

Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible

Clothed in Christ

Lesson #13 for June 25, 2011

Scriptures: Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 3:1-10; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Corinthians 15:49-55; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4.

1. What does it mean to be clothed in Christ? Does anyone besides Paul talk about this? Does a Christian's life change when he takes on that new "garment"? Or, do the new garments just cover over our sinful lives? Aren't garments primarily to look at? This lesson is going to suggest that new garments mean the renewal and restoration of God's original plan for our lives. Has that happened to us?
2. What does it mean to be a Seventh-day Adventist Christian? What does it mean to be a Christian? Is it more important to be a Christian or to be a Seventh-day Adventist? Could you be a Seventh-day Adventist without being a Christian? Or, a Christian without being a Seventh-day Adventist? What is going to happen in the "shaking" that has been prophesied? Could we be like the Jewish leaders? Weren't they seventh-day Sabbath-keeping, health-reforming, tithing "saints" who were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah (Christ)? They killed their Creator? Are they going to be saved? (Matthew 7:21-23)
3. Scholars who have studied churches recognize that there is a fairly typical progression as churches mature. At first, everyone is fired up with zeal about the ideals they have embraced and the doctrines they believe in. By the time the second or third generation comes along, the young people are asking, "Why are we different from others?" Eventually, the initial zeal seems to be gone completely. As has happened in many churches in the past, the new group melts into the general Protestant group and ceases to have any real distinctiveness. Is that because they are maturing? Were those initial beliefs really biblical and distinctive? Or, were they not?
4. Are there real hazards in being "born on the bus"? That is, if you believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church or any other church group is headed for the kingdom and you are "born on that bus," do you think it will automatically take you to heaven? If the church has some kind of problem, is it your responsibility to get off the bus and try to help repair it?
5. Read Galatians 3:26-29 and Romans 6:1-6. In these passages Paul was talking about being clothed with Christ. Certainly, that must be more than just a change in legal standing before God. If we stop to think of what clothing does for us, it is our clothing which appears to cover our bodies when we are out in public. Our clothes are what people mostly see. Do people see Christ when they look at us?
6. In the initial stages, it may seem like being clothed with Christ means primarily a change in legal status. But, as we continue to wear those new garments, it becomes an identifying mark on us. In other words, we are to appear more and more like Jesus Christ. Eventually, we are so transformed that by the time we reach the heavenly kingdom, our very physical nature will be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:52)
7. In the life of an ordinary Christian, what really happens? Are we clothed with Christ when we are slipping back into sin? Are we putting those garments on and taking them off as we walk through life? Or, daily, are we being transformed into God's likeness?
8. What actual difference does the life and death of Christ make in our lives? What difference

does His high priestly ministry in heaven make? How much time do we spend even thinking about those issues?

9. Read Romans 13. Notice that in the first part of this chapter, we are reminded of our civic duties. But, in the middle of the chapter, there is a dramatic change. We are told that love is the fulfilling of all law. Then, we are urged to stop paying attention to our sinful nature. How do you actually stop paying attention to your sinful nature? Does being clothed with Christ actually mean a life of faith and obedience? How is that related to putting on the armor of light described in Romans 13:12?
10. Human beings are so prone to peer pressure. Everyone wants to be liked and to be accepted by those around him/her—especially those he/she cares about. How easy is it to buck the trend? As we see in the world around us, almost everything seems to be in a deteriorating condition. But, as Christians, we are expected to get better and better and become more and more like Jesus Christ. Is that easy? What does it mean to “die to self”? Or, to “exercise complete surrender”?
11. In Ephesians 4:22-24, Paul suggested that our hearts and minds are to be made completely new. We are to take off the old man and put on the new man. We are to bury the old man and to rise in newness of life.
12. Rodney Clapp, in his book, *A Peculiar People*, suggests that if Christians are truly traveling in a different direction than the world, in effect, they are becoming subversives. If you are trying to do what God asks you to do—putting on the garments of Christ—in effect, you are saying, “I reject the lordship of this world; I am following a different Lord.” If that is true, we will be marching to a different drummer—living out of step with the dominant society. Is this what is suggested by Galatians 5:19-26? Or, by Romans 13? Is that how everyone will know that we are Christ’s disciples? (John 13:35)
13. Seriously, how much difference does your religion make in your daily life? How much time do you spend worshiping God, thinking about spiritual matters, and seeking ways to improve your life compared to the amount of time you spend working, sleeping, even watching television?
14. But, if we manage to make this change and if we take God seriously, the day will come when we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye! (1 Corinthians 15:51-55) What do we expect will change at that moment? Our bodies? Our characters? Our records in heaven? In our day this far from the tree of life, could we actually become somewhat closer to what God intended when He first made Adam and Eve? Are we truly headed in the direction of heaven? Or, only the grave? God has promised that those who honor Him will one day become incorruptible and immortal! Wouldn’t you describe that ultimate change as a real “change of clothing”? At that point, we will finally and completely really not only look like Christ but also be like Him!
15. Unfortunately, our church has often focused on getting people to the baptismal font so their names appear on the church books. Often, after a major campaign, the church fills up only to gradually slip back pretty much to where it was before. How can we prevent that attrition?
16. In the spiritual life of an individual Christian, what is supposed to happen after baptism?
17. What would happen if after a person is baptized, the church took upon itself the responsibility of nurturing each new member? What if they could join a book-by-book Bible

study class and learn the real truth about God from the Scriptures? Then ultimately, what if they became excited enough about the gospel that they wanted to go out and tell others? What kind of a church would that be? Isn't that what is implied by Matthew 28:20? Daniel 12:3 implies that all those who are going to be saved will be witnesses.

18. Do newly baptized church members really understand what the church expects of them? Do they know what God expects of them?
19. Paul argued very forcibly that just as Christ was raised from the dead and put on His immortal body, we can follow suit. What greater promise could we possibly have?
20. Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. Try to imagine Paul's thoughts as he suggested we should tear down the tent that we are now living in and put up the house not made with hands—the Christ-like eternal garment that God offers us. What is eternal life worth? Is there a price we can pay for it?
21. Is the reality of the resurrection and eternal life so clear in your mind that you do not fear death? Remember that in God's eyes, death is only a sleep. (John 11:11-13)
22. God calls on us to wash ourselves and cleanse ourselves, even washing our robes (Revelation 7:14; 22:14) so that we can put on these new garments that demonstrate to the world (Matthew 5:16) that we are Christians and that we take that name seriously.
23. God has promised us lives that can be measured with the life of God!
24. We do not need to remain shackled to the customs and practices of this world. The Holy Spirit, God the Father, and Christ Himself have promised to assist us in every way possible. Do we allow Them to help us each step of the way to the point that we receive those glorified bodies. (Read Romans 8)
25. It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* p. 555.1
26. If by beholding we become changed, then the challenge before us is to fill our minds and hearts with ideas, thoughts, stories, principles, and character-building steps that will take us one day to the gates of the New Jerusalem.
27. It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Saviour. If we would be saved at last we must all learn the lesson of penitence and faith at the foot of the cross. . . . Everything noble and generous in man will respond to the contemplation of Christ upon the cross. *4T* 374.1 (1879); *Mar* 77.5; *LHU* 240.3; see also *DA* 83.4.

28. Wouldn't that make a difference in our lives?

29. In this series of lessons, we have studied a number of stories involving clothing. What have you learned? In our world the clothing industry is a multi-billion dollar industry. Designers make enormous sums coming up with constantly changing ideas about what the latest fashions are. Some people think of little else! What would happen if a group of people paid that much attention and effort into clothing themselves and their friends in Christ-like garments?

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