

Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible

More Clothing Imagery

Lesson #12 for June 18, 2011

Scriptures: Mark 5:24-34; Luke 8:43-48; John 13:1-16; 19:23,24; Matthew 26:59-68; 27:27-29.

1. In this lesson we will explore occasions near the end of the life of Christ in which His clothing played an important part in the story.
2. We will talk about the woman whose touch of the hem of Christ's garment resulted in her being healed. We will talk about Jesus taking off His outer garment to kneel down and wash the feet of His disciples. We will discuss Caiaphas tearing his high priestly garments after the testimony of Christ about His identity. We will look at the mockery of the soldiers who placed a "royal" robe on Jesus to mock Him during the trial. Then, we will finish with the soldiers who casts lots for His clothing at His crucifixion. Clearly, clothing played a key role in each of these stories.
3. Each of these events was very significant in the life of Christ. But, what role did the clothing play? The Gospels make it clear that people came from far and near to be healed by Jesus. Mark 5:21-34 and Luke 8:43-48 tell the story of a woman who for 12 years had spent all the money she had trying to be healed of a bleeding disorder but had lost all hope. The doctors had declared her incurable. More than that, with continuous bleeding she would have been ritually unclean and not allowed to worship in the synagogue or go to the temple. (Leviticus 18:19; 20:18) It is very unlikely that she could remain married, and certainly, she could not have become pregnant. She had become almost an outcast.
4. How do you suppose she learned about Jesus? She came from a rural society where basically nothing was happening. It is quite likely that almost everyone was talking about Jesus. How did she develop a trust in Him? Jesus was the most exciting and noteworthy thing that was happening in that entire area. We know that people from as far away as Tyre and Sidon and from the cities of Decapolis came to find Jesus so they could be healed by Him. She had tried to approach Jesus at Matthew's feast but had been unable. Likely, she started out with the thought that she would go to Jesus and explain her problem and He would miraculously heal her. As she got nearer and saw the crowds, she realized that her plan was not going to work! As she watched what was happening and as she heard about and later saw for herself the others that had been healed, did her faith grow? How did she get the idea that just touching His robe would heal her?
5. Jairus, a local rabbi and "a ruler of the synagogue," (Luke 8:41) had called Jesus to come and heal his daughter who was deathly ill. Notice that when there was a desperate need, even the Jewish leaders knew where to find help! Jesus was progressing in the direction of Jairus' home with crowds pressing Him on every side when the woman saw her opportunity and managed to reach out just enough to touch the edge of Jesus' garment. Immediately, she felt something like a shock of electricity and knew that she had been healed. Jesus wanted to be sure that no one would be left with the impression that there was some magical power in His clothing. Many people, lacking any scientific understanding of the real causes of diseases, turned to so-called magical powers for healing. So, Jesus stopped and asked that incredible question, "Who touched me?" Surely, He knew who had touched Him. So, why did He ask that question? Jesus wanted to commend her faith. Then, He spoke to the woman assuring her that it was her faith that had made her whole.

How many people do you suppose that woman later told about her healing? How many people did she meet?

6. It is in this context that Ellen White gave one of the best definitions for faith and how it works:

Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 347.1.

It is interesting to notice that this is exactly what the original language suggests in Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:2; and Hebrews 11:6. But, Ellen White did not know any Greek or Hebrew! How did she get it exactly right?

7. Read Matthew 20:20-28; John 13:1-18; and Luke 22:24. The story of the upper room and Jesus washing His disciples' feet and then introducing them to a new Christian ceremony to replace the Jewish Passover was a critical turning point for most of the disciples. Remember that earlier in the week, they had participated in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. They had seen Jesus defeat the Pharisees and the Sadducees repeatedly in the temple. It was the fervent hope of the disciples that at any moment Jesus would announce His kingdom here on this earth. They were still fighting about who would be first in the kingdom as they entered the upper room. (Luke 22:24) None of them was willing to take the basin and the towel and wash everyone's dirty feet. This was normally a task done by a servant or even a slave, certainly not by the Master and Rabbi or honored guest! If one is fighting to be the next prime minister, he cannot wash feet! After waiting a short time, Jesus took off His outer garment and started washing those dirty feet. By the way, who washed Jesus' feet? It is interesting to notice that they were not following the directions given for the Passover celebration in which they were to eat roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. Clearly, Jesus was introducing a new ceremony. Jesus knew He was God, but they did not. What does this tell us about God? Would God the Father do what Jesus did on that occasion? (John 14:9) Did Jesus look up at any of the disciples and ask, "Do you think My Father would do this?"

