



# SIGN *of* AUTHORITY

Do you recall a time when women wore hats to church? Well, that tradition came from Scripture. Indeed, in the first Christian churches the women wore a covering on their heads. However, as the church watered down the gospel and sought to please the sin in men rather than calling them to repentance, this command died out.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about how they should conduct themselves during worship. Starting in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 going all the way to chapter 14, Paul talks about a few matters including the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, unity, love and the need to remain strong in the faith. While no church

would say that we don't need to love one another, or that we shouldn't take the Lord's Supper, most say that women do not need to wear a sign of authority—or a covering—during church services. As we would expect with Christ, though, no command can be ignored except at great peril to our spiritual safety and salvation. God made it clear, through Paul's letter, that a woman must wear a sign of authority during a worship service.

...the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.  
1 Corinthians 11:10b

## Not Cultural

Now, we know what you are thinking. Everyone immediately thinks this is a cultural command. You may even have been taught that Paul wrote the command because he was addressing some local social problem. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Let's look at what Paul wrote a little more closely and *in context*, starting with what he wrote before this command.

For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. 1 Corinthians 11:10

Paul declares that a woman should wear a sign of authority "because of the angels." The angels were not some local problem. Every true church in Jesus has angels helping, watching, and serving over it. In fact, none of the reasons Paul lists, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had anything to do with the culture of the time. Indeed, a woman must wear a sign of authority because of the way God made the universe. Let's look at the main reasons why a woman should wear a sign of authority.

*Christ is above every man.* No one would say this is a cultural statement, but a simple fact regarding how God arranged not only the universe, but the heavens themselves. And, just as Christ is above every man, so God declared that man is the head over woman. Unless you want to say that God is not the

head of Christ, you cannot say that women should not wear coverings.

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 1 Corinthians 11:3

If that were not enough, Paul gives another irrefutable fact—woman came from man. When God made Eve, the first woman, He did so by taking some of Adam. Again, this is no cultural matter, but a fundamental truth of creation.

For man did not come from woman, but woman from man. 1 Corinthians 11:8

*Woman was created for man.* Paul strikes at the heart of why both women and men do not want a woman to wear a sign of authority. God did not make woman to live her life fulfilling her dreams, ambitions and desires, but to help man fulfill his. God made the woman to be man's helpmate.

...neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 1 Corinthians 11:9

## Long Hair

People often claim the Bible tells us that long hair is the covering—another classic excuse for not wearing a sign of authority. This is simply not the case, though. Paul actually wrote of long hair as being one more proof that a woman should wear a sign of authority. God gave woman long hair at creation. It is the original covering He created her with, and therefore a sign of authority is not needed outside the church. Long hair (and, of course, every Christian woman should have long hair) acts as a covering for her daily life. After the fall and the cross, however, God requires women to wear a sign of authority demonstrating to the angels and others that men are back in their true position of headship in the church.

Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head

uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.

1 Corinthians 11:13-15

So people now say, "See, long hair is a covering." Yet Paul used every argument he could to show that a sign of authority is needed in church. For example, if I wanted to prove that the earth is round I might point out that the moon is also round, showing the natural state of things. However, that doesn't mean the earth is the same size, or is full of craters like the moon. Paul pointed to woman's original covering to support his point that she now needs *another* covering—a sign of authority in the church. He used one fact to prove another fact. Finally, we know that hair is not the covering because of 1 Corinthians 11:5.

And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. 1 Corinthians 11:5

Obviously, Paul is referring to the lack of another covering in saying it is "just as though her head were shaved." For in saying "as though her head were shaved," he makes the point that in reality her head is *not* shaved. Again, if this were not true, the passage would make no sense. Paul would have said something illogical like; "Every woman who prays or prophesies with a bald head—it is just as though her head were shaved." Such a sentence would not be the work of a sane man, but a madman.

We know these women had hair on their heads because of verse six. Paul says if a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off. But if the woman has no hair on her head, how can it be cut off?

If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. 1 Corinthians 11:6

Also, if hair truly is the covering then every man should shave his head bald. For it is a sin for man to pray with his head covered. This is why the Jewish Yarmulke is sin in God's sight.

*A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.*  
1 Corinthians 11:7

Whatever you may think about this topic, when a woman prays with her head uncovered she dishonors Jesus Christ and the men in her church. She "dishonors her head." Remember, Christ is the head of man and man the head of woman. Therefore, godly men and Christ become one head over women. Indeed, a woman's head is certainly Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ has said that if she prays with her head uncovered, He is dishonored.

## A Sign

Let us remember that we are talking about a "sign of authority." Something out of the ordinary that demonstrates to all, even angels, that women are in submission to men. Young's Literal Greek translation puts it this way.

