THE QUESTION

Did the early Christians teach that men must wear a beard?

Asked by a THF member on September 3, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 8 numbered quotations · the 11 early Christian passages and 64 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-christians-teach-that-men-must-wear-a-beard

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

Several early Christian writers expected men to keep their beards. Clement calls the beard a natural mark of manhood, and Cyprian cites the law against marring the beard. Their target is shaving bare, plucking and grooming to look attractive. These passages give no New Testament command that every man must grow a beard.

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HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 6

Clement says men should keep their beards

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria gives a plain rule. A full beard is enough for a man. If he trims part of it, he should not shave it bare, which Clement calls disgraceful and blameworthy. He allows trimming but not removing the beard.

1 “A full beard is enough for men. And if a man also shaves part of his beard, he must not make it completely bare, because this is a disgraceful sight. Shaving the chin down to the skin is blameworthy.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.11 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 3, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 6

The beard is a God-given mark of manhood

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement says God adorned men with a beard as a sign of manhood, strength and rule. In another line he calls the beard a man's natural and noble ornament, so it is wrong to pull it out.

2 “But He has adorned man, like the lions, with a beard, and endowed him, as a mark of manhood, with shaggy breasts. This is a sign of strength and rule.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.3 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 1, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

3 “For it is not right to pull out the beard, which is a man’s natural and noble ornament.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.3 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 4, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
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POINT 3 OF 6

Lactantius sees the beard in God's design

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Lactantius, writing on how God made the human body, says the beard marks a man's maturity, shows the difference between the sexes, and adds the beauty of manly strength. For him it belongs to the fitting order of God's work.

4 “Then the nature of the beard contributes in an incredible way to mark the maturity of the body, or the distinction of sex, or the beauty of manliness and strength.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *On the Workmanship of God* 7 (c. 290–320 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 11, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 6

Cyprian quotes the law against marring the beard

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian rebukes a man who claims to repent yet plucks his beard and fusses over his hair. He quotes Leviticus 19:27 and asks whether pleasing people is worth displeasing God. He treats beard-plucking as vanity.

5 “And although it is written, “You shall not mar the figure of your beard,” Leviticus 19:27, he plucks out his beard and arranges his hair. Is he now trying to please anyone when he displeases God?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 8, page 5 Read it in the library ›

POINT 5 OF 6

Disfigured beards were a sign of decline

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

When Cyprian lists the faults that crept into the church, he names disfigured beards in men beside dyed faces in women. He sees both as changing what God's hand had made.

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6 “In men, their beards were disfigured. In women, their complexion was dyed. Their eyes were changed from what God's hand had made them.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 7, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 6

Grooming to attract others goes against modesty

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian and Clement both object to men who shape, pluck or shave their faces to look attractive. Tertullian lists cutting the beard too sharply and shaving around the mouth. Clement calls shaving the cheeks for looks womanly. Their concern is vanity and modesty.

7 “such as cutting the beard too sharply, plucking it out here and there, shaving around the mouth, arranging the hair, and disguising its grayness with dyes”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On the Apparel of Women* 2.8 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 5, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

8 “But for a man to comb himself and shave himself with a razor for the sake of fine appearance, to arrange his hair at the mirror, to shave his cheeks, pluck hairs out of them, and smooth them, how womanly that is.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.3 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 1, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- None of these passages quotes a New Testament command that men must grow a beard.
- Clement allows trimming part of the beard, and the passages do not set any exact length.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

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WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 11 early Christian passages and 64 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–11, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 12–71, in Bible order), then 4 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *11 passages from 6 writers*

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 1–4*

1 *Instructor* 3.3 **Quotes 2, 8, pages 2, 4** locks growing naturally, as a horse in its mane. But He has adorned man, like the lions, with a beard, and endowed him, as a mark of manhood, with shaggy… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Instructor* 3.3 (on point 6) "they are not healthy. Instead, turning toward pleasure, they become effeminate. They cut their hair in an unmanly and prostitute-like way, wear fine and see-through clothes, chew mastich… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Instructor* 3.11 **Quote 1, page 2** "Twisted locks should not hang far down from the head, falling into womanish ringlets. A full beard is enough for men. And if a man also shaves part of his… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Instructor* 3.3 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** "it is not lawful to pluck out the beard, man's natural and noble ornament… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 5*

5 *On the Apparel of Women* 2.8 **Quote 7, page 4** "sex acknowledges in itself deceptive tricks of appearance peculiarly its own, such as cutting the beard too sharply, plucking it out here and there, shaving around the mouth, arranging the… [continues online] **read ›**

Dionysius of Alexandria, *c. 232–265 AD · source 6*

6 *Miscellaneous Fragments* 1 (on point 3) "the hair is a kind of protection and covering for the whole head, and the beard is a… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 7–9*