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed....In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father.—*Letter 83*, 1895; *That I May Know Him* 338; *21MR* 393.1

8. Many people have the opinion that heaven is going to be a place where they will relax and others will serve them and all of their needs will be met. Does this story suggest to us that even in heaven we will serve each other? As Christians, are we prepared to follow the example of Jesus by serving others? When we get to heaven, will God ever ask us to tell our story—the story of our salvation—to any of the beings in the rest of the universe?
9. The one very sour note in the story of the upper room was the story of Judas. He had made up his mind to betray Jesus. He was sure that Jesus would not allow Himself to be taken. He thought that Jesus would either have to exert His power and assert His kingship—and Judas would get credit for putting Jesus on the throne—or He would escape

from their control, and Judas would be so much the richer for his clever deal. (*Desire of Ages*, p. 720.4-5)

10. Under God's instructions, Moses wrote in the book of Leviticus that the high priest was never to leave his hair uncombed or tear his clothing when he was wearing those very special robes which were to be worn only by the high priest. (Leviticus 21:10) So, what happened in the trial of Jesus? (Matthew 26:57-68; compare John 10:18)

By rending his garments, Caiaphas made of no effect the law of God, to follow the tradition of men. A man-made law provided that in case of blasphemy a priest might rend his garments in horror at the sin, and be guiltless. Thus the law of God was made void by the laws of men.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 709.2

Remember that as a Sadducee, Caiaphas did not believe in angels, resurrection, or any life after death. What did Jesus' answer say to Caiaphas?

11. All five of the trials of Jesus were clear examples of human beings setting aside truth, righteousness, and justice and operating according to their own whims.
12. Why did Jesus have such a contentious time with the religious leaders throughout His life? Why didn't Jesus just ignore them? Was it because they were destroying God's people by their teachings and their actions? Were those leaders placing themselves in the place of God? Modern Jews have been told not to study Daniel 9 which prophesies the coming of Jesus.
13. There is no question about the fact that the Devil was orchestrating the entire proceedings from the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane to the death of Jesus on Calvary. Men, and possibly some women, who believed that they were God's chosen leaders of the nation were directly controlled by Satan. In the midst of that whole sham of justice while in the court of Pilate, Jesus was taken into a common room, His clothes were taken off of Him, and in mockery a purple robe was placed on Him, a crown of thorns was placed on His head, and a reed symbolizing a rod of power was put in His hand. Then, they mockingly bowed to Him, spat at Him, and beat Him. (Matthew 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20; John 19:2,3)
14. We do not know where the scarlet robe came from. Perhaps, it was part of a Roman cloak from one of the soldiers. Perhaps, it was an old garment belonging to Herod or Pilate. The priests had mocked Christ's spiritual authority. Then, the common soldiers mocked His political authority. Try to imagine how Jesus felt during all of that. He was fully aware that at any instant He could have stretched out His arm or spoken a word incapacitating all of them or even killing them. He could have escaped as easily as anything. All during the trial, He knew in advance exactly what each person was going to do. But, He never used that knowledge for His own personal advantage. He could even read the thoughts of Annas, Caiaphas, and everyone else present. So, why did Jesus keep silent?
15. What are we supposed to learn from all of this? Is this supposed to be an example to us of how we should react when faced with injustice?
16. After being unfairly and unjustly tried at night by Annas and Caiaphas and then by the Sanhedrin—minus people like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea—Jesus was condemned and taken to Pilate. Within a very short time, Pilate declared that he found no fault in Jesus. He was then sent to Herod because Jesus had grown up in Galilee in Herod's territory. But, Herod also was very reluctant to condemn Jesus. So, he sent Him back to Pilate. (Luke 23:6-12) Pilate allowed himself to be manipulated by the Jewish authorities. Finally, washing his hands of the whole deal, Pilate indirectly condemned Jesus to

crucifixion.

17. As Jesus was hanging on the cross and stripped naked, He watched the soldiers divide His clothes and then cast lots for His robe. While we recognize that the emotions and feelings of Christ at that point in time were unbelievably terrible, how do you suppose Jesus reacted as He watched them divide up His last possession on this earth—His clothes? Notice the following from Ellen White:

But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt. – Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.1.

Was it the separation from the Father that killed Him? Would a separation from the Father so alarm us that we would even be aware of it or be affected by it?

18. Our Bible study guide says:

The weight of the world's sin falling on Him, the separation from the Father bearing down on Him, Jesus then sees these soldiers, right beneath Him, dividing up His clothing and casting lots, all in a fulfillment of prophecy. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, June 16)

19. Do you think Jesus recognized the fulfillment of prophecy that was going on at that point? (See Psalms 22:18) Did it encourage Him in any way?

20. What was it that sustained Jesus through that terrible experience?

Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor. – Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 756.3.

21. There are a number of prophecies which Matthew quoted and some which John quoted from the Old Testament which they saw as pointing to the life of Jesus. How many of those prophecies are obvious from the Old Testament context? Look especially at Psalm 22:18 which was used as the prediction about His garments being parted and casting lots for His clothing. What did this passage refer to in the original context?

22. Do you think any of the people involved in those events had any idea that they might be doing the Devil's will in fulfilling prophecy and adding to the great controversy?

23. What do these stories teach us about God? Could we imitate any of these stories about Jesus? Are we sure that we are not acting like any of Jesus' enemies?

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Info@theox.org

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