



# ASK THE PASTOR

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EPISODE 4 – JAN. 10, 2024

# Q: Head Coverings in 1 Cor. 11

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## Questions:

- Can you give your opinion on what the current day application of the references to head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11 would be?
- 1 Cor. 11:4 says, “Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head,“. Is this verse referring to public worship settings only or does it apply to all situations? If a man is serving in the army, riding a bike, working construction etc. is he free to offer prayers while his head is covered?

## Answer:

- Let’s look at 1 Cor. 11:3-15. First, Paul sets forth the principle: “the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” The principle is covenant headship. The term “head” could mean either “source” or “authority.” Since man is not the source of woman (God made both), the meaning clearly is headship in terms of authority.
- Paul then addresses aberrant practices in the Corinthian church with respect to this principle.
  - “For a man to pray or prophesy with his head covered dishonors his head” (1 Cor. 11:4) – that is Christ.
  - “But every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven” (1 Cor. 11:5) – that is, her husband. “If a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head” (1 Cor. 11:6).

# Q: Head Coverings in 1 Cor. 11, cont

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- What is the rationale for these statements?
  - “A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor. 11:7), since “man was not made from woman, but woman from man” (1 Cor. 11:8).
  - Man: Long hair is a disgrace for the man (as nature teaches).
    - Context: “The length of hair at that time denoted a person to be a man or a woman.” Paul’s concern “is to preserve among believers a visible distinction (consistent with that culture) between men and women.” (P. Barnett).
    - Dt. 22:5 – “A woman shall not wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man put on a woman’s cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God”
  - Woman: Head covering as “a symbol of authority because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:10). Issue: The Greek text does not include “symbol” but simply says, “The woman should have authority.” So is this his authority or hers? Also, what is the reference to angels? Probably the sense that angels are offended by threats to God’s created design.
    - Context: Sculptures from that time depict women with long hair bundled up with a cloth cover. This was a cultural symbol of “wifely domesticity” (Barnett). A wife who did otherwise was presenting herself as an unmarried woman.
  - God’s “fundamental order of relationships is to be clearly reflected in Christian worship. It is important what people look like in public worship” (D. Pryor).
- The conclusion: The man should not pray/proclaim with his head covered but a woman should.
  - God’s design of headship should be honored
  - We should present ourselves in keeping with God’s creation & relational design. “Paul is seeking to uphold the Creator’s creation of the polarities of human sexuality” (Barnett).
  - We should not act as if there is not interdependence between men and women (v.. 11-12).
  - Paul affirms women’s participation in worship so long as it is in keeping with creation and covenant headship.

# Q: Head Coverings in 1 Cor. 11, cont

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- Application today:
  - An issue is that we not only do not know the precise questions being addressed in 1 Cor. but we also do not find these cultural symbols universalized elsewhere in the Bible.
  - The particulars of this scenario are therefore taken as being local to the Corinthian cultural setting. But the principles are universal: “The cultural symbols may change, but the principles do not” (D. Jackman).
    - There is a difference between men and women.
    - Men and women relate to one another distinctively.
    - Our dress, appearance, and demeanor should reflect these differences and distinctions.
    - Men and women worship and serve God with equal status but in different ways.
  - To answer the questions: I do not think the burden lies on the particular cultural symbols but on the biblical principle. As for men, the issue is not the setting (worship or recreation) but rather the biblical principle.
    - As God designed men and women with complementary functions and relations, our appearance and demeanor should reflect this complementarity in ways that our culture will identify.

# Covenant head of unmarried woman?

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## Question:

- So if an adult woman is unmarried and no longer living under her father's household, does she have a head over her?

## Answer:

- Ideally, an unmarried adult woman remains under the covenant headship of her father, although not as a child living in the home. She should therefore look to her father for guidance and protection.
- If a father is no longer living or is unsuitable, the woman may look to a Christian father-figure or she should look to the church – with its elders or pastors – for this role.

# Jeremiah 31

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## Question:

- If the newness of the new covenant is that members have the law written on their hearts, does this mean saints in the old covenant were not regenerated? What spiritual blessings do new covenant believers have today that someone in a preceding covenant like Abraham did not have? And if the new covenant is still a mixed community, what does it mean that “all will know me”? (Jer. 31:31-34)

## Answer:

- Clearly, there is a difference centering on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant. Yet believers in the old covenant also needed to be born again (as Jesus argued with Nicodemus). Also Ps. 51:10-11.
- The old covenant was primarily an external administration of God’s grace (the law) while in the new covenant there is a new internal administration via the Holy Spirit. Clearly, there is a great privilege, a higher potential, and a greater responsibility.
- Part of our challenge is that we do not have OT analogies of, say, the Pauline letters. So while we know what our experience is to be, there is some mystery regarding the OT experience of believers.
- Jeremiah’s prior use of “know me” pertains not to conversion but mature sanctification (Jer. 9:24; 22:16). So the outpouring of the Holy Spirit enables a higher level of spiritual maturity than in the old covenant.

