

## LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

### Lesson 6

#### Woman in God's Administration— Headship and Head Covering

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:7, 18-24; 3:1-6; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Tim. 2:14

#### **I. The significance of the woman is that she represents man before God:**

- A. Isaiah 54:5 says, "For your Maker is your Husband"; God is the unique, universal man.
- B. Whether we are males or females we are all a part of His wife; man's position is not the position of the husband; it is the position of a wife.
- C. God is our husband; the headship is with God, not with us, not even with the men.

#### **II. The failure of the woman consisted in being over the man and assuming the headship—Gen. 3:1-6; cf. 1 Tim. 2:14:**

- A. This failure on Eve's part typifies man's assuming the headship and signifies his being over God and putting God aside—Gen. 3:2, note 1.
- B. This same principle operates today; whenever we act on our own, putting the Lord aside, we are defeated.

#### **III. The position of the woman is one of covering her head and never assuming the headship:**

- A. We must always keep ourselves under God's covering; the woman must cover her head and never assume the headship—1 Cor. 11:3, 5, 14-15.
- B. Since God is our Head we should always turn to Him.

#### **IV. Head covering is a sign of submission to authority—1 Cor. 11:10:**

- A. First Corinthians 11:10 says, "Therefore the woman ought to have a sign of submission to authority on her head for the sake of the angels":
  - 1. The head signifies authority; according to God's ordination, a woman, even though she has her own head, should not be the head but should submit to authority.
  - 2. Thus, she should cover her head as a confession and declaration that even though she has her own head, she is not the head and does not act as head.
- B. Head covering declares that a woman is under authority and confesses and receives another as her head, allowing him to be the head; simply speaking, when the woman covers her head, it is a sign that she submits to authority.
- C. In verse 5 Paul says, "But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered disgraces her head; for it is one and the same thing as she who is shaved":
  - 1. Since woman is under the headship of man, she should keep her head covered, not exposed, when she touches the divine administration by praying to God and speaking for God.
  - 2. Otherwise she disgraces or shames her head, as if having her head shaved, because she denies the divine governmental ordination by exposing her head to the observing angels (v. 10) when she touches the authority of God.
- D. Verse 6 says, "For if a woman is not covered, let her hair also be cut off; but if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, let her be covered":
  - 1. This indicates that the head covering is a covering in addition to long hair.
  - 2. For a woman to have long hair, not having her head shaved, signifies that she does not reject God's governmental ordination; and for a woman to have a head covering in addition to her long hair is to say amen to the divine ordination.

#### **V. We need to see the reasons for head covering:**

- A. Man is God's image and glory, but woman is the glory of man—v. 7:

1. Man was made in God's image (Gen. 1:26) to express God and glorify Him; since man bears God's image and glory and represents God, he ought not to have his head covered; if he does, God's image and glory will be concealed.
  2. Since woman is the glory of man, she ought not to have her head expressed but covered; she should not express herself but the man, under whom she is.
- B. Man is not out of woman, but woman is out of man—1 Cor. 11:8:
1. As a rib taken out of man, woman was made out of man (Gen. 2:21-23); God did not create a woman; He formed a male body from the dust of the ground and breathed into this body the breath of life; as a result, a man, named Adam, became a living soul.
  2. God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and then He opened his side, took out a rib, and used that rib to build a woman; thus, woman was not created, but came out of man; this indicates that the woman's place is by the side of the man.
- C. Man was not created for the sake of the woman, but the woman for the sake of the man—1 Cor. 11:9:
1. Here the apostle takes God's purpose in the creation of man and woman as another strong ground for his teaching of head covering.
  2. It is based not upon any human-made customs, but upon the divine purpose of creation; in creation woman was made for the purpose of matching man—Gen. 2:18, 24.
- D. Woman ought to have authority on her head for the sake of the angels—1 Cor. 11:10:
1. Authority here denotes the head covering, which signifies the authority of man's headship over the woman.
  2. Satan, a chief angel, had been commissioned to control the universe for God; but he rebelled, and certain angels followed him; of course, a good number of angels remained faithful to God. God created man to deal with the rebellious angels.
  3. As the church, we should declare to the angels, both to the rebellious and to the submissive ones, that as God's redeemed people we are not rebellious against His headship.
  4. Even in this rebellious age we submit to His authority; the covering on the sisters' head is a sign declaring this to the angels.
- E. Nature itself teaches us that long hair is a dishonor to a man, but long hair is a glory to a woman—vv. 14-15:
1. When Paul says nature here, he is referring to our natural constitution according to God's creation; nature itself tells us that man should not have long hair, but the woman should.
  2. The woman by her female constitution realizes that to have long hair to cover her head is a glory; this is also a strong ground for the apostle's teaching concerning head covering.

