

What is the “Covering”?



The Meaning of “Katakalupto”

*1 Cor. 11:4, “Every man praying or prophesying, **having his head covered**, dishonoreth his head. (5) But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her **head uncovered** dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. (6) For if the woman **be not covered**, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her **be covered**. (15) But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a **covering**.”*

According to *Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*, “cover” is translated from the Greek verb, *katakalupto*, #2619, and means “cover with a veil”; also, defined in *Strong’s* #2619 as, “to cover wholly, i.e. veil.” *Vine’s* states “to cover oneself” used in 1 Cor. 11:6-7 is translated “veiled” in the RV. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* defines *katakalupto* as, “to veil; mid. To veil one’s self, be veiled or covered, 1 Cor. 11:6,7.” *Katakalupto* is a compound word of *kata*, meaning “down,” and *kalupto*, meaning “to cover up.” This covering that hands down is best described by the English word, “**veil**.”

“Covering” in v15 is translated from the noun, *peribolaion*, and defined in *Strong’s* #4018 as, “something *thrown around* one, i.e. a mantle, veil:--covering, vesture. *Peribolaion*, lit. denotes “something thrown around” (*peri*, “around,” *ballo*, “to throw”); hence, (1) “a veil, covering,” 1 Cor. 11:15...” *Vine’s* states *peribolaion* is rendered “a veil” in the KJV marg. of 1 Cor. 11:15.

The UPCI teaching denies the subject of the passage of 1 Cor. 11:3-16 is veiling, but that the “covering” referred to in vv 4-6 is the “long hair” of v 15 and not the head-covering that was a part of ancient Biblical dress. To support this view Daniel Segraves, author of *Hair Length in*

the Bible, totally rejects the Greek dictionary's translation and definition of *katakalupto* as "veil." From his book, p23, Segraves writes,

"It is wrong to say that the verb *cover* means *veil*. ...*Katakalupto* does not mean "veil." It is formed from *kata*, a preposition meaning "down from" or "down upon," and *kalupto*, meaning "to cover, hide, or conceal." The Greek text of verses 4-7 teaches that a man's head is to be uncovered and a woman's head is to be covered; it does not say what the covering is. Moreover, *katakalupto* in verse 6 is a verb, while *peribolaion* in verse 15 is a noun. They cannot be interchanged." P28: "...in v15 Paul states unequivocally that a woman's long hair takes the place of an item of dress."

Segraves only defines *kata* and *kalupto* – not the entire compound word – and declares that the identity of the "covering" is left un-defined but is plainly stated in v15. Even though *peribalaion* is a noun, the verb form is *periballo*, and the correct grammatical form of the verb, *periballo*, IS used INTERCHANGEABLY with the verb, *katakalupto*, in the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Here we see *katakalupto* and *periballo* both mean "veil."

Genesis 38:14, 15 "Tamar...covered (*periebale*) her with a veil... When Judah saw her he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered (*katekalupsato*) her face.

Segraves states on p24,

"...the KJV translation "having his head covered" is a literal rendering, and it leaves open the question of the nature of the covering."

A literal translation simply means the sentence was translated word-for-word, with no paraphrasing or amplifying, but a literal translation does not leave the nature of the covering a deep mystery. The Greek speaking Christians in 1st century Corinth would recognize Paul's usage of the **common idiom** referring to an external material head-covering, thus precluding long hair from being the covering in question. This is the only reasonable conclusion consistent with the ancient Greco-Roman culture.

The word group which includes the words translated "cover" and "uncover" in vv 5,6,7 and 13 is not used elsewhere to refer to the hair. In the Greek *Septuagint* usage of *kalupto* (also: *apokalupto*, *katakalumma*, *katakalupto*, *kalumma*, *krupto*, *sunkaumma*, and *sunkalupto*) refers to an **external fabric covering** over 80 times but never once to long hair:¹

- Gen. 28:15 – "...she had **covered** her face..." (with a veil – Gen. 38:14)
- Ex. 28:42 – "...make them linen breeches to **cover** their nakedness..."
- Num. 5:18 – "And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and **uncover** the woman's head..." (her hair also uncovered—not cut)
- Ruth 3:4,7 – "and thou shalt go in, and **uncover** his feet..." "...she came softly, and **uncovered** his feet..." (a blanket)
- Esther 6:12 – "...and having his head **covered**..." (his hair also covered)

