

REVERSING HERMON

Session 8: The Watchers' Sin & Head Covering

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, we shall be able to explain:

- Head covering in 1 Cor. 11:10.
- "Because of the angels."
- Pre-scientific ideas found in the Bible.



This statue of Emperor Augustus (r. 63 BC – AD 14) was discovered at Corinth. Augustus covered his head only when praying or sacrificing to the gods.

Inferred questions

- Why do you instruct Gentile Christian men not to cover their head during worship?
- Why do you instruct Gentile Christian women to cover their head during worship?

1 Corinthians chapter 11

³ Every husband's chief is Christ, every wife's chief is her husband, and Christ's chief is God.

- Husband: *anér* = adult man, husband, Adam.
- Wife: *guné* = adult woman, wife, Eve.
- Chief: *kephalé* = head, leader, protector.

God's Glory Reflected in Marriage



⁴ Any man praying or prophesying with his head covered dishonors his chief.

- Covered: Christian Gentile men were not to cover their head, as the pagans did, for they had direct access to God by faith in Jesus. (Christian Jews were free to cover their head.)

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⁵ And any woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonors her chief, because she is the same as a shaven woman.

- Prophecy: Speak aloud in a gathering.
- Shaven: A sign of shame or disgrace, which reflects badly on her husband.

1 Corinthians 14

²⁶ My brothers [and sisters]... When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.

- Together: Christian men and women worship together. All may prophesy. However, couples do not have to sit together.

³⁴ Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate, as the law also says.

- Silent: Not chattering as a group, and not asking random questions.
- Subordinate: Following the same instruction which men follow.

1 Corinthians chapter 11

⁶ I mean, if a woman does not cover her head, then she may as well shave her head. But if she would feel ashamed to cut or shave her hair, then she should cover her head.

- If: Assumed to be so.



Greco-Roman woman wearing a head covering.

⁷ So, a man ought not to cover his head, since he reflects God's image and glory, and a wife reflects her husband's glory.

- In Greco-Roman polytheism, both men and women covered their head when praying or sacrificing.
- Gentile Christian men broke with that tradition.

⁸ Remember, Adam was not made from Eve, rather Eve from a man. ⁹ And God did not create the man **because of** the woman but the woman **because of** the man. ¹⁰ This is why a wife ought to have an authority sign on her head **because of** the angels.

Because of the angels (aggeloi)

Current theories

- Messengers: From other churches.
- Guardians: Angels assigned to ensure worship and moral purity in churches. Rev. 2:1
- Seraphim: Christians join with angels who are worshipping God in heaven. Dead Sea Scrolls.
- Watchers: Spirit-beings like those who sinned with human women in antiquity. Genesis 6:1-4

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¹¹ Anyway, a wife is no greater than her husband, nor a husband greater than his wife. ¹² Likewise, as God made Eve from Adam, so men are born from women, and God made everything.

- Eve: Paul again appeals to the Book of Genesis.

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

- Judge: Each church decides its own customs.

Levels of authority in churches

1. Jesus' or apostles' commands: We obey these. E.g., baptize believers.
2. Apostles' practices: We may follow these if they are culturally acceptable.
E.g., baptize the same day on which they believe.
3. Church traditions: We may follow these if they do not hinder obeying level 1.
E.g., immerse three times.

¹⁴ And society itself teaches you, on the one hand, that people dishonor a man who has long hair, ...

- Society: *physis*, 'nature' = how things are, cultural traits.
- Man: Men with long hair were viewed as weak, effeminate, easily conquered.



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Typical Greco-Roman male appearance. Compare Jesus.

¹⁵ and, on the other hand, that people honor a woman who has long hair. Thus, it is an honor for a woman to have long hair, because God gave her hair [*anti peribolaïou*].

- Long hair: It was commonly believed that women's long hair was part of her gender. Therefore, women were to treat their long hair with modesty..

¹⁶ Now, if anyone seems to want to oppose this, then inform him that we apostles have no other such custom, nor do God's other churches.

- We: Emphatic pronoun (*hemeis*) = we who are writing this letter to you.

Abusive uses of head covering

- Ecclesial: Christian women must submit to church tradition and clergy.
- Marital: Christian women must submit to fathers and husbands in all matters
- Legalist: God commanded it, so women must do it.
- Religious: Women must submit to a religious male, to be saved by God.

Prevalent beliefs in Mesopotamia

- Polytheism: Multiple gods having...
- Divine control: Weather, fertility, health.
- Afterlife: Gloom in the underworld.
- Omens & divination: Certain objects and rites reveal the future.
- Astrology: Celestial movements influence human and natural events.
- Divine retribution: Gods punish sin.

Prevalent practices in Mesopotamia

- Honor-shame: Main motivator.
- Communal: Group decision taking.
- Patriarchal: Older men preside.
- Ritual purity: Restoring access to gods.
- Divine kingship: Honor kings as gods.
- Idolatry: Gods inhabit objects, places.
- Sacrifice: Destroying things or lives to honor or to placate gods.

Mesopotamian worldview in the Bible

- Creation: Six days. Adam and Eve.
- Flood: Drowning entire world.
- Babel: Multiply languages
- Miracles: Healing, water walking.
- Cosmology: Flat earth and sky dome.
- Spirits: Gods, angels, ghosts, demons.
- Prophecy: Foretelling the future.
- Incarnation: Gods becoming human.

Note: Amazingly, whilst the First and New Testaments of the Holy Bible employ the language and mental categories of ancient societies, these Scriptures do not present ancient errors as factually true. Had the Scriptures adopted 21st-century scientific language and models, then Bibles readers across the centuries would not have understood it.

Interpretive challenge

- Language: Morphology, phonology, phonemics, semantics, syntax, etc.
- Literature: Style, discourse, logic, purpose, cultural conventions.
- Translation: Find equivalent meanings in another language
- Worldview: Any society's beliefs about unseen reality.
- Application: Extract truth from ancient literature for modern worldviews.

Assignment

- Read Reversing Hermon, chapter9: "The Watchers' Sin and Baptism," pages 137-146.
- Visit www.ReversingHermon.site