

THE BIBLE ON JEWELRY & ADORNMENT

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AN ISSUE OF CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

- Lifestyle is not a **means** of salvation
- Christian lifestyle: the loving response of a redeemed, grateful heart
- Not up to each of us to define what the response would be
- Much of the Bible describes the lifestyle of redeemed hearts
- The Lordship of Christ is all-encompassing

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #22

- Section on Dress
- “While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit”
- “wearing of ornaments of jewelry is a bid for attention which is not in keeping with Christian self-forgetfulness” Church Manual, 177

GIST OF ADVENTIST POSITION

1. The use of jewelry as adornment is condemned in Scripture
2. The functional use of jewelry is permitted
 - Example of functional use: wedding ring, watches

ELLEN WHITE ON THE FUNCTIONAL USE

- “Our ministers and their wives should be an example in plainness of dress; they should dress neatly, comfortably, wearing good material, but avoiding anything like extravagance and trimmings, even if not expensive...Some have had a burden in regard to the wearing of a marriage ring, feeling that the wives of our ministers should conform to this custom. All this is unnecessary. The fact that a disregard of the custom occasions remark is no good reason for adopting it. Americans can make their position understood by plainly stating that the custom is not regarded as obligatory in our country. We need not wear the sign, for we are not untrue to our marriage vow, and the wearing of the ring would be no evidence that we were true... In countries where the custom is imperative, we have no burden to condemn those who have their marriage ring; let them wear it if they can do so conscientiously; but let not our missionaries feel that the wearing of the ring will increase their influence one jot or tittle.” Testimonies to Ministers, 180-181

BIBLICAL SUPPORT

- In the Bible we see different uses of jewelry, some of which appeared to create no problems
- This point needs to be appreciated if we would avoid misunderstanding
- Jewelry as adornment is only one of the uses in the Bible. We will look at some of the main other uses first

I. JEWELRY AS CURRENCY

- Before the invention of coins—jewelry
- Jewelry was made with a standard weight, so it could be used in commerce
- This was the purpose of what Abraham’s servant gave to Rebecca
 - Gen. 24:22, 23— “So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels of gold, 23 and said, “Whose daughter are you? Tell me, please, is there room in your father’s house for us to lodge?”
 - Notice that the weight of jewelry was mentioned
 - The people could wear it although it functioned as money

I. JEWELRY AS CURRENCY

- New Testament Times
 - Coins were then invented, thus use of jewelry as currency unnecessary
 - In 1 Pet. 1:18, Peter may be referring to an old practice of slaves been freed from bondage with “**objects/things**” of gold and silver: could still refer to **jewelry** in this form
 - “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like silver or gold*, from your aimless conduct *received by tradition from your fathers*”
 - Jewelry in such cases were functional

2. JEWELRY AS EVIDENCE OF WEALTH

- This is close to the previous use. A person, however, may wear jewelry to show their wealth
 - 2 *Chron.* 32:27 “Now Hezekiah had immense riches and honor; and he made for himself treasuries for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuable articles
 - Bride’s wealth: *Gen.* 24:53 “Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.” NB. Bride’s wealth was to give financial stability; jewelry may have been worn during wedding ceremony—beautify herself and display her wealth : see *Jer.* 2:32; *Isa.* 49:18; *Ezek.* 16

2. JEWELRY AS EVIDENCE OF WEALTH

- *Exod. 11:2* “Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry” (see verse 3:22, c/f. Gen. 15:14, promise to Abraham, financial security)
- *1. Rev. 18:16-17*—and “saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’ Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance”
- *2. James 2:2*— “For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes”
- *Matt. 2:11*— “And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

3. SYMBOL OF SOCIAL STATUS

- One of the common uses; indicating one's position
 - Ps. 21:3 “For You (God) meet him with the blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold upon his [king]head.”
 - Ezek. 16: Designed to express the status that the Lord had accorded Israel, using the standard parameters of social standing
 - “I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. **I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head.** Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate *pastry of fine flour*, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to **royalty**” (10-13)

3. SYMBOL OF SOCIAL STATUS

- Apparently, some in Israel dressed to bring out their status
 - Isa. 3:16 ff. “Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, And walk with outstretched necks And wanton eyes, Walking and mincing *as they go*, Making a jingling with their feet, Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab. The crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, And the LORD will uncover their secret parts.” In that day the Lord will take away the finery: The jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents; The pendants, the bracelets, and the veils; The headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands; The perfume boxes, the charms, and the rings; The nose jewels [How ‘big people’ dressed!]
 - THE HIGH PRIEST: Exod. 28 NB. vs. 2 [for glory]
 - James 2:2
 - The man wearing the ring is seen as having status
 - Rev. 14:14—Jesus wearing a crown, sign of status

4. SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY/POWER

- Gen. 38:18;25 Tamar and Judah, the legal significance of the seal was a sign of authority
- Esther 8: King Ahasuerus' ring taken from Haman and given to Mordecai
- 2 Sam 12:30—David removing crown of king of Rabbah, a sign of humiliation
- Zech. 6:11 “Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set *it* on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest”
- Luke 15:22 [Prodigal son] “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet” [Lost authority restored]

