

Head covering in worship

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of head covering comes up every now and again on propriety of dressing in worship. **Note** that command on head covering is ONLY relevant during prayer/prophecy (worship) and is not about general dressing or comportment at all times. This is a brief enquiry to stimulate study.

TEXTUAL EXPOSITION

<p>1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.</p>	<p>In vs 1, the apostle enjoins the saints to emulate him as a disciple of Christ who converted them. (<i>Similar to his charge to the Philippians in 4:9.</i>)</p>
<p>2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.</p>	<p>The Corinthians were to recollect what Paul previously instructed them, to reflect on all the religious precepts he gave unto that church as he passed such down, without alteration.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>He announced / reiterated the spiritual hierarchy in human religious settings; the woman is subservient or subject to the man, the man is under Christ while Christ is under God.</p>
<p>4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.</p>	<p>Any and every man while in worship (<i>or prayer, offering thanks, praises, prophecy, exhortation, etc.</i>) who has his [<i>physical, literal</i>] head covered dishonours or disrespects his superior or head in the hierarchical spiritual structure [<i>Christ</i>].</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Any and every woman while in worship (<i>or prayer, offering thanks, praises, prophecy, exhortation, etc.</i>) who has her [<i>physical, literal</i>] head uncovered [<i>NOT covered</i>] dishonours or disrespects her superior or head in the hierarchical spiritual structure [<i>every man especially the ones present at that worship session</i>]. Her status of her head being uncovered is AS IF she is shaved,</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Hence inspiration says if a woman is not covered (<i>or would not cover her head</i>) THEN let her be shaved/shorn [<i>let her hair be removed from her scalp.</i>]</p>
<p>7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his</p>	<p>A primary reason why a man should NOT cover his physical head during NT worship is because man</p>

<p>head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.</p>	<p>is the image and glory [<i>likeness of the person of God, prime subject of things created for God's pleasure and representative of God in this world</i>] but the woman should cover [<i>because she is created for the man as a thing of splendor for his companionship, desire and assistance.</i>]</p>
<p>8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.</p>	<p>Man did NOT originate from the woman [<i>going by the account in Genesis</i>] but the woman came from the man, [<i>from the bone of man's rib.</i>]</p>
<p>9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.</p>	<p>And man was not made for the woman [<i>or her sake</i>] but rather, the woman was made for the man [<i>to be his helpmeet and companion</i>]. Man was actually made to worship God and serve the creator by being a lord or the one exercising dominion over other creations on earth</p>
<p>10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.</p>	<p>Hence the woman should have [<i>a symbol of</i>] authority on her head [<i>indicating her submission</i>] because of the angels [<i>ministering spirits; the witnesses to woman's creation for man; these celestial beings respect hierarchy and would want God's will followed on earth by His people.</i>]</p>
<p>11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.</p>	<p>In the Lord, man and woman need each other and the duo constitutes the human race. Neither of the two can alone, without the other, be happy nor survive to fulfill its divine purpose.</p>
<p>12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.</p>	<p>As the woman is of the man [<i>originated from the man</i>], also man is by the woman [<i>subsequent men have also come from a woman via pregnancy and natural birth</i>]. All things are of God, from Him, by Him and for Him.</p>
<p>13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?</p>	<p>Judge as individuals who can reason, is it proper, nice looking and befitting for a woman to pray, communicate the Lord's word or worship God with her head uncovered?</p>
<p>14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?</p>	<p>Even nature teaches or illustrates this matter thus; if/when a man has 'long hair' [<i>extended/dressed hair</i>] it is a shame to him. Men tend to have relatively shorter, undressed hair [<i>and may even grow bald as they age</i>] unlike women. The only exceptions in ancient Israel were men under vow as a Nazarite; such grew locks without using the razor on their head to cut the hair during the period of their vow -Num 6:1-21. Samson and Samuel were meant to be Nazarites all the days of their life (Jud 13:7, 1 Sam 1:11) while other men visited barbers regularly or used barbing tools to shave and cut their hair periodically (Eze 5:1)</p>
<p>15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a</p>	<p>If/when a woman have 'long hair' [<i>extended/dressed hair</i>] it is a splendid and beautiful thing for her</p>

glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.	because <u>her hair is</u> given unto her to be ‘a covering.’
16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.	Paul says, if anyone is contesting his commands about covering or being uncovered for females and males during prayer/worship, such should realize neither they [we = <i>the writers/ministers</i>] nor the churches of God have a custom [<i>religious practice</i>] contrary to what the apostle just enunciated.

