

HEAD-COVERING IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 11:1-16)

PREFACE:

Note 1: The doctrine of head covering is NOT a doctrine of foremost significance, but neither is it insignificant

Matthew 23:23-24 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

- There is a prioritization and weighting of the various commands in Scripture
- EVERY command must be obeyed ("without neglecting the others"). But we must accurately determine how much "weight"/importance to put on the various commands

We believe that these verses provide a good basis and foundation on how to interact with the truth of covering the head.

- The teaching on head covering is addressed only once in the New Testament - in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16.
- These sixteen verses are a relatively small part (in quantity as well as in emphasis) of the overall New Covenant teachings, so we do NOT look at this as an example of the "weightier provisions of the law."
- However, this section of Scripture is not immaterial. Most of all, we believe that Paul uses strong theological reasons to buttress his argument - so we cannot ignore it.
- In addition, it is right before (and seemingly connected with) a foundational passage on communion. It is of note that many churches have not relegated the doctrine of communion to be cultural (the second half of 1 Corinthians 11), but have relegated most these verses (the first 16 verses of 1 Corinthians 11) to be almost completely cultural.

Note 2: 1 Corinthians 11-14 provide various instructions about the gathering together of the saints of God

We believe that chapters 11-14 of 1 Corinthians provide several of the Spirit's instructions with regard to the gathering together of the believers of Jesus Christ as His church.

- 1 Corinthians 11 addresses his views on two specific church practices - the head covering and communion. (That this is related to church practice is seen in verses 2, 16-19)
- 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 provide instruction on the Body of Christ. Chapter 12 addresses overall concepts of the universal Body, and chapter 14 addresses the local Body.
- 1 Corinthians 13, which is the chapter on Christian love, is placed appropriately (we feel) in between the chapters that describe the workings of the church. LOVE must be the new wine that is housed in the new wineskin of the New Covenant Church.

INTRODUCTION

Verse 2

Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

- Paul seems to have heard reports that the Corinthians kept Paul and his instructions in front of them, and held firmly to the traditions that Paul had already taught to them
- Holding firmly to the traditions that Paul taught to them was a praiseworthy act
- In this context, there appears to be two traditions that Paul feels the need to ***clarify*** and ***correct***. The communion table is addressed in more detail and more seriousness, as correction is required (verses 20-34). The principles of head-covering are also addressed (verses 1-16), and it seems that he is mostly clarifying (based on my reading of verse 17)

In the immediate verses that follow (verses 3-16), Paul proceeds to explain the theology on head-covering. This passage seems to be best understood with the most cohesiveness and integrity, by noting that Paul builds his overall doctrine from various different arguments.

These seem to be the main arguments being proposed:

- The Christological Argument (verses 3-6)
- The Creation and Angelic Argument(verses 7-12)
- The Sociological (Cultural) Argument (verses 14-15)
- The Final Ecclesiastical (Church) Argument (verse 16)

We will now study each of these arguments to get an overall sense of what Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is teaching

1. THE CHRISTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Verses 3-6

³But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. ⁴Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. ⁵But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. ⁶For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.

V3: Christ is the head of every man; God is the head of Christ
 V4: Every man who has something on his head when praying or prophesying disgraces his head

Verse 3:

- Since the Father (God in verse 3) and Jesus are both equally Divine and equal members of the Triune God-head, we know that this "headship" is NOT one of superiority. This "headship" (v3) is a statement of authority, not a statement of superiority. This is critical to recognize and differentiate between.
- It is also interesting that Paul makes this statement about "every man" who covers his head. In that day and culture, Jewish men and women covered their heads when praying. So it was probably harder for the Jewish MEN to obey Paul's commands than Jewish women. Corinthian men (being of a Greek culture), probably didn't cover their heads, so this was something they already easily obeyed.

Verse 4

- Paul instructs us that when a man prays or prophesies with his head covered, he disgraces his own self (his own head) as well as his spiritual head, who is Jesus.
- As a side note, this is one reason why we cannot think of HAIR as being the covering (a misappropriation of verse 15). Because otherwise, Paul would be indicting all men who had hair on their heads.