# Good Thursday?

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## Question:

- In Matthew 12:40, Jesus references Jonah being three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, saying, “so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” So should we be commemorating Maundy Wednesday and Good Thursday?

## Answer:

- Mark 15:42 says: “evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath.” While it is debatable, it is pretty clear that this is an ordinary Sabbath, i.e. a Friday.
  - “The day of preparation” seems to be a technical term relating to the Friday preparation for the Saturday Sabbath (and not a preparation for the Passover). You find it this way in Josephus, Judith, and 2 Macabees. The *Didache* specifically assigns this term to the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the week.
  - In modern day Greek, the name for “Friday” is “paraskeue” – the word used for “Preparation” in Mk. 15:42).
- We therefore take the 3 days of Mt. 12:40 as *inclusive* – involving 3 days, but not necessarily 72 hours.

# What about Ish-Bosheth?

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## Question:

- I have been reading in I Samuel and now II Samuel. I am confused about the line of kings. How does Ishbosheth fit into the lineage?

## Answer:

- Ish-Bosheth was the son of Saul who succeeded him among the northern tribes. However, the tribe of Judah (with Benjamin) followed David as king.
  - 2 Sam. 2:10-11: “Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.
- Ish-Bosheth therefore was never king over a united Israel (like Saul and then David). And while the Lord anointed Saul and David, the Lord did not anoint Ish-Bosheth.
- 1 Chronicles 10-11 skips Ish-Bosheth, evidently because of his illegitimacy as king.



# The Holy God Deceiving

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## Question:

- How do we reconcile passages that seem to depict God deceiving with those clearly displaying his purity and truth?
- Examples: Nathan's parable with David (2 Sam. 12); Solomon's "baby answer" (1 Ki. 3). The prophet Micaiah's false answer to Ahab (1 Ki. 22); Jesus not revealing himself on Emeaus Road (Lk. 24).

## Answer:

- Some of these scenarios are not deception but displays of wisdom – or in Jesus' case, his redemptive purpose.
- In other cases, such as Ahab, God is executing judgment. It is a holy war scenario where deception should be taken in a military sense against God's enemies.

# James 5:14-16

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## Question:

- How are we to understand James 5:14-16?
- “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

## Answer:

- We take this at face value.
- James should not be taken as saying that “the prayer of faith will *always* save the one who is sick.” It is God’s purpose for us to die at some time, for instance. But we should pray with fervor and expectancy.
- The elders’ prayer is assigned particular efficacy because they are praying in their office and with God’s special appointment. God blesses faithful actions taken by the persons appointed to them.
- The anointing with oil is a physical ministry but also a symbol of the Holy Spirit’s presence. The fragrance remains as testimony to God’s grace in answer to prayer.
- Our church practices this literally.

# Psalms-only Position?

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## Question:

- Please explain the historical background of singing only Psalms and only accapella (also no instruments in the church) and whether or not there is Scriptural support for that position.

## Answer:

- The Psalms-only position is based on the regulative principle of worship. It the synagogue as the biblical basis for the church and notes the lack of instruments or evidence of songs other than Psalms. It takes Col. 3:16's "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" as referring to different kinds of Psalms.
  - This position was advocated widely during the Protestant Reformation not only in light of the regulative position but also as a reaction (over-reaction?) to Roman Catholic liturgical abuses.
- The inclusive Psalms view also holds to the regulative principle of worship but notes that the temple is the theological context for New Testament worship, which includes instrumentation. It translates the Levitical choirs to the context of the priesthood of all believers. It also notes the evidence that the lyrics were being written/used in the New Testament era (Col. 1:15-20, for instance).

# Disposing of Bibles?

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Question:

- What is the proper way to dispose of old Bibles or bibles in disrepair?

Answer:

- I don't know that I have ever thought about this!
- In my view, there is nothing wrong with putting an unusable Bible in the trash. The book itself with its pages is not sacred in the sense of a talisman.
- The question does reflect a good view of the sanctity of God's Word.

# Remarriage and Mark 10:11

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## Question:

- Is remarriage appropriate in light of Mark 10:11 – “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

## Answer:

- Here, interpreting Scripture by reference to Scripture is key. In Mt. 19:9, Jesus establishes adultery as a ground for divorce: “whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”
  - The point of the exception is that it excludes such a divorce from committing adultery.
- In 1 Cor. 7:15 – “If the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved.”
  - Here, abandonment (biblical considered) removes the stigma from remarriage – which is the point of “not enslaved.”
- Jesus teaches the highest view of marriage and treats divorce gravely. However, we take the Bible as endorsing remarriage without stigma or sin *when the prior divorce has been on biblical grounds.*
- Such permission is not granted by Scripture for the offending party in a divorce.

