

New Testament Church Principles - Part 2

by Mike Attwood

Mike Attwood explores the principles of headship and authority in the New Testament church, emphasizing the importance of understanding scripture in its context.

Scripture: Matthew 18:10

Topics: "Church Order", "Headship Principles"

Description

This sermon delves into the controversial passage in 1 Corinthians 11 about head coverings, emphasizing the importance of understanding and applying God's order of headship in the church. It explores the symbolism of head coverings, the significance of angels observing church gatherings, and the need for men to lead under Christ's headship and for women to submit in accordance with God's design.

Transcript

If you have your Bibles with you, I'd like you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians 11. And we want to read perhaps one of the most controversial passages in the entire Word of God. And we want to look at it and kind of deal with it.

Deal with what the passage is saying, what the passage is not saying. We want to think about what the objections to the passage are. And we want to just kind of really take our time about this because it really is an important passage of Scripture.

So we'll begin reading in verse 2 of 1 Corinthians 11 and read down to verse 16. And I'm going to be reading from the King James Version. I don't know if you realize this year the King James is 400 years old.

And just when I was in England, I think I was there in February this year, I got to see a BBC documentary on the making of the King James Bible. And it was really quite interesting because the BBC don't usually say anything positive about Christianity or anything to do with Christianity. They're very liberal, very sympathetic to other religions, but very antagonistic towards Christianity, unfortunately.

But on this documentary, they said some amazing things. They said that the King James Version was the finest work of English prose ever written. That's quite amazing, isn't it? From the BBC, I want to tell you that's compliment indeed.

And then they said that it manages to combine majesty and simplicity like no other piece of writing. And I thought, wow, that sounds pretty good. So I think I'll stick with it after all these years.

I think it'll do all right for me. In fact, the reason that I stick with the King James is not that I'm one of these King James only kind of guys, that if you're not reading from that, you're not even saved or whatever. I don't believe that for one minute.

But you know what? I'm just lazy. And all my memory work is done in the King James Version, and I'm too old to memorize it all over again. So I'm going to stick with it.

But I do think that it does capture the poetic cadence of the scriptures very beautifully. And I think that some of the more modern translations are so bland, they actually miss the poetic intent of the authors. A good portion of scripture is poetic in nature.

So I'm just going to stick with my convictions about these things. But I still will fellowship with you if you use something else. Verse 2, it says, Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you.

But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ. The head of the woman is the man. The head of Christ is God.

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head. For that is, even all women, as if she were shaven.

For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God.

But the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.

For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman, but all things of God.

Judging yourselves, is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it's a glory to her, for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God. And again, we believe God will bless the reading of His precious word to us this morning.

You know, it's kind of interesting. I once was asked to speak on this down in Florida in an assembly there. And the elders asked me specifically, I want you to deal with the issue of the head covering.

So that's fine, I'll do that. And before the meeting, a lady came up to me and she said, Mike, I don't care what you're going to say, I'm not going to wear one. That was her declared intent.

So instead of reading from 1 Corinthians 11, I read from John 7. And I want to read there now, John chapter 7 and verse 17. John 7 verse 17. It says this, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

Now, you get what that's saying? The will is the key to the intellect. Right? If anyone will do his will, he will know of the doctrine, whether it's of God or not. In other words, that lady, she had absolutely no willingness to do his will.

So she's not going to understand it. Why? Because she's determined not to. That's why.

I don't care what you say. It doesn't matter how reasonable the arguments are, how logical it is, I'm just not going to do it, you see. So a good thing to ask ourselves before we begin today is this.

Are you willing to do his will? Because if you're not, you're wasting your time here this morning. You might as well go play golf or do something. You know what I'm saying? In other words, there has to be a willingness to do God's will or we're not going to make any progress today.

Now, I also want to just say a couple of things by way of introduction before we actually get into the text. And that is this. First of all, I want you to know that I was not raised in a church that practiced head covering.

I was raised Roman Catholic, as many of you know. And although in the past the Catholic Church practiced the veiling of women, when I came on the scene in 1960, they had already dropped it. It was gone.

And then when I got saved, I was 20 years of age when I became a Christian, and I was involved in independent evangelical churches in England, and they also did not practice the head covering. So, in other words, I'm not here pushing an agenda that I kind of grew up with because I didn't. And actually, before I ever came into fellowship in an assembly, I had been convinced of head covering through studying the passage without any outside influence whatsoever because I was troubled, I'd been taught that the head covering was cultural.

Okay, that was the explanation I'd been given. And it really bothered me because I thought to myself, listen, if that's really true and I don't have to worry about that passage because it's just the culture of the day in Corinth, where do I stop with that mentality? See, I grew up in an industrial city in the north of England, and much of what is found in the Bible I could dismiss as cultural if I really wanted to because it's a different culture to the one I grew up in, you see. And so my point is, where do you stop with that logic, you see? If you start saying, well, it's cultural, then you could get rid of anything in the Bible that you didn't feel comfortable with and you could just say, well, it's cultural.

And you could end up with a pretty small New Testament, right? And I thought, no, I don't want to do that. I want to walk in obedience to God. And so I don't want to just dismiss chunks of the Bible as cultural.

I want to be honest with the text. And that's all I'm asking you to do today is be honest with the text of Scripture. Once we came to the conviction that the Bible really taught that men should appear in the presence of God without a covering on their heads and women should appear with a covering, then we thought, well, if I--at the time I was pastoring a church in Springfield, Missouri, of all places, and I thought, if I start teaching this, it's going to split the church because I already mentioned it in conversation to some people and it went down like a lead balloon.

And so I thought, you know, if we're really serious about this, we better find somewhere where they practice it. And so when we began looking, there were kind of two groups that really took it seriously. There was the kind of Mennonite Amish tradition, and they believe you can lose your salvation, and I

certainly don't believe that for one minute.

So that kind of dismissed them, or there were assemblies. So we're here by default in a sense that there was nowhere else that we could find that actually took this teaching seriously. So that's how we ended up in Assembly Fellowship, because of this teaching.