V3: Man is the head of a woman;
 V5: Every woman who keeps her head uncovered when praying or prophesying disgraces her head

- Paul does not say that "the man" is the head of every woman in verse 3.
- But Paul does say "every woman" in verse 5 to say that the general principle of the covering of the head in the church service includes unmarried women as well
- An unmarried woman's head may be a father/son, or sometimes a local elder (if the rest of her family members are not Christians). So a woman who does not cover her head is disgracing her head in TWO senses - it is a disgrace to the woman herself, and also a disgrace to the man who is her figurative/spiritual head

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is especially significant since the evidence indicates that pagan Greek women did not worship with a covering on their head. In discussing the customs regarding women's headdress in the <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>, Albrecht Oepke says: To be sure, the veil was not unknown in Greece. It was worn partly as adornment and partly on such special occasions as match-making and marriage . . . , mourning . . . , and the worship of chthonic [underworld—bt] deities (in the form of a garment drawn over the head). But it is quite wrong that Greek women were under some kind of compulsion to wear a veil in public. ▪ On the other hand, Jewish women, as well as most women in Tarsus and to the east of there, did wear a head covering in distinction to the Greek custom. And most oriental women covered their heads in public
<p>V5-6 - <i>But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. ⁶For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.</i>fs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extent of the disgrace of praying/prophesying with head uncovered: Just as disgraceful as having her head shaved. ▪ Shaving the head was primarily a symbol of grief or mourning (compare Deuteronomy 21:12-13; Isaiah 7:20; 15:2; 22:12; Jeremiah 16:6; Micah 1:16). ▪ Plutarch, in discussing mourning at funerals, says, "So in Greece, whenever any misfortune comes, the women cut off their hair and the men let it grow" ▪ Paul's purpose in writing this is not so that a woman who offends in this matter would cut off her hair, but that realizing how serious the disgrace is, she <i>would</i> wear a covering while praying or prophesying. ▪ There is no evidence that the lack of a head covering in Greece indicated that a woman was a prostitute or had loose morals. It is often asserted without proof that the real reason Paul wanted the women to wear a head covering was so that people would not think they were immoral. In fact, in the Old Testament, the very opposite was true (see Genesis 38:15 where Tamar posing as a prostitute covered her face).

2. THE CREATION AND ANGELIC ARGUMENT

⁷For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; ⁹for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. ¹⁰Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹²For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.

<p>Verse 7 - <i>For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verse 7 is a HUGE verse. This embodies the very nucleus of the overall doctrine. This is a driving PRINCIPLE that we must understand. ▪ Let's start with the man. In the church, which is the house of God, we must exalt and bring glory to God. There is no place for any glory in either man or woman. ▪ When men keep their heads uncovered, they are embracing the statement that they have been given the responsibility of representing the glory of God. Man is the image and glory of God. So it is of theological impact that men do not cover their heads. The uncovered head is the symbol that men accept their task to represent the glory of God ▪ Important note: The woman is not said to be in man's image—she too is in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). ▪ But being second in creation, the woman is the man's glory, not God's.
<p>Verse 10 (building from Verse 7) - <i>Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is because of this hierarchy ("since" in verse 7) that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a man should not cover his head (v7) and, ○ a woman should have an authority over her head (v10). More on this "authority" later. ▪ We cannot discern any clear and easy inference from the "<i>because of the angels</i>" statement, but it does seem to be something that carries reverence - because angels are beings that live in the actual presence of God in heaven.
<p>Verse 8-9 - <i>For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The order of creation is not insignificant. It IS of importance. God intentionally created man first and woman second. So there was a purpose in the <u>order</u> of creation - a purpose that defined one's role in this world. ▪ God created woman to be a "helper" to man (Gen 2:18) ▪ Helping somebody else does <u>not</u> mean being lesser in value. This is a HUGE concept to embrace, because this is completely contrary to the world's thinking (To be a fully committed Christian, we must constantly be watchful to recognize the various ways where the logic of the world

