

## Is it a Sin to Wear Jewelry?

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For most Christians today, the *thought* of jewelry being a sin would never cross their mind. Most women have worn jewelry from a very young age, and have never so much as fathomed that they could be in transgression in doing so. Nevertheless there are certain denominations in Christianity today that teach that wearing jewelry is a sin (I just again met a person the other day who believes this), and some would in fact teach that if you wear jewelry, you will end up in the lake of fire.

### Two New Testament Passages

There are two Scriptures generally referred to when speaking to individuals who espouse the teaching that wearing jewelry is sin. These Scriptures are found in 1 Timothy and 1 Peter.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. [1 Timothy 2:9]<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of (the) Almighty of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in (the) Almighty, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. [1 Peter 3:1-6]

I can understand how someone who has *only* read these two passages and *nothing else* in the Bible can arrive at the conclusion that it is wrong for women to wear jewelry. The problem is that reading just these two passages is not taking into account the sum or totality of Yahweh's written Word. Psalm 119:160a NASB states, "The sum of Thy Word is truth." We will always find ourselves diminishing from the truth when we only study the Bible on a surface level. I have even met some people who do not even realize that there are other texts in Scripture discussing the matter of jewelry. We will see by the end of this paper, from a study of the whole Bible, that the aforementioned passages do not teach against wearing jewelry. For now, let's proceed in our study. We will begin by noting all the positive passages for wearing jewelry and for jewelry in general, we'll then proceed to examine every passage people use in a negative fashion against jewelry.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the KJV unless otherwise noted.

### Rebecca's Gift from Abraham

The first instance we have of wearing jewelry in the Bible is found in Genesis 24. This chapter contains the story of Abraham's desire to find a wife for his son Isaac from among his people. Along with his servant, Abraham sends a few gifts for his future daughter-in-law. What were the gifts? They were none other than jewelry sent by Abraham who was rich in silver and gold (Genesis 13:2). Once the servant saw that Yahweh was going to answer his prayer by sending Rebecca to supply water for him and his camels, the following happened:

And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten *shekels* weight of gold; And said, Whose daughter *art* thou? Tell me, I pray thee: is there room *in* thy father's house for us to lodge in? [Genesis 24:22-23]

Abraham, kept all of Yahweh's commandments (Genesis 26:5). Had wearing jewelry been a sin there is no way that Abraham would have sent these jewels for his son's future wife and it be approved. Also, do we suppose that Abraham would send these adornments to Rebecca and not adorn his own wife Sarah?

Notice that the items mentioned above were a golden earring and two golden bracelets. When we read Genesis 24:47, we see that as the servant tells Rebecca's family of their encounter, he put the earring on her face and the bracelets upon her hands. This was not simply a medium of exchange, that is, a way in which something of worth was given in exchange for Rebecca. This was a *gift*, a gift that was to be placed upon her for wear and adornment.

We also read that immediately after the servant placed the jewelry upon Rebecca, he bowed down to worship Yahweh (Genesis 24:48). He had done nothing wrong or sinful in the least.

I should make note here that the gift of the earring was *most likely* a nose ring seeing that it is mentioned in the singular and that the Hebrew word *can* mean a ring for the nostril. This is not to say that the Hebrew word here for earring (*nezem*)<sup>2</sup> cannot have the meaning of a ring or rings for the ear, but only to say that in this occasion a nose ring is more likely to be in view.

It is of interest to point out that at the beginning of this Biblical chapter we see Abraham *concerned* about his servant finding a *wicked* wife for his son Isaac (Genesis 24:1-4). This shows that Abraham was concerned about living a holy and righteous life, set apart from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. What this speaks to is that Abraham would not be engaging in a practice that defied the laws of his Sovereign Creator.

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<sup>2</sup> *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* defines this word as, "H5141 nezem neh'-zem From an unused root of uncertain meaning; a nose ring:—earring, jewel." *Brown, Drivers, Briggs Hebrew lexicon* gives the following as the definition: "1) ring, nose ring, earring 1a) nose ring (woman's ornament) 1b) earring (ornament of men or women)."