So I just want you to know that so you're not thinking of yourself, well, oh, this guy, you know, he grew up in this thing, and he's just pushing the--that's not the case. Just honesty with the text led us to this position. Now, we said yesterday, yesterday evening, we said that there's an order in the Scriptures, and that this order was universally practiced in the New Testament church.

All the churches--Paul keeps saying in 1 Corinthians that the thing I teach, I teach everywhere in every church. And I can honestly say to you that up until 1950, the head covering was universally practiced in all the churches. And so it's interesting, isn't it, that for basically 1,950 years, the church never had a problem with this issue.

Come to the 1960s, and everything changes. And, of course, there's lots of evidence for that. You look at commentaries written prior to 1950, and they will tell you what I'm going to tell you today, whatever denominational background.

You look at John Wesley's commentary, you look at Matthew Henry's commentary, you look at all these--Dave Dunlop from Florida did a really interesting booklet, and it's full of quotations from Bible commentaries on this passage written prior to 1950, and they're all going to say what I'm going to say. You get a commentary written after 1950, you know what they're all going to say? It's cultural. What changed? Did the Bible change? No.

The attitude of people towards this passage of Scripture changed. And why did it change in the 1960s? Anybody think of anything significant happening in the 1960s? Well, lots of things happened. I was born in 1960, so it was a very significant time in-- no, it wasn't a big deal at all, but it was a period of rebellion against authority became mainstream, didn't it? You know, the swinging 60s and all the rest of it, and there was the drug scene and all.

You know, you just have to look at any kind of history, and if you don't know about it, just look it up on the Internet and read about the 60s. It was a time where rebellion became mainstream. And so obviously a passage like this that actually deals with loving authority and willing submission is going to come under scrutiny.

If rebellion is in-- well, we've got to look at this passage again because it's all about the very opposite of rebellion, about subjection, willingly submitting to authority. And sadly, the church, instead of taking a stand on Scripture, capitulated to the general ideas of the culture. And so all of a sudden, this thing gets thrown out of the window, and nobody practices it anymore.

And so what we want to do is look at the passage itself and try, as it were, to declutter ourselves from all that's happened since then and just get back to the simple text and see what it says. Now, it's interesting that it's going to be a passage of correction. Just as we said that the whole of this epistle is about correction.

Every chapter is correcting error. But wherever he can praise them, he does. And that's a good lesson, isn't it? Because if all we're doing is correcting people all the time, we never pat them on the back, they get

discouraged.

And so when he can, he gives praise. And so he begins, he says, Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances or traditions that I delivered them to you. And so he says, I want to encourage you in the things that you are being faithful to.

And we need to do that. When somebody's being faithful in a measure, encourage them in that, right? Let's praise where praise is due. We're good at criticism, but we're poor at praise.

And where we can praise somebody, let's do it. Sometimes you can be in an assembly situation where maybe a young person gets up, and in their zeal, they pray and they thank the Father for dying on the cross. Well, everybody knows the Father didn't die on the cross.

Now, you can do two things. You can go up and encourage that young man and say, The Lord was glad to hear your voice. And you know what? By the time it got to heaven, it was corrected anyway, wasn't it? Right? Because the Lord kind of presents it.

Or you can go up there and you can just hit him and say, You know, the Father didn't die on the cross. And what's he going to do? I've known people that have been so criticized for something they said that they will never get on their feet again. They would devastate.

Right? So we've got to be careful. Where we can praise, let's praise. But then if we have to give correction, then we need to do it.

But even better still, correction is always born better if it's carried on the back of praise. Right? So let's not be those that are always kind of knocking everybody, knocking everything if we can praise. And so he does.

He praises them that they did remember him in all things and they did keep those things that he had handed to them. And then he says in verse 3, but. And but in Scripture is a contrast word.

Okay? I praise you in this, but... And sometimes we can expect that. Right? Somebody comes and praises us and we think, Oh, this is wonderful. And then we say, but when's the but coming? Brother, you're a really nice guy, but... Then here we go.

Well, this is... Here we go. This is something I can't praise you about. This is something where you need correcting.

This is something where things are out of whack here in the assembly in Corinth. And so he says, I would have you know. This is something that you need help on.

You better know this. You better understand this. And then he begins to speak about the issue of headship.

Now, I want to just say that when you're studying a passage of Scripture, and this is kind of maybe for some of the younger brothers and sisters here, when you start studying a passage of Scripture, one of the things that really helps me is to look for the key repeated words and phrases. Because the idea is that when these words and phrases are repeated, obviously the Holy Spirit is trying to get something over to us. And he uses repetition to do it.

And so if you read this passage, obviously the key words stand out. The word head is pretty dominant, isn't it? Verse 3, I would have you know. The head of every man is Christ.

The head of the woman is the man. The head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying with his head covered, dishonors his head.

Every woman prayeth or prophesyeth with her head uncovered. And if you just go through and underline every time it says the word head, you get the idea. This is something about headship, right? That's the big idea.

Another dominant word is glory. We see that twice in verse 7. We see it in verse 15. And so this chapter really is about the truths of headship and glory.

Now, yesterday we made an observation. We said God is a God of order. And it's true, isn't it? God is a God of order.

But order pervades the universe. We were talking afterwards around the table, and one of the things we said was that this universe is such an ordered system that NASA can send a probe out into this universe and know that it's going to reach a certain star at a certain point in time. Why? Because the whole system is orderly, right? It's an ordered system.

No question about it. I'm no scientist, but I realize that. It's a reflection of God.

God is a God of order. And in order to run his universe, part of the way he's doing that is he uses structures of authority. In other words, there's order in his universe, isn't there? And it's true.

We recognize the importance of order, don't we, in the military? There's an order of authority, isn't there? There's generals and all the rest of it. There's ranks, and there's order. And if that order breaks down, what happens to an army? It's chaos, isn't it? An anarchy.

