

# 1 Corinthians 11

Review for the students:

**When had Paul established the church at Corinth?** On his Second Missionary Journey, after speaking on Mars' Hill in Athens

**Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?** Ephesus

**Had Paul written to the church at Corinth before this letter of *1 Corinthians*?** Yes, there are references to an earlier letter (for example: *1 Cor. 5.11*)

**Were the earlier letters inspired?** No – *1 Peter 1.25* says that the Word of God abides forever – Therefore we know those letters were not inspired (because they have not been preserved for us), but we do know they were written

**What was the purpose of this letter?** To answer questions that the church at Corinth had written him as a result of the earlier letters

**What would you say is the general theme of *1 Corinthians* so far?** Bring your conduct into line with your claim of being Christians and members of the Lord's church

**What do we know about the city of Corinth?** Full of sailors, travelers, businessmen, military people (because of its location and the isthmus)

-Corinth was known as the cesspool of the ancient world, with temples to Poseidon (or Neptune) and Aphrodite (or Venus)

## 1 Corinthians 11.1-7

**Please notice about v 1-16:** – In modern accurate translations, there is absolutely no mention of a "veil" for the women or that men should not wear "hats"

-The misunderstandings about this verse (that women have to wear hats or scarves during worship) come from the old American Standard Version (1901 edition)

-That was corrected in the New American Standard Version

-What Paul is talking about is the length of the hair, and he defines the will of God that women should have long hair and men should have short hair (so that there is a distinction of the genders)

Also notice that he does not limit these restrictions to being in worship or being outside of worship

-The misunderstandings from this chapter are cleared up once the reader understands these principles

**V1** – Most commentaries say that this chapter goes with the preceding discussion (his mistake of not accepting pay, not eating meat offered to idols, etc.)

-However, that is not really the case

**V2** – **When was the last time Paul said something good about the church at Corinth?**

-As far as this instructor can determine, it was *1 Cor. 1.4*

-Compare *1 Cor. 11.2* with *11.17* – Paul is getting ready to come down hard on them again

**-How could they be remembering Paul?** Maybe in prayers

-And they had written to him for advice

"Traditions" – since the New Testament was not yet complete, they had to listen carefully to Paul and the other apostles

**V3 – Order in life for husbands and wives?** The husband is to be the leader

-**Christ and his followers?** Christ is to be the leader

-Christ learned obedience and was in the service of the Father (*Phil. 2.8*)

**V4 – "praying and prophesying"** – not necessarily referring to the assembly

**Read 1 Cor. 14.34**

-Notice the prophesying by Agabus – *Acts 21.11ff* – not in worship, but in public

-**Note:** Jewish men wear a skull-cap, but the Greek custom was the opposite – no hat meant freedom

-Slaves would wear a hat to show subjection

-Message of v 4: Paul is just summarizing local customs

**V5 – Principle for God's people?** For a Christian woman to pray and prophesy without a "covering" was to put her in the same class as a prostitute

**V6 –** For a Christian woman to have short hair was the same as having her head shaven (as a prostitute)

**V7 – The principle for Christian men?** Men should not have their heads "covered"

-There is to be a difference between the sexes in appearance (based on the length of their hair)

## **1 Corinthians 11.8-16**

**V 8-9 –** A reference to *Genesis*: the woman came from the man (and therefore is to be in subjection to the man)

**V 10 –** "Because of the angels"

-**Meaning?** Not to offend the angels

-*Heb. 1.14* – Angels are ministering servants sent to assist Christians

-**Message of v 10?** The godly women should have long hair, more than just to please their husbands, but to keep from offending the angels

**V 11 –** However, the woman is not a slave to the man!

-**Meaning of "In the Lord"?** The husband and wife depend on each other

**V 12 – Proof?** A man is born through the woman

**V 13 – Basic principle?** The Christian woman is to pray with her head "covered"

**V 14 –** In almost all cultures this is true – it is innate, not environmental or cultural

-Usually men go bald, but not women

-So men are to have shorter hair than women

**V 15 –** Her long hair was given to her from God as a covering

-God counts long hair as the proper head covering for women

**V 16 – Does Paul give in on this point?** No – this is "standard operating procedure" for all congregations

Summary: Maintain a distinction between the sexes, especially with long hair for women and short hair for men

**-How long is "long"?** Long enough to show that she is a woman

**-How short is "short"?** Short enough to show that he is a man

-Let's not see how close we can come without actually violating this principle!

See *Rev. 9.8* – very interesting – this supports the view that the hair of women should be different from the hair of men

**1 Corinthians 11.17-22** – Next problem at Corinth: A gross misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper had led to great abuses at their love feasts

**V 17 – Why could he not continue to praise them?** The worship service was doing more harm than good

-Think about this: It was better if they had not even assembled for worship than to come together under these circumstances and behave as they did – so the problem was really bad

**V 18** – A worship service had divisions (reference back to *1 Cor. 1*)

-Notice how the word "church" is used here

-It can refer to the church dispersed or to the church assembled

-This distinction is very important in *1 Cor. 14* concerning the question of whether a woman can speak in the "church" or not - So please notice the distinction here

**-Was he talking about the church assembled or the church dispersed?** The church assembled

**-What had Paul heard about their assemblies?** There were divisions among them

**-How had Paul heard these things?** From Chloe's people – *1 Cor. 1.11*

**V 19** – Paul is being a little satirical here

**-Was Paul in favor of factions and divisions in the church?** No (remember *1 Cor. 1*)

**-But at least, what purpose did the factions serve?** To separate the good from the bad (but he was in no way approving of divisions)

