

1 Corinthians 11:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Analysis

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God—Paul establishes a theological hierarchy using κεφαλή (kephalē, head), which can mean source, authority, or both. The threefold chain—God → Christ → man → woman—grounds the head-covering practice (vv. 4-16) in created order, not mere cultural convention.

This verse is controversial but crucial. Kephalē likely carries both source (Genesis 2:21-23, woman from man) and authority (Ephesians 5:23-24). Critically, **and the head of Christ is God** shows this is not about ontological inferiority—Christ is fully divine—but about economic order within the Trinity (1 Corinthians 15:28). Just as Christ submits to the Father without being less divine, wives' submission to husbands doesn't imply inferior worth or dignity (Galatians 3:28). Paul's theology roots gender roles in creation order and Trinitarian relations, not cultural patriarchy.

Historical Context

Roman Corinth had complex gender norms. Elite Roman women enjoyed significant freedom, while Greek customs were more restrictive. Pagan religious ceremonies often featured ecstatic, gender-bending rites (temple prostitutes, eunuch priests). Paul addresses a church where new freedom in Christ (Galatians

3:28) was being misunderstood as erasure of creational distinctions. Some Corinthian women were apparently discarding head coverings during worship, possibly claiming radical egalitarianism or spiritual superiority.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the Trinity's internal ordering (Father, Son, Spirit) model unity with distinction rather than sameness?
2. In what ways does modern culture confuse equality of worth with sameness of role?
3. How can churches affirm women's equal dignity and spiritual gifts while honoring biblical distinctions in marriage and church leadership?

Interlinear Text

θέλω	δὲ	ὑμᾶς	εἰδέναι	ὅτι	παντὸς	ἀνήρ	ἡ
I would have	But	you	know	that	of every	is the man	G3588
G2309	G1161	G5209	G1492	G3754	G3956	G435	
κεφαλὴ	ό	Χριστοῦ	ἐστιν	κεφαλὴ	δὲ	γυναικὸς	ό
the head	G3588	Christ	G2076	the head	But	of the woman	G3588
G2776		G5547		G2776	G1161	G1135	
ἀνήρ	κεφαλὴ	δὲ	Χριστοῦ	ό	θεός		
is the man	the head	But	Christ	G3588	is God		
G435	G2776	G1161	G5547		G2316		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 3:16 (Parallel theme): Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Colossians 3:18 (Parallel theme): Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Colossians 1:18 (Parallel theme): And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

1 Corinthians 3:23 (References Christ): And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Ephesians 4:15 (References Christ): But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Colossians 2:19 (References God): And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

1 Peter 3:1 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

Colossians 2:10 (Parallel theme): And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: