

# The Head Cover

**A commandment obeyed  
by the people of God**



*“Every woman who prays or  
prophesies with her head uncov-  
ered dishonors her head...”*

—apostle Paul.

This study is dedicated to those in search of the truth about a commandment of God which nowadays is ignored by Christianity.

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## The head cover to pray

*“1Cor. 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*

*1Cor. 11:2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.*

*1Cor. 11:3 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.*

*1Cor. 11:4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head.*

*1Cor. 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.*

*1Cor. 11:6 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.*

*1Cor. 11:7 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.*

*1Cor. 11:8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man;*

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

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

*1Cor. 11:11 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.*

*1Cor. 11:12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.*

*1Cor. 11:13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?*

*1Cor. 11:14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him,*

*1Cor. 11:15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering.*

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

There is a question regarding the obedience to God that doesn't have a satisfactory answer: Why did Christian women stop wearing head covers to pray, even though it was a practice long before Christianity decided to abolish it? The answer could be reasonably difficult if the Holy Scripture is taken as supportive proof.

Once a Christian woman who was very active in her ministry, was asked by a Minister of our church, if women in her church wore a head cover to pray. Her answer was “no”, and continued to say: “Actually, I do not know why the church discontinued the practice of head covering to pray. All I remember is that one day

our pastor declared from the pulpit that the practice of veiling would no longer be necessary. I never knew why. I never asked”. Years have continued to pass, and the question remains without a reasonable answer: Why did Christianity discontinue the use of the head cover to pray?

Likewise, vague answers are given whenever the subject is brought up: “Wearing a veil to pray was Paul's commandment only for some Christian women in Corinth”. “Veiling was a cultural custom, proper of geographical regions”. “Veiling is not necessary for modern women”. “The veil was worn by some women converted to Christianity only while their short hair grew”. “In my church, veiling is not a practice”. “My pastor says the veil to pray is not necessary”. Etcetera. The answers vary depending on the person who answers the question. Anyhow, the final response is that for modern women, the head cover to pray is not necessary. Nowadays, the head cover is an issue nobody cares for. It is unnecessary. It is not an obligation.

Undoubtedly, discontinuing the practice of veiling the head to pray created havoc against the Christian faith, and made the Christian Religion oppose God.

Probably every person who reads the Holy Scripture has read 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, where the apostle Paul states to the church the correct attitude to be adopted by men and women when they enter in close communion with God. (In fact if you do not remember what Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, it is suggested that you read it again).

### A glimpse to the divine principle of submission

*“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 Cor. 11:3)*

Before the creation of all things, even before the creation of time, in eternity and before eternity hierarchical positions have existed. God the Father, His Son, and the creation. The head of all heads is God the Father. He is the head of Jesus Christ, whom during His ministry on earth declared His Father as the highest of highest. According to the apostle Paul, Jesus Christ is totally submitted to the Father. He also says that the head of men is not the Father, but Christ. His role as Saviour and Advocate in regards to humanity undoubtedly fits in the scheme.

Paul continues to say that the headship of women dwells on men. No matter what the circumstances or times are, man is the head of the woman because God decreed it. Do these positions prevail nowadays? Of course they do! To rebuke men's headship upon women it is necessary to rebuke the Father's headship upon His Son since Paul is declaring this hierarchical order starting from God and ending with women. To change or modify this order is unreasonable.

This hierarchical position will remain unchangeable as a commandment from God throughout the ages while men and women exist. Neither Jesus nor His disciples gave permission to modify this status. Nobody has ever been entitled to abolish what God designated.

Understanding who is the head of whom is critical to reach a clear picture of the situation we are dealing with.

**More on men headship**

*“And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner”. (1 Timothy 2:11-14).*

In order to understand why the head covering is necessary for women, it is important to go back in history, when the creation had ended, specifically to the scenes found in Genesis chapter 3, when Eve sinned, carrying upon herself unprecedented consequences. According to this chapter, the results she got not only carried her submission to Adam, but also God prevented her from taking authority or leadership over him.

Time has continued to go by, nothing regarding the differences between men and women has been modified by God or by His Son, the will of God remains unchangeable.

Notoriously, the law applies not only to the first couple but to all people in all times. As we have inherited sorrow and death from them, we have also inherited unevenness. As women inherited pain in childbearing, they also inherited: *“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”*

Therefore, the submission of Eve to Adam was not an issue only for them but for all women and men while humankind endures. Paul knew it, and emphasized it twice when he said:

*“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”. (1 Cor. 14:34-35).*

Neither races, nor cultures, geographical regions or time can overcome the law decreed by God in Eden.

Thousands of years after the events at Eden, women continued to have a lower status than men before God, Paul knew it when he wrote 1 Cor. 14:34-35.

The “Law” mentioned by Paul is not Moses’ Law but Genesis 3:16: *“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”.*

The work accomplished by Christ’s crucifixion brought salvation from sin to men and women, however, it is critical the understanding of the prevalent sentence commanded in Eden, because the freedom from sin provided by Christ to his children, does not mean freedom from Genesis’ Law.

The second text from Paul says:

*“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner”. (1 Timothy 2:11-14).*

In conclusion, these two verses clearly indicate that the will of God must be obeyed by Christians in all times, because the submission we are talking about has not been abolished by Christ. Of course, in the Gospel, men’s headship is not to be understood as making him appear despotic, tyrant or dominant; it is for sure that our God did not intend for man to appear as a “powerful macho man” ruling on what a woman can or can’t do.

The sentence involves two things: The man is superior to the woman because he was not the one deceived, the woman was.

God decreed that women must not rule or take authority over men. No human decision prevails or overcomes God’s will.

Of course, the Gospel gives women a very different position from what was given to them in ancient Israel. Male israelites became masters over women, minimum privileges were given to them. The Gospel bestows women with a category that ancient Israel denied them. No part of the Gospel shows that men are entitled to imitate or follow the Israelites footsteps. The Gospel honors women as children of God, surrounding them with self-esteem and consideration, and giving them the precious gift of the Holy Spirit.

Although the privileges for women are notorious, the state of superiority from men to women remains. What God decreed was confirmed by His Son. No human has the power to break that rule.

**Obedience and disobedience**

*“Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head.*

*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 11:4-5).*

It is very visible the high level of respect that Christian denominations have for God and for His Son. But a question remains: Why do men and women uncover their head to pray? This fact requires attention.

Men uncover their head whenever they pray because by doing so they show obedience to the Scripture: *“Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head”.* Moreover, their respect goes further since the uncovering usually is realized just immediately before entering the sanctuary. Have you observed that? Yes, men uncover their head! Why do they do so? Simply because they strongly believe that they show respect when they come in contact with God and with His Son.

Have you ever seen a man wearing a hat while attending a service? For sure you have not. Men do not stay covered simply because uncovering their head is a commandment they faithfully obey since the times of the apostolic church.

*“Dishonoring his head”*, which is Christ, means lack of respect to Him before God. It is not necessary to speak blaspheme words against Christ, dishonoring involves actions and attitudes. God does not tolerate disrespect.

How about the women? It seems that modern Christian Theology decided that God’s law no longer applies to them as it was for two thousand years. The decision is defended by different and vague arguments. Yet, whatever the arguments are, they are always intended to contradict what God decreed. The Holy Scripture does not validate disobediences. The day comes when every disobedience will be punished.

Human reasonings do not count, what Paul declares, is: *“And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head”.* Dishonor or disesteem means disrespect to men.

Do men demand respect from women? No, they don’t. God demands it! It is important to keep in mind what happened at Eden’s, and why the commandment emerged.

Christians must obey without hesitation because they know

that arguments can't overcome what the Almighty decreed.

Women haven't lost the right to inherit everlasting life because of Eve's transgression; but obedience to God's will is completely necessary. The sentence upon women at Eden was physical pain during childbearing. But to reach everlasting life, a requirement must be fulfilled:

*"But women [Greek: she] will be saved [Or restored] through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (1 Timothy 2:15).*

Yes, she continues having the same opportunity to enjoy everlasting life like man although a sentence weighs upon her. Remarkably, a prerequisite must be met: *"if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety"*, which means nothing but obedience to God. That obedience involves the head covering to pray.