5. RELIGIOUS FUNCTION

- High Priest's jewelry, a sign of social standing but also of religious significance; identified him as religious leader
 - Exod. 28: 36-38 A crown with a gold plate (Holy unto the Lord) ; a sign of consecration
 - 2 onyx stones on shoulder ephod and 12 precious stones on breast piece (28:17-30), remembrance before the Lord; High Priest takes Israel to the Lord
 - Hem, pomegranate tassels of gold
 - Only high priest prescribed this clothing
 - But others also wore religious jewelry (Isa. 3:16-21—anklets: fertility; headbands: really necklace with sun disks; crescents: ornaments of moon for deity)

BIBLE'S VIEW ON THE USES ABOVE

- Jewelry to indicate **royal status** not condemned (it is functional) but also not officially prescribed
- Jewelry as **currency**, also functional, and not condemned
 - But there is a tendency to devalue the significance of jewelry for **financial** security
 - Prov. 3:15: Wisdom better than jewels
 - Prov. 31:10: Good wife better than jewels
- Jewelry as **religious symbols** (not pertaining to the worship of the God of Israel) condemned
 - Gen 35:4: Jacob returning; consecrate themselves to serve; implication, the rings had religious connotations
 - Exod. 33:4-6: Command to remove after golden calf
 - Mourning of repentance? A temporary thing
 - **Exod. 33:6** Jewelry Stripped from Mount Horeb onward, a permanent move
 - **Judges 8:24** (Israelites did not wear earrings; but by time of Isaiah/Hosea we see evidence of wearing ornamental and religious jewelry)

6. JEWELRY AS ADORNMENT

- 1. The dress of the High Priest is the only positive side of jewelry as adornment (Exod. 28)
- The negative side is clear
 - Isa. 3:16-23: Isaiah criticizes the beautification of the self as prideful
 - Ezek. 23:40: Jewelry as adornment for sex appeal condemned
 - “Furthermore you sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and there they came, And you washed yourself for them, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments.”
 - Jer. 4:30 “And *when you are* plundered, What will you do? Though you clothe yourself with crimson, Though you adorn *yourself* with ornaments of gold, Though you enlarge your eyes with paint, In vain you will make yourself fair; *Your* lovers will despise you; They will seek your life.”

I PET. 3:1-6

- The most forceful condemnation of jewelry as Adornment
 - “Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste [*pure*] conduct *accompanied by fear*. 3 Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— 4 rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord”

I PET. 3:1-6

- Let us try to understand what Peter is saying
 - 1. According to vs. 1 and 2, the **submission** of wives that husbands will see and be won over is their **behavior**. **This behavior is described with the words “chaste or pure” and “fear”**
 - “Chaste” and “fear” refer to the wife’s commitment to her Lord.
 - This commitment is expressed in how she adorns herself
 - Vss. 3-4 There are primarily two forms of adorning: external (not pleasing to the Lord), and internal (precious in the sight of God)

I PET. 3:1-6

- Peter gives three examples of external adornment not pleasing to the Lord
 - 1. Braiding of hair: high, elaborate hairstyle, held up with lacquer (a type of PAINT); also decorated with countless gold spangles even hiding the hair
 - 2. Putting on gold ornaments: these would be necklaces earrings, bracelets, etc.—ambulatory (a walking) jewelry shops
 - 3. *Fine* clothing, lit. “putting on of garments”: garment was often sophisticated to indicate social class (JB, Luke7:25) – ridiculously overpriced fine clothing
 - The point: some clothing is not in harmony with the Christian spirit

I PET. 3:1-6

- “Hair jewelry had been known since Homer, who described the strings, nets, and circlets decorating Andromache's hair (Il. XXII, 468). Gifts in graves show that wreaths in the shape of leaves, made of silver or even gold, and ivory curlers and hair pins were in use as well. Later, fine Roman hairnets were in use, made of pure gold, studded with jewels such as rubies or pearls. Dyeing, bleaching, curling, or straightening of hair was common, and curling irons were used to create elaborate hairstyles. Curls and braids were arranged in elaborate settings with beeswax. Hair was colored using ashes or henna, and even colored wax was used, resulting in rather shrill hairdos.”

I PET. 3:1-6

- Now let us focus on jewelry
- Peter condemned the wearing of gold. But was he just speaking about an extravagant use?
 - The issue: the expression “let not.... But”
 - May mean ‘let it be *not so much ... rather*—not negated
 - Or may mean ‘not *this... but that*’
 - Greek. Not (*ou*)....but (*alla*) – the construction and syntex suggests the later not former
 - Peter rejects the use of jewelry as external adornment

I PET. 3:1-6

- Detecting the basis of Peter's rejection
- Was this just a cultural issue? No. Reasons
 - I. Peter is pointing out a contrast between “true” adornment and “false” adornment
 - It is a contrast between two values in which he rejects one
 - True adornment: “the hidden person of the heart”
 - The imperishable jewel of gentle and quiet spirit
 - ‘Gentle’ and ‘quiet’ describe lack of violence (restlessness), quietness within
 - False adornment (external): jewelry
 - Expression or restless attitude, a need, quest for inner peace
 - Need is met by self reliance and pride

I PET. 3:1-6

- 2. The women of Old Testament who used proper adornment described as “holy,” i.e. “set apart” —their adornment was an expression of commitment (separated) to the Lord
- 3. Wearing jewelry is not ‘precious’ in the sight of the Lord’
- **Note:** All three bases are enduring reasons and not just cultural matters.

