

The Significance of the Beard

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Some may wonder why I would take the time to write about the beard. After all, isn't wearing a beard, or not wearing one, just a matter of personal choice concerning grooming and appearance? This is the mindset of the Western world that many Christians find themselves in. But the scriptures actually have much to say about the beard and Paul told Timothy that "ALL scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching... and instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16).

We live in a day when the revelation of the Spirit, the voice of the prophets, the signs in the heavens, and other witnesses are testifying that a full stature man child is about to come forth. The manifesting of the mature sons of God is about to be revealed. The scriptures also reveal to us that Christ will return during a period of time described as the "restoration of ALL things" (Acts 3:20, 21).

That which has been out of order will be put back in order. That which has been lost and neglected will be found once more and adhered to. The matter of the significance of the beard of man is one of these things that is being restored, and it is not coincidental that the beard is representative of a man of maturity and full stature and its symbolism is coming back into light at this hour.

Although it is rarely preached upon, God gave Moses specific instructions regarding the beard of man and how it was to be worn. As with many of the instructions given to Israel, great symbolism was bound up in this matter. Even as the observances of the feasts pointed to spiritual truths and future fulfillment of the will of God, so does the matter of the beard.

Consider the Hebrew meaning for the word beard and its significance begins to be shown. The Hebrew word for beard is zaqan (zaw-kawn'). This is Strongs' word 2206 and we are told in Strongs' dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words that the word for beard comes from the related word zaqen (zaw-kane'), which is a primitive root meaning to be old. The correlation to this second word for age is so clear that Strongs dictionary defines the Hebrew word for beard as "the beard (as indicating age)."

To the Hebrew mind the beard was clearly a symbol of maturity and age. This was not a cultural viewpoint, rather it was an understanding of God's design in placing a beard on mature males. A boy cannot grow a beard. A boy is one who is not mature. When a young male passes through the time in his life defined as puberty some

distinct outward signs accompany this advancement to maturity. One of the signs is that the voice takes on a deeper timber, it becomes more commanding. Another obvious sign is the growth of body hair and, for a male who is modestly arrayed, the only part of this growth that is seen is that which is on the face.

It is interesting to note that the Webster's 1933 Dictionary, (the one I often refer to, preferring the older and more conventional definitions), defines puberty in this way: "the age of maturity; manhood, adult; the time a plant comes into flower." Did you note that puberty also refers to the time that a plant comes into flower? Is not the beard of a man a sign of the flowering of his manhood? Even as the flower is the beauty and adornment of many plants, so is the beard the beauty and adornment of a man as he crosses the line of puberty and comes into the age of maturity.

God gave the beard to man for beauty and glory. Older men whose beards had turned grey were to be accorded special honor because the grey beard was a sign of even greater maturity. We find this understanding in the following verse.

Leviticus 19:32

Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.

(KJV)

The phrase "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head" and the phrase "and honour the face of the old man" are actually parallel expressions denoting the same truth. The hoary, or grey head directly corresponds to the phrase "the face of the old man." The hoary head certainly could include the grey hair found on top of the head, but it most specifically refers to the grey hair of the face which is the beard.

An amazing truth is found as one begins to link certain words found here to other scriptures. The word 'face' in the above verse is the Hebrew word 'paniym' (paw-neem'). It literally means face, but is often interpreted as 'presence.' One such place this word is interpreted 'presence' is in the scriptures that talk about the Tabernacle of God. In the middle court of the Tabernacle was found the bread of the presence that was placed on the table of shewbread. The word 'presence' here is the same word 'paniym' which literally means face. The bread that was placed on the Table of shewbread was actually the "bread of faces."

The articles in the Tabernacle were symbolic. To reach the middle court, or the Holy Place the believer has to pass through the Outer Court which symbolizes spirit

salvation. He has to go through the washings and repentance symbolized by the altar sacrifices and such a one has submitted himself to the continual searching and cleansing of God. These are then able to enter into the Spirit filled life typified by the section of the Tabernacle called the Holy Place. Those in this place were to feed on the bread that came down from heaven, which is Christ. We eat Christ's body as we meditate on Him and fellowship and commune with Him. As we behold His 'face' we are transformed into His image.

II Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

(NAS)

The longer one looks at the face of Christ the more one becomes transformed into His likeness. This does not come suddenly, but over time. John spoke the following in his first epistle.

I John 2:12, 13

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

(NAS)

John makes a distinction between children, young men, and fathers. The distinction is very revealing. Spiritual children are focused on overcoming sin and they have come to see God as their Father. This is good, but it is just the first stage of maturity. Young men are focused on overcoming the evil one and they are becoming strong, as John further reveals. They are enjoying flexing their spiritual muscles. This is a definite advancement from the child stage. Spiritual fathers, however, are known by their knowledge of "Him who is from the beginning."

John writes to both children and fathers "because you know Him", but what they know of Him is quite different. Children know Him only as Father and they are still focused on forgiveness of sins. Fathers are advanced in knowledge of God until they are described as "knowing Him who is from the beginning." This highest level of maturity is marked by a deep knowledge of God.

The longer one feeds on the bread of faces found in the Holy Place, the more one becomes transformed into the image he is beholding. His own face begins to reflect the image and glory of God. This is symbolically witnessed to by the sign of the beard that God has placed upon the face of man. Not only does the beard express the glory of maturity, but it serves to cover the flesh of a man's face.

The fathers that John writes to are being transformed into God's image from having spent much time beholding Him. This deeper conformity to God is evidenced in a greater glory resting upon these mature ones as is stated in I Corinthians 3:18. We are "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory." Those who have long gazed upon the face of God have attained to the greatest glory, and in the natural God has set the beard, and particularly the grey beard, as a symbol of this truth.

This is a marvelous truth. All the way back in the book of Leviticus God said "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man." Honor was to be accorded to those who were of great age in the natural realm as a sign of the parallel principle that honor is to be accorded those who have greatly matured in the spiritual realm. Both principles must be adhered to. An old man in the natural is to be honored, whether he has attained to a deep knowledge of God, or not. This is a sign indicating that we understand the spiritual principle that we are to honor those who have matured in the Lord.

God has declared this matter in the manifestation of the beard. A child does not have a beard. He has little maturity and little glory and honor are accorded him. A young man has achieved a certain level of maturity and even as he has put away childish things he has flowered and his beard has grown and God has set a mark of maturity upon him. As a man perseveres in his pursuit of God and continues to look steadfastly at the face of God, he begins to enter an even greater realm of glory and he acquires a grey beard which is his crown of glory.

Why then do so many men, especially Christian men, shave off the beard? A great portion of the reason has to do with the fact that the body of Christ has lain in immaturity for so long. When the body should have long ago progressed to eating meat, they have remained drinking only the milk of the word. When they should have advanced to the place of being teachers themselves, they have need for someone to teach them again. The body has failed to come to maturity, and as a judgment against them God has allowed them to fall under the deception and delusion of Satan. They have cut off their beards which symbolize their advancement past childhood and in an outward way they are agreeing with God that they truly lack maturity. God

prophesied through Isaiah that this would happen.

Isaiah 66:4

I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

(KJV)

This is an awesome thing indeed. God said, “I also will choose their delusions...” A delusion has come upon the mind of man. Man has failed to press on to maturity as God has designed and as a judgment God has given them over to delusion. One of these delusions which God has chosen is that man should despise his beard which was given to him as a sign of maturity and a symbol of glory. Even as the body of Christ has failed to mature and to become worthy of glory, a delusion has come over them where they willingly shave and cast off that which God designed to proclaim maturity. Is this not a most fitting judgment and delusion for those who have not answered God, nor listened to Him when He spoke?