**VI. We do not want to make head covering a mere outward formality; but it is a fact that the Bible reveals that the church should have such a sign declaring that we are a people under God's headship:**

- A. In the church meetings the sisters should wear a head covering to signify that we recognize God's authority and respect His headship and that we are not a people rebellious against God; instead, we are absolutely submissive to Him and signify this by having a head covering.
- B. However, although this has been our practice for more than fifty years, we have never forced anyone to participate in such a practice; in speaking about head covering, it is not our intention for the sisters to accept an outward practice merely in a doctrinal way.
- C. When a sister puts a covering on her head, she needs to realize the significance of head covering.

## **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

### **II. THE HEADSHIP**

In [1 Corinthians 11:3] Paul says, “But I want you to 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.” This verse through verse 16 deals with the seventh problem, the problem concerning head covering. The first six problems, dealt with in chapters one through ten, may be considered one group. They are concerned with matters in the realm of human life. The last five problems, dealt with in chapters eleven through sixteen, are another group. They are concerned with matters in the realm of God’s administration. The first is concerning the headship of Christ and of God in the divine government. In Ephesians 1:22 and 23 the headship of Christ over all things is to His Body, the church. Here the headship of Christ over every man is concerning individuals. Christ is both the Head corporately of the Body, the church, and individually of the believers. He is the Head directly of every one of us. In the apostle’s dealing with the Corinthians’ problems concerning God’s administration, this matter of the headship of Christ and of God is his first concern.

In verse 3 Paul points out that the head of the woman is the man. In the divine governmental ordination, woman is under the headship of man. God created the female in this way (Gen. 2:18-24; 1 Tim. 2:13). According to the nature (1 Cor. 11:14) created by God, woman is subordinate to man.

Paul also says in verse 3 that the head of Christ is God. Christ is God’s anointed One, appointed by God. Hence, He is under God, and God as the originator is His Head. This refers to the relationship between Christ and God in the divine government.

In dealing with the problem of head covering, the apostle takes the headship of God, the headship of Christ, and the headship of man as strong ground for his instruction. His instruction concerning head covering is not based upon any religious practices or human customs, but based upon the headship in God’s governmental administration. Such a strong base leaves no ground for any argument over the matter of head covering.

Soon after I was saved, I heard a great deal of talk about head covering. Some argued that Paul spoke concerning head covering because in his time there was such a custom among the people. Later, thorough study made it clear that there was no such custom either among the Greeks or the Jews. Actually, according to Jewish custom, it was the priests who were required to cover their heads. Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 11 is not based on any custom found in the Mediterranean area. On the contrary, his teaching is according to divine revelation.

The reason we need head covering in the church is that head covering is related to the headship of God. This is the reason Paul speaks the way he does in 11:3, telling us that he wants us to know that the head of every man is Christ, that the head of the woman is the man, and that the head of Christ is God. Thus, head covering is related to the headship in God’s government. In the universe, especially in God’s governmental administration, there is order. God is the head over Christ, Christ is the head over every man, and man is the head over the woman. Therefore, in the church meetings the sisters should wear a head covering to signify that we recognize God’s authority and respect His headship and that we are not a people rebellious against God. Instead, we are absolutely submissive to Him and signify this by having a head covering. However, although this has been our practice for more than fifty years, we have never forced anyone to participate in such a practice. We do not want to make head covering a mere outward formality. But it is a fact that the Bible reveals that the church should have such a sign declaring that we are a people under God’s headship.