In order for military campaigns to be successful, there has to be people who give orders and people who take orders, right? Even in sport. Now, I don't know too much about sport, but I do know this, that you have a coach who gives his instructions to a quarterback in football, and then the quarterback calls the different things. And somehow, to me, it looks chaos.

It looks like people are running in every direction like chickens with their head cut off. But apparently, they're running in a certain direction for a certain reason, right? Because it's called a play. I'm glad I didn't grow up with that game.

It's so confusing. And they only have it for the adverts anyway, don't they? That's why it takes so long. You've got one minute left to play and four hours left to watch, right? Because of all the... Forgive me, I'm not an American football fan.

But anyway, there is some order in the whole thing, isn't there? And there are people that are giving directions, and there are people who are taking directions. And that's the way it is. Even in the heavenly ranks, there's a captain of the host of heaven, isn't there? The captain of the Lord of Hosts or the army of the Lord of Hosts has a captain over it.

And there are principalities, and there are powers, and there are rulers. There's orders of authority. And when that breaks down, you actually have anarchy and chaos.

Order and subordination pervade the whole universe and are essential to its well-being. And so, even within the Godhead, there's an order of authority. The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

And guess what happened? The Son obeyed, didn't He? He was subject to the will of His Father, even to death, the death of the cross. Isn't that true? The Son, upon His resurrection and ascension to glory, sent the Holy Spirit. He didn't want to leave us comfortless.

So He's going to send to us another Comforter. Does that imply that the Son is inferior to the Father or that the Spirit is inferior to the Son? Not at all. Scripture's clear.

The Lord Jesus says, I and the Father are one. There's equality in essence and being, but in order to accomplish redemption, there was an order of authority within the Godhead. And so, this verse begins by this simple principle.

It's not about saying that one is of lesser value than another. It's not a saying that, and when we get into the idea of men being in authority and ladies subjecting themselves to them, it's not saying in any way that men are superior and women are inferior. If you get that today, you're not listening to what I'm saying.

Okay? That's not what it's about. And certainly, even in the military, you could have somebody who's a commanding officer and you could have a private, and the private might well be a better man than the commanding officer. Right? It's not saying that one man's superior to the other, but in order for this thing to work, somebody has to give orders and somebody has to take them.

And so, within the Godhead, it's true. He says, I would have you know, the head of every man is Christ. Now, I'm not just speaking to women today.

I want you to know that, because if the guys could really get a hold of this, it would make all the difference in the world. The head of every man is Christ. And if men in assembly fellowship were in subjection to Christ, it would be much easier for sisters to be in subjection to the men, wouldn't it? And the idea of a head is that which gives direction, right? Isn't that the idea? You know, that today, my speaking is all going to come from signals in my head.

And hopefully my head's going to be working correctly, so that the right signals are going to mean that the right words are going to come out. Even the actions, the movements, you know, it might just seem haphazard to you, but there's a signal coming from my brain to say to my finger, Right? So the idea of the head is that which gives direction. And so the head, that which gives direction to the man, is to be Christ.

Men, did you seek direction from Christ your head this morning before you came out? You see, what I'm saying is that maybe part of the problem with this whole issue of headship is that the men are not really subject to Christ, and then that's why the women are having such a problem. So guys, get your act together. You be subject to Christ.

You be those men that start the day seeking direction from Christ your head about how you could give proper leadership in your home and in your local assembly. And that would really make a difference, wouldn't it? If we just stopped here, closed the book and just went home, and we applied that principle, it would radically affect the life of every assembly. So we've got to start there, right? We've got to start with that.

The head of every man is Christ. And the head of the woman is the man. So now the idea is that the man, who in subjection to Christ, is now to give direction to the woman.

And then, of course, it says the head of Christ is God. And again, we're saying and stressing this, that it's not in any way implying the inferiority of the Lord Jesus to the Father, but it says the head of Christ is God. And the Lord Jesus was the subject man when He was here on the earth.

And He says, I always do those things which please the Father, and He was subject to the Father's will. But yet, it says that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He's not inferior in any way.

But equal in attributes and essence, and yet the Father exercises the functional headship of the Trinity, and the same way with men and women. They're equal in Christ. As far as God's grace, we're equal, aren't we? We all got saved the same way.

There's no gender distinction at the foot of the cross, right? You get saved through the work of the Lord Jesus. If you're a woman, just the same as I did as a man. All the same, right? God's grace, no distinction, no man has any advantage over any woman.

We're all at the same level at the cross. But as far as God's government is concerned, God has decided to order His affairs in this way, that the men are to take the leadership to be the head, and the women are to be in subjection. That's just God's authority.

God's order. Men are to be under direct headship of Christ, taking the direction from Him. Now, when it comes to the local church, there is a way that symbolically we show our acceptance of this truth.

Okay? So there's a symbolic way now that we show that we believe and accept what God is saying. So, verse 4, it says this, Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. Now, let me just, before we kind of get into the details of this, I want to just say something.

This context from chapter 11, verse 2, all the way through chapter 14 and verse 40, is about order in the gatherings of the people of God. Okay? So we're going to deal with kind of what happens when we come together. You know, the order that's given.

There's going to be the Lord's Supper. There's going to be how a meeting takes place, and the use of gifts, and all of this. It's all about order in the public gatherings of the church, beginning in 11, verse 2, to 14, verse 40.

And quite clearly, when we look at verse 2 through 16, one thing we can see, just as a general observation, is that it's describing a mixed gathering. There are men and there are women together, and prayer and prophesying are taking place. Prayer is men speaking to God, and prophesying is God speaking through men.

Okay? So these things are taking place, and there are men and women together. Okay? So it's good just to lay that foundation. But then he says that the men, in verse 4, every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, his son has his head.

I wonder if you realize how radical this teaching must have been. Because where did the assembly in Corinth begin? You read Acts chapter 18, and the beginning of the assembly in Corinth started in a synagogue. And Paul preached in the synagogue, and actually the chief ruler of the synagogue was one

of the converts.

And now Paul is saying, the men, when they come together collectively, and prayer and prophesying are taking place, the men are to appear uncovered. Now, have you ever seen a Jewish man pray? What does he do with his head? He covers it. Doesn't he have one of those? The Amalukis? Okay.

And if he doesn't have one, you know what he'll do? He'll use a tissue or he'll put his hand on it. He'll do something, but he would never dream of ever praying to God with his head uncovered. So we say, you know, this is kind of cultural.

Well, listen, he's already going against culture, isn't he? He's actually cutting through the culture of the Jewish way of worship right now. And the assembly included the chief ruler of the synagogues here listening to this teaching. And he's saying, you appear in the presence of God with your head uncovered.

Now, why? Why is man to appear in the presence of God uncovered? The explanation is further down in the chapter. We have to look at verse 7. It says, for a man indeed ought not to cover his head for as much as he is the image and glory of God. So God gives us the definite reason for this.

He must not cover his head because man is the image and glory of God. And so the idea is, in the presence of God, we want to see the glory of God displayed, don't we? So what does all that mean? Well, the idea of the glory, glory, I think one way of looking at glory is, I mean, it's a very hard word to define. But one thing that's really helped me is that it really speaks of that which makes someone or something look good.

So when the Lord Jesus said this, Father, I have glorified thee on the earth. What does that mean? Well, Jesus sure made the Father look good, didn't he? Because he really reflected the heart of the Father, compassionate, loving, gracious to the human race in every way. And he said, I've glorified thee on the earth.

The woman is the glory of the man. You may not think much of me, but if you saw my wife, you'd say, boy, there must be something about that guy. She makes me look good.

Woman's hair is her glory. Is it important that a woman's hair looks good? If somebody comes to the door and I just, I'll go answer it. I don't care to whose, what my hair looks like.

But my wife, first thing she'll do is look in the mirror, make sure the hair is right, right? Because it's her glory. And so the idea is this, that the man is the image and glory of God. In a sense, he is the pinnacle of God's creation.

Right? Six days, God makes this universe and all the rest of it. But the crowning pinnacle of it all was man made in his image and to reflect his glory. And man does reflect the glory of God.

Even unsaved man reflects the glory of God, doesn't he? The creativity of man. Now realize that God, when he creates, creates ex nihilo, right? The idea is that he creates out of nothing. And man uses the bits that God gives him, right? He uses matter, material.

But man is very creative. Every time I get in a vehicle, I think of all these moving parts. And I just turn a key and guess what? The thing fires up and I put my foot on the accelerator and put it in gear and off it goes.

It's amazing, isn't it? And all that, including the rubber tires and all the details, all that was created in the mind of man. And it's a reflection of the one who is even greater who made him. You see? In other words, he makes God look good, doesn't he? Because if man is so smart and can do all these things and put a rocket on the moon and all this kind of stuff, then what must be the creator who made man, who man is just a reflection of, be like? And the idea is that in the assembly, we don't want to cover up man because he's the glory of God, and we want to see the glory of God on display.

Okay? Because when we come together, the glory of God is what we want to see. And so man is the image and glory of God. But then it says the woman is the glory of the man.

Now, I'm getting ahead of myself, but I want to just say that. The woman is the best thing that ever came out of man. Do you agree with that, guys? I think so, right? The best thing that ever came out of man.

Because the woman came from the man, didn't she? She was taken out of the man and for the man. And so she is the glory of the man. But do we want to see the glory of the man when we come together in the assembly? Or do we want to see the glory of God? The glory of God, right? So we're jumping ahead, but we just wanted to lay the foundation there.

Look at verse 5 then. So we're saying the man, he has to have his head uncovered. And in fact it says, verse 4, Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonors his head.

Now, who is he dishonoring? He dishonors his head. Whose is his head? The head of every man is Christ. It would be dishonoring.

I noticed one of the guys came in who had a baseball cap on. No, that's okay, that's fine. But when you come in here, you take it off.

Why? Because it would be dishonoring to Christ to be here as a man in the meeting where prayer and prophesying is taking place with a baseball cap on your head. And that is, of course, unfortunately becoming more of a... I've had to ask guys to remove their baseball caps in meetings. Some of them are stitched to their heads, right? So clearly, you see, that's what the passage is saying.

You would dishonor his head if he prayed or prophesied. In other words, he's there in this environment where prayer and prophesying is taking place and he did that with a covering on his head. Then he says, Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonors her head.

So who is she dishonoring? If she's praying or prophesying, it says, Everyone praying or prophesying with their head uncovered, she dishonors her head. Who is her head? Well, the man. She dishonors the man if in a gathering of the saints she appears with her head uncovered.

She dishonors the man. Why? Because she is wanting to take the place of the man by being like him. That's the reason why.

It would be dishonoring. And he goes on and he says this, and this is kind of strong language. He says, Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonors her head, which is clearly the man, for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

And if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn, for it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. What Paul is saying is simply this. Listen, if she wants to be like the man, let's

get the shears out and make her look like him.

Right? If you want to take the man's place, all right, let's take you seriously. Can you imagine saying that today? I mean, I'm saying it because Paul said it, but can you imagine if somebody said that in the church? You know, let's get the shears out. Boy, it would be a riot, wouldn't it? But that's what he's saying.

Okay, get the shears out. It would be equally serious for her to appear with her head uncovered as it would be to be shorn. And again, he gives the reasoning in verse 8 and 9. He says, The woman is the glory of the man.

End of verse 7. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. So what he's saying is simply this.

Okay, man is not from woman. Right? He was a direct creation of God. Remember that? It's taken us all the way back to Genesis, isn't it? That's why it can't be cultural.

If it was cultural, why did he just say it? That's what I keep thinking to myself. If it's really cultural, why don't Paul just say, Don't worry about this, folks. You're just offending local cultural sensibilities.

Why does he go into all this argument and reasoning from the book of Genesis? By the way, can you see why the book of Genesis is under such attack? Because, you see, if the devil can discredit Genesis, much of our New Testament would also have to be thrown out. 1 Corinthians 11, Romans 5. Some of the teaching of Jesus. The issue of divorce.