Men do not dishonor Jesus Christ (before God) since they uncover their head while in communion with Him. Then, why promote women's disobedience when they pray uncovered like men? Although thousands of women continue to cover their head to pray, millions have stopped, why? only because Paul speaks about head covers in a letter to the church in Corinth? Why attach 1 Corinthians 11 only to corinthian women while at the same time other teachings in this epistle are taken universally?

It is true that the apostle Paul mentions the head covering in a letter addressed to the church in Corinth, but it is necessary to note that the *"dishonor"* mentioned by him does not refer to any rule established by the Corinthian society. Corinth never set a rule regarding this subject and Paul's words have nothing to do with the corinthian society, he was seriously interested in obeying and preaching the will of God.

### Getting worse

*"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).*

On one occasion I talked to a religious lady about obeying God by wearing a cover to pray. I said, Paul declares that if women do not cover their head to pray, that they should cut off their hair as a sign of disgrace. She laughed and said: "I don't feel disgrace if I pray uncovered". With a great deal of tranquility she continued to say: "Covering to pray, or cutting off the hair was only a regional matter, for Corinthian women". I still continue to believe that she did not understand that the mentioned disgrace is not a feeling or regional issue but a sign of disobedience to God's will. According to Paul's teachings, women expose themselves to shame or disgrace before God, not before society.

No matter what they think. The question is: What is God's attitude towards women who rebel against Him?

It is important to keep in mind that modern society is not surprised to see women cut off their hair. The apostle Paul has nothing to do with society's tendencies, he is really concerned about God's will.

It doesn't matter if churches have rebuked the head cover to pray. It doesn't matter if members of the church laugh at women who wear head covers. It doesn't matter if pastors confront women that wear a head cover arguing that others do not. Living in

Christ does not mean freedom to disobey.

What really matters is the obedience to God's law. God does not approve human intentions to reject His will.

Neither time, nor culture or religious positions can constrain or obligate God to null His decision.

Christianity is challenged by the Holy Scripture to obey without hesitation what God commands as the only requirement to reach everlasting life. Therefore, it is urgent that Christians embrace obedience to God, which includes the head covering to pray, avoiding cutting off the hair or shaving it off.

### The prostitution argument

An argument says that the only women who used to cut off their hair were the one thousand priest-prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth. Idealistically is stated that when some of them converted to Christianity, they were asked by the authorities of the church (Paul among them) to cover their shaved head until their hair grew; thus, (as argued) they would avoid being looked at by men as being active in their functions at the temple. Once their hair grew, the head cover was no longer necessary.

Another argument says that such converted prostitutes had to cover their shaved heads to pray only while their hair grew, after that, the cover became unnecessary.

It is not clear which argument poses as more important nowadays since arguers mix them when explaining their rejection to obey Paul's teaching.

Apparently, these arguments support the non-head covering position, however, a question emerges: Why does Paul start his teaching about the head covering issue by telling about God as the head of His Son, and the Son as the head of men, and men as the head of the women? Moreover, the arguer(s) forget that at the same time Paul is saying: *"Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head" (1Cor. 11:4)*. Obviously, the person or persons who invented the "prostitution argument" forgot these two aspects found in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

Also: *"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" (1Cor. 11:6)* was forgotten.

By reading 1 Corinthians 11:4,6 it is understood that Paul is not recommending covering shaved heads but haired ones; he says that if a woman rejects to obey to cover her head to pray or prophesy, she must cut off her hair. This shows that the "prostitution argument" is in deep contradiction to the Word of God because it states that the only women who wore head covers were supposedly those that had shaved their heads.

If the "prostitution argument" is to be taken as real, how is it related to Paul's teachings? And how is it related to: *"Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head"*? Because if Paul is talking about priest-prostitutes converted, there has to be a correspondence between that comment and the mention of men dishonoring their head (which is Christ) when praying covered.