### **III. THE HEAD COVERING**

#### **A. Every Man Praying or Prophesying Having His Head Covered Disgracing His Head**

In verse 4 Paul goes on to say, “Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered disgraces his head.” To prophesy here means to speak for God. Since man has the headship over

woman and is God's image and glory (v. 7), he should keep his head manifested, unconcealed, uncovered, when he prays to God and speaks for Him in touching the throne of God's administration. Otherwise he dishonors or shames his head.

We should not think that praying or speaking for God by prophesying are insignificant matters. It is a great thing to speak for God. Both our prayer and our speaking for God are related to God's administration. They are related to God's authority and headship. Therefore, as those who are God's image and glory, the men should not cover their heads when praying or prophesying. To cover our head in this way is to shame our head.

### **B. Every Woman Praying or Prophesying with Her Head Uncovered Disgracing Her Head**

In verse 5 Paul continues, "But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered disgraces her head; for it is one and the same thing as she who is shaved." Since woman is under the headship of man, she should keep her head covered, not exposed, when she touches the divine administration by praying to God and speaking for God. Otherwise she disgraces or shames her head, as if having her head shaved, because she denies the divine governmental ordination by exposing her head to the observing angels (v. 10) when she touches the authority of God.

Paul tells us that a woman who disgraces her head is the same as one who is shaved. This is a strong indication that for a woman to have her head shaved or her hair cut off is shameful (v. 6).

Verse 6 says, "For if a woman is not covered, let her hair also be cut off; but if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, let her be covered." This indicates that the head covering is a covering in addition to long hair. For a woman to have long hair, not having her head shaved, signifies that she does not reject God's governmental ordination; and for a woman to have a head covering in addition to her long hair is to say amen to the divine ordination.

## **IV. THE REASONS**

### **A. Man Being God's Image and Glory, but Woman Being the Glory of Man**

One reason for head covering is found in verse 7: "For a man indeed ought not to have his head covered, being God's image and glory; but the woman is the glory of a man." Man was made in God's image (Gen. 1:26) to express God and glorify Him. Since man bears God's image and glory and represents God, he ought not to have his head covered. If he does, God's image and glory will be concealed. Since woman is the glory of man, she ought not to have her head expressed but covered. She should not express herself but the man, under whom she is. This is also a ground taken by the apostle for his teaching of head covering.

When a man prays or prophesies, touching the throne of God's authority, he should not have his head covered. But when a woman prays or prophesies, she should be covered.

### **B. Man Not out of Woman, but Woman out of Man**

In verse 8 Paul gives us a second reason for head covering: "For man is not out of woman, but woman out of man." As a rib taken out of man, woman was made out of man (Gen. 2:21-23). God did not create a woman. He formed a male body from the dust of the ground and breathed into this body the breath of life. As a result, a man, named Adam, became a living soul. God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and then He opened his side, took out a rib, and used that rib to build a woman. Thus, woman was not created, but came out of man. This indicates that the woman's place is by the side of the man.

However, a man should not be proud regarding his position in relation to the woman. Notice what Paul says in verses 11 and 12: "However, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For just as the woman is out of the man, so also is the man through the woman; but all things are out of God." In the Lord's plan and arrangement, neither is the woman apart from the man nor the man apart from the woman. Man is the source of the

woman's existence. Hence, the woman is out of the man. But woman is the means through which the man is born. Hence, the man is through the woman.

Regarding the relationship between man and woman, Paul is balanced. On the one hand, he says that the woman is out of the man, for she was made from a rib out of Adam. On the other hand, Paul says that the man is through the woman, for man comes into existence through his mother. [474] We also should be balanced, realizing both that the woman is out of the man and that the man is through the woman.

### **C. Man Not Created for the Sake of the Woman, but the Woman for the Sake of the Man**

Verse 9 says, "For also man was not created for the sake of the woman, but woman for the sake of the man." Here the apostle takes God's purpose in the creation of man and woman as another strong ground for his teaching of head covering. It is based not upon any human-made customs, but upon the divine purpose of creation. In creation woman was made for the purpose of matching man (Gen. 2:18, 24).

### **D. Woman Having Authority on Her Head for the Sake of the Angels**

In verse 10 Paul continues, "Therefore the woman ought to have authority on her head for the sake of the angels." Authority here denotes the head covering, which signifies the authority of man's headship over the woman.