	<p>is WRONG AND UPSIDE DOWN TO GOD'S LOGIC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Luke 22:24-27 - ²⁴And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. ²⁵And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ ²⁶But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.</i> ▪ Do we agree and embrace the truths being described here? ▪ Example: There is a lot of subtle demeaning by women of their husbands and of males - that is accepted by the world system of today. This is contrary to God's ways. A woman is supposed to be of help to a man, and she cannot fulfill her divine responsibility of helping man, while at the same time ridiculing and criticizing and nagging him.
<p>Verse 11-12 - <i>However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As we have already seen above, it is very important that we distinguish between order/structure and worth. But regardless, there is a mutual dependence ordained by God for man and woman to depend on each other. ▪ <i>Question for meditation: Does my spouse see me as somebody that he/she can lean on?</i> ▪ So just in case men think they can use their order in creation to claim to be more valuable than women, Paul clarifies that the creation order does NOT infer a lesser status/value/worth for the woman. Though the woman was created with a different role and function from man, the woman is AS VALUABLE as the man.

TAKE A MOMENT TO STOP NOW AND REASSESS

¹³*Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?*

Paul now asks the Corinthians to pause and reassess. Given all the theological reasons given so far, Paul asks the Corinthians to weigh all that he has written and judge for themselves.

But to be clear, this is not a judgment based on reason. And neither is this a judgment based on present cultural norms/mores. This is a judgment based on a mind that has been renewed by the Holy Spirit:

- Judge for yourselves since you have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- Judge with righteous judgment, not based on appearances (John 7:24)

3. THE SOCIOLOGICAL (CULTURAL) ARGUMENT

¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,
¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

Verse 14-15

- Now Paul introduces a sociological (cultural) argument: an appeal to nature and propriety.
- **It is not that the cultural context is irrelevant. But as we see throughout the New Covenant, cultural contexts are SECONDARY to Divinely-ordered principles.**
- By "nature," Paul refers to the natural order of things - the customs of society in general, and not to some physiological (biological) characteristic.
- Physiologically, a man's hair may grow as long as a woman's, but in most societies (both then and now) men cut their hair shorter than women.
- Paul uses this to *further* show that women naturally have more covering on their heads than men; therefore, they should also wear a head-covering.
- This argument is still valid today; in general, women still wear their hair longer than men. Even in the subcultures where men do wear their hair long, it is considered more natural (c.f. nature from v 14) for women to wear their hair as long and even longer.

Verse 15 - *but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.*

- Paul says that a woman's long hair is given to her as a covering. But the covering here is not the same as the head veil mentioned earlier.
- Here he says that a woman's hair serves as a mantle (**Greek peribolaion**), a wrap that hangs from her head over her shoulders, much like the modern shawl is sometimes worn.
- Some have supposed that long hair can substitute for a head-covering, and they appeal to the Greek preposition *anti* which is used here and which can mean "instead of." Thus they translate "her long hair has been given to her instead of a covering." But here *anti* does not refer to a replacement, but to an equivalent, and should be translated "for, as, in place of."
- As we have seen earlier in Point 1, thinking of a woman's hair as the head-covering being discussed, does not work with the logic of Paul in verse 4 and as it relates to men.
- Building on the logic of what we have seen in verse 7, the fact that a woman's long her serves a source of glory to

