

Public Prayer and Prophecy | 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

- Verse 2 –
 - Concluding the previous segment, Paul begins a new discussion about public prayer and prophecy. He commends the Corinthians (a rare occasion) for remembering him and for keeping **the ordinances, as I delivered them**. This is closely connected with the previous verse about following Paul.
 - Suppose the Corinthian church believed, "we should follow Christ, not Paul?" (Matt. 28:20, John 14:15)-
 - They would never give an offering if anyone was offended with them (Matt. 5:23-25).
 - They would not save for the future (Matt. 6:19-21, 19:21).
 - They would expect every prayer to be answered (Matt. 7:7-8, 21:21-22).
 - They would hold feasts for the poor in order to be **recompensed at the resurrection of the just** (Lk 14:12-14).
 - Individual church members would be baptizing new converts (rather than turning to the church to do the baptisms) (Mt. 28:19).
 - and so much more!
- Verse 3 –
 - Concerning the instructions for public prayer and prophecy, Paul gives instructions that have been misunderstood (and thus misapplied) or ignored by the majority of Christians in our day.
 - Verse 3 is the key to interpretation of these verses. If verse 3 is understood and followed in the subsequent verses, then the verses have a crystal-clear message.
 - Here is the key or legend as given by Paul:
 - Christ is the **head of every man**.
 - **The head of the woman is the man**.
 - **The head of Christ is God**.
 - From this simple legend, the following verses make sense. However, if you do not use this key, then the following verses require a woman to have a piece of cloth on their head when praying.
 - Note: in the following verses, the head is not the part of anatomy that sits upon a person's shoulders. Paul has defined the head perfectly clearly in verse 3.
- Verse 4 - Using the key given in the preceding verse, the only way to interpret this is as follows: *if a man has anything that covers Christ in his prayers or prophecy, he dishonors Christ*.
- Verse 5 –
 - Once again, using the key given in verse 3, the interpretation of this verse is simple: *if a woman prays or prophesies without [the blessing of] a man who is covered in Christ dishonors her man, even as if she had shaved her head*.
 - This speaks of *rogue women* who enter spiritual leadership without the blessing of a husband who is covered in Christ. Without this blessing, she is taking the role of the man and embarrassing him.
- Verse 6 –
 - A woman who prays and prophesies in public and has no authority from a *covered man* is again compared to a woman with a shaved head.

- The point: A woman should only take a role of spiritual leadership in prayer and prophecy if her believing husband gives approval.
- Verse 7 –
 - Once again, the interpretation is perfectly clear and sensible when the legend of verse 3 is used.
 - The KJV, along with all other modern translations, inserts *his* inappropriately. The Young's Literal is most accurate with, "the head." Christ is the head.
 - Note, importantly, that Christ (the Head) **is the image and glory of God**. This phrase is *not* a statement about the man.
 - Man is *made in God's image* but is not *the image of God* nor *the glory of God*. Christ, however, is **the image of the invisible God** (Col. 1:15) and is God's **express image** (Heb. 1:3) and is also **the brightness of God's glory** (Heb. 1:3).
 - Note: No English translation except Young's Literal gives clarity that the **head** is the **image and glory**. However, in Greek the words translated **image** and **glory** are feminine, and can only correspond to the feminine word for **head**. It is grammatically impossible that the reference is to the man.
 - Is the woman the glory of the man? This verse tells us that *as Christ is to God, so is woman to man*. Therefore, this passage is not demeaning in any way, but rather is hugely complementary of woman.
- Verses 8-9 - Rather than verse 8 being a conclusion to verse 7, I believe verses 8-9 are together a conclusion to verses 3-7, summarizing the argument that a woman is to be under a man's spiritual leadership.
- Verse 10 –
 - There is an *and* or *also* that is not in the KJV but is in the Greek. Paul is adding an *additional* reason that a woman should have her head covered.
 - First, he speaks of the woman having **power on her head**. The Greek for **power** is ἐξουσία [exousia] the power of authority. The head of the woman is the man, and the man is to be under *authority*, namely that of Christ Himself.
 - Second, the reason that a woman is to be under a man who is under Christ is **because of the angels**. This cryptic phrase begs to be completed, but is not.
 - Some have suggested that the angels are watching on, and must see that God's creation is in order. This is pure speculation, however.
 - Others have suggested that **the angels** are leaders within the church (i.e.: *messengers*, as in Revelation 2-3), but the connection fails to provide much logic, since church leadership would not be any more negatively affected by these women than any other men.
 - The only reference within Scripture that makes any connection is Genesis 6:2 (along with 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 8), where women took a "man" who was not under Christ, and the result was worldwide havoc. Thus, Paul say (if I interpret correctly), women should be reminded to put themselves under the authority of a man who is under the authority of Christ, knowing what havoc can be wrought when things are done without this authority.
- Verses 11-12 - Lest someone conclude that men were superior to women, Paul gives this **nevertheless** statement. The Greek χωρίς [chōrís] is related to the root of our English word *chasm*. The idea conveyed is that man is not set with a *chasm* between him and the woman, nor the woman from man. Giving a phrase that speaks both of the creation of woman and the birth of men, Paul says, "the woman is out of the man (speaking of Eve) and the man is through the woman (speaking of childbirth.)"