How much plainer could it be that wearing jewelry was an accepted practice among Yahweh's people? We shall see that it does indeed, get plainer.

### The Signet Ring

The Bible speaks of the jewelry of the man Judah in this fashion.

And he said, what pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that *is* in thine hand. And he gave *it* her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. [Genesis 38:18]

The signet<sup>3</sup> and bracelets of Judah are *equated* with his staff. By examining the Hebrew word for bracelets, this item may not have been bracelets as we think of them today, but rather a very fine, expensive thread worn by Judah.<sup>4</sup> All were normal objects worn without the slightest sense of being sinful.

In addition to this Scripture we also have Haggai 2:20-23, which shows that Yahweh was going to make Zerubbabel liken to a signet ring. This means he would have the authority of Yahweh behind him, and Yahweh uses a ring which is worn in a positive manner.

We also see in Genesis 41:39-42 that Joseph likely adorned a signet ring along with a golden chain and fine linen. All of these items are mentioned together without a hint of them being sinful. If we say the ring or gold chain was sinful, we would also have to say it is a sin to wear fine linen.

We also see in another text that after Mordecai saved the life of king Ahasuerus, the king found out that his right hand man, Haman, was plotting to kill his wife (Queen Esther). Haman was abased and Mordecai was exalted.

And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. [Esther 8:2]

The giving of the king's ring to Mordecai was considered honorable, not sinful.

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<sup>3</sup> The *Holman Bible Dictionary* defines the word "signet" in the following manner: "**SIGNET** - A seal, usually a ring with a seal carefully crafted upon it, which an important or rich person used to authenticate a document. It was used much like a signature on a document today. The ring of kings would carry the highest authority in a land and empowered subordinates to act for the king. Examples of such rings in the Bible are: Pharaoh's ring given to Joseph (Gen. 41:42), Ahasuerus' ring given to Haman and then to Mordecai after Haman was hanged (Esth. 3:10, 12; 8:2), King Darius' sealing the den of lions after Daniel was thrown into it (Dan. 6:17). The signet could be worn on a chain around the neck (Song of Sol. 8:6). In an unusual use of the word, Zerubbabel is said to be "a signet" because the Lord had chosen him (Hag. 2:23). Zerubbabel was granted Yahweh's authority, and thus completion of the Temple was guaranteed. Another unusual use of the word was the special engraving of the stones on the ephod of the high priest "like the engravings of a signet" (Ex. 28:11). See Seal."

<sup>4</sup> *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* gives the following as the definition for the word "bracelets" in Genesis 38:18: "H6616 לַיָּדָיִם pa^thi^yl paw-theel' From H6617; *twine*:—bound, bracelet, lace, line, ribbon, thread, wire."

### **The Israelites Spoiling the Egyptians**

The next example we will look at is a command from Yahweh in reference to the Israelites spoiling the Egyptians at their exodus from the land of Egypt.

And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians. [Exodus 3:21-22]

Yahweh *commanded* that the Israelites were to put the jewels and fine raiment upon their sons and daughters. Was Yahweh telling them to commit sin? Of course not; the Israelites were commanded to borrow these jewels from the Egyptians (Exodus 11:2) and this is what they did in obedience, not defiance, to Almighty Yahweh (Exodus 12:35).

### **Saul & the Daughters of Israel**

Upon Saul's death David told the daughters of Israel to cry over him. This was because Saul treated them in what was considered an honorable way, by David.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. [2 Samuel 1:24]

David here speaks to the daughters of Israel in saying it was a *good thing* for these daughters that Saul had adorned them with beautiful clothes *and* precious jewelry.

### **Job's Consolation**

Job had terrible things happen in his life, but after his trials and tribulations, he was blessed abundantly. Gifts were even brought to Job.

Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that Yahweh had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. [Job 42:11]

And earring of gold is here mentioned as a consolation for Job's trials right alongside with a piece of money. If we try to say that the gold earring is sinful we would have to also say that the money was sinful, yet would any preacher preach against gold as a means of currency?

### **Proverbs 25:12**

As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is* a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.

An earring and ornament of gold is equal with a *wise reproof* upon an ear that takes heed to the wisdom spoken to it. This places jewelry in a positive light, rather than in a negative light.

