

1 Corinthians 11:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

Analysis

But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering—The contrast: man's long hair is shame (v. 14), woman's long hair is glory (δόξα, doxa). Long hair signifies femininity, beauty, and God's design. The parallel structure (doxa to woman, atimia to man) reinforces gender distinctiveness as divinely ordained, not culturally arbitrary.

For her hair is given her for a covering (ὅτι ἡ κόμη ἀντὶ περιβολαίου δέδοται αὐτῇ)—anti peribolaiou (instead of/in place of a covering) is crucial. Does this mean:

1. hair replaces the need for a veil (making vv. 5-6 contradictory)? Unlikely.
2. Hair is a natural covering that points to the need for an additional symbolic covering in worship? Most likely.

Nature provides a built-in covering (hair), which itself teaches that women should be covered; in worship, an additional covering symbolizes the principle nature already illustrates. Long hair and head covering both signify the same reality: feminine glory under male headship, creational order honored.

Historical Context

Roman and Greek women prized long hair as a sign of beauty and femininity. Hair care was elaborate among wealthy women. Cutting or shaving women's hair was shameful (v. 6). Paul doesn't reject cultural aesthetics but Christianizes them—long

hair isn't vanity but God-given glory that points to deeper theological realities. The covering in worship extends the principle nature establishes through hair: women's beauty and glory are real but should be displayed within proper order, not flaunted autonomously.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does nature (long hair) point to theological truths about gender and glory?
2. What is the relationship between natural covering (hair) and cultural covering (veil)—does one replace the other or reinforce it?
3. How can women embrace their God-given beauty and femininity while avoiding vanity or immodesty?

Interlinear Text

γυνή	δὲ	ἐὰν	κομᾷ	δόξα	αὐτῇ	ἐστιν	ὅτι	ἡ
a woman	But	if	have long hair	a glory	her	it is	for	G3588
G1135	G1161	G1437	G2863	G1391	G846	G2076	G3754	
κόμη	ἀντὶ	περιβολαίου	δέδοται	αὐτῇ				
her hair	for	a covering	is given	her				
G2864	G473	G4018	G1325	G846				