What does he do? He says, But it was not so in the beginning. He goes back to Genesis. He keeps going back to Genesis.

And so we see how the enemy would want to attack that. So, look, he's going back now, and he's going to kind of go through this order. And so he says, The man is not of the woman.

He was a direct creation of God, Genesis 2, 7. And then he goes on and he says, But the woman of the man. Remember, she was taken from the man. Genesis 2, 21 and 23.

Taken from his rib, if you remember. First surgical operation that took place in the scriptures. And, of course, remember Martin Luther calling his wife, Kitty, my rib.

Right? That's what he called his Kate. Kitty, my rib. And then the key point here, and it's very important, he says, Neither was the man created for the woman.

Because, you see, the man was already there. He wasn't created for the woman, but the very opposite. The woman was created for the man.

You see, remember what happened, how that all took place. Remember how God brought all the animals for Adam to name? And, you know, people say that a dog is a man's best friend. Adam wouldn't agree with you.

He could have spent his life with a dog, but he didn't want a dog. He said, I can't find anybody suitable for me. And all these critters, there's not one of them that I would like to spend the rest of my life with.

So God put him to sleep, took his rib, and from that made the woman. And the woman was made for the man. Because the man was incomplete without the woman.

And so, man was not created for the woman, but the woman was created for the man. And so, what God is saying is, okay, because of the Genesis order of things, the man is to be the head, and the woman, what was she to be? She was to be a helper suited for him, wasn't she? A helpmeet, a helper suitable for him. In other words, to enable him to achieve his goals, which was at that time to have dominion over the earth.

And so, clearly, there's an order in Scripture that's delineated here. And what it's saying is that when we come together in assembly fellowship, one of the things that we do is we show that we believe in God's order of authority. And we show it very distinctly by taking upon voluntarily the symbolic representation of truth.

The man appears in the presence of God without a covering on his head. The woman appears with a covering upon her head. And that way, we show that we believe in God's headship order.

Now, having said all that, I want to just kind of look at the objections to it. Because, let's be honest, many evangelical, Bible-believing Christians who love to teach the Scriptures and ministries that have given themselves to the expository teaching of the Word of God don't believe what we believe about this passage. And so, you have to ask them, why not? Why a man like John MacArthur, who, if you read his exposition of 1 Corinthians 11, will be very much in agreement with everything that I've said, but at the end of it all, he'll say, but it's cultural.

So, how do we deal with that? How do we answer those objections? Now, the cultural argument, again, the more I think about it, the more serious I see it to be. And I'm not the only one. I want to read some articles, just little excerpts from articles from people, and none of these people are assembly people.

They're people that are evangelicals, but they're worried about this idea of interpreting Scripture and dismissing it as cultural. And they can see where it leads. In fact, one guy wrote an article called, Threats to Scripture Today.

And he's a reformed Baptist pastor. And he says this, the result of placing undue stress on the culture is that passages which at face value appear clear in their instruction are said to be only understandable in the light of the knowledge of the culture of the day in which they were written. This knowledge is not accessible to all.

The effect is to remove the Bible from the ordinary believer. Now, let's just think about that for a minute, the statement he's made. You see, one of the things about the Protestant Reformation was the cardinal tenets.

Remember, there was faith alone, in Christ alone, plus nothing. Another one was sola scriptura, right, Scripture alone. And the idea was that the belief of the reformers was that an ordinary person could understand the Bible because the Spirit of God is the teacher.

But if I need this added information about the culture in Corinth back in the 1st century in order to be able to understand this passage, what it means is I can't really understand this passage without this additional information about the culture of the day. So what I need is access to the libraries that will tell me about all the research about the culture of Corinth in the 1st century. So I can't just pick my Bible up and read it and

understand it.

And once again, subject to experts. See, the Catholic Church says that you cannot understand the Bible without the teaching magisterium of the church. In other words, you're just a dumb lay person.

How could you possibly understand the Bible? That's their big argument, you see. And what we're doing is we're saying now, okay, you can't understand the Bible unless you know the background of the culture in Corinth. Do you want that? Do you want to go back to Rome? I certainly don't want to go back.

I came out of there. I'm done with that, right? I want to be able to pick my Bible up and understand it just by reading it. Another advocate says, the gulf between today and the 1st century is so great that it's impossible to understand the New Testament today.

Is that what you want? Because if you do, accept this as cultural. Lloyd Jones, he was a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist, which almost seems like an oxymoron, doesn't it? A Calvinistic Methodist, but anyway, he was. And he says it was a new way of interpreting the Bible.

He says, how on earth were people to understand the Bible up to this century without all this added information? He says, who decides what we're to believe? How am I to know? We're forced to listen to the new popes, Don Cupid, professor of this and professor of that. It's a return to the scholars now all agree. Here's the point.

He says it destroys the continuity of Scripture from century to century. That's an important one, isn't it? What did I start out by saying? You read Matthew Henry, you read John Wesley, you read all these Old Testament, these commentaries written prior to 1950, and they're all in agreement. Then all of a sudden, 1950, a watershed, everybody changes their view.

The continuity of belief has now been broken. Because they're no longer interpreting Scripture by the usual methods, they're now saying you need to understand the culture of the day to understand the passage. He says it makes the interpretation of Scripture to be governed by extra-biblical evidence such as archaeology or science.

And he says this, to hold that a knowledge of the culture can deepen our appreciation of an injunction is one thing. To claim that it completely changes it and then in fact reverses it is another thing. You see, that's the point.

If the culture enhances my understanding of this passage and helps me to obey it more, I can see that. But what they're saying is ignore what the passage is saying, the culture allows you to dismiss it. And I'm not happy with that.

So what was the cultural view? I just want you to know what they say. They say that in Corinth, the local women all wore head coverings. And the only women that didn't cover their heads were prostitutes.

And it was a way of advertising their availability. And so when the gospel came to Corinth, it brought with it freedom and liberty. And so the women stopped wearing the veil and were confused with local prostitutes.