Note: The words in yellow background were inserted by the translators while the one with green background could have had a different translation.

Some critical points which every Bible student should reflect on are enumerated as questions below (please state your answers before you read on):

1. **What does it mean for a woman to have ‘her head uncovered’ in worship?**
Answer:
2. **In a New Testament (NT), religious service, a woman should cover her head ‘with what?’**
Answer:
3. **Under the NT, is the worship of a woman whose head is uncovered, true worship or will/vain worship?**
Answer:
4. **What does it mean for a man to have his head ‘not covered’ in worship?**
Answer:
5. **In the NT, is the worship of a man whose head is covered, true worship or will/vain worship?**
Answer:

Verse 4 shows it is a disservice and disrespect unto Christ, for a man with his head covered, to (non-inadvertently) pray or worship the Lord.

Verse 5-6 states it is equally a disrespectful and scandalous thing for a woman to pray with her head uncovered. An uncovered woman in prayer is like a shaved/shorn woman, it does NOT mean she is actually shaved but it is **just as disgraceful**. Her uncovered state is AS IF she is shorn, so if she would NOT cover her head THEN let her be actually shaved to complete her shame!

The phrase “as if” in Vs 5 is a representation of an approximate similitude NOT an exact thing. It is similar to the phrase “*as though*” in 1 Cor 5:3 and “*as if*” in 2 Cor 13:2. In those passages, Paul was NOT present with or amidst the Corinthians BUT he wrote/judged AS IF he was there, the intent was they should carry out his instruction or verdict to realize his intent which has already been reflected in his epistle.

1 Corinthians 5:3 *For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,*

2 Corinthians 13:2 *I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:*

Thus Paul wrote that a woman who prays while uncovered is as one shaved and should then go ahead to be shorn and bare her whole scalp. This can only happen if a woman who is UNCOVERED has hair on her head. His command ‘*let her also be shorn*’ is unnecessary and ridiculous if having no hair is what makes her uncovered originally. If *her hair* is THE COVERING (as some presume from Vs 15) and she is uncovered while praying (as in Vs 5) then it implies she has NO hair on her head and Paul’s statement (in Vs 6) that she be subsequently shaved would be... nonsensical.

However, if *an external material* (e.g. veil, scarf, hat, cap, shawl, etc.) is the covering meant (in Vs 3-6), then Paul's statement that she be shaved for not using an 'external material to cover her head/hair' would make sense.

Inspired Paul did not state in Vs 15 that '*her hair is the covering*' under discussion in previous verses, do not merely assume so!

He wrote that '*her hair is given her for a covering,*' in order to symbolize the fact that she is a beautiful creature for man's glory and thus must naturally be reminded of the need to cover [with an external material] while she is in God's presence for worship, to show her humility, submission and not get conceited with her adorned hair or cause distraction to the men/other women, thereby constitute an offense unto watching angels, etc.

In verse 13, the answer to the rhetorical question is "No" (*just as to Rm 6:1 on whether we shall continue in sin that grace may abound*). It is not comely (*good, lovely, proper*) that a woman pray unto God uncovered and it is also not comely that a man pray unto God with his head covered.

If 'hair is the covering' as posited by some THEN men ought to be shaved/shorn with no hair on their head whenever they pray! If however, an external material is 'the covering' under discussion in Vs 3-6 then a man ought NOT to wear such during NT worship. Nobody is born with long or extended/dressed hair; rather individuals nurture and groom their hair as they wish especially in conformity with societal norms and natural dictates.

Under the Old Covenant (OC), it was normal for women to wear a veil and thus cover their head as well as hide their adorned hair from view. That was particularly so in public to hide their face from strange or unfamiliar men.

Genesis 24:63 *And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. 65 For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.*

Genesis 38:14 *And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. 15 When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face.*

2 Samuel 15:30 *And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.*

Thus the women were usually veiled. Did David and his men abruptly grow long hair to cover their heads or they used clothing to conceal their hair? When Moses went to receive the law on Mount Sinai, he talked with God '*face to face*' or directly but when he came down to deliver it unto the Israelites, he had to cover his shining, glorious face –Exo 33:34-35. Under the law of Moses, the priests had special garments and the high priest had a crown for his head with which he must be covered while ministering to the people -Exo 29:4-9, Lev 8:6-13; 21:10.

In administering the law of Jealousy, God though Moses commanded:

Numbers 5:16 *And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD: 17 And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water: 18 **And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head**, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse.*

Does the above passage mean that before conducting the test to find out whether she was guilty of adultery as per her husband's suspicion...

The priest must loosen/expose/release her hair (from its veil) or that he shall shave (her hair off) her head to bare her scalp?

I suggest that a diligent truth seeker reflect and consult several Bible translations e.g. at <http://www.biblehub.com/numbers/5-18.htm>

In 2 Cor 3:6-14, Paul says the inspired ministers of the NT did not put vail on their faces but spake openly and plainly. In 1 Cor 14 & 1 Tim 2, he affirms that women are to keep silence in the churches and learn under subjection; they are neither permitted to teach nor to usurp authority over the man. Is a woman to *have her head covered* and is a man to *have his head uncovered* in a private or corporate worship session today? Recall that in the church we all pray with one accord even when only one brother is leading the assembly because we follow his vocalization with our minds and assent with 'Amen' at the end. The ordinances on covering in 1 Cor 11 are NT injunctions and NOT based on Judaism or Greek cultural practices. Some claim Paul and his fellow Jewish apostles were not binding any instruction about covering for saints and that the matter was peculiar to Corinth. That supposition is weird. Would Paul hide a profitable counsel of God from others and deliver it only to Corinth? The true revelation and practices which the apostles delivered became the acceptable tradition or custom of Christians everywhere. If the apostles have no divine authority to bind revealed truth everywhere just what was their mandate or the import of Mt 16:19 & 18:18? Their writings (NT) are inspired truth meant for us to understand and abide in.

CONCLUSION

The case has been established that men ought not to be covered while women should be covered during worship; *an external material*; usually a piece of clothing for the head '*to conceal the adorned or long hair,*' is the covering under divine contemplation. The reason for this NT precept have to do with '*creation order, divine purpose for man/woman and the angels*' since the times of ignorance is over and all that pertain to life and godliness has been bestowed in this age. The reasons given by inspired Paul are neither localized/cultural nor temporal but are universal and perpetual. If anyone is contentious, such should note that neither Paul nor the churches had any practice of doing otherwise than what he instructs. If anyone chooses to be ignorant, we note Paul's writing are '*the commandments of the Lord.*' The 1 Cor 11 head covering passage says nothing about a local matter of unruly wives in Corinth, prostitutes fashion, etc.; such need not be read into the text! It discusses EVERY MAN and EVERY WOMAN who prays (Vs 4-5) and call upon Jesus as Lord in EVERY PLACE (1 Cor 1:1-2) and follows the apostles doctrine in EVERY CHURCH (4:17; 7:17).

Which of the following could inspiration really be teaching to show subjection to authority and God's spiritual hierarchy:

- a) "Women, you naturally have dressed, long hair, make sure it is still on your head when you pray"
- b) "Women, your head naturally have dressed, long hair, make sure it is covered up when you pray"

Controversy has always been about '*women covering*' (**not** '*men covering*') and similar arguments are advocated by those who contend for women preachers/bishops today. Whenever/wherever the "women's lib movement" gathers momentum, the idea of God-ordained subjection is resisted and sadly, some men support that. The focus has plausibly been on women because '*the modernizers of religion and human rights advocates*' are trying to bring equality of gender/roles even into the church; asserting that women do not have to cover their heads in worship or necessarily be told how to dress, averring that modern women should be ordained as ministers just as the men. However, inspired Paul wrote: "*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you... Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*" -Phil 4:9, Col 2:8. It may not be obvious to some but '*let her be covered*' of 1 Cor 11 stands or falls together with '*let the woman learn in silence with all subjection*' of 1 Tim 2. Remember 1 Pet 3:1-6.

Do you believe it is scriptural and appropriate during NT worship, for a man (irrespective of whether he is shaved, bald, with low-cut hair or not) to wear a crown with beads upon his face (thus veiling his head) or for a woman to fully expose her adorned hair (thus uncover her head)?