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The Woman And HER ADORNMENTS



By Rev. C. Hutchinson

Principal,
Berean Bible College
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

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Many people will consider such a subject too personal to be discussed in this manner, but countless discussions arise about various phases of the question, and it is high time we knew what the Bible actually declares about it. The remarks we shall make will be delivered impersonally, and in a strictly analytical sense, that the meaning of the Scriptures quoted might be fully understood.

THE PROBLEM EXAMINED

Let us consider the three-fold nature of the problem.

FIRST: - It is a Christian problem. What we here write is for Christians only. The world expects its women to be highly ornamented, or "glamourized", with every conceivable addition of paint and decorative jewelry and striking clothing. It expects its women to compete with each other in making themselves "attractive" to draw attention to themselves and to their so-called "charms". It is well to read the list of such ornamentations, as God wrote it in Isaiah 3:18-24. What a list that is! Apparently God takes careful note of a woman's ornaments! Now note an important point. The judgment of God was not here pronounced on these THINGS, as such, but on the heart attitude they had helped to produce in the women of Israel. Read carefully verse 16 of this chapter. It was the pride and haughtiness and wantonness that these self-glorifying ornaments had produced that God utterly condemned. Notice the unusual word "mincing" in this passage. I have heard that interpreted as meaning that they were chewing gum! No, chewing gum was not invented then! The root of this word means "to trip along coquettishly". Now the world expects that women will do that, and men will probably whistle as they go by! But God expects something too, of His children. Thus this problem is for you Christian women. It does not remotely concern the worldling. If all we can do is ape the world, then we have not found God's standards for us, for surely His

standards are higher than those of the world, the flesh and the devil.

SECOND: - It is not a material problem, but one which concerns spiritual values. It is a deep problem involving the very purposes of life, the very goal of our existence. What should be the goal of a Christian's life before the eyes of the world? I believe it is set forth vividly in I Cor. 6:20, where we read in part; "Therefore glorify God in your body". GLORIFY GOD! That means to make God glorious in the sight of all men. The word "glorify" comes from the same Greek root that we use in our word "doxology". You are to glorify God "in your body". That is most important. We are to put God first, and so live and dress and speak as to show that God is first in our lives. Everybody who sees us ought to see that fact! That ought to be our goal.

THIRD: - This is an especially feminine problem. Because of the relative position of submission God assigns to the woman, she is to fear all semblance of self-exaltation. Her great enemy, her supreme temptation, is pride, as it was with the first woman, Eve. Examine I Cor. 11:3 and I Tim. 2:12-13 as to woman's proper position. Thus Satan especially tempts women, through their tendency to fancy adornments, to become proud and SELF-GLORIFYING, instead of living to the glory of God. Women have these special temptations that men know little about.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Now, with these three things in mind, examine what the Bible has to say about the adornments of a woman. Here are two very important Scriptures that every Christian woman should examine most carefully. Read I Tim. 2:9-10 and I Peter 3:1-6. These Scriptures tell us what SHOULD be the adornments of a woman, and what SHOULD NOT be her adornments. Here we read about clothes, about the face, about the hair, about gold, pearls, costly array and a meek and quiet spirit.

Let us first clear away some misapprehensions. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with these various material things. They are all good in their place. Gold is not an evil metal; nor are pearls wicked jewels. These things are UNMORAL; that is, they are neither good nor bad in themselves. NOR DOES THE BIBLE FORBID WOMEN TO WEAR THEM! We read here of apparel, yet it is evident that a woman is to wear apparel of some sort. Some folks refuse to wear a wedding ring simply because it is made of gold. God does not forbid the WEARING of gold. I would rather see a married woman wearing a wedding ring than not. I believe she ought to proclaim her loyalty to her husband, publicly and positively. The FAULT lies in the USE of these things, when they are used for PERSONAL ADORNMENT to bring self-glory, instead of the body glorifying God.

Now examine each of the things involved, regarding the use of them:

CLOTHES: -God is an expert on what a woman should wear. And He says there are two important things that a Christian woman ought always to keep in mind. First, that her clothing is to be modest, Second, that it is not to be a "costly array". She is not to make a display of either her feminine form or her material wealth, to the glory of self, or for self-gratification.

FACE: -The painting of the face is often a controversial matter, especially in the "fundamentalist" circles. Well, the Bible speaks about face-painting, and surely it ought to be warning enough for any woman who loves her Lord to know that He always associates face-painting with that which is evil and vile. Read Jer. 4:30. That is spoken of Israel as a woman trying to attract her "lovers" for lustful purposes. That may sound like a "hard saying", but it is a Bible saying! Again in Ezek. 23:36-37, 40 we find a similar picture of Israel. Here she is pictured as a harlot painting herself to attract men. In II Kings 9:30 we read of that wicked, cruel, self-ex-

alting, immoral woman Jezebel, painting her face to influence the young captain Jehu. By the way, it is interesting to know that an expedition, sponsored by Harvard University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the British School of Archeology and the Palestine Exploration Fund, has found in Samaria the very ruins of Ahab's "Ivory House", and in it the very saucers, small stone boxes, in which Jezebel mixed her cosmetics. They had a number of small holes to contain the various colour; kohl for black; turquoise for green; ochre for red; and a central depression for mixing. They still hold traces of the red. So now we know even the colours wicked Jezebel used on her face! She used these colours for self-glorification, to attract men to herself for evil purposes. What should a Christian woman do, as she seeks to glorify, not self, but God?