¹ "No More Excuses!", by A.A. Bieler

In v4 the expression translated “having his head covered” literally means “having down on a head.” In the Greek it is *kata* (down) *kephales* (head) *echon* (having.) *Kata kephales* (=‘down the head’) is found in the *Septuagint* in Esther 6:12. In the Greek OT we read that Haman went to his house “mourning down on a head” (*lypoumenos kata kephales*)—a way of saying he put something over his head to show his mourning. Obviously, Haman did not grow long hair.² (“*And Mordecai came again to the king’s gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.*”)

The minority of Biblical teachers, who believe the “covering” is long hair, point to the absence of a noun naming the identity of the “covering” in the phrase, *kata kephales echon*, but there is no noun in Esther. According to Dr. Richard Oster in *When Men Wore Veils to Worship: the Historical Context of 1 Cor. 11:4*, the “argument from silence” is not valid. Dr. Oster states, “It is clear from Greek and Latin texts the argument based on the absence of (a noun) in 1:4 is specious. In a score of examples from Plutarch that refer to a head covering or the lack of it, there is no consistent pattern for describing the wearing of the head covering. The noun is often lacking, though on occasion “*to himation*” is used. Often in Greek sources the term “head” was not to be found. On the basis of silence, is one to conclude that some other part of the body was being covered since the term *kephales* is not specifically employed? Moreover, the Latin sources that mention head coverings often do not mention the garment that covers the head, but only that the head is covered—*capite velato*.”

Plutarch, in his *Sayings of the Romans*, speaks of Scipio the Younger walking through Alexandria “having the garment down the head” (*kata tes kephales echon to himation*), meaning that he concealed his head with part of his toga to avoid being recognized by the people.³

Dr. Oster further explains, “When describing individuals wearing head coverings Plutarch demonstrates that *kata kephales echon* can refer to something **resting on the head**. Greek literature contemporary with the NT demonstrates that the phrase *kata kephales* can clearly mean ‘**on the head**,’ and Dr. Oster cites Plutarch and Josephus.⁴

The noun forms of this word group, *katakalupsis* and *katakalumma*, both meaning “covering” are not found in the NT, but *katakalupsis* does occur in the second century Christian writing, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Visions 4, 2, 1: “...a virgin arrayed as if she were going forth from a bride-chamber, all in white and with white sandals, veiled up to her forehead, and her head-covering [*katakalupsis*] consisted of a turban, and her hair was white.⁵ Here again it is obvious that the covering is not hair, but a turban. *Katakalumma* occurs in the Greek OT in Isaiah 47:2 where it refers to a head-covering. In 47:2-3 we read, “Take the millstones, and grind meal: **uncover thy locks** [*apolilupsai to katakalumma*, which meant to remove your veil—not cut the hair] uncover the thigh [*or take off the skirt—anakalupsai tas polias--...*] Thy nakedness shall be uncovered (*anakaluphthesetai*.)” Once again the covering is cloth or fabric.⁶

² “No Such Custom,” by Bruce Terry pp6-7; <http://www.bible.ovc.edu/terry/articles/headcovr.htm>

³ Plutarch’s, “Moralia”, *Saying of Romans*, Scipio the Younger, 13. Vol. III (trans.) Frank Cole Babbitt in Leob Classical Library ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp 190-191. “Women Who Pray or Prophecy: 1 Cor. 11:3-16,” p4; Witherington

⁴ Josephus *De bello Judaico libri vii* 2.48; *Antiquitates Judaicae* 1.50; 5.252; 13.117 and Plutarch *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* 200F; *Aetia Romana et Graeca* 267D; *Vitae decem oratorum* 842B; *Pyrrhus* 399B; *Pompeius* 640C; *Cesar* 739D

⁵ J.B. Lightfoot (trans.) “The Apostolic Fathers”, ed. J.R. Harmer [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967] p180 “No Such Custom,” by Bruce Terry <http://www.bible.ovc.edu/terry/articles/headcovr.htm>

⁶ “Head Coverings in Public Worship,” by Brian Schwertley; p5

“Uncovered” in vv 5 and 13 translates *akatakaluptos* and is found nowhere else in the NT and only once in the Greek OT. One manuscript contains the word in Leviticus 13:45 where it is said that one with a leprous baldness should “uncover” his head. It is obvious “uncover” does not mean cutting off the hair.