To those who would say that the beard is just an external matter and it holds no real value, I would ask “Why do you want to throw away that which God has ordained to cover the face of man?” Do you have a good reason for doing so? We teach that the spiritual realm takes precedence over the physical or natural realm, but it is in the natural realm that what is in our spirits is manifest. Is this not why God created man in the first place, that He might have a way to manifest His person to all of creation?

Christ Jesus had a beard and we know that He only did what He saw the Father doing. Jesus did not wear a beard because it was a social standard of the time. The only standard Jesus conformed Himself to was the standard of His Father. He did not see the Father cutting off the beard, so he did not cut off the beard. Jesus not only had a beard, He had a substantial beard. We are told of Him “I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard...” (Isaiah 50:6). One cannot easily pluck out the beard of one who has cut his beard short. It is only a full beard that can be grasped and pulled in this manner. Furthermore, Jesus said that He came to fulfill the Law and the Law has these commands concerning the beard:

Leviticus 19:27

'You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard.

(NKJ)

Leviticus 21:1, 5

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them... 'They shall not make any baldness on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards

(NAS)

Nelson's Bible Dictionary has this to say about the beard.

In biblical times most adult males of Israel wore full beards. An oiled and well-kept beard was a mark of pride (Ps. 133:2). The Law of Moses required Israelite men not to "disfigure the edges" of their beards (Lev. 19:27), a common practice of Israel's pagan neighbors.

To shave or pull out part of the beard was a sign of grief (Jer. 48:37-38), and to cut off someone's beard was to insult him (2 Sam. 10:4-5). Isaiah 7:20 pictures God's judgment on Israel as a shaving of the nation's beard, an intentional disgrace. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

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Note: The reference to the beard being a mark of pride is not used in a negative sense, but a positive one. The scripture referred to is Psalm 133:2. This verse and the one preceding it state the following:

Psalm 133:1-2

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes.

(NAS)

This is clearly a beautiful and honorable thing. In fact the beard is intended as a sign of beauty and glory. God intends man to be crowned with beauty and glory.

Psalm 8:4-5

4 What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?

5 Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and dost crown him with glory and majesty (hadar)!

(NAS)

The word for majesty in the Hebrew is the word 'hadar'. Strongs' Dictionary gives

us this description: “magnificence, i.e. ornament or splendor: -beauty, comeliness, excellency, glorious, glory, goodly, honour, majesty.” In Deuteronomy God reveals that it is His desire and intent to lift men up, not to abase them. He has created them for glory, not for dishonor.

Deuteronomy 26:17-19

17 "You have today declared the LORD to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice.

18 "And the LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments;
19 and that He shall set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken."

(NAS)

However, as Nelson’s Bible Dictionary states, God will abase those who fail to walk in faithfulness before Him. In Isaiah God symbolically spoke of shaving off Israel’s beard as a sign of their disgrace.

Isaiah 7:20

In that day the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the River-- the king of Assyria-- to shave your head and the hair of your legs, and to take off your beards also.

(NIV)

To have the beard shaved off was a sign of great disgrace. This is shown clearly in the story of King David’s ambassadors who were disgraced by the Ammonites by having their robes cut in two and having half of their beards cut off. David was so enraged that he declared war on the Ammonites and destroyed them. So deep was the shame of David’s ambassadors that David told them to not return to Jerusalem until their beards were grown back, but to stay in Jericho.

II Samuel 10:5

When they told it to David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, "Stay at Jericho until your beards grow, and then return."

(NAS)

Is it not a great delusion that has led men today to so carelessly cast off that which

God designed to be for their glory and beauty, that which was to distinguish men from boys and from women? Rightly did Paul prophesy to Timothy the following:

II Timothy 3:1-5

- 1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.
- 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,
- 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,
- 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;
- 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.

(NAS)

We live in the generation Paul spoke of and it is fitting that a generation that has so despised God and pursued their own pleasure should be shorn of the glory that God ordained to be revealed in the beard of a man. Men having failed to seek after God have remolded themselves after the fashion they desired and they have uncovered their faces.

