

TWO SIGNIFICANT PASSAGES

I Corinthians 11:2-16

The concept of “headship” in verse 3, “Now I want you to realize that the *head* of every man is Christ, and the *head* of the woman is man, and the *head* of Christ is God.”

“Authority” or “Source?”

Eph. 4:15-16, “Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the *Head*, that is, Christ. *From Him* the whole body ... *grows* and build itself up in love....”

Col. 2:18, “He (one who is proud) has lost connection with the *Head*, from whom the whole body ... *grows* as God causes it to grow.”

Eph. 5:22-23, “For the husband is the *head* of the wife as *Christ is the Head* of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior.”

I Cor. 11:3....

Verses 4-5 – the eligibility of women as well as men “praying” and “prophesying.”

“The two verbs *to pray* and *to utter prophetic speech* mean in this context to lead in prayer and to articulate an applied pastoral message, or to preach. The words also include applied theological training, encouragement, and exhortation to build the church.” (Anthony Thiselton, commentary on I Corinthians)

But there is a regulation:

Men – having their heads uncovered.

Women – having their heads covered.

If all of this is so, why must women “keep silent in the church?”

I Corinthians 14:34, “Women should remain silent in the churches.”

I Timothy 2:11-12, “A women should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”

Note: “Silence” does not mean “a lack of sound.” It means “quietness” or “a lack of disorder.” The issue (certainly in I Cor. 14) is that of “order” in worship.

Comments on I Corinthians 14:34

If I Cor. 14:34 is “interpreted literally,” it contradicts what Paul said in 11:5 where “women (can) pray and prophesy in the church.” He can only be referring to a particular kind of speech.

So, what does it mean for women to “keep silent” in the church?

A. these Paul’s words in verses 33-35f are related to the paragraph that precedes in vss. 26-33a. In verses, Paul told both the *tongue speakers* and the *prophets* to be *silent* when others were talking. Each should participate in turn. He offers the same advice to those women who were chatting during the worship service.

Three groups of people who were disturbing worship:

1. The (male and female) *prophets* are told:
 - Don’t talk all at once

- *Be silent* in church (when someone else is speaking)
2. The (male and female) *speakers in tongues* are told:
 - If there is no interpreter
 - *Be silent* in church
 3. *Married women* with Christian husbands (who attend) are told:
 - Don't ask questions during the worship and don't chat.
 - Ask your husbands at home and *be silent* in church.

Each of these groups is told to be silent when it disturbs worship. Paul is not telling the female prophets discussed in chapter 11 to stop prophesying!

B. An additional possibility is suggested by the context of Corinth and of pagan society in Corinth.

Pagan religions were characterized by women serving as goddesses and priestesses. A temple of Artemis, a multi-breasted goddess – served at Corinth by 1000 prostitutes.

Is there a reference to converts from such a religion now in the church? And if so, what would be their behavior? Paul particularly addresses “wives” in these verses (vss.

33- 35).

There was also the fact that there was a lot of false teaching going on. Corinth was not only pagan; it was highly Gnostic in its religions. And it was a common religious myth among Gnostics that Eve brought life to Adam because she received from the serpent the knowledge of good and evil.

The passage is not to be taken as a blanket indictment against women leadership. That would be inconsistent with the Scripture and with the spirit of the teaching of Paul earlier as well as here in I Corinthians. Here, he's dealing with specific circumstances.

I Timothy 2:8-15 (also chapter 3:1-13)

What's Paul saying? He is not prescribing specific behaviors in worship that are binding on all people everywhere at all times.

But he does say in verses 11-12, “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man.”

A strong restriction!

Why?