I TIM. 2:9-10

- Second direct text on jewelry and adornment
 - “also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire ¹⁰ but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion.”
 - Seemly apparel; comes first. Meaning of “apparel [katastole]”: demeanor expressing itself in clothing. Meaning of “seemly [kosmios]”: disciplined, respectable

1 TIM. 2:9-10

- “modestly [aidos]” and “sensibly [sophrosune]”: this is how the “disciplined demeanor that expresses itself in clothing [seemly apparel]” should be done
 - Aidos=a secret fear that one feels towards oneself; keeps one from excesses and base actions
 - Sophrosune=self-control; comes from God’s Spirit (2 Tim. 1:7)
 - Paul asks that when women adorn themselves, it be done in the realm of ‘self-controlled demeanor’ with self fear and self control/discipline

I TIM. 2:9-10

- What we have said above are principles
- Now, specifics
 - “Not *braided* hair”: the same kind of hairdress in I Peter 3
 - Or “gold/pearl”: i.e. ornaments of gold and pearl (not qualified in anyway)
 - Or “*costly* [polutelei] attire [himatismo]”: emphasis not mainly on cost but on luxury and ostentation which does not reflect true beauty , Christian style
 - BUT *something else* that “befits” or corresponds with..

I TIM. 2:9-10

- The something else that “befits” women who “profess” religion is “good works”
- Conclusion:
 - The nature of true adornment: “fundamentally living a life in which personal commitment to the Lord expresses itself through deeds that are a clear and visible manifestation of that commitment”
 - “Christianity is so valuable and attractive that if it is put into practice, it will beautify the lives of believers”
 - It is “Christian works adornment” vs. “jewelry” etc.

I TIM. 2:9-10

- As far as jewelry is concerned, Paul does not make any qualifications about it—like “inexpensive” or “small”
- This means that “clothing” and some “hair grooming” are “basic human needs,” but should be controlled. The reason he does not make any distinctions about jewelry is that it is **not** a “basic human need.”

HISTORICAL - METHODIST

- "Wear no gold, no pearls, or precious stones... I do not advise women to wear rings, earrings, necklaces." - JOHN WESLEY, REFORMER & FOUNDER of the METHODIST CHURCH, The Encyclopedia of World Methodism, 1977 edition, s.v. "Dress" (vol. 2,p. 717)
- "Should we insist on the Rules concerning Dress? By all means. This is no time to give encouragement to superfluity of apparel. Therefore give no ticket to any, till they have left off superfluous ornaments....Allow no exempt case, not even of a married woman...Give no admission to those who wear rings." Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church New York 1835, p. 88

HISTORICAL MENNONITE

- “No jewelry is to be worn, whether of gold, pearls, or any other form of outward adornment. (1 Tim. 2:9,10; 1 Pet. 3:3,4) Paul seems to have especially in mind gold worn in the hair a worldly custom in his day, while Peter is condemning the wearing of such items as gold chains, rings, and bracelets... How professing Christians can fly in the face of these clear verses by wearing jewelry is difficult to see.” || 211
- “Can we not have, by God's grace, a deepening of conviction against jewelry? Can the reader not say with Menno Simons: "It seems to me, it is high time to awaken, and to give heed to the Scriptures?"“ Historical And Biblical Position Of the Mennonite Church On Attire, p. 17 by John Christian Wenger

HISTORICAL - BAPTIST

- "Not many years since it was considered a sin by Baptists, Methodists, and other denominations, to wear gold; and I well remember when the Baptists, to whom I belonged, made it a rule to take up a labor, in love, with those members who put on gold."- **Daniel Bourdeau Review & Herald 1869**

OLD
TESTAMENT
TABERNACLE



OLD TESTAMENT TABERNACLE

- On the outside it looks like a plain tent
- On the inside however, it was full of articles of gold

- God desires golden hearts over golden chains; pearls within over pearls wore without



INSIDE THE TENT - TABERNACLE

TWO WOMEN OF REVELATION

- Revelation 12 – We meet the woman representing the pure church, the true church
 - Verse 1 – says she's clothed with the sun, moon, and stars (simply adorned)
- Revelation 17 – We meet the woman representing the corrupt/apostate church
 - Verse 1-5 --- In verse 4 this woman is arrayed in purple and scarlet colors, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand...

A MORE PRECIOUS ADORNING

- We want to be dressed and beautified with the light and glory of God which is imperishable over the perishable ornaments of gold, silver, jewels, and pearls!