*Because of this the woman ought to have a token of authority upon the head, because of the messengers.*  
1 Corinthians 11:10 (YLT)

The word "token" provides a perfect definition for this passage. It means, "something serving as an indication, a proof, or an expression of something else; a sign." The sign of authority is "proof, or an expression" of what lies in the heart. Non-Christian women in the world often have long hair—but for reasons of vanity, not godliness. This is why God requires a second covering during worship. Remember what we saw earlier? God made man and woman with their "natural" hair length—short for man, long for woman—as a symbol of their inward spirituality and submission to His design. When we fell, so did those symbols and our acceptance of His plans. When a

woman returns to the Lord she returns to her God—given spiritual status. This new covering symbolizes her joyful submission to God. It represents that she once again accepts the authority of men as God first established.

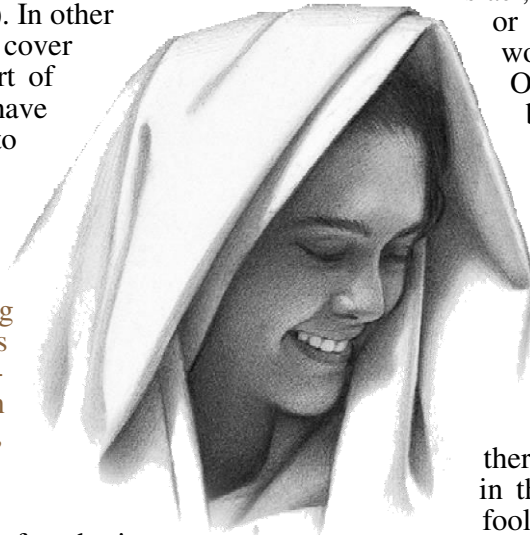
A sign of authority should not cover a woman's face, because we have a greater covenant than Moses. He had to cover his face because the "radiance" of the Old Covenant faded away (2 Corinthians 3:13). In other words, none of us have to cover our faces because, as part of the New Covenant, we have freedom through Christ to seek the face of God.

*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:18

For a woman, the sign of authority means that she is in submission to the men in the church, that she understands a woman must not teach or have authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:11-14), that she should be silent in the churches and when she does speak in church it is only with permission from the male leaders. In fact, it is the covering that gives a woman an opportunity to pray, fellowship, and speak.

A sign of authority is not some fluffy, cute command that women obey to receive blessings. Because of woman's sin in the Garden of Eden, God requires Christian women today to wear a sign of authority. This is the offensive message of the cross and to wear a covering for any other reason is total sin. Certainly it is a joy for women who wear it in faith as part of the crucified life, but only for those who truly admit their sinfulness and surrender to this loving discipline from God.



## No Other Practice

*If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.* 1 Corinthians 11:16

In every New Testament church, except for the one in Corinth, the women wore coverings. It didn't matter if it was Rome, Spain, Athens, Israel, Colosse, Philippi, Ephesus or any other culture, all Christian women wore a sign of authority. Only the Corinthian church became puffed up in pride and rebelled. As Paul stated, all the "churches of God" practiced these things. Simply, there was "no other practice." This was Paul's final proof.

Therefore all contention or objection to obeying what he wrote about this issue should be totally silenced. Yet many today say Paul meant that there was no practice of coverings in these other churches. What pure foolishness! This would mean that Paul took the time to give commands about the Lord's Supper, love, spiritual gifts and more, but in the case of coverings he ended by saying, "Never mind, skip it. No other church practices these things." Again, to hold to this view makes Paul out to be some kind of whimsical madman.

In reality, Paul was so serious about these matters—from coverings to the proper use of spiritual gifts—that he declared if anyone ignores these directions, that person must be ignored.

*For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the word of God*

originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.  
1 Corinthians 14:33-38

It doesn't matter if they are a preacher, elder, leader, or your favorite brother or sister. If they ignore everything Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11 through 14, you must ignore them. You cannot speak to them, listen to their sermons, or read their books. They must be ignored. If any woman will not wear a sign of authority in church, if any church will not require and teach that all women should wear a sign of authority, then they must be fully, completely, and totally "ignored"—just as Paul wrote.

## If You Are A Visitor

While this command is a clear requirement of God, it is very far from being "legalism." The need to love is also a requirement of Jesus. We do not want visitors to wear a sign of authority just because you worship with us. Rather, we encourage you to seek the Lord, surrender to Him, and begin to wear a sign of authority in the joy of the Holy Spirit. For it is by faith and God's grace that we obey all the things Jesus commanded. For, as Romans 1:5 says, this is an "obedience that comes from faith."

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