However, God does have a remnant that are coming to maturity in this day and hour. These will be used of God to go forth before the return of Christ and prepare the way before Him. These will walk in a similar calling as did John the Baptist, setting things in order that have been out of order, and calling men and women to repentance. These will be used of the Lord to begin to restore all things that have been lost and neglected, of which this teaching is but one small part.

As the man child spoken of in Revelation 12 is revealed and as the sons of God spoken of in Romans 8:19 come forth manifesting a maturity that the church has not known, the signs of maturity that God has set in the natural order of things will be restored. The beard is intended to be a beautiful thing and for the great majority of men, it is only with stubborn persistence that they keep it from manifesting. Even so, the maturity that God has ordained to be the portion of His church has been stubbornly resisted, and many have turned to other things. This is precisely why Paul described this time as “perilous days.” Men have heaped to themselves teachers to titillate and entertain, and it is with difficulty that they are made to endure sound doctrine.

I am confident that maturity will come to the body of Christ for the scriptures foretell

it, but for many it will only be as they demonstrate great patience in the midst of severe trials. Those who willingly give themselves to God as a freewill offering will always find their way easier than those who resist God and are forced with a bit and bridle to go where they have not desired.

God will bring forth the unity that David spoke of in the Psalms and it will be even as he described it, as the dew upon Mount Hermon, or as the oil upon the head of Aaron, running down the beard and onto the robes. Unity will be restored and once again believers will greet one another with a holy kiss. This was the manner of greeting in days of old and it has not changed.

In the book of II Samuel we are shown a description of the manner of the greeting of brothers who were united in oneness and friendship. Although Joab was being treacherous and patterning the same deceit that was later found in Judas when he betrayed our Lord with a kiss, we see the pattern for the holy greeting.

II Sam 20:9

And Joab said to Amasa, "Is it well with you, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.

(NAS)

In the instruction to "greet one another with a holy kiss" it was intended for men to greet men and women to greet women. For men and women to greet in this way would be improper and would open the door for temptation and lead to adultery. In this manner of greeting the man would reach out with his right hand and grasp the beard of a brother. Throughout the ages the right hand has represented fellowship and even in many churches today the saints speak of extending the right hand of fellowship.

As one reached out and grasped the beard of a brother he was touching that which was the glory and beauty of the brother. This was a sign of affection and an acknowledgment of the other brother's maturity in Christ. The brothers would then kiss one another on the cheek. We are told by Christ that all men will know we are brothers by our love. Indeed, how beautiful it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.

However, many saints are having much difficulty holding onto one another today. Even as the beard is missing, so is the maturity that it represents. Brothers that lack maturity manifest it by their divisions and strife. Where there is immaturity there is

division and strife and a lack of unity, and consequently the sincere greeting of the holy kiss is missing. This is found in Paul's words to the Corinthian believers.

I Corinthians 3:1-4

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ.

2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

(NAS)

In this passage we see both the inability of the saints to partake of the solid meat of the teachings and doctrines of Christ, and we see the jealousy and strife among them. Both of these are signs of immaturity. Even as a very small child cannot yet eat meat, neither could these believers. Even as small children bicker and quarrel, so did these saints. Paul declares that they are fleshly, and this description of being fleshly typifies a man's face that has not yet grown a beard, or the face of a man who has cut his beard off. Both symbolize immaturity.

For brothers to greet one another with a holy kiss after the manner previously described, they must move on to maturity. They must symbolically allow their beards to grow so that other brothers have something to grasp and hold onto while embracing. The smooth face of childhood that the church has presented to the world and to one another has kept the unity from coming forth which God has desired.

Yes, the beard is but an outward symbol of greater truths, but they are important truths. It would avail a man little to grow a beard, even a grey beard that is full and glorious, and to not have grown to maturity in Christ. God has called us to a harmony of the natural and the spiritual. It is unfitting to see adults acting in a childish manner. The apostle Paul declared that when he became a man that he put away childish things. Our outward appearance is to reflect our inward condition.