And so the whole argument is, you know, kind of you're offending the local culture, therefore cover your heads. Now, I've read that passage so many times, I've never seen the word prostitute mentioned once. Have you? What do you call that when you read something into Scripture? Exegesis is when you bring

something out, you know, exit, out of.

Exegesis, you bring out the truth of the passage. Eisegesis is reading something into the passage that's not there. That's exactly what they're doing when they use the cultural argument.

They're reading this whole scenario in, and it's not there at all. In fact, I can quote you Greek scholars who will tell you the very opposite. One fellow says this.

His name was Opicius, an Oriental scholar. He said, it used to be asserted by theologians that Paul was simply endorsing the unwritten law of Hellenistic feeling for what was proper. But this view is untenable to be sure.

The veil was not unknown in Greece. It was worn at some special occasions, for mourning, matchmaking, marriage, and in the worship of some deities. However, it's quite wrong that the Greek women were under some compulsion to wear a veil in public.

In other words, for every authority they can quote, I can quote an authority that says the opposite. That's the problem with authorities, isn't it? Have you ever tried to follow the latest diet things? Eat salt, don't eat salt. Eat margarine, don't eat butter.

The experts can never agree for five minutes, can they? Isn't that a problem? Isn't it better just to read the Bible? That's the better thing. Just simply take God at His word. To me, it's applicable to all cultures everywhere.

Remember chapter 1 and verse 2 where He says that He's writing to not only the Corinthians but to all that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus in every place. And so this teaching is relevant everywhere. And remember we said He already kind of confronts culture because He asked the men to pray without a covering on their head because they're to appear where the glory of God is to be seen uncovered in the assembly.

And that was against the Jewish culture. Now, another argument that people give for not believing the head covering is taught by people like Bill Guthard. Does anybody ever follow him anymore or is he gone? There was a time when everybody was going to Bill Guthard, right? The Institute of whatever it was.

Is it still around? I have no idea. I'm not saying Bill Gaither, I'm saying Bill Guthard. Anyway, but he was one that said that the teaching of the passage is that the woman's long hair is her covering.

So she doesn't need any additional covering. J. Vernon McGee. May God richly bless you, my beloved.

J. Vernon McGee. He again would say that the answer to this passage is verse 15. If the woman has long hair, it's a glory to her for her hair is giving her her covering.

And so at first reading that sounds kind of really logical, doesn't it? It's the woman's long hair. But it's really a problem. Because if the covering is hair, let's just assume that that's right.

It is hair. Well, what do you do with verse 4? Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonors his head. If it's hair, what is that saying? Now, Daniel, you're okay.

You can lead us in prayer, but nobody else can do that in this room, right? Others are catching up slowly. But you see what I'm saying? It doesn't make sense, does it? Look at verse 5. Sorry, verse 6. If the

woman be not covered, let her also be shorn. Now, if it's her hair, if a woman doesn't have hair, let her be shorn.

Does that make sense to you? That's ridiculous, isn't it? It cannot be the woman's hair when you read it back through the passage. It just can't be. But the real problem with it is this.

Remember what we're saying about the glory of God. The glory of God is a very important topic. And what he's saying is, in his presence, what we want to see is the glory of God on display.

So, the woman is the glory of the man. So, her hair, it tells us, is given her for a covering. Okay? So, we've got the man with uncovered head, that's the glory of God.

The woman is the glory of the man. She is given by nature her own covering, which is her hair. But, unfortunately, as well as being a covering, it's also a glory.

If a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. It's her own personal glory. So, if she appears without a head covering, an additional covering, you still have two glories seen.

The man with uncovered head, which is the glory of God, and you've got the woman with her personal glory on display. So, what she does is she takes an additional covering, and she covers her personal glory. So, the only glory that is seen in the assembly is man with uncovered head, which is the glory of God.

You look at Ezekiel, and you'll see these creatures that are in the presence of God. Cherubim, and then elsewhere, Seraphim. And the interesting thing is that the Seraphim have six wings, and it says with four they cover themselves, and with two they fly.

Because they're glorious creatures, aren't they? I wonder about Lucifer. He was the anointed cherub that covers. But I wonder, because he was very beautiful, did he unfurl his beauty in the presence of God? Because a third of the angels got impressed, didn't they? But you see, the Cherubim cover their glory so that only his glory is seen.

And so, the idea is that the woman, she is the glory of man. Her hair is given to her for a covering. In other words, her hair covers her because she's the glory of the man.

But the problem with her hair is that it's also her personal glory, so then she takes another covering to cover her personal glory, so that the only glory seen in the presence of God is the man with uncovered head, which is the glory of God. Now, look again at verse 10. For this cause ought the woman to have a power or a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels.

I really believe that this is the key verse in the whole passage. You know, whenever you see for this cause in Scripture, you know what that means? This is the reason. That's what got me.

This was the verse, I can remember distinctly the time and the place. We were living in Michigan. We were moving down to Florida.

We stopped in Kentucky on the way. It was a bold and green Kentucky in a motel. My wife and I were there.

We couldn't sleep. We had two kids with us. We put them in the back of the pickup truck, and we headed down the highway at 4 o'clock in the morning, and I was meditating on 1 Corinthians 11.

And I said to my wife, I've got it! She said, you got what? This is 4 o'clock in the morning. What have you got? I said, I understand it now. And it was verse 10 that I understood.

This is the reason. A woman should have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels. That's the key verse.

Now, we're going to expound on that before we finish this morning, but I want you just to think about that, because, you see, the angels cover themselves, their glory in the presence of God, right? They also saw what happened when one of them unfurled his glory in the presence of God. They also realized what happened when a headship broke down in the Garden of Eden. They witnessed all that.

The angels are interested in what happens in the assembly. We're going to think more about that, but I want you just to throw that there in our thinking. And so, clearly, what we're saying is that it cannot be the woman's hair.