	<p>her, also means that this glory must be covered in God's house. Paul's argument here is not that the woman who has long hair may dispense with the head-covering, but rather that the fact that she already has one type of covering shows she is to wear a head-covering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verse 15 has also been read to say that a woman should not cut her hair. The verse actually says nothing of the sort. It simply says that if a woman should be wearing her hair long, this is a glory to her. The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles reads: "for a woman long hair is attractive," and J. B. Phillips translates that long hair is "of glorious beauty to a woman." ▪ While the Scriptures do extol the virtues of long hair on a woman, nothing is said of short hair. It is not said that it is a sin, not even a shame. From the cultural standpoint of that day, long hair is extolled as something glorious.
<p><i>Verse 14 - Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verse 14 has been used to say that it is a sin for a man to have long hair. Paul does not say that it is a sin, but rather a dishonor (Greek <i>atimia</i>), if a man should be wearing (or growing) his hair long. ▪ Greek men normally wore their hair short and grew it long only in a time of mourning. Thus Plutarch says, "<i>So in Greece, whenever any misfortune comes, the women cut off their hair and the men let it grow, for it is usual for men to have their hair cut and for women to let it grow.</i>" So there was a sense of dishonor or human lowliness that is associated with the Greek men growing out their hair.

4. THE FINAL ECCLESIASTICAL (CHURCH) ARGUMENT

¹⁶*But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.*

Now then, having presented theological and sociological arguments as to why men should pray and prophesy bareheaded and women with their heads covered, Paul concludes by saying in effect, "*If you still don't like it, I'm sorry, but that's the way it is.*"

In doing so, however, he throws in a fifth argument at the end of the discussion. By Paul's appealing to the universal practice of the churches, we see that he is not saying that one should do what his culture does. Rather, there was one practice for all the churches even though there were churches spread among many different cultures of the first century. **So this was not something that Paul had just made up; it was (and is) apostolic tradition.**

Question #1: What custom is Paul referring to?

Some have mistakenly taken the phrase "we do not have such a custom" to mean "we do not have any particular custom." They say that Paul is saying that if a person wants to disagree, he may do as he pleases. This explanation certainly jars against the context, for **it does not seem probable that Paul would write 13 verses arguing for and even commanding a practice and then at the end say, "But if you don't want to do it, you don't have to."**

So Paul is not saying, "we do not have any custom"; rather, he is saying, "we do not have a custom except what I have proposed."

Question #2: Is Paul really saying, "We do not have a custom in our churches of being contentious."

It doesn't seem plausible that "contention" would be called or referred to as a custom.

A much better and clearer translation is one such as is found in William Barclay's translation of the New Testament: "*Let it suffice to say that we have no such custom as the participation of unveiled women in public worship, nor have the congregations of God.*" A similar translation is given by F. F. Bruce in his *The Letters of Paul*: "*We have no such custom as you are trying to introduce, and neither have the churches of God elsewhere.*"

Question #3: About whom does Paul refer to by his use of the plural "we" in this verse?

The most likely answer is that by "we" he is referring to the apostles. He is saying that the custom that someone is trying to introduce is not an apostolic tradition.

5. CONCLUSION

- The fact that Christ is head of every man and the man is head of woman has not changed.
- The fact of creation, that woman was created from and for man, has not changed.
- The fact that man is the glory of God, and the woman is the glory of man has not changed
- Whatever the meaning of the phrase "because of the angels" might be, it is a safe bet that the angels have not changed.
- Culturally, women still wear their hair longer than men. And although modern man would not judge it improper culturally for a woman to pray bareheaded, the thrust of Paul's entire argument leads us to believe that Paul was appealing for them to judge in light of Divinely-ordered principles and apostolic teaching.

So to summarize:

Very simply, when we as men and women gather together as a local church, God is present in this midst (Matthew 18:20). It is His church, not our church (Matthew 16:18). In His church where He is in the midst (middle) of it, He alone gets all the glory.

With that as a basis of understanding 1 Corinthians 11, the crux of this entire passage is verse 7. Since the woman is the glory of the man, this glory should be covered so that God alone gets all the glory. From verse 15, it is clear that the woman's hair is her glory, so it makes sense that her hair should be covered in the church meeting.

This is why we believe that ALL men (married and unmarried) should keep their heads uncovered when praying or prophesying in the public assembly, while ALL women (married and unmarried) should keep their heads covered when praying or prophesying in the public assembly.

