVEN nature teaches, vs. 14
3. What is it that “we have no such custom” as?
Tho the most literal application of the phrase, “we have no such custom” might suggest that the custom pertained to Corinth only, that other Christians & other churches did not share that custom, it is obvious that the vast majority of translators did not believe that was what Paul was trying to communicate. They believed, rather, that Paul was saying that the practice he expected of the Corinthians was universal among Christians and that any contention to do otherwise was not acceptable.
4. I conclude that the covering may have involved an ancient custom, but if so, there was a principle behind that custom.

B. Because inspired women were addressing the assembly?

1. It is assumed from 14:4 that all prophesying was done in the assembly. If I can find just one case where anyone prophesied outside the assembly, this theory bites the dust. See Acts 20:29; 27:24. See 1 Cor. 14:34-35, context.
 2. It is further assumed that the praying under consideration was inspired praying. A very unnecessary assumption.
 3. I do not believe women were permitted to address the assembly whether or not they were inspired., 1 Cor. 14:34-35.
- C. Paul's reasons for teaching the Corinthian women to be covered., vs. 3-10. Esp. vs. 7, 8, 9, 10

NOTE: This gets back to the line of subjection, which is a universal principal. There may be some lee-way in how to signify our acceptance of that principal, but the principal is universal.

II. UPON WHOM WAS THE COVERING ENJOINED?

- A. Prophetesses (only)? The argument is based on the interpretation that Paul meant praying AND prophesying. He SAID "praying OR prophesying."
- B. Let Paul tell who is to have the covering? vs. 5, 13
- C. Consider synecdoche as in "house of PRAYER" (MT 21:13), "hour of prayer," "prayer meeting," etc.
- D. Also note 1 Thess. 5:17. I believe the covering was enjoined upon all godly women, not to inspired women only. I recognize that ONLY inspired women could prophesy, but all godly women can, do & must pray.

III. WHERE WAS THE COVERING NEEDED?

- A. Limited to the assembly? The assembly is not mentioned, implied, or in any way referred to in the text. Do godly women pray ONLY in the assembly?

- B. Paul's answer: wherever they pray or prophesy
- C. I am inclined to suggest: wherever they are in subjection to men, vs. 3-10.

IV. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE COVERING? hat, veil, or what? The Roman Catholic Church, the Pentecostals, the Amish & Mennonite, etc., all have their various "understandings."

A. Greek words of significance.

1. vs. 4, KATA KEPHALES ECHO
having [something] down the head
2. vs. 5, 6, 7, 13, KATAKALUPTO
to cover up, to cover oneself

NOTE: Used only here in N.T. Several LXX passages, incl. Num. 22:5; Ezek. 26:10, etc. There is nothing within the word KATAKALUPTO itself that defines the nature or material of which the covering is made. It simply means a covering.

3. vs. 15, PERIBOLAION. This word denotes something thrown around, hence an item of clothing, a veil, a mantle, a vesture, a robe, etc. It is used 24 times in the N.T. and always means an item of clothing.

B. Paul speaks of a covering of long hair, KOMA, KOMA, long hair, vs. 14, 15, 16. He says her long hair is given to her **instead of** (Gr.: ANTI) a headdress (PERIBOLAION).

V. HOW LONG IS LONG? IS IT A SIN FOR A WOMAN TO EVER CUT HER HAIR? No. If trimming the hair makes it short, then a man would only have to trim his hair once & from then on, it would be "short."

A. The text recognizes 4 states of the head re the covering.

1. The covered state, showing recognition and acceptance of her state of womanhood.
2. The Uncovered state. Like mine. Proper for a man, but not for a woman.
3. Shorn, a burr, crewcut, G.I., flattop, etc. Acts 18:18
Acts 8:32
4. Shaven, like a man's face.

B. A woman CAN cut her hair without sinning so long as she does not cut it/style it like a man. The purpose of the covering is to recognize & show acceptance of the line of subjection given by God. Neither a man nor a woman should intentionally blur that distinction.

VI. IS THE COVERING VALID TODAY?

A. One thing is certain. The principle signified by the covering IS valid today.

B. I am persuaded that intentionally blurring the distinction between the roles and responsibilities of males and females is sinful and dangerous. To whatever extent our society recognizes that a particular thing is "feminine" as opposed to "masculine," or vice/versa, I believe the Christian's behavior & lifestyle should recognize that distinction. Our society is working hard to blur all such distinctions. I suspect Christians should work hard to maintain at least some of them.

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