

Head Coverings for Women I Corinthians 11:1-18

Should a woman wear a literal head covering while praying? The Scriptures teach that, yes, it is necessary for a woman to wear a literal head covering while praying, and that it is a special blessing and calling from God to do so.

In the English translated Bibles there is a degree of vagueness which has led some people to view the prayer "head covering" in this chapter to simply be a woman's long hair, while others still regard it to be a literal head covering. Therefore we have two opinions when reading these Scripture verses in English, depending entirely on the frame of mind in which one perceives the apostle Paul's writings. However, a quick inspection of the Greek language used by the apostle Paul in his teachings on this subject clearly reveals that the prayer head covering mentioned is a literal covering to be worn by a woman to cover her hair while praying.

There is a 21st century psychological atmosphere which misunderstands God's arrangement of headship, that is to say, His divine order. Some women today may feel as if they would be insulted to participate in some sort of demeaning ritual which portrays them as "inferior" if they wear a head covering for prayer, while men don't have to. However, when we gain the mind of Yahweh Almighty with respect to His arrangement of divine order, our women "angels" will readily see the reasoning involved, and will realize the true honor they have in glorifying God by wearing a head covering while praying (at a gathered assembly).

A head covering for women is not a sign of "female inferiority" but rather a testimony of Yahweh's order of headship and chain of command in the several duties of a man and a woman. Different divinely gifted skills and life's stations do not imply an ill willed inferiority. One may feel that they are superior to their cat, for instance, since the cat cannot even log on to the Internet. However in a contest to catch a mouse barehanded, your cat may not consider its owner to be the superior party. The point is that Yahweh created a cat to be very good at being a cat. He also expects men to be very good at being men, and women to be very good at being women. From God's viewpoint it is considered an honor for both men and women to participate in outward signs and symbols that reflect a loving relationship of understanding with our Heavenly Father. These signs may at times be different for the man and woman. Let's quote the pertinent verses so we have a point of reference for this study.

The Apostle Paul teaches us about this doctrine:

I Corinthians 11:1-18 (KJV)

- 1 *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*
- 2 *Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances (Greek word "Paradosis" - Traditions) , 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 Yahweh.*
- 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.*
- 17 *Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.*
- 18 *For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it."*

THE HEAD COVERING HOLDS A MESSAGE

This entire discussion of Paul's is concerned with headship and divine order. When the Scriptural meaning and understanding of HEADSHIP is perceived, then we are able to see the reason for a woman to wear a literal head covering during prayer. First of all we must each understand that Yahweh God is above all things. He is the "head of everything". Next we must understand that we, as mere mortals, each make mistakes and therefore are imperfect. Man, therefore, cannot be the head of all things. Men, individually, have not been perfect in ruling the world in righteousness for God's glory, and the women have not been perfect in helping the men in doing so as their created helpmate. We have failed in many respects and only by "Christ living in us" can we

achieve the calling that Yahweh has for our Adamic race to become the sons of God. Therefore only through the New Testament in Christ can we correct former mistakes made by our family of Adamic Man. Eve did not completely recognize Adam's headship as she thought she could take matters into her own hands by listening to the advice of the "deceiver" in the Garden of Eden, even though she meant well. By not maintaining her focus on her duty to help Adam, Eve brought Adam down instead of aiding him in keeping his own divine calling. Adam failed by following after Eve's reasoning, thus man wound up being out of order and out of his rightful place to serve the great calling given to him by God Almighty. The correct order in chain of command, which was ignored in Eden, is The Everliving God (YHVH or "Yahweh"), then Adam – then Eve.

As men are redeemed *back to the Creator God* in Christ (who came as a man) and regain their divine sonship, so too the New Testament woman surpasses Eve's failure *by understanding headship*. The New Testament woman acknowledges Yahweh's Word and agrees that He is the head of all things, and that a man who is obedient to God's calling is the head over her. This is not an orderly arrangement of opposition, but in loving team work. She agrees to follow Yahweh's plan to ultimately bring divine rulership to Earth in Christ's Kingdom. Along that traveled road through linear time, we have jobs to do. Men must be good at being men, and women must be good at being women. Though Eve brought man down, the New Testament woman serves Yahweh's plan to help man stay in his station. She helps man to remain in his rightful place. By the grace given to her in Christ, *she will help to constantly remind man that all things operate by divine order (headship)*, and she is Yahweh's "angel" to encourage her "Adam" to do his job in serving Yahweh! *"For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels."* (verse 10)

"Angels" is literally the Greek word "angelos" and means "messengers". In the Scriptures, "Angels", that is messengers, are almost always *people* who teach the Word of God, or else manifestations of Yahweh Himself. There is a divine order in "messengers" as we read in Ephesians 4:11, 12 *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"* Because of the important message women carry by the act of wearing a head covering in prayer, they are "messengers", actually "angels with power" to physically convey that message of God concerning headship and order of delegated jobs. It is a blessing and an honor for women to be called of God to herald this message.