In this verse we have another ground for the teaching of head covering. Head covering is closely related to God's headship, God's authority. The archangel with his subordinates rebelled against God's headship (Ezek. 28:13-18; Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 25:41), establishing his kingdom of darkness (Matt. 12:26; Col. 1:13), and became Satan, God's adversary. After God created man, Satan seduced man to follow him and rebel against God. Then God sent His Son to destroy Satan and rescue man out of his authority back to God's kingdom (1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14; Col. 1:13). Now when the believers worship God in praying to God and speaking for God, they should have signs that they are under God's headship, the divine authority, showing the observing angels (see 1 Cor. 4:9), who are concerned with this matter, that they (the believers) keep God's ordained order in His administration. For this sake, the sisters should have a sign, a covering, on their head.

It is significant that Paul says that the woman ought to have authority on her head for the sake of the angels. Satan, a chief angel, had been commissioned to control the universe for God. But he rebelled, and certain angels followed him. Of course, a good number of angels remained faithful to God. God created man to deal with the rebellious angels. But Satan seduced man, and man followed him. Then in redemption God came in to bring fallen man back to Himself. God's redeemed people are now the church. As the church, we should declare to the angels, both to the rebellious and to the submissive ones, that as God's redeemed people we are not rebellious against His headship. Rather, we remain under the headship of God. Not only in the coming kingdom age in eternity shall we be under God's headship, but even in this rebellious age we submit to His authority. The covering on the sisters' head is a sign declaring this to the angels.

In verse 13 Paul asks, "You judge among yourselves: Is it fitting for a woman to pray uncovered to God?" Here Paul is indicating that, judging according to the reasons he has given, it is not fitting for a woman to pray uncovered to God.

### **E. Nature Itself Teaching Us That Long Hair Is a Dishonor to a Man, but Long Hair Is a Glory to a Woman**

Verses 14 and 15 say, "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him; but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? Because the long hair has been given to her for a covering." When Paul says nature here, he is referring to our natural constitution according to God's creation. Nature itself tells us that man should not have long hair, but the

woman should. The woman by her female constitution realizes that to have long hair to cover her head is a glory. This is also a strong ground for the apostle's teaching concerning head covering.

No matter how bold a sister may be, she would not feel peaceful if she were to assume authority over her husband. There is no need for anyone to teach her to feel uneasy about this. By her natural constitution created by God, she knows that she should not assume authority over her husband. There can be no doubt that the female constitution is different from the male constitution. Therefore, even the feeling we have from our natural constitution supports Paul's teaching concerning head covering.

In verse 15 Paul says that a woman's long hair has been given to her for a covering. Some who debate about head covering claim that in chapter eleven head covering simply refers to a woman's long hair. According to their opinion, as long as a woman has long hair, she has a head covering. But if we read these verses carefully, we shall see that head covering is something in addition to a woman's long hair. For a woman to have her hair long indicates that she recognizes God's authority over her. When she puts on a head covering, this indicates that she says amen to God's governmental arrangement.

## V. NO CONTENTION

In verse 16 Paul concludes the portion on head covering: "But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." Custom here denotes the custom of contention, disputation, and debating. Neither the apostles nor the churches tolerated any disputation concerning the apostles' teaching. Furthermore, the plurality of the churches in this verse indicates that all the local churches are independent of one another, yet they all act in the same way according to the apostles' teaching.

In speaking about head covering, it is not our intention for the sisters to accept an outward practice merely in a doctrinal way. From the time the Lord's recovery came to this country, I have never given a message charging the sisters to cover their heads. Had I given such a message, I would just have been encouraging a formality. We do not want to see an outward form. The wearing of head covering by women is widely practiced in Catholicism. Among the Arabs, women are also instructed to wear a covering on their heads. However, in such cases, I do not believe that there is any understanding of what head covering signifies. When a sister puts a covering on her head, she needs to realize the significance of head covering. (*Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, msg. 53, pp. 470-476)

### Study Questions:

1. What is the headship in God's administration and how can the sisters be proper in relation to this headship?
2. What is the significance of head covering? Why is realizing this significance necessary in properly applying this teaching?
3. What are the five reasons Paul gives for head covering?

### References and Further Reading:

1. *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, msg. 53.
2. *Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 18.
3. *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 2, ch. 19.