-The "faithful few" were becoming obvious (they would stand out)

**V 20 – Is Paul still talking about the church assembled or the church dispersed?** Assembled (for a period of worship)

Paul: You are not eating the Lord's Supper in the right way

-See: *New International Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, p 266, footnote 15

**-What is the satire in v 20?** They wanted to partake of the Lord's Supper, but they had made a mess out of it, so that the end result was that they did not celebrate the Lord's Supper properly

**V 21** – It seems as if they had taken the Lord's Supper and combined it with a fellowship meal (more in v 22)

**-How might someone confuse the two?** Because of the use of the word "supper"

**-Do we have other references to congregations in the first century of Christians eating together?** Yes: *Acts 2.44-46, Jude 12*

**-What abuses were going on at their assemblies?** They were fighting over the food; some were getting drunk; others were not getting enough to eat and were going home hungry  
Notice that they were getting drunk; that would indicate that the church at Corinth was using fermented grape juice for the Lord's Supper

**-Does the New Testament allow us to do that?** Yes, because the Lord only called it the "fruit of the vine"

-But it is in the same category as meat dedicated to an idol (See *1 Cor. 6.12*) – we must be very careful about members with a past history of alcoholism and the appearance before members of the local community

**V 22 – Therefore, under these conditions, what did Paul recommend?** That they eat in their own homes

-For those who would say that we cannot eat in the church building, the question is: "Where is the building mentioned in this chapter (or anywhere else in the New Testament)?"

-It is not mentioned – Paul says nothing about a building – rather, it is the assembly

-So churches which forbid eating in the building have really missed the point

-They should not be eating together anywhere (house, park, church building, community center, etc.) if they are abusing the Lord's Supper and the fellowship meals

-However, he really does not condemn eating at an assembly (as we will see later in this chapter), but just not eating together when there is going to be abuse of the Lord's Supper and the fellowship meal

## **1 Corinthians 11.23-29**

**V 23a – Where had Paul gotten his information?** From the Lord

**-When had he delivered it to them?** When he preached for the church in Corinth – he had preached on the Lord's Supper

-So they knew the truth about this matter

**V 23b-24 – What was the original order for the Lord's Supper?** The Lord took the bread and gave thanks for it

-He broke it and passed it around

-That should be the same order that we follow today

**Read Matt. 26.26, Mark 14.2, and Luke 22.19**

**-Was the actual breaking of the bread an example for us to follow?** No – when he fed the multitudes, he also "broke" the bread (See: *Matt. 15.36, Mark 6.41, Mark 8.20, Luke 9.16*)

-Because they did not have sliced bread, it was necessary to break it to share it with the other people who were gathered there

**V 25 – What was the next part of the Lord's Supper?** Taking the fruit of the vine

**-What was the purpose of the grape juice?** Again, to remind us of the Lord

- You cannot have grape juice without a cup, so the word "cup" refers to the grape juice
- Those who believe that we must use one cup are mistaken

**V 26 – How long are we to partake of the Lord's Supper?** Until he comes again

- Those who believe in the Max King doctrine (also called the AD 70 doctrine – that Christ returned in AD 70, the earth was destroyed at that time, the dead were raised, and the judgment took place then) have a very, very difficult time with this passage
- If they really believe that the Lord returned at that time, then they should not be taking Communion today
- This also applies to other groups who believe in a secret return of Jesus Christ in 1914, etc.
- Why will we not need to take the Lord's Supper when we are with Jesus in heaven?** Because we will not need to be reminded of him; we will be with him

**V 27 – Does this say that we have to consider ourselves worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper (as many people think)?** No

- This verse is about partaking of it in an unworthy manner
- What would be a unworthy manner?** With proper seriousness, whispering, passing notes during the Lord's Supper, thinking about other things
- What is the significance of partaking in an unworthy manner?** We are guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (compare with *Heb. 10.26-29* – trampling on the body of Jesus Christ because of unfaithful attendance)

**V 29 – What therefore are we to do during the Lord's Supper?** Examine ourselves (not other people)

- We are to think about our need for the blood of Christ to cover us, then partake of it

**V 29 – It is very important to partake of the Lord's Supper in the right manner**

- Why was Paul going through all of this?** Because of the reckless manner that they had in partaking of the Lord's Supper at the church at Corinth
- So Paul wanted them to understand the seriousness of what was going on at this point in our worship

## **1 Corinthians 11.30-34**

**V 30 – What had been the result of abusing the Lord's Supper?** Some were sick; others were dead

- What incident in the book of Acts shows that God is very serious about the Christian faith?** The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira
- This verse here should indicate how serious God is about remembering the death of his son in the Lord's Supper

**V 31 – Message:** If we partake of the Lord's Supper properly, then God will be pleased

**V 32 – What is Paul referring to again?** The fact that God punished some for abusing Communion (v 30)

**V 33** – Very important: **Are we allowed to have congregational meals together?** Yes – so in v 22, he was only talking about the abuse of congregational meals

-**IF** people are going to get drunk, fight over food, etc., then don't eat together, but the Bible allows and encourages love feasts at the local church

-Paul says that when they do behave better, they should come back together for a church fellowship (in whatever place they have been meeting)

**V 34** – But again: "If you are starving, eat at home"

-**What does this tell us about the main purpose of our pot-luck dinners? To eat?** No, to have fellowship with each other

**V 34b** – We assume that Paul had dealt with only the worst abuses of the Lord's Supper; the more minor details he would deal with when he got there

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