It doesn't make sense whatsoever. And then other people say, well, it's not really an assembly gathering. That really the assembly gathering doesn't begin until verse 17, where it says, now in this I declare unto you, I praise you not, that you come together not for the better.

And they say, well, the phrase come together didn't happen until verse 17. But verse 16 tells me that what this teaching is about has relevance to churches of God, doesn't it? If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God. So it's obviously related to church activity.

When we come together corporately as a church of God. I like the way that one brother outlines the passage. He says that verse 3 is headship, verse 4 through 16 is head covering, and verse 17 to 34 is head remembering.

That's a nice outline, isn't it? Headship, head covering, head remembering. And it's certainly to do with the universal practice of all the churches. Now, again, we're still thinking of objections.

I have a friend, he's a Baptist brother, dear brother, great Bible teacher in every respect. He's tremendous. But when it comes to this passage, he loses the plot.

And what he says is, he says it with all sincerity, is the Old Testament is filled with symbolism. But when you come to the New Testament, we're free from all that symbolism. And it's true there's a lot of symbolism, right? The tabernacle, all the rest of it.

But is it really true that in the New Testament we're free from symbolism? I mean, he's a Baptist after all. So I said to him, I said, okay, brother, if you really are serious about this, let's take this to its logical conclusion. Okay? If the important, what he says is the important thing is the principle, right? That the women are in subjection to the men.

Don't worry about the symbol as long as you're in subjection. By the way, I have to say that, if you're wearing the head covering, sisters, and you're also wearing the trousers, there's a problem there. You know what I mean by that? I'm not saying wearing pants physically, but, I mean, you're the boss.

The husband is in subjection to you, and yet you're coming out to the meeting with your head covered. You've not understood the teaching behind this passage. So we don't want to just kind of mangle the symbolism and lose the actual real teaching of headship.

We don't want to lose, that's important. And what he's saying is all that matters is the actual headship teaching. You know, that man is to be head, the woman is to be in subjection to the man.

That's the important thing. I say to him, okay, well, what about baptism then? If symbolism doesn't really matter, all you need to say to people is, look, live a baptized kind of life. Why go to all, I remember when I got baptized, the building we were in, we didn't have a baptistry, and we had to go and get this mobile baptistry and set it up, and it took ages to get the water in there and all the rest of it.

What a waste of time if all they had to say to me was, look, the symbol doesn't really matter as long as you live a baptized kind of life. This Baptist church that he was involved in, they, like us, remembered the Lord every Sunday morning, and it was very similar to ours. They had kind of an open time for the men to participate verbally, and it was very similar, and they had a loaf and a cup.

And I said, well, you know, listen, if symbolism isn't important, can you remember the Lord without a loaf and a cup? Sure you can, can't you? I mean, and especially when you have these single cups, I mean, just think of all the fidgeting around to fill those individual cups. Wouldn't it be easier just to say, let's come and remember the Lord and forget it? Because it's only symbolism after all, and that's not really important. And yet the amazing thing is, you say, no, I don't want to give that up.

Well, let's be consistent. See, the symbol is important, isn't it? Obviously it's important. Now, when we get to this idea, because of the angels, we'll see why the symbol is important.

The symbol is not for us, it's for the angels. It's very important. So what is so significant about the angels? Why is this verse so key? This calls out the woman to have power or a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels.

Well, look at Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 10. I want you just to see that angels are very definitely interested in what happens in the local church. Let me start from Ephesians 3 verse 9. And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

So, principalities and powers in heavenly places, our truth is being made known to them, the truth of the mystery is being made known to them by the church. And also God is revealing to the angels the multifaceted wisdom of God. So, obviously the angels are very interested spectators in what goes on in the church.

They're learning things. You see, the whole mystery that he's been talking about is Jew and Gentile in one body on the same level. That just blows the mind of them.

You talk about kind of a distinction between people groups. The Jew-Gentile distinction was massive. The Jews used to call the Gentiles dogs.

And they weren't talking pedigree puppies. They were saying mutts. That's what they were saying.

And yet now God has done something amazing. In the church of the Lord Jesus, you now have Jews and Gentiles in the same body on equal footing. I remember being in an assembly in Northern Ireland and one of the brothers in that meeting was a Jew.

And he used to pray beautifully. I used to love listening to him pray. But you know what? He had no more access to the presence of God than I, a Gentile.

We were on the same level. It's amazing. And the angels just look at all this and they're amazed at the wisdom of God and what he's done in the church.

And so the angels are interested. And I often say that I believe that when we get to glory, that the Lord is going to, as it were, play back some of the things that took place in local churches that we thought, what's going on here? What's the big deal? And we're going to see the Lord was here. The angels were watching.

All of these spiritual things were taking place. And we know it. How do we know it? By faith we know it, don't we? Because the Bible says so.

That scripture verse there, wherever two or three are gathered unto my name, there am I in the midst. How do you know the Lord is here in our midst today? Can you smell him? Can you touch him? Do you feel him? No. How do you know? Because the scripture says so, don't we? And God can't lie, right? Isn't that the reason how we know? We know by faith in the word of God.

So how do you know the angels are watching what's going on in the meeting today? Because the scripture says so, right? Anybody here seen one? I don't think so, right? But we know they're there. And so he says, for this cause, the women ought to have a symbol on their heads because of the angels. Now again, what's the overall point of it? Let's kind of think about the angels for a moment.

Go back with me to the book of Job. And think about what the angels have witnessed and observed. Book of Job and chapter 38.

Job 38, verse 4 through 7. God is speaking out of the whirlwind, speaking to Job, and he says, Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof? If thou knowest, or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the cornerstone thereof? And then he says this, When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. So God is speaking about the original creation of the world.

And he's saying, Job, were you there when that happened? Good question to ask to our evolutionist friends, right? How can you speculate what happened back then? Were you there? They weren't, were they? Who was there? God was there. And he said, Let there be light, and there was light. And he spoke the world into existence.

