



Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association

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Dear Christian Friends,

The enclosed booklet, ***WOMEN'S ADORNMENT—What Does the Bible Really Say?*** has been sent to you as a **gift**. It could have been offered for a price—or free upon request. But this way, you have the booklet with no further action required!

Because there are Christian people who (freely) choose to send offerings—some each month, some from time to time—financial needs for this ministry are supplied. I do not have to beg for money. There is no pressure on anyone to give. But, for those who would like to have a part, offerings will be gratefully received.

When I was a teenager, being old enough to read the Bible for myself, I came to realize there were things in the Bible I had *never heard*. AND, some things I had heard—somewhat to my surprise—were *not in the Bible!* This was intriguing. So, like the noble Bereans, I had a desire to “search the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Back over the years, there have been Christian groups that have set up what they believed were standards of Bible “holiness.” Many were rules about women’s adornment:

Women are not to wear slacks; only dresses are proper clothing for women.

Sleeves must cover the elbows.

Women are not to use makeup—Jezebel “painted her face”!

Women are not to wear jewelry: rings, earrings, bracelets or necklaces.

Women’s hair must be long, which means (according to some), hair that is left uncut.

We respect Christian people who sincerely believe they are following standards of Bible holiness. But the question before us is: “What does the **Bible** really say?”

It can be shown from the Bible that Israelite women—and men!—wore *earrings* (Exod. 32:2, 3; 35:22). While this falls short of being a “commandment” to do so, if wearing jewelry was *forbidden* by God, references like this would have been the ideal place to make that point. To the contrary, *many* verses speak of jewelry in a positive way (Isa. 61:10; Jer. 2:32; Pro. 25:12; Ezek. 16:11, 12; etc.).

Years ago, there were some churches that wasted time preaching against rings, even a *wedding ring!* In time, fortunately, quite a few of these have now come to understand how fruitless this was.

When the Prodigal Son repented and returned to his father’s house, he was given a fine robe and a **ring** was placed on his finger (Lk. 15:22). This story is commonly used to illustrate how God will welcome the sinner who forsakes the world and returns to Him. Obviously, then, if wearing a ring is *sinful*, the whole point of the story would be greatly weakened.

Following Job’s time of adversity, “all” his brothers, sisters, and friends “each gave him a **ring** of gold” (Job 42:11). He must have had a lot of rings! Some translations say “earrings.” It can also be shown from Scripture that Job’s daughters—described as “most beautiful”—wore eye makeup.

Peter and Paul each spoke of a woman's **inner** beauty being more important than her **outward** adornment. But this use of a common Hebrew idiom *did not do away with outward adornment*. As *Halley's Bible Handbook* explains: This does not prohibit a woman's desire to be attractive in personal appearance, but rather is a caution against *overdoing* it, remembering that no amount of finery can substitute for a gracious Christian personality.

Issues about hair have become major doctrines for some—how *long* for a woman, how *short* for a man, etc. *One* verse seems to say it is “a shame for a man to have long hair.” But *many* verses speak of men (who were not shameful) who had long hair. Surely the **heart** is more important than **hair**!

In Muslim countries, it is considered a “holiness” requirement for millions of women to cover their hair. Newscasts from that part of the world show how widespread this is. If Muslim women desire to cover their hair (and even their faces), this should be a choice *they* make—not because laws *force* them to do so!

It is commonly supposed that Paul (1 Corinthians 11) required women to wear head coverings when praying or prophesying. But as the enclosed booklet shows, there is a better explanation. “We have no such custom,” Paul said, “neither the churches of God”!

Some suppose that in New Testament times Jewish women—and women in general—wore coverings over their hair when in public. This is simply not true. How could a teaching about women wearing head coverings while prophesying or praying be an issue, if women **always** wore head coverings in public?

Two portions of Scripture speak against Christian women wearing extreme hair styles that would draw attention to the *external*, rather than their *inner* beauty (1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3,4). But this tells us something else. If women *always* wore head coverings in public, what difference would their hair style make if it was covered?

When Judah saw a woman with her head and face covered, he assumed she was a prostitute (Gen. 38:15). Surely, then, this was *not* the type of covering worn by women *in general*.

The enclosed booklet, **WOMEN'S ADORNMENT**, discusses all of these things—and *more*!

There has been much on the news about the Israel and Gaza conflict. It is sad to see the hurt, destruction, and loss of life, especially for innocent people.

In 1983, traveling with a group of ministers from Jerusalem to Cairo (Egypt), our bus broke down south of Gaza. We were stranded there several hours by some palm trees and sand dunes, within view of the Mediterranean Sea. Reminiscent of ancient times, a train of pack animals (camels) passed along a trail at the edge of the sand dunes and crossed the highway near our bus. While waiting, some of us walked along the highway, but were warned about landmines in the area.

Gaza is mentioned in Scripture about 20 times, starting clear back in Genesis 10:19. It was on the Gaza Road that Philip led the Ethiopian official to Christ (Acts 8:26). And, there is also the case of Samson. After Delilah had a *man* cut off his hair, the Philistines put out his eyes, brought him to a prison in **Gaza**, where he also died (Judges 16:19-21).

Samson, at Gaza, was made to **grind** in the prison. I think we can assume (as with most commentators) this meant to grind grain into flour at a mill, a job commonly assigned to women, slaves, or donkeys. But—and this is mentioned only in passing—some of the old Rabbis, like Rabbi Yohanan, gave “grind” a sexual meaning, citing Job 31:10. According to this teaching, Philistine women were brought to Samson to be impregnated by him, presumably to pass on his great strength to offspring.

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you...and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

Yours in HIM,

Ralph Woodrow