## Proverbs 11:22

As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

The word jewel in this passage is taken from the same Hebrew word (*nezem*) as earring in Proverbs 25:22. So this passage is saying that an earring or nose ring of gold is a good thing, but to place it on a swine is like having a beautiful woman (earring/nose ring) without discretion (swine like).

## Song of Solomon 1:9-11

I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of *jewels*, thy neck with chains of *gold*. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

Every piece of jewelry mentioned here is mentioned in a positive light. He praises his beloved for her beauty which consists of rows of jewels, golden chains, and silver studs.

## A Bride's Adornment

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith Yahweh, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. [Isaiah 49:18]

I will greatly rejoice in Yahweh, my soul shall be joyful in my Almighty; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels. [Isaiah 61:10]

Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number. [Jeremiah 2:32]

And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from (the) Almighty out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [Revelation 21:2]

These passages all show that a bride (and groom) adorned herself (and his-self) with jewelry, with absolutely nothing negative to say about it.

## Yahweh's Beloved Israel

The symbolism Yahweh uses to describe the gifts to His symbolic bride is one of the plainest Scriptures in the Bible showing that jewelry upon a woman is far from being sinful.

Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord Yahweh, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed

away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead<sup>5</sup>, and earrings<sup>6</sup> in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment *was of* fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it *was* perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord Yahweh. [Ezekiel 16:8-14]

Israel took these items and played the harlot. We will look at this later in the study. As for now, notice that all the jewelry mentioned here is mentioned in the same positive context as covering nakedness, clothing her with embroidered work, fine linen, and silk. None of these are negative items, and neither are bracelets, necklaces, earrings, or crowns.

### **Daniel**

Upon Daniel's interpretation of the handwriting of the wall he was given the following by King Belshazzar.

Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and *put* a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. (Daniel 5:29)

Daniel did not refuse the chain any more than Joseph refused the jewelry given to him by the Pharaoh in Egypt. This passage shows that Daniel must have considered the golden chain as a sign of honor, and not as sinful adornment. Take note that clothing of scarlet is mentioned in the same context.

### **The Prodigal Son**

Most Bible believers have heard the story of the prodigal son. This son left with his inheritance at an early age from his father's house, and ended up feeding swine because of using his money hastily and without wisdom. His coming back to his father is a positive type of a person falling into sin and returning to the faith. What is one thing the father gave to him?

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet: [Luke 15:22]

Putting a ring upon the hand of the man's son is a type of coming out of sin, *not* of going into sin.

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<sup>5</sup> Why the King James translators chose forehead at this passage is beyond me. The Hebrew word has the clear meaning of nose or nostril.

<sup>6</sup> The word earring is taken from the Hebrew word *nezem*, and definitely denotes a ring for the ear in this context.

## James 2:2-4

For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

This speaks of a man coming into the assembly with a gold ring and fine clothing. These items are mentioned only to show that he was well off in lieu of being poor. The gold ring is no more sinful than the fine clothing. Both were worn and both were fine. The only wrong done is the respecting of this man by people who at the same time were looking down upon the poor man.

### But What About These Passages?

Now we will turn to the Scriptures in the Bible which people use in attempt to discredit the wearing of jewelry. However, before we go on to these passages, be reminded of those already presented. If you are now of the persuasion that wearing jewelry *is* a sin you must of necessity explain what the aforementioned passages are actually saying, not just give passages that you feel prove your position. I believe if anyone diligently examines these positive passages on jewelry they will realize that they cannot "get around" these texts of Scripture.

### Back to Bethel

And (the) Almighty said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto (the) Almighty, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that *were* with him, Put away the strange gods that *are* among you, and be clean, and change your garments: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto (the) Almighty, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which *were* in their hand, and *all their* earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which *was* by Shechem. [Genesis 35:1-4]

This passage shows that everything from the garments to the strange gods was put away from the household of Jacob. The earrings involved here had obviously been involved in idolatrous worship, just as the garments. A garment or earring is not sinful, but seeing they were idolatrous garments and earrings they had to be put away. Evidently the nose-ring/earring of Rebecca was not idolatrous (Genesis 24:47) as these here were.

