

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Notes from Leonard VandenBerg, Feb. 7, 2015

(ch. 1-10) - The unity & sanctification of believers

(ch. 11:17-14:40) - Mainly instructions related to the actual meetings of the church and exercise of gift.

(ch. 11:1-16) - Headship and the head covering.

Gal. 3:28 Positionally in Christ there is no distinction between male and female. In the functioning of the Church there is a distinction.

Coverings in the Old Testament:

Gen. 3 - God made coats of skin for Adam & Eve to cover their shame and He placed cherubim to guard the entrance to Eden.

Exodus - God instituted a system of sacrifices to make atonement for Israel, that is to cover their sins. He also placed coverings with elaborate designs of cherubim on the tabernacle and cherubim on the ark. These cherubim were the symbolic guardians of God's glory.

-The purpose of the covering or veil has been to allow men to come as close to God as possible without being destroyed by God's overwhelming presence and glory.

Jn. 1:14, 18 - The eternal Son veiled this glory in a human body, which at the same time made it possible for Him to dwell among us, so that we could behold His glory.

Ezek. 28:11-17; Isa. 14:12-15 - Satan before his fall was the "anointed cherub who covers". He was to guard and honour God's glory, but was lifted up in pride. This is a lesson for us and the Corinthians who were puffed up with pride.

Isa. 6:1-3 - The seraphim had six wings and four were used to cover themselves in the presence of the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 11

vs. 2 - "I praise you"; **vs. 17** "I do not praise you". "Traditions" is what is delivered by God, not customs made up by men over time.

vs. 3 - "The head of every man is Christ" -linked specifically to the dispensation of the Church.

"The head of woman is man" - linked specifically to the dispensation of creation.

"The head of Christ is God" - linked specifically to the dispensation of the Millennial reign of Christ.

Headship is not inferiority, but a willing submission under authority. This verse is the key verse to the whole passage and reveals God's divine order for His universe.

Vs. 4-7 "Dishonouring his/her head" refers to both his/her physical head, that is themselves and to their moral head, that is Christ and the man respectively. In the church the glory of Christ should be on display as symbolized by the uncovered head of the man. The glory of man should be concealed as symbolized by the covered head of the woman.

Quotes from others...

"God has sovereignly willed that the head of Christ is God Himself, so Christ must obey; the head of man is Christ, so man must obey; and the head of woman is man, and so woman should have the sign of obedience on her head."

– **Watchman Nee** (1903-1972)

"...a veil put on the head designates the power of another over the head of a person existing in the order of nature. Therefore, the man existing under God should not have a covering over his to show he is immediately subject to God; but the woman should wear a covering to show that besides God she is naturally subject to another."

–**Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274).

"...it is often said that head coverings for Christian women were necessary in Paul's culture so as to not offend the status quo. But since the practice of the head covering as described in 1 Corinthians 11 was not a particular Greek, Asian, or Roman custom, and since the Corinthian congregation was Greco-Roman this argument is seen as invalid. Failure to wear head coverings would have caused no scandal to the local population."

–**Mary A. Kassian**,

Professor of Women's Studies,
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"The wearing of fabric head coverings in worship was universally the practice of Christian women until the twentieth century. What happened? Did we suddenly find some biblical truth to which the saints for thousands of years were blind? Or were our biblical views of women gradually eroded by the modern feminist movement that has infiltrated the Church...?"

–**R.C. Sproul**

vs. 8, 9 - The woman was made from the man's side to be "a helper comparable to him" (Gen, 2).

vs. 10 - The "symbol of authority" is probably the head covering mentioned earlier.

"because of the angels" - compare Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12. It might refer to:

- The angels looking on to see God's order maintained.

- A reminder of Lucifer who rejected God's authority and rebelled against Him.

vs. 11, 12 - To balance the thoughts of verse 8-9 Paul says man and woman are interdependent and God is the source of the whole created order.

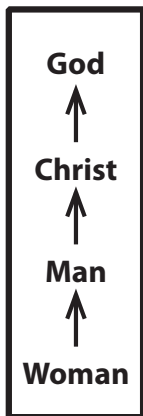
vs. 13, 14 - Two rhetorical questions in which Paul appeals to their God-given understanding of the distinction of the sexes. "Nature" here is what God established at creation, not necessarily what is culturally acceptable everywhere. Compare similar word in Rom. 1:26-27.

-The distinction God made in creation between the hair length of men and women is an additional reason to display this distinction in the Church by the head covering.

vs. 15 - "Long" and "short" are comparative words. The text does not expressly command certain hair lengths, but assumes that the woman has longer hair than the man. The word "covering" is not the same word in Greek used in verses 4 and 6, where the word "covered" refers to a material covering. Here in verse 15 it refers to the woman's hair. The only other verse in the N.T. where this word is used in Greek is the Heb. 1:12 where it is translated "cloak" or "vesture".

vs. 16 - Paraphrase --"We don't have the custom of arguing against the head covering, and the churches of God in other places don't argue against it either."

HEADSHIP



In Summary:

The woman's physical head is a symbol of her moral head, which is the man.

The man's physical head is a symbol of his moral head, which is Christ.

In the church Christ should be on display and not man.

For this reason the woman's head should be covered and the man's head uncovered.

1 Corinthians 11:3

When should the head covering be worn?

See vs. 5 - When a woman is praying or prophesying. Notice the word "when", not "where". "Praying" is speaking to God and "prophesying" is speaking on behalf of God to man. The time to cover and uncover is not necessarily limited to assembly meetings of the church, since a woman is to be silent in the meetings of the church (1 Cor. 14). However, the words used in this chapter, "dishonour, shameful, proper" put the head covering in a public setting where other people see you praying either silently or audibly. It seems proper then to use a head covering in the public meetings of the church and where women gather for prayer and Bible study and Sunday school classes. Some women believe they should wear it when they are praying in private as well.

Practical challenges

- As a man, do I take spiritual leadership and initiative in my marriage and family? Is my attitude reflecting the teaching of the uncovered head and the headship of Christ? Am I active or passive in the church?
- As a woman, am I submissive to my husband as Christ is submissive to His head? Is my heart attitude corresponding with what I profess in wearing a head covering?
- As an unmarried man or woman, am I manifesting the godly behaviour of what God is looking for in a man or woman respectively?
- Is it my aim and motive to see the Lord Jesus glorified in the Church?