In verse two of I Corinthians 11 (pg. 2) we see that Paul praises the assembly for keeping the traditions he has delivered and handed down to them. These are more than "take it or leave it" traditions. They are spiritual laws which go back to the chain of command in Eden. Neither was this just a "New" Testament tradition, since we see that when Rebekah saw Isaac she "covered herself" with a veil as thus to testify "Isaac is my head". (Gen.24:65) Paul's use of the word "delivered" (v.2) with respect to the usage of the woman's head covering is highly significant. It is the Greek word "paradidomi" (Strong's # 3860) which carries a force of a doctrinal commitment. It carries a lifestyle

change, the same as in deliverance from sin. *"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered (paradidomi) you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."* (Rom.6:17,18)

Also, as in the same doctrinal commitment concerning Christ's death and resurrection taught by Paul -- *"For I have received of Yahweh that which also I delivered (paradidomi) unto you, That the Master Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me"* (I Cor.11:23,24)

Although some have considered the issue of whether or not a woman should wear a head covering to be a "minor issue", God's Word teaches that it is not minor at all, and places it on the same level of doctrine as the taking of the "the Lord's supper". Paul's use of the word for "Tradition"('ordinance' here in the KJV) is the Greek "Paradosis" (Strong's 3862). It has a much more intent meaning than the English concept of a "tradition" (as in merely a nice custom). "Paradosis" has the intent of a binding action that is *not optional*. It the same word used by Paul in II Thessalonians 2:15 warning Christians that they will face stiff opposition by antichrist forces, yet, *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions (paradosis) which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."*(II Thes.2:15) According to the Scriptures therefore, the wearing of a literal head covering by women during prayer at a gathered assembly is **not** an optional passing fancy. Most Christians have just been out of touch as to the importance of the reasoning. To neglect this doctrine is to once again disavow the headship of God's chain of command as was done in Eden at the fall of Adam and Eve. To embrace it willingly and with covenant understanding, however, is a blessing of joy to women, God's "angels" chosen to convey the headship message.

IS A HEAD COVERING ONLY THE HAIR?

Many regard Paul's message here to imply that a woman's covering for prayer is only that she must have long hair, for which they cite verse 15:

(15) But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

However, Paul is not teaching in this verse that the "prayer head covering" is just long hair. If we read from the beginning of the chapter instead of isolating one verse, Paul's point becomes clear. Paul describes the similarities of a real cloth head covering *compared to* that of long hair a natural covering, and in doing so he is actually emphasizing that the two are not the same coverings. As we will see in a moment, the two different coverings each serve a different purpose. Let's again read what Paul tells us.

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.*”

Paul’s line of reasoning is easy to follow if we pause for understanding. That is: If a woman prays without a covering (uncovered) it is *the same* as having a shaved head and being dishonored (v.5). If then "uncovered literally = shaved", men must shave their heads bald before praying (v.4) if indeed the covering meant here is hair.

There is no such male requirement in the Scriptures. The true intent is that if a woman does not wear a head covering while praying, it is a disgrace to her, just as it would be if she were shaved bald.

Now see verses 3,8,9, 10 & 15:

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.*

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 (v.8,9 that is) ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.(i.e. "Messengers" who deliver and teach a message)*

15 *But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.”*

YAHWEH SENDS THE MESSAGE AND CHOOSES WOMEN AS THE MESSENGERS

The head of man is Christ. The head of woman is man. The symbol of power (to agree with God) which the woman wears on her head in verse 10 is a symbol of SUBMISSION, while the long hair in verse 15 is a symbol of her GLORY. This means that they are different coverings spoken of. Remember that verse 7 tells us that man is the glory of God, and woman is the glory of man. Paul is comparing several "glories" and several "coverings" in this discourse. They are not all the same glories or the same coverings.

Since head coverings represent subjection, we can see how this ties together when men and women assemble for prayer. Man wears no head covering (veil, hat, etc) as he is God's glory, and God subjects His glory to no one. The woman however is *the glory of man* (v.7) and she wears a literal head covering when praying before God to hide man's glory before The Almighty out of respect in humbleness. By this action without having to utter a word, *she is teaching and reminding man that man is in subjection to God.* This is what Eve forgot to do. Furthermore, we know that woman was taken out of man and was ordained to have long hair as her own personal glory.(v.15) This personal glory of the woman must also be covered when praying before Yahweh, as only Yahweh's glory must be revealed (uncovered) as a testimony to the chain of command in authority. The woman's literal cloth head covering, not only covers man's glory (the woman) thus helping the man appear with a contrite heart before The Almighty; but it also covers her own glory (her long hair) before Yahweh God as well. *"Now unto the King eternal,*

immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."(1 Timothy 1:17) Yes, the Word of God teaches that the glory of both men and women need to be covered when appearing before Yahweh! For this reason the long hair by and of itself COULD NOT BE AND IS NOT the prayer head covering mentioned by Paul in these verses. Rather, Paul is comparing two coverings for women-- one is the natural glory that covers a woman's head (her long hair), and the other a literal covering which covers that hair when appearing before Yahweh in prayer at the assembly so that the man's glory (the woman) is not elevated and flaunted before God Almighty by the man. The literal head covering worn by a woman then, conceals both the man's and woman's glory simultaneously as they pray before Yahweh Almighty.

For those who would still rather disregard this sound doctrine of Paul's by misrepresenting verse 16, let's include that verse as well.

16 *"But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."*

No, Paul is not saying that the several churches (assemblies) had no such custom as head coverings. This modernist interpretation is a feeble excuse to contradict the previous 15 verses. On the contrary, Paul says that none of the churches (assemblies) had any such custom as being *contentious* over these necessary traditions. In the following verses 17 & 18 Paul chides this assembly for its divisions and entertaining of heresies which is the real point of concern in verse 16.

Since this chapter in I Corinthians applies to a formal gathering where brethren meet as assembled, it does not appear to mandate a head covering for a woman who, during her daily walk, stops to pray a personal prayer of instant thanks, petition, or praise, to God Almighty. This message of Paul as inspired by The Holy Spirit sets forth to require a formal recognition of *headship and agreement of chain of command* when gathered as an assembled group. (I. Cor. 11:18) The uncovered prayer of a man and the covered prayer of a woman attest to that headship as divinely revealed by God Almighty to His family in the Earth. In this agreement of testimony both men and women are greatly chosen and blessed as God's representatives and family in the Earth.