It is crucial to recognize that Paul uses strong theological arguments to build his case. He appeals to culture (nature) at the end, but this one argument does NOT invalidate all his earlier arguments. One question to ask ourselves is whether we use verses 14-15 to give us a convenient way out from having to cover our heads. And at least three modern cultural factors seem to have produced the disregard for this teaching:

- (1) the fact that head coverings are no longer considered stylish,
- (2) the move for greater women's rights and equal roles as men, and
- (3) the overall tendency of our present culture towards a lack of respect for authority.

One final note:

This problem of elevating cultural traditions above the Word of God was interestingly, around even in Jesus' day. He had to rebuke the Pharisees and scribes because they were invalidating God's word for the sake of their tradition (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13). So let us not invalidate God's Word and God's prioritization, because we want to maintain our present-day traditions and please modern-day culture.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

1. Is the veil supposed to be a face-veil, as is generally used in today's language?

Bottom-line: The word for face-veil in the Greek is different than the word used here. The thrust of this passage uses "head" and "hair" to make it clear that this is a covering for the head, and not the face.

Quote: The word for face-veil (Greek *kalumma*), although found in the New Testament in II Corinthians 3:13-16, is not found here at all. The word "cover" (Greek *katakalupto*) is a general word. Out of the twenty-five times it is found in the Greek Old Testament, it refers once to a face covering (Genesis 38:15), once to a head covering (Esther 6:12), and once to a seraph covering his face and feet with his wings (Isaiah 6:2). In the Apocrypha (Susanna 32) it is used absolutely to refer to Susanna having her face (or possibly her head) veiled. But in the passage in question "head" rather than "face" is specified as being covered.

2. Can the head covering be symbolic and not a physical head covering (e.g. wife "covered" by her husband, single woman covered by her father/an elder, etc.)?

Bottom-line: 1 Corinthians 11:5 will not make sense with this inference. Furthermore, the overall logic of the writing .

Our thoughts: 1 Corinthians 11:5 says, "*But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.*" This statement fails to sustain itself logically if we make the head covering to be a male person, and not a physical veil that covers the head. Because using that logic, this verse would be paraphrased to read, "*But every woman who prays or prophesies but does not have a male person who covers her as her authority disgraces the male person who is her authority.*" This logic makes no sense as she has specifically chosen to stay without of submission. And further, the second half of the verse that compares such a woman to a woman with a shaved head again makes little sense. Instead, comparing a woman who does not cover her head (hair) with a woman who has shaved her head and has no hair, has a natural and logical flow to it.

Quote: The word group which includes the words translated "cover" and "uncover" in verses 5, 6, 7, and 13 is not used elsewhere to refer to the hair, but is used to refer to some other type of covering. "Cover" ("veil"—ASV, RSV of verse 6) in verses 6 and 7 translates *katakalupto* which means "cover, veil" and in the middle voice "cover oneself."

The word occurs only here in the New Testament, but it is found several times in the Greek Old Testament. It is used in Genesis 38:15 of Tamar where it is said that she had "covered" her face. It can easily be seen from the preceding verse that she did not cover her face with her hair but with a veil. Similarly the word is used in three manuscripts in Esther 6:12 where it says that Haman hurried to his house in mourning with his head "covered." Here again it is obvious that Haman had not grown his hair long to show his shame, but had thrown something over his head. "Uncovered" ("unveiled"—ASV, RSV of verse 5) in verses 5 and 13 translates *akatakaluptos* which simply means "uncovered."

This word also is found nowhere else in the New Testament and only once in the Greek Old Testament. One manuscript contains the word in Leviticus 13:45 where it is said that one with a leperous baldness should "uncover" his head. (For this see the King James Version; the Hebrew literally says, "let the hair of his head hang loose.") Here again it can be seen that "uncover" is not cutting off the hair. The noun forms of this word group (*katakalupsis* and *katakalumma*, both meaning "covering") are not found in the New Testament.