Philo, the Greek philosopher, used the word for “uncovered” to mean with a cloth removed.⁷

THE HEAD AND HAIR BOTH COVERED

Hair was always covered up when the head was *katakalupto*. According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, the general custom for women was to “appear in public, and in the presence of strange men, with covered HAIR.”⁸ According to the *Talmud*, a man could divorce his wife for “going into public with uncovered HEAD.”⁹ Uncovering the HAIR in public amounted to proof of adultery in Jewish estimation. This is from the Oral Law of the Jews, that is, what the daughters of Israel follow though it be not written. In that section of the *Talmud* called “Sotah”, which treats of unchaste women, under the sub-head, Of the duty of Repudiation of a Wife for adultery, we learn that this duty rested upon a Jew whose wife was seen abroad with her HAIR not covered.¹⁰ From *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, by Alfred Edersheim, p142:

“... it was most strictly enjoined upon women to have their **HEAD and HAIR** carefully covered. ...the propriety of a woman having her head “covered” could not be called in question. ...it was the custom in the case of a woman accused of adultery to have her hair “shorn or shaven”, at the same time using this formula: “Because thou hast departed from the manner of the daughters of Israel, who go with their HEAD covered;...therefore that has befallen thee which thou hast chosen.” An unveiled Jewish wife might then be tried for adultery; and when so tried, be “shorn or shaven.”¹¹

Catherine Clark Kroeger, PH.D., expert on ancient women, says, “...head-covering was expedient for Jewish women, among whom properly **bound hair and veiling** was obligatory unless they wished a divorce. Speaking to a man without a head-covering was a sure sign of a woman’s promiscuity, and to participate in a service unveiled would be a flagrant defiance of her husband, hardly conducive of positive family relations.

Upper-class Roman women might go uncovered, but the lower-class women in the provinces usually wore a veil. The women of Paul’s home town Tarsus were routinely veiled...Since the congregation at Corinth met next door to the synagogue and was composed of both Jewish and Gentile women, universal veiling of women would certainly cause the least offense.”¹²

In both Greek and Hebrew tradition a woman’s veil was a symbol of chastity.¹³ Kluane Spake states in *You are Acceptable to Me*, “Jewish women wore their hair bound up in public

⁷ Schreiner, 126, “Women Who Pray or Prophecy: 1 Cor. 11:3-16”

⁸ “Christian Debatorial Works” http://memberstripod.com/debatorial_works/id303_m.htm

⁹ Ketubah 7.6

¹⁰ “Paul’s Real Teaching as to Veiling,” Bushnell <http://www.godswordtowomen.org/lesson%2032.htm>

¹¹ “Paul’s Real Teaching as to Veiling,” Bushnell <http://www.godswordtowomen.org/lesson%2032.htm>

¹² “The Apostle Paul and the Greco-Roman Cults of Women”, by Catherine Kroeger, Library Bob Jones University, Greenville, S.C.

¹³ “An Inquiry into Evidence of Maenadism in the Corinthian Congregation,” by Richard & Catherine Clark Kroeger

because unbound hair was almost considered as nudity, or immorality.” The women in the church at Corinth were not only required to keep their heads veiled while they prayed and prophesied, but the hair also had to be bound to the head after the manner of Jewish women.

READING THE MEANING BACK INTO THE PASSAGE

It renders the passage confusing to substitute long hair for the “covering”. If “covered” refers to having “long hair,” and “not covered” to a head from which hair has been cut, and “shorn” means “cut” (any length), verse 6 is senseless.

“For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn:”
(Would be saying, in effect:)

“For if the woman [*has cut hair from her head*], let her also [*cut her hair*]”

A woman who has cut her hair cannot be commanded to cut her hair again. Replacing the key words with the correct Greek definitions, the verse can be clearly understood:

“For if the woman [*appears without her head veiled*], let her also [*cut off her hair*]: but if it be a shame for a woman to [*have shortly cut hair*] or [*hair shaved with a razor*], let her [*wear a veil on her head.*]

Nothing in the passage means “hair” except the very word, “hair”, itself, otherwise the Apostle was referring to a woman’s veil, or ancient headdress.

PRAYING OR PROPHESYING

According to the Apostle’s injunctions the only time a woman’s head was to be covered and a man’s head uncovered was WHEN praying and prophesying. This lets us know the “covering” was of a temporal nature—something that could be taken off and put back on, which rules out hair.

The UPCI tract, *The Scriptural Teaching on Hair*, states:

“...none of the churches of God had a custom of allowing men to pray or prophesy with their heads covered with long, uncut hair. Nor did they permit women to pray or prophesy unless their heads were covered with long, uncut hair.”