# Nursing Children in Heaven?

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## Question:

- Isaiah 11:6-9 assumedly refers to the new heaven and earth when saying “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat.” How should we understand the references to the nursing child and the weaned child in verse 8? Will not everyone in the new heaven/earth be adults?

## Answer:

- In general, we do not look for a literal fulfillment in heaven when the OT prophet seems to be speaking symbolically. Here, the wolf dwelling with the lamb is a picture of the creation at peace and in harmony. So also “the nursing child” playing “over the hole of the cobra.” We should not take Isaiah as prophesying that there will be nursing children in heaven but rather that there will be universal peace.
- As for all adults in heaven – this makes sense. Will saved little children be transformed into the adult glorified form when Christ returns? It is difficult to speak authoritatively, but I think they will be.

# Israel and Jerusalem

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## Question:

Could you please speak to the everlasting covenant mentioned in Psalm 105 and how it relates to Israel both today and in the days mentioned in Revelation? For example Revelation 21, the holy city, the new Jerusalem.

## Answer:

- We take the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham and Jacob to be fulfilled in Christ, the promised offspring.
- When God speaks in Psalm 105 of remembering "his covenant forever" and of "an everlasting covenant," we view this in terms of its intended fulfillment in Christ.
- It is clear in the New Testament that the Christian church is Israel today. The holy city of Revelation is the church of both Testaments.
  - Gal. 5:15, Paul refers to the church as "the Israel of God." In Romans 11:17 – Gentile Christians were "grafted into" the olive tree of Israel.
  - Eternal city of Rev. 21:14-15 – twelve tribes of Israel and twelve apostles of the Lamb

# Romans 11:26

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## Question:

- Regarding Israel, could you help explain Romans 11:25-36, especially verse 28?

## Answer:

- Romans 11:25-26 – “a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved.”
- I am sympathetic to the view that “all Israel” here is the entire church, Jew and Gentiles both.
- However, I believe that at this point in Paul’s teaching, he is referring to Israel as the Jews and foretelling a widespread in-gathering of Jewish believers prior to Christ’s return.
- Romans 11:28 should be taken as the rationale for this prophecy. The Jews are “enemies of the gospel,” i.e. persecuting the church in Paul’s time. But “they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.”



# Young Men Seeing Visions

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Question: Acts 2:17-18 interprets the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost by saying, “Your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” These visions and dreams appear to be prophetic in nature. How do you understand these visions and dreams today?

Answer: Peter is citing the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 as an explanation for what has happened at Pentecost. Here, Joel is using the prophetic experience of his own time as the grid for what will happen in the future epoch. When we get to Acts, we do not see the literal description of Joel’s prophecy, but we see the preaching and witness of the church community to Jesus Christ. In John 14-16, Jesus describes what will happen when he departs and the Holy Spirit comes. He does not describe speaking in tongues and prophetic dreams, but the Word of Christ through the Spirit inspired Word. We therefore should not ordinarily expect to see revelatory dreams and visions today.

# Was the American Revolution Biblical?

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Question: How does Romans 13:1-7 – which teaches that civil authorities are instituted by God and should be respected – align with Christians supporting the American Revolution? What about Christians living under unjust governments? How can God ordain unjust governments?

Answer:

Romans 13:1-7 commands civil obedience: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom. 13:1-2).

For this reason, many Christians did not support the American Revolution. However, Reformed churches also hold to the doctrine of the lesser magistrate: lower officials have a duty to protect the people from the tyranny of higher magistrates. On this basis, the Christian argument for the American Revolution was that Christians did have the right to obey lesser magistrates (the various colonial assemblies) in fighting the tyranny of the British king.

# Biblical Revolution, cont.

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Moreover:

- Christians living under tyranny should not foment rebellion against their tyrants (Paul wrote Romans 13 under Nero's rule in Rome). However, if there are legitimate lesser magistrates seeking to oppose tyranny, then Christians may support them. Christians who are lesser magistrates have a duty to protect their people from tyranny from above.
  - If the President makes a decree that is contrary to the US Constitution, a state governor should act to bar that decree from his or her state. Christians should support their governor in this case.
  - John Knox saw Jer. 37 as an example where the church urged its people to disobey the legitimate king because the church had a higher duty to proclaim God's Word.
- Why would God ordain evil government? As judgment, mainly. But also for the sake of the gospel, according to his inscrutable will. (God uses sin sinlessly! – Gen. 50:20).