### The Golden Calf

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And

Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron. And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. [Exodus 32:1-4]

First of all, we must remember that the earrings were on the Israelites by divine prescription (Exodus 3:22). Here Aaron uses the most convenient way to make the idol, by removing the gold from all the Israelites, their jewelry. The earrings were fine so long as the people stayed in obedience to Yahweh, but when they stepped out of obedience and used something inanimate in a corrupt way, it became disobedience and thus sin.

A similar example would be that Yahweh made the moon to tell us of His appointed times (Genesis 1:14-18; Psalms 104:19), but to begin to worship the moon would be a sin to us. The moon itself is not sinful, but what you do towards it can be sinful. Jewelry is the same. A woman can use jewelry to beautify herself for her husband (good), or to entice a man other than her husband to commit adultery (evil).

### **After the Golden Calf**

And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. For Yahweh had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye *are* a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb. [Exodus 33:4-6]

This was just after Yahweh had plagued the people for the golden calf incident. Why were the ornaments taken off? These are the same ornaments Yahweh adorned Israel with (Ezekiel 16:7) and the ornaments a bride cannot forget (Jeremiah 2:32). Why take them off here?

The answer lies in the fact that the Israelites were being punished and judged. Yahweh was about to decide what he would do to Israel for their sin. It was a time of mourning (Exodus 33:4) and thus no man put on his ornaments. To wear ornaments at other times, as we have shown from Scripture, is acceptable.

### **Gideon, Israel, Ishmael**

Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Yahweh shall rule over you. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.) And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he



requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. [Judges 8:22-27]

Israel had subdued the Ishmaelites (Midianites), and they desired for Gideon and family to be ruler over them. Gideon rightly answers that they needed to desire Yahweh to rule over them. Gideon then requests of them, each one an earring from the spoils of war they gathered from Midian. Notice that they were not commanded to give all jewelry or even all earrings to Gideon, only each *an* earring. Furthermore, they did this at Gideon's request. He desired to have *an* earring from each soldier. The prey of the earrings was in addition to ornaments, collars, and clothing. Were these items sinful too?

The sentence concerning the Ishmaelites having gold earrings is probably a reference to a specific *type* of gold earring that they were accustomed to wear. Israel captured the Ishmaelites, took their belongings as spoils of war, and Gideon desired one earring from each of his soldiers in battle.

### **Ezekiel 16:15-19**

But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colors, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them, And tookest thy embroidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savor: and thus it was, saith the Lord Yahweh.

This verse is sometimes used to "prove" jewelry is sinful, but let's look at the context. If you remember, I dealt with Ezekiel 16:8-14 earlier in the paper to show that it was Yahweh who gave Israel all of her jewelry. This accompaniment passage does not show wearing jewelry to be sin, rather it shows that what Israel *did* with the jewelry was sinful. Much like it shows that what Israel did with her **garments, embroidery, oil, incense, fine flour, and honey** that Yahweh had gave her. All these items were precious and given in honor of Yahweh's symbolic wife. She polluted them by playing the harlot, not by merely wearing them for beauty. Had Israel continued in submissiveness to her husband, these items would have been a blessing to her and they would have beautified her appearance. Seeing that she did not use them wisely, Yahweh took them away from her.

Let me add this here: when preaching on this subject in the local assembly I attend, I was approached with a question that some people ask in an attempt to teach that wearing

jewelry is sin. The question is this: "If Yahweh took away Israel's jewelry here, when did He give it back?" This question on the surface seems plausible, but with close examination it falls short. If we state the question in relation to the jewelry mentioned in the passage, we could also state the question for **the other items** in the passage. In other words: "If Yahweh took away Israel's clothing, oil, incense, fine flour, and honey, when did He give it back?" The point should be clear. The verse is not speaking of Yahweh removing jewelry from those who use it appropriately, but rather from those who are abusing jewelry by playing the harlot or acting in an adulterous manner.