How ridiculous! Paul refers to “nature” with respect to hair, but to *sunetheia* (“custom”) with respect to the wearing of a head-covering. The custom to which Paul referred was NOT growing long hair.

The author of the tract totally ignores the women slaves in the congregation. Growing long hair was only permitted for FREE women. Female slaves were recognized by their short hair cuts or shaved heads.¹⁴ The Corinthian woman prophet, who was a slave when called, is probably still a slave as Paul writes, or he would hardly bring in the example of slavery to confirm the rule for remaining married as when called (7:21-24). The general determination is

¹⁴ “Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History,” by Victoria Sherrow

that the Corinthian Christian community was mixed-caste, approximately half slave and half free.¹⁵ God showed no distinction between bond or free (Gal. 3:28). Women slaves in the Corinthian Church prayed, spoke in tongues and prophesied in customary short hair cuts equally with free women in long hair. The presence of women slaves in the church is proof that hair length is a cultural issue—not a salvational one—also the impossibility of the “covering” being long hair.

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE

It is **linguistically impossible** for the “covering” of vv4-6 to be the “hair” of v15! Although understanding the grammatical structure of the original Greek can assist in understanding a text, the English grammatical structure of these verses does not mean a thing, but the UPCI draws attention to it in their tract *The Scriptural Teaching on Hair*:

“The covering mentioned in this passage is the woman’s **uncut** hair. Verse 15 is the only place the word “uncovered” and “covered” appear.¹⁶ These two words are adjectives; they do not declare what is the covering. But verse 15 specifically says, “Her hair is given her for a covering.”

It is correct that “uncovered” and “covered” in ENGLISH are verbs used as adjectives to modify the noun, “HEAD,” whereas, “long” and “short” are English adjectives describing “hair,” but, *katakalupto* and *akatakaluptos* are **Greek VERBS**. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* states that *katakalupto* is a **verb** in the **Middle Voice**.

In English verbs are either active or passive. If the subject of the sentence is executing the action, then the verb is referred to as being in the active voice. If the subject of the sentence is being acted upon, then the verb is referred to as being in the passive voice. But, in Greek there is a **third voice** which shows the subject acting in his own interest or on his own behalf, or participating in the results of the verbal action. For example, “I *am washing myself*.” The subject performs the action and yet is receiving the action.¹⁷ Thus, with “having his head covered” the subject performs the action of “covering” and is receiving the action of “being covered.” So, Paul is not describing the noun, “hair,” as being “cut” (“uncovered head”) and “uncut” (“covered head”) but is speaking of **reflexive ACTION**. Therefore, **“having long hair” and “being covered” are NOT interchangeable.**

THE GREEK WORD ANTI

As his final “proof” that the “hair” of v15 is the “covering” of vv4-6 Segraves bases his argument on his *preferred* definition of the Greek word, *anti*, translated “for” in v15. From p37 of *Hair Length in the Bible*:

“Long, uncut hair is given to a woman instead of a veil.

¹⁵ “The Corinthian Women Prophets,” by Antoinette Clark Wire; pp64-65

¹⁶ Evidently the author or the Publishing House made a mistake. These words appear in vv4-6, not v15

¹⁷ “Greek Verbs (Shorter Definitions)”, http://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm

...the word *for* in the phrase “her hair is given her for a covering” is translated from the Greek *anti*, a word which means “against” or “instead of”. This is the meaning of the word according to Dana and Mantey’s *Grammar*, Bauer’s *Lexicon*, Thayer’s *Lexicon*, and Gingrich’s *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek NT*.”

Gingrich’s *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek NT*, p17, states the definition as “*for, AS, in place of.*” But, Segraves totally omits “**AS**”—the meaning that fits the context. This is also the definition found in Arndt and Gingrich, p73, and A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the NT*, p162. Here *anti* does not refer to a **replacement** but to an **equivalent**.

When many Christians see the word, “for”, it is assumed it is the same English “for” as in Acts 2:38 “for the remission of sins”. We are baptized “to be” saved; thus women are given hair “to be” covered. The NIV, to which Segraves refers, even “helps” them believe this. But, the Greek word translated “for” in Acts is not the same Greek word in 1 Cor. In Acts the word is *eis*.