And the amazing thing is that the angels obviously were already in existence, because it says that they, when they observed these things, they shouted for joy. When they saw God speak and that it was. I mean, you'd have to admit, it would be pretty amazing to watch that, wouldn't it? To hear God speak and then suddenly it's there? Even the most kind of mundane amongst us, the least charismatic amongst us, might be tempted to let out a yelp of praise if we saw God speak the world into existence, wouldn't we? So they saw this creation in its unspoiled beauty.

They saw the garden. They saw man, the pinnacle of the creation. They witnessed all of this.

And then they saw what took place in the garden. And what really did take place in the garden? What was it? Remember what we said about headship? Remember that the head gives direction? So in the garden, man is supposed to be the head, right? So what does that mean? It means that Adam, the first man, was to give direction to Eve, the woman. Right? And he should have given her direction as the head and she should have taken direction.

But what actually took place when the fall happened? Who was doing the leading and who was doing the following? It was a breakdown in headship, wasn't it? Wasn't that what it was? And the angels saw it. And they saw the consequences of it. In fact, they were involved in actually making sure the consequences were enacted, weren't they? Because what was it guarding the way back to the tree of knowledge, of life, should I say? It was the cherubim that were there guarding the way, weren't they? They were enforcing God's directives there.

So they saw all this. And then we come to the new creation, which is the church. And it's really quite an amazing thing, isn't it? Because what has happened in the church, God's new creation, is that once again we have embraced God's headship order.

Right? We now believe that men should be taking the lead. Getting their direction from Christ who is their head, but nevertheless giving direction. And the women are to be in subject.

We believe that now, don't we? Because we've embraced God's headship order once again in the new creation. But the problem with the angels is the angels are not omniscient. Sometimes people think the angels know everything.

They don't know everything. They know a lot. We're made a little lower than the angels.

They're certainly more magnificent beings than we are, but they, only God is omniscient. Means He knows everything, right? And an angel doesn't know or cannot read what's going on in your heart. Can't.

Neither can Satan, by the way. Sometimes I think we gave more, as it were, credit to Satan than we ought. Now I'm not undermining him or minimizing him either.

He's a real vicious enemy of the people of God. But he's not God. He's not everywhere present.

He doesn't have the attributes of God. He's certainly powerful, but he doesn't know everything. He's been around a long time, and he's very smart.

Don't get me wrong. But he doesn't know everything. Only God knows everything.

And so here's the angels, and they're looking in at the meeting today. And how do they know that you have accepted God's headship order of authority? They can't tell by looking at your heart. But when you, as a sister, take that piece of cloth and put it on your head, you are proclaiming to the angels, I have accepted God's order of headship.

And I want God's glory to be seen in the assembly, not my glory. And you're preaching, by the way. You're going to say, can women preach? Every time you do that, you're preaching a message to the angels that you accept God's order of headship and that you also want only God's glory to be seen in the assembly.

To me, that's quite a statement, isn't it? You're not permitted to preach to men, but you are permitted to preach to angels by that simple symbolic act of taking a covering and covering your glory in the presence of God. It's saying, I accept his headship order. Sadly, in Corinth, in many of the churches today, they have thrown off God's order in symbol, at least.

They're not saying that there are women that are not very submissive and subject to their husbands that don't do this. Maybe there are many that do. But what I'm saying is that this message has in view angelic beings.

And to me, it's a supreme act of faith, isn't it? It's saying, I really believe God's word. And I believe these spiritual realities. And I'm showing my belief by voluntarily doing this.

And for the man to appear in the presence of God with their heads uncovered, again, it's saying, I believe what God is saying. I believe that there is a headship order. I believe that I need to be subject to Christ who is my head.

Now, if we really thought about these things more, boy, it would really have an impact, wouldn't it? Let's just start with that one. Man, if we really got serious about getting direction from Christ our head and giving that direction, that would be so much easier for the sisters to be in submission, wouldn't it? Part of the difficulty is we have men who are not under the headship of Christ, who are basically living self-willed lives. And that's having devastating effects in many assemblies.

It really is. And men, can I plead with you? Get your act together. Be a man.

Quit ye like men. Be strong, right? What Scripture says. Be the man.

Play the man. And be under the headship and subjection to Christ. And sisters, what if you have a man that isn't the head he ought to be? Well, you know what you need to do? You need to follow God's Word and do your part and leave the Spirit of God to deal with the man.

Trust the Lord. Do the right thing. God will never, ever get upset with anybody for doing the right thing.

Right? And let's just do it and trust the Lord to work in the heart of your man that he would indeed be brought to that place where he is under the headship of Christ. And then just to think once more about this, that even this morning, as we have taken seriously these things, to realize that actually most people in this county probably are not paying any attention to what's going on in this building this morning. But principalities and powers in heavenly places are interested in what takes place in this room.

And the Lord of Glory is interested in what takes place in this room. He's thrilled to see the new creation. To see the new creation that is a work of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus and people once again being restored to God's headship order.

That's a thrill to the heart of God. I believe that more than ever, we need this teaching. I believe it's not just kind of about the piece of cloth.

As you see, we've covered a lot of doctrines this morning, right? We got into the doctrine of the angel. We got into the fall of man. I mean, we've covered a lot of big issues here, haven't we? This is not just some kind of piece of cloth thing.

This is very important. And sadly, in the church, it's either skipped over or just written off. And so, again, I encourage us to think seriously about the things we've learned.

Now, after lunch, we are going to ask some tough questions. When should the covering be worn? What covering should it be? In other words, what should the head covering look like? Kind of getting into the details of when. And then we want to finish the chapter because we've only got to verse 10, and we have 11 through 16, and we need to kind of take our time and work through them.

So we got a lot more to cover. But I think mentally, there's a limit to how much we can take in at one time. So I think this is a good time to kind of just pause and kind of think through some of these things.

I'm going to close in prayer. And again, if anybody has questions, I certainly will take them from you during the break. But I do want to say this, that I suspect that many of your questions will be answered in the second session.

That's not a cop-out. I'm not trying to get out of it. But I just want to say, in the words of Paul Harvey, let me give you the rest of the story first, okay?

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