

## **The Difficulties Concerning the Role of Women I Corinthians 11:2-16**

### **Introduction:**

#### 1. Major issue in the church: The Role of Women

It has to do with First, Theology of the bible, Second, Methodology of interpreting the bible, Third, the Application/Implication of the interpretation of the bible.

The Problem- What does the NT teach about role of women in the church?  
How are those teaching to be applied today?

The Options- NT is old and not binding on today society  
NT is old and we need to find parallels for today  
NT is wrong-Paul K Jewett- I Tim 2

#### 2. A Biblical View of Woman

a. Historical Errors and Social Excessiveness-

b. Biblical Exposition

Women are Made in Image of God

Honored by God in OT

Honored by Jesus

Honored by Paul

#### 3. A Theological Question

The passage in chapter 11:2 begins with Paul's commendation of the Corinthian church for following the custom in which he is about to instruct them. (:2-16) The following section (:17-34), concerns a matter in which Paul cannot commend the Corinthian Christians- The Lords table. The meaning of Paul's commendation in :2-16 is that the Corinthians were following the custom under consideration. Therefore, Paul was not dealing with active opposition over this issue, nor with a widespread refusal to follow an imported custom. However, he must have had a reason for giving the instruction contained in 1 Cor. 11:2-16. The reason might well have been that reports had come to him about some Corinthians who were questioning the practice of wearing head-coverings.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 includes more than an incidental reference to men and women. Here, Paul deals with a practical problem in relations between men and women. In doing so, he includes a large amount of "doctrinal" material relevant to the roles of men and women. The passage is difficult to interpret clearly. Paul's line of thought is not always clearly understood. Numerous books and articles have been written in scholarly journals about small points in the passage, and heated disagreements have arisen concerning the passage's overall meaning and significance. Many of these difficulties are irrelevant to our purposes, but many will have to be considered.

Notice the Structural Form :2 & :16 inclusion- “custom in churches” ties together.

### **I. Paul Commends the Church for their general obedience to his example and teaching 11:2**

### **II. Paul Criticizes the Churches for their lack of obedience concerning the role of women. :3-16**

Women in the church are to wear a head covering that is designed to show submissiveness to men. The question is; Who, When, Where and Why?

#### **A. The Head Covering is Designed to Show the Headship of the Man :3-6**

1. The focal point of I Cor 11:2-16 is the issue of head-covering for men and women.

While the specific issue of head-coverings is less important than the various considerations Paul introduces in the course of discussing it, the passage as a whole cannot be properly interpreted without an understanding of the focal issue. Judging from the passage as a whole, Paul is giving a concrete rule of order: In worship services, men should leave their heads uncovered, while women should wear something which covers their heads. The rule deals with both men and women.

2. Since more of the passage discusses head-coverings for women (vv. 13-15), the complaint Paul was addressing may have centered upon the part of the ruling that applied to women.

3. The rule probably applies specifically to worship services since the discussion centers on matters of communal worship.

4. The instruction is addressed to “woman “gunkyos”. The question is, Who does Paul have in mind?

- a. The Social Relationship

- b. The Spiritual Relationship

5. There is no exact parallel to Paul's instructions here in either the Jewish or the Greco-Roman sources of the time.

- a. Jewish Social Life Background

- b. Greco-Roman background

- c. Jewish Worship Custom

Although Paul's instructions do not correspond to Greco-Roman customs, either for worship or for daily life situations, they may possibly correspond to Jewish worship customs as observed in the synagogue.

6. Does Paul give permission for a woman who wears a head-covering to pray and offer prophecy in the church or is it simply acknowledging what was going on but not giving approval? See I Cor. 14:34 I Tim 2:9

**B. The Head covering Should be Worn Because of the Order of Creation, Nature and the Church Custom 7-16**

1. The Reason Concerning Creation :7-12
  - a. The Creation Order of Humankind :7-9

- b. The Concern of the Angles :10

- c. The Conclusion :11-12  
Dependence

Interdependence

2. The Reason Concerning Nature :13-14

3. The Reason Concerning Church Custom :16

### Summary

It seems impossible to completely determine the full cultural context of Paul's ruling. However, the context of the passage clearly indicates that Paul linked the practice of head-coverings with the order in men and women's relationships in the church. The woman should have her head covered because of her relationship to the man-her head. The head covering is an appropriate expression that she is under the man's authority. Similarly, the man should keep his head uncovered as an expression that he is under Christ. This is clear from Paul's grounding of the rule in the order of headship (v. 3), in Genesis 2, and in the precedence of man in creation (vv. 7-9)

However, it is not as clear why the presence and absence of a head-covering should be appropriate symbols for the man's and woman's relationship to their different heads. The appropriateness of these symbols may have been intuitively obvious to Paul, as vv. 13-15 might indicate. Perhaps they may have been part of the customs of the Christian community with enough authority that he could presume their appropriateness (as v. 16 might indicate). Nevertheless, it can be seen that, for Paul and the Corinthian Christians, the rule about head-covering expressed the roles of men and women.

### Application/Implication Questions

1. Should women Prophesy, pray and speak in church and what are these activities? I Cor 11:5 How does I Tim. 2:9-11 fit into this issue?  
\*Issue of theology
  
2. Does I Corinthians have any application today since it was an occasional letter to a specific church and today women are more “equal” in society in terms of education, work and providing the social fabric to society?  
\*Issue of methodology.
  
3. If woman are to demonstrate a sign of submission in the church, should they wear a head-covering, a hat or other sociological symbols?  
\*Issue of application. Timeless Truth vs Temporal Expression