Katakalupsis does occur in the second century Christian writing, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Vision 4, 2, 1: ". . . a virgin arrayed as if she were going forth from a bride-chamber, all in white and with white sandals, veiled up to her forehead, and her head-covering [*katakalupsis*] consisted of a turban, and her hair was white." Here once again it is obvious that the covering is not hair, but a turban. Of the seventeen times that *katakalumma* occurs in the Greek Old Testament, only once does it refer to a head covering. See Isaiah 47:2. (The King James Version and the New English Bible take the Hebrew word behind *katakalumma* to mean "locks" or "tresses," but the other modern translations and Hebrew lexicons²⁸ define the word as "veil.").

3. Can a woman's hair be the covering that Paul is referring to?

Reason(s) to consider this: Verse 15

Bottom-line: The word used for covering in verse 15 is a different Greek word than the one used in verse 6.

Quote: The words "cover" in verse 6 and "covering" in verse 15 translate two entirely different Greek words. The noun translated covering in verse 15 is not *katakalupsis* or *katakalumma*, but *peribolaion*, which means covering, wrap, cloak" and is described as being "an article of clothing something like a cloak or mantle."²⁹ In Hebrews 1:12 (the only other place the word occurs in the New Testament), it is translated "mantle" or "vesture." Now a *peribolaion* is a type of covering, but the fact that Paul uses an entirely different word shows that it is not the same type of covering as that discussed in the preceding verses. His point in verse 15 is that since nature gives woman one type of covering, she ought also to wear another type of covering while praying.

4. Should women cover their heads all the time?

Reason(s) to consider this: The New Testament tells us ALL to pray without ceasing. So shouldn't a woman cover her head at all times if she should also be praying at all times?

Bottom-line: The covering of the head is written in the context of the church gathering. So we see the covering of the head to be required only when believers are gathering together as a "church" as described by the Bible.

Our thoughts: 1 Corinthians 11:1-2, 16-19 seem to make very clear that Paul is referring to the practice of the church gathering alone.

¹Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. ²Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you

¹⁶But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God. ¹⁷But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. ¹⁹For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

5. Does the head-covering refer to a cultural custom for wives to indicate that they were married?

Reason(s) to consider this: The English Standard Version (ESV) uses the word "wife" instead of "woman" in verses 3, 5, 6, 10, and 13.

Bottom-line: The translators of the ESV unfortunately insert THEIR cultural understanding of this passage into the Scriptures. We find this to be a deeply troubling precedent and cannot agree with it.

Our thoughts: The translators of the ESV intentionally chose to translate the same Greek word in this passage as "woman" in some occasions, but as "wife" in some occasions. These are the footnotes they give:

ESV Footnote for 1 Corinthians 11:3: Greek *gü-nā*; This term may refer to a woman or a wife, depending on the context

ESV Footnote for 1 Corinthians 11:5: In verses 5-13, the Greek word *gü-nā* is translated wife in verses that deal with wearing a veil, a sign of being married in first-century culture

To us, this is an example of the translators going beyond what their role was, and inserting *their* cultural understanding into the reading of the text. This is a dangerous precedent that could be applied by other translator to change the language and meaning of many other Christian traditions. Could baptism and communion be negotiable by cultural contexts as well?

To us, the very logic of their translation breaks down from any kind of consistent flow. Example:

ESV v4-5 - ⁴Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.

ESV v7 - For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

We will repeat again what we stated earlier to help clarify our position:

To us, the crux of this entire passage is verse 7 - and even ESV keeps this generic to men and women, rather than men and wives. But very simply, when we as men and women gather together as a local church, God is present in this midst (Matthew 18:20). It is His church, not our church (Matthew 16:18). In His church where He is in the midst (middle) of it, He alone gets all the glory. Now since the woman is the glory of the man, this glory should be covered so that God alone gets all the glory.

This is why we believe that ALL men (married and unmarried) should keep their heads uncovered when praying or prophesying in the public assembly, while ALL women (married and unmarried) should keep their heads covered when praying or prophesying in the public assembly.