

WHAT WINGER PRESENTLY GETS WRONG:

“WOMEN KEEP SILENT” (1 COR 14:34-35)

10 March 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 on one page.

QUICK SUMMARY OF ARTICLE ON 1 COR 14:34-35 by Andrew Bartlett and Terran Williams

Two disputed verses – 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 – state three times, in emphatic language, that women must keep silent and not speak when the church is assembled together.

Trying to understand these two verses in their context presents numerous difficulties, not least that they appear to be in strong conflict with Paul’s surrounding words, which give instructions for both men’s and women’s vocal contributions to corporate worship.

Mike’s video reviews five proposed solutions. He rejects four of them and argues that the real intent of the disputed verses is to prohibit women from taking part in judging (evaluating) prophecies spoken in the assembly.

We examine Mike’s chosen solution and show that it is not a realistically viable interpretation of the text. There are fatal objections to it, which Mike does not answer.

On the assumption that the disputed words are original to Paul, no satisfactory solution for the interpretive issues has yet been found.

Since no one has found an interpretive solution in which we can have confidence, we remain at a loss to know exactly what, if any, restriction is intended, and we cannot be confident of how to apply these verses to churches in different times and cultures

However, one of the proposed solutions is that the two verses do not belong in Paul’s letter: they originated as a comment that someone wrote in the margin, which got added into the main text by mistake. Mike calls this the ‘interpolation’ view.

Mike rejects this view, but he does so without engaging with the writings of respected scholars who have put it forward.

We do understand the concern that removing the two verses may seem just too convenient a way of solving the interpretive difficulties. That was what we thought ourselves, until we examined the evidence.

We show that the interpolation view is the most probable solution, based on the best available evidence. The words should not be there.

This view depends upon the application of the ordinary principles which scholars use to weed out errors in ancient handwritten copies. The characteristics of the manuscript evidence are unique in this particular case. There is no comparable example where the disputed words are judged by scholars to be genuine. Removing the two verses does not threaten any genuine passage of Scripture.