7 *Treatises* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 4** "their manners there was no discipline. In men, their beards were defaced… [continues online] **read ›**

8 *Treatises* **Quote 5, page 3** "although it is written, "You shall not mar the figure of your beard," Leviticus 19:27, he plucks out his… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Treatises* (on point 6) is changed into a lie by the deceitful dyes of cosmetics? Your Lord says, "You cannot make one hair white or black." Matthew 5:36 And yet, in order to… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 10*

10 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 4) "the law says, "You shall not mar your beards… [continues online] **read ›**

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Lactantius, *c. 290–320 AD · source 11*

11 *On the Workmanship of God* 7 **Quote 4, page 3** "an ugliness there would be in that is clear from baldness. Therefore, God covered the head with hair. And because it was to be at the very top, He added… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *60 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

12 **Leviticus 13:29** If a man or a woman has a plague of leprosy on the head or in the beard, **read ›**

13 **Leviticus 13:30** the priest shall look at the plague, and behold, if its appearance is deeper than the skin, and there is thin yellowish hair in it, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a broken patch, a leprosy of the head or a leprosy of the beard. **read ›**

14 **Leviticus 13:33** then the skin shall be shaved, but the broken patch shall not be shaved; and the priest shall set apart the broken patch seven days a second time. **read ›**

15 **Leviticus 13:34** On the seventh day the priest shall look at the broken patch; and behold, if the broken patch has not spread in the skin after he was shaved, and the appearance of the broken patch is not hollow below the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; and when he has washed his garments, he shall be clean. **read ›**

16 **Leviticus 13:40** If anyone's head loses its hair, he is bald; he is clean. **read ›**

17 **Leviticus 13:41** If his head loses its hair in front, he is bald on the forehead; he is clean. **read ›**

18 **Leviticus 13:45** As for the leper in whom the plague is, let his garments be loosened and his head uncovered; let him put a covering about his mouth, and he shall be called unclean. **read ›**

19 **Leviticus 14:9** On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair—his head, his beard, and his eyebrows; all his hair he shall shave off—and he shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean. **read ›**

20 **Leviticus 16:4** He shall put on the sanctified linen tunic, and linen undergarments shall be on his body; he shall tie on a linen sash and put on the linen turban. These are holy garments; he shall bathe his whole body in water and put them on. **read ›**

21 **Leviticus 19:27** You shall not cut the hair of your head into a round tuft, nor spoil the appearance of your beard. **read ›**

22 **Leviticus 21:5** You shall not shave your heads bald for the dead; and they shall not shave the appearance of their beard, nor cut gashes in their flesh. **read ›**

23 **Leviticus 21:10** And the high priest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor tear his garments; **read ›**

24 **Leviticus 21:18** No man who has a blemish shall come near: a man who is blind, or lame, or with a mutilated nose, or with ears cut off, **read ›**

25 **Numbers 6:5** all the days of his purification. No razor shall come upon his head until the days that he vowed to the Lord are fulfilled; he shall be holy, letting the hair of his head grow long, **read ›**

26 **Numbers 6:9** And if anyone dies suddenly beside him, the head of his vow shall at once be defiled; and he shall shave his head on the day he is cleansed; on the seventh day he shall be shaved. **read ›**

27 **Numbers 6:18** Then the one who has vowed shall shave the head of his vow at the doors of the tabernacle of witness, and put the hair on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offering. **read ›**

28 **Numbers 8:7** And thus you shall perform their purification: you shall sprinkle them with water of purification, and a razor shall pass over their whole body, and they shall wash their garments and be clean. **read ›**

29 **Deuteronomy 14:1** You are sons of the Lord your God. You shall not make any baldness between your eyes for the dead, **read ›**

30 **Deuteronomy 22:5** A man's articles shall not be on a woman, nor shall a man ever put on a woman's robe; for everyone who does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God. **read ›**

31 **Deuteronomy 22:12** You shall make twisted tassels for yourself on the four corners of the cloaks with which you clothe yourself. **read ›**

32 **Deuteronomy 23:2** One born of a prostitute shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. (Septuagint Deuteronomy 23:3 (Deuteronomy 23:2 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

33 **Judges 16:22** But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. **read ›**

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34 **2 Samuel 10:4** So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off their beards, and cut off their cloaks in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away. **read ›**

35 **2 Samuel 10:5** When they told David about the men, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly disgraced. And the king said, "Stay in Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return." **read ›**

36 **2 Samuel 20:9** Joab said to Amasa, "Are you well, my brother?" And Joab's right hand took hold of Amasa's beard to kiss him. **read ›**

37 **1 Kings 7:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

38 **2 Kings 1:8** And they said to him, "A hairy man, with a leather belt bound around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite." **read ›**

39 **1 Chronicles 19:5** And some came to tell David about the men; and he sent to meet them, for they were greatly disgraced. And the king said, "Stay in Jericho until your beards grow, and then return." **read ›**