HAIR: -What does a woman's hair symbolize in the Bible? It speaks of her sweet, loving submission to God. So when Jerusalem rebelled against Him, God said that she should "cut off her hair", the symbol of her submission which she had cast aside. Read this in Jer. 7:28-29. In the New Testament we find Mary using her hair to show her love and submission to Christ. Read this in John 12:3. Why did she not use a towel or cloth. Because she wanted to openly demonstrate her utter submission to her Lord. Yet the adornment and arrangement of the hair can be perverted to the glorification of SELF, to show off, to attract praise and to make the owner thereof proud and vain. A Christian woman ought to be most careful of the way in which her hair is arranged.

GOLD: -There is nothing wrong with gold itself, as we have already said, just as there is nothing wrong with "well-set hair" or proper clothing, God often used gold, in the construction of both Tabernacle and Temple. It is used in the Bible as a symbol of Deity, of God Himself BUT the trouble comes when a woman uses this to glorify herself, as a self-adornment. It is almost as though she were saying "Worship me and my beauty". And

all self-glory is SIN. Read Rev. 17:4 and see how both gold and pearls are used by this harlot who symbolizes false religion. She takes to herself the symbols of God's nature and God's work to glorify herself.

PEARLS: - These are similar to the gold in that they are not necessarily evil in nature. They are used in the Bible to signify God's purchased possessions, the ones He has loved, and for whom He has died. They symbolize the spiritual beauty of the church of Jesus Christ. Thus there is a strange perversion when a woman uses these to exalt her own personal beauty, for self-glorification. The sight of pearls ought to fill us with deep humility and thanksgiving as they tell us of the perfect life laid down for lost sinners.

EAR-RINGS: - While these are not specifically mentioned in the two Scriptures we read about a woman's adornments, they form part of the ornaments often used by women, and in ancient times by men also. The wearing of ear-rings has often been questioned by Christian people. Is it right or not? What is wrong with them, if anything? How do they differ from other ornaments or jewels? The Bible teaches us that where the ear is involved, there is a real and important meaning. The marking of the ear signifies that the person involved is a servant or slave to some one or something. Read Exod. 21:5-7 carefully. Here the servant, having fulfilled his contract, is shown as having such affection for his master that he does not want to leave him, but to remain his bond-slave forever. In such a case the ear was bored through, and usually a ring inserted, probably bearing the name or seal of the owner. Now in Psalm 40:6 we read a prophecy concerning the Messiah, that His ear was reckoned as "opened" or pierced, marking Him as God's perpetual Servant, as He is called in many other Scriptures. In Heb. 10:5-7 we find this Scripture quoted and applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, occupying a "prepared body" as God's servant. The ears of the Lord Jesus were constantly given to God. And so we see that an ear-ring is the Badge of slavery, perpetual servitude.

Now notice that sometimes the ear-ring symbolized slavery to that which was quite evil in nature. In Genesis 35:4 we have a remarkable instance of this. Jacob was called by God to return to Bethel, the "House of God", to worship Him. In the meantime his wives had accumulated other "gods" or idols. So of course, before going to Bethel, these idols had to be put away, and so they buried them under an oak tree. Now see this remarkable fact. They buried their EAR-RINGS with the idols! Why? Because they were associated with that false worship. Whatever they were like, they signified allegiance to false gods, and were not fit for the house of the true God. Now turn to another striking reference to ear-rings. Read Hosea 2:13. Here it is evident that the Israelites who turned away from God put on ear-rings for the worship of Baal. This is the opposite of the action of Jacob's wives. These rings were fashioned so as to mark the wearers as Baal-worshippers. Everybody could recognize them as such. They were marks of identification, of devotion as slaves to Baal. What they were like had better not be even imagined. Baal-worship involved sexual orgies of the most lewd and debased order, or rather disorder. These ear-rings signified that. Why are ear-rings worn today? Too often for self-worship, self-glory, as a slave to fashion and pride. And self-glory is a sin to the Christian.

But look at yet another Scripture. Read Gen. 24:22, 29-30. Here we see the servant of Abraham coming to find a bride for Isaac, and being led of God to Rebekkah. When he found her, he put a ring upon her ear, and when her brother saw it, it was a testimony to him that his sister now belonged to somebody. All this is symbolic of the Holy Spirit seeking a Bride, the Church, for the Lord Jesus Christ, but surely God would not have used this symbol of the ear-ring if it were an evil thing! What was on that ornament? Perhaps it bore the name of her future bridegroom, Isaac. Certainly, in wearing it, she was pledging herself to him, as today a girl may wear

an engagement ring. She wore it not as a self-glorifying thing, but rather to point to her bridegroom, and declare her allegiance to him. Perhaps, on this basis, an ear-ring could well be designed that would be pleasing to God! Perhaps one marked with the words of John 3:16 would please Him. Perhaps it would be even more fitting if the ear-ring bore the words, "I am a Christian" or "I love the Lord Jesus Christ" or "Jesus Christ is my Lord and Master" in words large enough for the world to see and read clearly! I wonder how many would wear such ear-rings?

THE CHRISTIAN GOAL OF LIFE

Today God is looking for women who will dare to live **FOR HIM, TO HIS GLORY ALONE**. He wants wholesome, clean, pure, surrendered lives, with the meek and quiet spirit, wholly submissive to His will. He wants those who will "Do all to the glory of God", who will "Glorify God" in the body. He wants Christian women to ponder well the clothes she puts on, the fixing of the hair, the ornaments she uses, on the basis of this question: "Will this glorify God, or myself?" Perhaps someone will say: "But I will be so different from others". Of course you will! **GOD INTENDS US TO BE DIFFERENT**. And God help us if there is no visible difference between us and the world! May God stir every Christian now living to walk worthy of our high calling, living all-out for God, to **HIS GLORY ALONE**.