### **Isaiah 3:18**

In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet*, and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon

We may read the verse above by itself and think, "Well, if Yahweh took away the earrings or necklaces of the women back then, why is it that preachers cannot do the same today!" This would *not* be a proper dealing of the text. Reading the entire context (Isaiah 3:16 – 4:1) shows that because the daughters of Zion were *haughty* and *flaunting themselves flirtatiously* in the sight of others, Yahweh would take away their beauty, which included the items they used to enhance their beauty (clothing, scarves, jewelry, etc.). Everything, including jewelry, fine robes, linen garments, beautiful hair, and perfume would be taken away. Notice especially verse 24:

And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty. [Isaiah 3:24]

Yahweh speaks through Isaiah and says that one punishment for these haughty daughters of Israel will be a removal of their sweet smell, girdle, well set hair, and stomacher. We can understand this Scripture at the places of sweet smell and well set hair. Are we to suppose that both of these are sinful items taken away? Wouldn't the context be more in line with saying that both of these are gifts of beauty given to the women of Israel, but they used them to act uncomely (crudely) in the sight of others?

It would do us well to consider the meaning of the words girdle and stomacher. When the Hebrew text is examined we find that this is nothing more than a fine belt (girdle) and an expensive robe (stomacher). These are not sinful items in the least. These were beautiful items for the daughters of Israel, so long as they did not trust in their own beauty by playing the harlot.

### **Is the New Testament Stricter?**

We now come back to the beginning of this paper where two New Testament passages were mentioned. When I first wrote this paper (2003) I had not contemplated on writing the section you are now reading, but thanks to Yahweh, with the input of my local congregation, I felt a need to touch on this issue.

Basically, there are some in Christianity today who may say the following, "Okay, people could wear jewelry in the Old Testament, but under the New Testament the wearing of jewelry is condemned." This statement would then be followed by an attempt to show Scriptures in the New Testament which appear to teach that certain things were okay under the Old Testament, but are no longer permitted under the New Testament.

First of all I would like to point out an inconsistency on the part of some who choose to use this argument. Some who use this argument also use certain Old Testament passages to condemn jewelry. For example, one may try to use Genesis 35 where the earrings were removed from the household of Jacob to promote wearing jewelry to be sinful. On the other hand when we show them a passage such as Genesis 24 where Rebecca was given a nose-ring and bracelets as a betrothal gift from Abraham, they might respond, "Well, I see what you are saying, but it's stricter under the New Testament." This kind of argumentation has to let go of one of the positions. You cannot say the teaching is stricter under the New Testament, and then at the same time try to use Old Testament passages to teach that the wearing of jewelry is sinful.

Secondly, we *are* under the New Testament or New Covenant now (Hebrews 8:6-13), and there are some differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant (Hebrews 7:11-16; Hebrews 7-10). We need to understand the differences and scripturally define them. We do not need to *make up* differences to try to fit a teaching or theology that we hold.

In reading Hebrews 7:11-16 we find that perfection was not by the *Levitical priesthood*, for the rhetorical question asked in verse 11 proves this. The change in the priesthood from Levi to Melchizedek necessitates that the law commanding priests to be from Levi has changed. This is the law spoken of in the remaining verses in this particular context. In reading Hebrews 8:6-13 we find that the New Covenant has begun, and that this covenant involves the writing of the law on the hearts and minds of the houses of Israel and Judah. This proves that Yahweh's law has not been done away and that we are still to abide by and be governed by Yahweh's morality under the New Covenant age. What we *do not see* in these passages referring to the covenant change and the law change is *anything* about jewelry. Why in the world would people teach that the change in the covenants brought about wearing jewelry to be sinful? Where's the Bible verse that teaches that?

Thirdly, the passages that are generally used in an attempt to teach a stricter morality under the New Covenant, do not teach anything of that nature at all. This is a mistaken understanding and interpretation of certain verses in the New Testament.

Basically, this teaching promotes the "But I say unto you" passages in the Sermon on the Mount teaching in Matthew 5. It is taught that Yeshua<sup>7</sup> would quote what Yahweh or Moses taught under the Old Covenant, and then he proceeds to give his *stricter* teaching under the New Covenant. We will examine a few of these instances now.