40 **Nehemiah 9:3** They stood in their place and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God, and they were confessing to the Lord and worshiping the Lord their God. (Septuagint 2 Esdras 19:3 (Nehemiah 9:3 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

41 **Ecclesiastes 6:6** And though he has lived through the circuits of a thousand years and has not seen goodness, do not all go to one place? **read ›**

42 **Ecclesiastes 7:7** For oppression drives a wise man mad and destroys his noble heart. **read ›**

43 **Isaiah 6:2** And seraphim stood around him; six wings to the one, and six wings to the other; and with two they covered the face, and with two they covered the feet, and with two they flew. **read ›**

44 **Isaiah 7:20** In that day the Lord will shave the head and the hair of the feet with the razor hired beyond the river, the razor of the king of the Assyrians, and he will take away the beard. **read ›**

45 **Isaiah 50:6** I gave my back to whips, and my cheeks to blows; and I did not turn my face away from the shame of spitting. **read ›**

46 **Isaiah 52:14** Just as many shall be astonished at you, so your appearance shall be without glory from men, and your glory from the sons of men. **read ›**

47 **Jeremiah 25:23** and Dedan and Teman and Ros, and everyone who is shaved around his face, (Septuagint Jeremiah 32:23 (Jeremiah 25:23 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

48 **Jeremiah 29:8** For thus said the Lord: Do not let the false prophets who are among you mislead you, and do not let your fortune-tellers mislead you, and do not listen to your dreams which you dream; (Septuagint Jeremiah 36:8 (Jeremiah 29:8 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

49 **Jeremiah 48:37** Every head in every place will be shaved, and every beard will be shaved, and all hands will beat the breast, and on every waist there will be sackcloth. (Septuagint Jeremiah 31:37 (Jeremiah 48:37 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

50 **Ezekiel 5:1** And you, Son of man, take for yourself a sword sharper than a barber's razor; you shall acquire it for yourself, and you shall bring it upon your head and upon your beard; and you shall take a balance of weights and divide them. **read ›**

51 **Ezekiel 41:21** And the holy place and the temple opened out foursquare; in front of the holy places was an appearance like the look of **read ›**

52 **Ezekiel 44:20** And they shall not shave their heads, and they shall not pluck out their hair; they shall surely cover their heads. **read ›**

53 **Hosea 9:8** The watchman of Ephraim is with God; the prophet is a crooked trap in all his ways; they have fixed madness in the house of God. **read ›**

54 **1 Esdras 8:71** As soon as I heard these things, I tore my garments and my holy robe, and pulled out the hair of my head and my beard, and sat down deeply troubled and very sorrowful. **read ›**

55 **Wisdom of Sirach 27:14** The talk of one who swears much makes the hair stand on end, and their fighting makes one stop the ears. **read ›**

56 **Letter of Jeremiah 1:31** And in their houses the priests sit with their tunics torn, and their heads and beards shaved, and their heads uncovered. **read ›**

57 **2 Maccabees 6:6** A man could neither keep the Sabbath, nor observe the feasts of his fathers, nor so much as confess himself to be a Jew. **read ›**

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58 **2 Maccabees 7:7** After the first had died in this way, they brought the second to be mocked. They tore off the skin of his head with the hair and asked him, “Will you eat before your body is punished limb by limb?” **read ›**

59 **4 Maccabees 6:2** And first they stripped the old man, who was adorned with the dignity of godliness. **read ›**

60 **Acts 3:18** But the things which God announced beforehand through the mouth of all his prophets, that the Christ should suffer, he fulfilled in this way. **read ›**

61 **Acts 3:19** Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, **read ›**

62 **Acts 7:20** At that time Moses was born, and he was beautiful before God. He was brought up for three months in his father’s house. **read ›**

63 **Acts 11:5** “I was praying in the city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision: something like a great sheet descending, lowered from heaven by its four corners. It came down to me. **read ›**

64 **Acts 17:6** When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brothers before the city rulers, crying out, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too. **read ›**

65 **Acts 21:24** Take these men, purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and everyone may know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in obedience to the law. **read ›**

66 **Romans 9:25** As he also says in Hosea, “I will call those who are not my people, ‘My people,’ and her who was not loved, ‘Loved.’ **read ›**

67 **Romans 16:6** Greet Mary, who labored much for us. **read ›**

68 **1 Corinthians 11:6** For if a woman is not covered, let her hair also be cut off. But if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or be shaved, let her be covered. **read ›**

69 **1 Corinthians 11:14** Or does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? **read ›**

70 **1 Corinthians 11:15** But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her, because her hair is given as a covering. **read ›**

71 **Ephesians 5:1** Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *4 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Matthew 10:30 · 18:7

1 Corinthians 11:3

2 Corinthians 13:5

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

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THE END OF THIS STUDY