Only by ignoring the Holy Scripture the theological argument aimed to nullify what it is a commandment of God given through apostle Paul can be validated.

## Two different words

There is no doubt that reading the Holy Scriptures on a daily basis, fills the soul with positive feelings of love and obedience to God; it strengthens the mind to fight against the malicious darts from Satan. However Jesus Christ recommends not only Scripture reading but also a careful examination of it in order to achieve good results. To achieve good results there are tools to help Bible students: Dictionaries, Greek-English Lexicons, Greek Grammar, and more. Using them appropriately brings out brilliant discoveries.

It is important to keep in mind that the Holy Scriptures we read are Versions taken from ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Every Version produced goes through idiomatic difficulties, which often are not verted as real translations but mere interpretations. For example, when in the English language we talk about love between husband and wife, between friends, or between parents and children, we normally use the same word: love. However in the Greek language different words are used depending on the relationship.

The same phenomenon applies when we talk about the word “veil”. We often use it to refer to a piece of garment to cover the face, or to cover the head to pray, or when we mention the curtain to separate the holy place in the Temple in Jerusalem. While in the English language only one word is used, in the Greek language three different words are used.

Do you know that while in English 1 Corinthians chapter 11 uses only one word to reference the veil, in Greek two words are used? Let’s take a closer look:

*“Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head — it is just as though her head were shaved. 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. 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. (1Cor. 11:4-7).* (The underlining is ours to show emphasis).

In English these four verses use the same word “cover”, the Greek text uses the word κάλυμα, “ka>luma, — kal’-oo-mah; which is veil.

A carefully observation leads to see that Paul is talking about a piece of garment to be placed over the head to pray. Now let’s see the other word:

*“But that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering” (1Cor. 11:15).*

Any reader of this verse in English Versions is led to read the word cover, or veil as read in verses 4-7, however in Greek, in verse 15 Paul uses a different word to kaluma, that word is περιβολάιον, (peribo>laion, — per-ib-ol’-ah-yon; neuter of a presumed derivative of (periba>llw); something thrown around one, i.e. a mantle, veil: — covering, vesture).

Both references: κάλυμα and περιβολάιον have been taken from the Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, which is a very popular biblical tool.

It is notorious to see how biblical interpreters and translators

fail to clarify the difference between these two words, preferring to use a vague generic word: “veil” or “cover” carrying out confusion to Bible readers, which in spite of their natural good intentions to understand what God says, confront difficulties in achieving that purpose.

As explained by Strong’s Concordance, peribolaion means “something thrown around one”. It also means a mantle or veil as “covering or vesture”.

Peribolaion is a large piece of garment to cover large parts of the body starting from the head down to the feet, in many cases going through the face. It is part of daily dressing for women in Arab countries, India, Pakistan, Afganistan.

A biblical reference to peribolaion is found in Hebrews 1:12.

*“You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end”.*

The reader can clearly see that the Greek word peribolaion denotes in English a piece of robe, which is a long, loose, flowing outer garment.

On the other hand kaluma, which is a different “veil” than the extremely large peribolaion, is a small piece of garment, used to cover small areas like the face or the head. References to kaluma are found in 2 Corinthians 3:13, 14, 15, 16.

*“We are not like Mosses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away”.*

Human sense obviously leads to understand that in this verse Paul is not saying that Mosses covered his head with a piece of garment as large as peribolaion, since the area to cover was only his face.

The conclusion about these two different words is remarkable: According to apostle Paul, long hair substitutes the peribolaion (as domestic and social dressing); but long hair does not substitutes the kaluma to pray.

## Obedience or disobedience

By knowing the truth about the difference between both veils, Christians are given the choice of obedience or disobedience, there is no third option. Notoriously, the Scripture does not show a case in which disobedience has been rewarded by God with blessings.

I encourage the reader to meditate on this issue, and to think about the importance of obeying. It doesn’t matter if unveiling to pray is the actual attitude sustained by thousands of millions, what really matters is obeying what God commands.

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