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<sup>7</sup> Yeshua is the personal, proper name of the Messiah. It is a Hebrew / Aramaic name, and was the name our Messiah was known by when he walked the earth.

As we begin examining this in Matthew 5, let me remind you that the Sermon on the Mount took place *under the Old Covenant*, and not under the New Covenant. So often we are programmed to think that the New Covenant began when Yeshua was born in Bethlehem or when we flip our Bibles to the book of Matthew. This is not the case. Hebrews 9 teaches us that it was *blood* that brought in the covenant, in this case the blood of Yeshua, the Son of Yahweh. The covenant thus began at no time earlier than at Yeshua's *death*.

Yeshua thus made every statement in Matthew 5 while living under the Old Covenant. This means that any attempt to make him violate or change the morality of Yahweh, would also make him a sinner (1 John 3:4). This promotion of the Sermon on the Mount does not look healthy from the start. Yeshua's statements begin in Matthew 5:17-20, and this is where the foundation for what he is about to teach begins. Verse 19 has him pronouncing a blessing on those who do and teach even the least commandments, and a curse on those who break and teach men to break the least commandments. Verse 20 then shows us that he is contrasting his teaching in these passages with the teaching of the Pharisees, who were hypocrites (Matthew 23:1-4). This gives us an accurate foundation for what comes next. Yeshua has just held Yahweh's law up as the ultimate standard.

#### **MURDER (Matthew 5:21-24)**

The first words out of our Messiah's mouth are "You have heard," and it's interesting that Yeshua uses the language "You have heard" instead of "It is written." When quoting the Old Testament Scriptures the "It is written" statement is normally used. Many Bibles do not even say it was said *BY* them, but rather it was said *TO* them. Both the American Standard Version and the Holman Christian Standard Bible render it this way.

One might say that Yeshua has to be contrasting the Old Testament with the New Testament because he quotes verbatim Exodus 20:13, "Thou shalt not kill." However, Scripture can be quoted, even verbatim at times, in an attempt to distort its meaning. Please see Matthew 4:5-6 where the devil quotes Scripture in distortion.

The scribes and Pharisees here were quoting Exodus 20:13, but using it to promote hatred in your heart against a brother. In other words they were saying, "Just do not *literally* murder your brother. That's all this commandment is about" and then hating their brother in their heart.

Yeshua was not teaching something new when he said we are not permitted to hate our brother in our heart. It was taught by Yahweh through the mouth of Moses (Leviticus 19:17-18; Mark 12:28-34).<sup>8</sup> Yeshua was explaining the true intent of the law. It was wrong to literally *or* mentally murder, not just wrong literally, as the Pharisees promoted.

#### **ADULTERY (Matthew 5:27-28)**

Once again note that Yeshua uses the "You have heard" phrase and then quotes an Old Testament verse that the Pharisees were using wrongfully.

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5:23-24 also shows that Yeshua's audience would still recognize the validity of the law in offering gifts on the altar.

What is *said* here by some is that Yeshua is teaching that it is wrong to lie down with your neighbors' wife, but it's now - under his stricter teaching - just as wrong to look upon her to lust after her in your heart.

When we study the Scriptures (Old Testament), we see that it's not stricter at all, because Yahweh through Moses and the rest of the Old Testament taught it was wrong to lust after your neighbors' wife (Deuteronomy 5:21; Proverbs 6:23-29). It did not just become a sin to lust after a woman under the New Testament. This had been the teaching of Yahweh through Moses in the Old Testament for centuries.

The issue was how the Pharisees were misusing the word of Yahweh or the Law of Moses. The issue was not contrasting the Old Testament with some kind of stricter New Testament.

There is no reason for us to think that the New Testament is stricter, and somehow has made the wearing of jewelry sinful. The contrasts between the covenants have nothing to do with jewelry, but rather to do with the Temple, Levitical priesthood, and certain sacrifices related to the Temple.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter**

What then can we make of the passages from 1 Timothy and 1 Peter? Let's first look at 1 Peter 3:3-4 again.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of (the) Almighty of great price.

