

## **WHAT WINGER PRESENTLY GETS WRONG:**

### **THE HEAD COVERING DEBATES (1 COR 11)**

18 January 2023

*Our full article takes up Mike Winger's kind invitation to give feedback. We hope you will enjoy reading it. Here's a quick summary in less than two pages.*

#### **QUICK SUMMARY OF ARTICLE ON 1 CORINTHIANS 11 (HEADS) by Andrew Bartlett and Terran Williams**

In Part 10 of his Women in Ministry series, Mike discusses 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. He interprets that passage as teaching authoritative male headship over women or wives.

Mike's interpretation is in stark conflict with what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 7. Mike does not offer a plausible answer to this difficulty.

He approaches the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 with a predetermined idea that 'head' in verse 3 is a metaphor for 'authority over'. That idea is derived from the faulty analyses in his Part 8 and Part 9 videos.

The meaning of the metaphor in verse 3 can only be determined by closely examining Paul's train of thought in this passage; but that is the very thing that Mike does not do in his Part 8 or Part 9 videos. In this Part 10 video, his predetermined idea about the meaning of 'head' is his starting point for interpreting Paul's teaching. That is a basic error of method.

The order of the couplets in verse 3 (Christ-man; man-woman; God-Christ) is consistent with the ancient interpretation 'source' and inconsistent with 'authority over'. Mike does not address this difficulty.

In the express words of the passage, Paul does not mention the authority of Christ over man, man over woman, or God over Christ, but he does mention the authority that a woman ought to have (verse 10). If 'head' means 'authority over', the necessary clues to the meaning of Paul's metaphor are absent. Compared with the express words, Mike's interpretation is topsy-turvy. Mike does not address this difficulty.

Verse 3 drives Paul's discussion. If 'head' means 'source' in verse 3, Paul uses each couplet successively in his argument. But if 'head' means 'authority over', the third couplet lies unused by Paul. Mike does not address this difficulty.

Verses 8-9 are about the original sources and purposes of men and women in the creation story, which provide reasons for the honorable behavior that Paul wants to see. Mike's argument that verses 8-9 teach male authority is not supported by satisfactory reasoning. He makes an unwarranted leap from the Woman's purpose (in the creation story in Genesis 2) to the Man's authority.

Because of the structure of Paul's argument, for a male-authority interpretation to work, verse 10 has to be about the woman's obligation to wear something on her head as a symbol that

she is under a man's authority. But the express words of verse 10 are directly against that interpretation. The verse can only be interpreted in that way by inappropriately translating *epi* ('over') as 'on', by inserting extra words which are not in Paul's Greek ('a symbol of'), and by unprecedentedly reversing the meaning of *exousia* ('authority'), so that it refers to the subjection of the person who ought to have it, rather than to their authority. Mike offers four reasons in support of those interpretive acrobatics, but all four are inadequate to support the drastic remodeling of verse 10, including the material from Anthony Thiselton's commentary. And Mike omits to mention that Thiselton is firmly *against* Mike's interpretation.

In Paul's original text, the relationship of verse 11 to verse 10 is incompatible with a male-authority-over-women interpretation. The incompatibility was so clear to scribes living in a patriarchal culture that they reversed the order of Paul's clauses. Mike does not address this difficulty.

In short, from verse 2 to verse 16, there is not even one express word in the text about men's authority over women. The hierarchical-complementarian interpretation, which portrays this passage as being about authoritative male headship, is a mirage. It is based on faulty reasoning and lack of close attention to the text. It is contrary to the words of Scripture.

Mike says that he is 'on the fence' as regards whether Paul's teaching here is about man and woman or only about husband and wife. Here he is confronted by a dilemma. If he says that Paul's concern is about the authority relationship of *husbands and wives*, his male-authority interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 collapses into nonsense. But if he says that Paul's concern is about the creation-derived authority relationship of *men and women*, then that relationship should logically be applied across all of life, putting all women under the authority of all men with whom they interact, which he is rightly reluctant to do. This unacceptable dilemma is another pointer to his interpretation being mistaken.

In this passage, Paul affirms women and men praying aloud and prophesying in each other's presence, and he places no restriction on the scope of women's participation in vocal ministry. The spiritual unity of men and women in Christ (verse 11) is expressed in the fact that men and women are together leading in worship by praying and prophesying.