

TITLE: THE DIVINE ORDER OF AUTHORITY

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:3-16

INTRO: These verses contain some teachings that are difficult to understand (and for some, difficult to accept and apply). Are the teachings in these verses merely cultural? Or are they timeless? Or are there aspects of each?

I. THE DIVINE ORDER (v. 3):

The head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man.... This is the reason for everything he's going to say. God, Christ, man, woman. Christ is the head of man; man is the head of woman. This is God's divine order of authority. God and Christ are equal (both members of Godhead), but authority-wise, it's God, then Christ (**John 4:34; 8:28; 12:49-50**). This is the same with man & woman. Man is not superior; woman is not inferior. Authority has simply been given to man and not woman. Both have their distinctive gender roles to fulfill. Neither is to violate them, even in dress. **Deut 22:5** – *the woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.*

II. THE DIVINE ORDER APPLIED (v. 4-7a): (to praying & prophesying)

(v. 4) *Every man praying or prophesying with his head covered* (physically) *dishonors his head* (spiritually – Christ). Men remove their hats before praying. Why? How does it dishonor Christ? Is this just cultural? Paul will address this momentarily (v. 7-12).

(v. 5) *Every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered* (unveiled, unhidden) *dishonors her head* (man).

1. Women did prophesy. However, no details of this are given here. It obviously would not have been done in violation of the concept here, or more specifically in **ch. 14 & 1 Tim 2:11-15**. Prophesying has ended now (for men & women).
2. The wearing of veils was a cultural thing in OT & NT times. It was not commanded, but was something women did as a sign of submission. It was a disgrace for a woman to have it removed (**Num 5:18**). A woman in public without a veil was advertising herself as available (harlots' hair was shaved or "closely-cropped" – B. Jackson, p.107), or publicly rejecting her husband's authority (a bold statement).
3. Not so today – no statement is being made w/ or w/out a veil. So the veil is cultural, and here it is commanded of the woman (in worship), because not to do so in *this* culture was a statement of rebellion. She was dishonoring her husband specifically, but also **all** men in general, because her actions show rebellion and disregard of God's order of authority.

(v. 6) *For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn.* If she's going to pray with her head uncovered, she might as well go ahead and cut off her hair. *But if it be a shame for women to be shorn* (Greek 1st class cond. – understood to be true, as in **Col 3:1**). It is a shame for a woman to be shorn (and it's no different today; it's acceptable for men, but not women!), so *let her be covered!* Does this mean women must wear a hat or veil today? No, it has no cultural significance today. But something does (**v. 15**).

(v. 7a) *For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God.* This is the first point in showing that this is **not** just cultural! Man was **not** just the image and glory of God in Corinth during the 1st century! Therefore, it is true today that men are not to cover their head when praying (worshipping).

III. THE DIVINE ORDER SUPPORTED & EXPLAINED (v. 7b-12): (based on creation – not cultural)

A. The woman's role in submission to man (**v. 7b-10**)

(v. 7b-9) *The woman is the glory of man.* How? Why? **1)** *For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.* Eve was made from the rib of Adam, not vice versa (**Gen 2:18-23**). This is an argument for man's authority based on order of creation.

2) *Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.* This argument is based on purpose of creation.

(v. 10) *For this cause* (order and purpose of creation) *ought the woman to have power* (authority) *on her head...*

1. Because of creation (again, not cultural) the woman ought to have this sign of the man's authority. The woman is to recognize and accept the role God gave her. This may be politically incorrect today, but God expects women to fill their role and responsibilities, in submission to their head, just as He expects men to do the same.
2. As already mentioned, this sign of authority in Corinth was a veil, since it communicated submission. Today veils/hats make no statement. But certain hairstyles do; they communicate rebellion, lesbianism, etc. Christian women should show an attitude of submission in whatever way culture demands.
3. *Because of the angels* – the meaning is uncertain; most commentators admit they do not know for sure. They may be referenced as **1)** witnesses of the woman's actions or **2)** simply examples of submission.

B. The woman's role in conjunction with man's (**v. 11-12**)

(v. 11) *Neither is man without the woman, neither woman without the man, in the Lord.* The man and the woman have their distinctive & necessary roles in the Lord. They work together; one is useless without the other.

(v. 12) *The woman is of man* (**Gen 2-rib**), *man also by woman* (childbirth), *but all things of God.* This order of authority is **God's** design. For a woman to rebel against it is to rebel against God (same if a man ignores his role of authority).

IV. THE DIVINE ORDER CONFIRMED BY NATURE (v. 13-16)

(v. 13) *Judge...is it comely* (proper) *that a woman pray unto God uncovered?* No (v. 5). This is how a *man* should pray.

(v. 14) *Does not even nature itself* (habit – as in **Eph 2:3**; society's accepted practice) *teach that if a man have long hair...shame?*

1. Rhetorical – yes! Why? Because he looks like a woman! It's no different today. There are many longhaired men. But the average man has short hair, and those with long hair are still looked at strangely (because they look like women). A recent beer commercial shows a long-haired man from behind, getting approached by a guy who assumes he's a woman!
2. Of course, the next question is "what constitutes long hair?" It's what's generally accepted by society. I could grow my hair a little longer, but I would be very careful how long I get it because of this very issue (err on the side of caution).

(v. 15) While long hair is a shame (disgrace) to men, *it is a glory to a woman.* Why? Because God has given it to her *for a covering*.

1. Veils, being no longer culturally significant, are not needed. A woman's hair accomplishes the same purpose (a covering).

2. If long hair on a woman is her covering (positive), it is the same thing on a man (negative). It violates the gender boundaries that God established, and it causes him to dishonor his head (Christ – v. 3,4,7).
3. How can it be taught that long hair (however it is defined by society) is acceptable on a man? **1)** It is **not** cultural that long hair is unacceptable, because it is a covering, and for a man to have this covering would violate timeless truth of v.3,4, and 7. But **2)** the precise length at which a man's hair becomes "long" may be cultural. **It must be short enough to distinguish himself as a man.

(v. 16) *We have no such custom* (of men and women violating these roles), *neither do the churches of God*. Apparently there were some there at Corinth who felt it was okay to violate these gender distinctions. This is why Paul had to teach on it.

CONCLUSION: There are timeless aspects *and* cultural aspects in this topic. The timeless truth is that men & women have distinct gender roles (in the home & the church). Specifically when praying (i.e., worship, religious settings), women's heads are to be covered; men's uncovered. The cultural aspect is seen in how this is done. The veil makes no statement today of obedience or disobedience. Long hair is specifically referenced as a covering (positive sense for women; negative for men). So the final cultural question is, how long is long, and this is answered by recognizing what is & is not accepted in society, and by erring on the side of caution.