What is the Apostle saying? Is he condemning the women that plait (braid, twist, curl) their hair? Is he condemning wearing gold? What about Rebecca in Genesis 24? Does this passage bring her and the gift giver Abraham under condemnation? What about all the passages clearly showing that jewelry was acceptable and not sinful?

We should also consider what is said about apparel. The passage says "Let it not be that outward adorning, of putting on of apparel." Is Peter condemning women who wear clothes? Would that make any sense at all? (Especially seeing that Yahweh himself made man and woman clothes to cover their nakedness Genesis 3:21?)

1 Timothy 2:9 is parallel to the 1 Peter passage in that it says the women should be adorned "not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." Does this mean women cannot braid their hair, wear jewelry or have clothing that costs over a set amount?

In light of all the Scriptures showing that jewelry is a perfectly acceptable way of a woman adorning herself we ought to be able to see that neither Paul nor Peter are

advocating women to not wear jewelry.<sup>9</sup> They are rather using a common idiom of Scripture which states that we are to not *only* do this, but to *also/rather* do something else too.

We see this in 1 John 3:18 where it says, "Little children, let us **not** love in word or in tongue, **but** in deed and in truth." Does this mean we shouldn't tell people we love them? Of course we should all know better. We are to not love in word or in tongue, *only*; it doesn't need to stop there. We should *also/rather* love in deed and in truth. The same applies in John 6:27 which states, "Labor **not** for the meat which perisheth, **but** for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Taking this verse literally would cause us to quit working for food because it says "Labor NOT." But the true intent of the passage is that we should not *only* labor for the meat that perisheth, but *also/rather* for the spiritual meat. Other passages which use this idiom can be found in Genesis 32:28, Exodus 16:8, 1 Samuel 8:7, Mark 9:37, Luke 14:12-14, John 12:44, and Acts 5:4.

By seeing the way this idiom is used in Scripture it helps to conclude that Paul and Peter were admonishing the women to not *only* adorn themselves outwardly, but *also/rather* inwardly. That harmonizes with all the approved examples of wearing jewelry in the Bible.

This is akin to even one Old Testament verse where the Bible says, "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth Yahweh, she shall be praised. [Proverbs 31:30]" This verse is not saying a woman cannot have favor and look beautiful on the outside, but it is saying that **the most important thing** in a woman's life should be the fear of Yahweh. Women today should definitely take heed to this admonishment in Proverbs, as well as Timothy and Peter. Most women are so concerned about how they look on the outside, while women concerned about their meek and quiet spirit are few and far between. A woman's outward adornment, although perfectly acceptable, should not become her primary goal in life. She should not spend hours upon end fixing her hair, purchasing fine jewelry, and getting just the right clothing to make her beautiful, while disregarding Yahweh's word and will for her life in the area of serving her husband. There is nothing wrong with a woman adorning herself, but to do these things and neglect Yahweh and spiritual matters, is a problem.

We might compare this with the statement in John 6:27. Many men become burdened down with heavy workloads and find themselves working hours upon end to make a dollar. "If I can just make that extra dollar" they think to themselves. We, as men, *are* to provide for the well-being of our household (1 Timothy 5:8) but this not only includes material things, but *more importantly* spiritual things. For a man to always labor for the material and neglect the spiritual is sin. It violates John 6:27. We should not let working for perishable food become our primary goal. Likewise, women should not let their outward adorning become their primary goal.

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<sup>9</sup> By recognizing the truth that neither Paul nor Peter was condemning the wearing of jewelry, we can also recognize that they were not condemning the braiding of the hair or the wearing of nice clothing. All these are mentioned in the same context and the passage deals with them all in the same way.

### Piercing: Yea or Nay?

We could not rightfully close this article without addressing the issue of body piercing. Some people believe that piercing the ears or the nose with a ring is unlawful based upon these passages in Scripture.

Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am Yahweh. (Leviticus 19:28)

Ye are the children of Yahweh your Almighty: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. (Deuteronomy 14:1)

Although these passages are used to condemn piercing the ears or nose, what do the passages actually teach? By reading what is written in each of them you can see that these cuttings in the flesh were something done *on behalf of the dead*. The Israelites were not to cut themselves nor print marks upon themselves, or make baldness between their eyes, as a mourning rite (like the heathen nations) for the dead. This is also spoken of in another passage of Scripture:

Both great and small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make baldness for them: Neither shall men tear themselves, for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead... [Jeremiah 16:6-7]

This is a practice that was done in ancient times (Jeremiah 41:5, 47:5). We see a practice similar to this in 1 Kings 18:28 where the priests of Baal cut themselves in their **prayers** and **worship** of false, pagan mighty ones. *Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* states the following under the heading CUT, CUTTING:

4. A particular, prohibitive usage. "Cutting" or mutilating the body was expressly forbidden for Israelites in contrast to the customary practice of slashing and gashing the body among neighboring peoples. The people of Moab in brokenness and lament shaved their heads and made "cuttings" ("gashings", RSV) on their hands (Jer 48:37...); "cutting" or "incisions" were forbidden for Israel as an evidence of mourning for the dead (Lev. 19:28...); priests were not permitted to make any "cuttings" in their flesh (21:5...). By contrast the prophets of Baal slashed and gashed their bodies in frenzy in order to prevail against or move Baal to action (1 Kings 18:25-29); this practice was strongly condemned by the prophets (Jer 47:5; Hos 7:14).<sup>10</sup>

Is piercing the ears or nose thus wrong? Not at all. In Exodus 32:2 Aaron told the children of Israel to "Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters." You do not have to *break* an earring off that is clipped on.<sup>11</sup> In addition to this, an undeniable example of piercing can be seen in Exodus 21:6 (See also Deuteronomy 15:12-18).

<sup>10</sup> *Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1976, Volume 1, pg. 1050

<sup>11</sup> I'm definitely not promoting piercing the body as many in today's society do. The only places I see rings pierced on something in the Scriptures is the ear and the nose, and this was a common adornment for beauty.

Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.

This is an undeniable reference to piercing the ear. However, some have attempted to use this passage to show that earrings were just sign of slavery (in a negative sense). Is this the case?

As we've seen in this paper, many more people, other than slaves, adorned earrings or nose rings. Furthermore, did all slaves adorn earrings? It cannot be borne out by the testimony of Scripture. We know that the slave of Exodus 21:6 definitely did, but why? When we read the verses before verse six, it causes us to understand exactly why this particular slave had a hole bore through his ear.

If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever. [Exodus 21:2-6]

This is clearly an *honorable* thing for this slave (that had been treated well). He was in love with the wife his master gave him, as well as with his children. He did not desire to leave his family. When someone in Israel saw this particular slave walking around with his ear pierced through, they did not think to themselves, "That dirty slave!" but rather, "Now there goes a servant who loves his master and family. Yahweh bless him."

What this shows is that it was acceptable to pierce the ear (and by implication the nose) with an earring, and had nothing to do with the prohibitions of Leviticus 19:28 and Deuteronomy 14:1.

## Conclusion

Why have I taken the time to write this study? I once thought and was taught by some, that wearing jewelry was a sin. What I was taught stemmed from people who had not studied what the Bible says, means, and teaches in this area. This subject has caused me to understand the importance of studying a topic diligently, before arriving at a conclusion. For a preacher to teach people that wearing jewelry is a sin, is a commandment of men that makes the word of Yahweh of none effect (Matthew 15:3, 7-8). This paper is not meant to be one which says women or men should rush from their homes immediately and go purchase loads of jewelry; that's not the point. The point is that if a woman or man chooses to have and wear jewelry, there is nothing sinful about that at all. Likewise, if either of them chooses *not* to wear jewelry as a personal preference, there is nothing sinful about that at all. I, personally, do not wear any



jewelry, minus occasionally wearing a wedding band. It isn't because I think it is sinful, but because I just prefer not to wear jewelry. It feels cumbersome to me. With that being said, I do dogmatically refuse to follow the traditions and teachings of man that would teach the wearing of jewelry to be sinful. For some reason many ministers think they can have more morality than Yahweh. We don't decide what sin is, that Yahweh's job. We just decide whether or not to sin and whether or not to believe lies or the truth.