In the Greek OT *anti* is most often used as a word of comparison, such as, “an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth.” This phrase indicates equivalency, and *anti* is a word of COMPARISON. In Ephesians 5 Paul uses *anti* to teach how a man and wife are TYPED to Christ and the Church. The *anti* used in v15 does not mean “instead of” but COMPARED TO, because long hair is LIKE a veil—it SYMBOLIZES a veil. The French language *Louis Segond Bible* of 1910 translates the *anti* in v15: “...*la chevelure lui a ete donnee comme voile,*” or “...the hair is given to her LIKE a veil.”¹⁸

This meaning is found in *Strong’s*, “...the context shows that the “covering” provided in the long “hair” of the woman is **AS** a veil...” *Strong’s* also states *katalupto* (“having his head covered”) **signifies** that “hair that hangs down is too long for a man, and consequently hair that does not hang down on a woman is too short.”

TWO DIFFERENT WORDS

All 6 times the “covering” is referred to Paul uses *katalupto*, but in v15 he does not use the noun form *katalupsis* or *katalumma*, but he uses *peribolaion*, which also meant a veil, or “something thrown around one, like a vesture or mantle.” The usage of two different words indicates that the “covering” in v15 is not the same TYPE of “covering” in the preceding verses—the woman’s *natural* covering (v15) of “hair” must not be confused with the material head-covering, or *literal* veil (vv4-7). In v14 (“*Doth not nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair...*”) Paul draws his support for the use of the veil as evidenced in the law of nature, thus long hair is a *natural* covering **paralleling** the veil. He uses the man’s absence of long hair to show that the man should not be covered with a veil hanging down from his head, for the veil was LIKE long hair and effeminate. The Apostle clearly made an ANALOGY, thus the meaning is not LITERAL. Women did not wear veils MADE OF HAIR!

The connection between being veiled or unveiled with hair length was evident within Greco-Roman culture. Plutarch also refers to hair length when discussing covering the head and used similar terminology to Paul’s in doing so. They both agree that long hair and a head covering are appropriate for women, but not for men. In his “Roman Questions,” Plutarch asks:

¹⁸ “No More Excuses!”, by A.A. Beiler

“Why do sons cover their head when they escort their parents to the grave, while daughters go with uncovered heads and hair unbound? ...is it that the unusual is proper in mourning, and it is more usual for women to go forth in public with their heads covered and men with their heads uncovered? So in Greece, whenever any misfortune comes, the women cut off their hair and the men let it grow, for it is usual for men to have their hair cut and for women to let it grow.” (267 A-B).

In Homer’s *Iliad*, Hector’s mother throws off both her veil and tears her hair (22.405), while his wife throws off her veil (22.470). The **parallel of the veil and hair** is significant here, since both are marks of feminine married/household identity. Thus, when writers want to demonstrate the expression of grief, the women are portrayed as “shedding” (and thereby grieving the loss of) their marks of domestic character, which is a way of evoking pathos in the spectator.¹⁹



Pictured are women mourners following a corpse to the burial ground. You can just see the dead person’s head with its wreath of leaves. The women have **cut their hair** as a sign of respect. Some are also wearing black robes. The women are **unveiled**.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The UPCI makes a number of serious errors attempting to interpret the meaning of having a head “covered”.

- (1) Refusal to accept Greek dictionaries for the definition of *katakalupto*.
- (2) Failure to research into the Greek OT for usage of the Greek terms in the NT. Both *katakalupto* and *periballo* meant “veil.”
- (3) Failure to research into ancient Greek literature for usage of Greek terms.
- (4) Apparent deceit in quoting word definitions. Such is the case with the Greek word *anti*.
- (5) Failure to recognize the Apostle’s use of symbolism.
- (6) Attempting at every point to put the passage of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 within a modern day church setting.

Veiling is a CULTURAL concern involving nationality and historical era and has absolutely nothing at all whatsoever to do with today’s women in churches of our country. Women do not wear veils of any nature, and no woman, who has cut her hair (any), has “uncovered” her head!

The significance of head-coverings in ancient Greco-Roman culture and how they pertained to the church at Corinth will be taken up in another article. Read “Understanding 1 Cor. 11:3-16 in Light of Culture & Veiling in the Cult of Dionysus.

¹⁹ “Unveiling Paul: Gendering *Ethos* in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16”, Caroline Vander Stichele, University of Amsterdam; Todd Penner, Austin College

²⁰ “Women in Ancient Greece,” by Fiona Macdonald; p40