

## **Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible From Exalted to Cast Down**

Lesson #2 for April 9, 2011

Scriptures: John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16,17; Ezekiel 28:12-19; Deuteronomy 8:1-18; Isaiah 14:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:14.

1. If God is a good God and if He created everything, why is there so much evil in this world? Did a good God make a bad world? That is a question which has challenged generations of thinkers. For conservative Christians who believe in the biblical records, the answer, of course, is that Lucifer exercised his freedom to become Satan, the adversary. But, to many Christians who believe in the absolute sovereignty of God, such a thing is not possible.
2. And if God has foreknowledge, why would He create a being that He knew was going to rebel and become His mortal enemy? Doesn't that make God responsible for evil? And why does God continue to keep the Devil alive? Why do so many people even among relatively conservative Christians no longer believe that the Devil exists? How could someone who was perfect come up with the idea of rebellion and sin? If you do not accept the idea that Lucifer—created by God—could become Satan, then you are in an even worse quandary as to the origin of evil. A God of love only creates creatures that are free and capable of loving.
3. So, why would God create Lucifer if He knew that he was going to become Satan? On the other side of the coin, if God were really as Satan has claimed He is—arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe—would Satan have dared to rebel? The Bible presents—and Ellen White greatly expands the idea—that our universe is caught up in a great controversy between Michael the Archangel—one of the names of God the Son—and Lucifer who became Satan or the Devil, the adversary or the evil one, in an all-out “battle” to control this earth. (Revelation 12:1-3) Lucifer has made many, many claims against God. The first recorded such claim was a blatant statement recorded in Genesis 3:1-4 that God is a liar. God had said that if one would sin and rebel against God, he would die the same day. (Genesis 2:17) The Hebrew can be taken two ways: “You will certainly die,” or “You will die that same day.” But, Satan wants us to believe that we can sin without ever dying.
4. Lucifer was originally created to be the leader of the angels. The few hints we have about his pre-rebellion status suggest that he was fantastically talented. He was beautiful in appearance and occupied a place next to the throne of God. Some have suggested that he was one of the four living creatures that stood around the throne of God. He is described as having worn garments covered with what we would regard as precious gems of all sorts of colors. No doubt, this is a metaphor for something much more sophisticated. It is possible that his clothing reflected the rainbow. It certainly is more than a coat covered with stones!
5. Considering all you know about the history of Lucifer/Satan, what explanation can you possibly give for his rebellion in heaven? And how did he convince one-third of the angels who were living *in the very presence of God* that God is untrustworthy, possibly a liar, and One to be rebelled against? Moving among the angels as Michael the Archangel, apparently Christ was so convincingly like an angel that they did not always recognize that He was, in fact, God. Lucifer was supposed to be representing God. Lucifer was supposed to be a light-bearer. Did he begin misrepresenting God instead? Did they, at first, have any reason to mistrust Lucifer?
6. Why is freedom so important to God? Wouldn't God have been better off to just create us without moral freedom?
7. Consider the following. 1 John 4:8,16 says, “...God is love....”

It sounds so profound and yet so simple! *Love* is probably the word that has come to be associated with Christianity more than any other. But, is it really that simple? Follow me as we consider this sequence for a few minutes.

What God wants most of all in His universe is loving, understanding friends. But, love is much

more than just a warm, fuzzy, emotional response. Think of the implications of this “simple” concept!

In order to be able to love, one must also be able to hate. Otherwise, *love* has no meaning. God wants much more than mere robots. Suppose you took a tape recorder and after inserting a nice new tape pressed the record button and spoke clearly into the microphone the following words: “I love you; I love you; I love you; I love you;” etc. for as long as you wanted. If you then should rewind the tape and push the play button, would you be delighted to know that the tape recorder was saying, “I love you”? Would you give the recorder a big hug for such a wonderful expression of appreciation and love? Of course not. You would think that the whole exercise was a bit silly because the tape recorder has no control over what it says. It only repeats what you tell it.

So, in order for God to have creatures that truly love Him, He had to create them with freedom of choice. This, in turn, implies a lot of other things. Let us consider the implications.

If God wants real love and at the same time grants real freedom, then He must give us a basis on which to build that love. In essence, He must truly love us if He wants a love response in return. He will, in effect, have to win our love. But, how do you do that if someone is truly free?

To be *really free*, one must have *choices*. Choices are not the same as chances. Sometimes, children play a game where they put something valuable or desirable in one hand and then put both hands behind their back. After a moment or two during which they may or may not have moved the object from one hand to the other, they bring both hands out for you to choose which one you want. Now, if the item is large enough or irregularly-shaped enough, you may get a clue by the appearance of the hands themselves. But, for the moment, let us assume that you have no idea which hand contains the item. When you choose one hand or the other, you are playing a chance game. God does not play chance games. If salvation were based on chance, then we are truly dealing with an arbitrary God who just enjoys entertaining Himself with our foolish activities.

In order for God to give us real freedom, He must give us *real choices*. That means that we not only must be able to see what we are choosing; but more than that, we must have some idea of the implications of that choice in the future. If you make a choice because something looks good or feels good but you have no idea whether you are getting a deadly weapon or a child’s toy, it is really nothing more than chance. In order to have a real choice, you must know what the item is and have some idea about the future implications of choosing it. Furthermore, if we lived in a universe that was completely chaotic so that a choice which appeared good today would turn out to be deadly tomorrow, again, any real freedom would be gone.

So, in order to make real love possible, God had to create an *orderly* universe in which choices that are good today are still good tomorrow. We would have to be able to study reality at least long enough during one lifetime so that we could get a pretty good idea what the result of each of our regular choices was going to be. But, think of the implications of this! We would need to have a universe that is orderly enough so that science would be possible. “Laws” would describe the way things work rather than some arbitrary rule.

In allowing us freedom, God recognized that sooner or later, someone might choose to work against His plan. Then, He would have to deal with the problems that arose. As we know historically, Lucifer, the leader of the angels, was the one who rebelled. (Revelation 12:7-12) In turn, he convinced our first parents to join him in that rebellion. (Genesis 3:1-19) Thus, our world became the testing ground for the “great controversy.” No doubt, God wished that He could prevent any evil consequences from befalling any of His children. But, in order to have an atmosphere of love, God knew that He would have to stand back and allow things to take their course. God certainly has and had the power to step in at any moment and prevent anyone from sinning or even prevent the consequences of anyone’s sins. But, if He did that, He would have to overrule our freedom.

Instead, God chose to allow events to take their natural course with people mostly reaping the

consequences of their own actions—and those of their forefathers. God would only step into human history to exercise His power and force when it was absolutely necessary to preserve the human race or to prevent them from losing contact with Him.

And so, we read the record in the Old Testament. (Genesis 6-8) God had to allow things to go from bad to worse according to human choices until finally, at the time of the flood, things had become so bad that God was about to completely lose contact with the human race. Many things still needed to be demonstrated. So, God drowned all of His children except eight.

And so, the story went on for thousands of years. Now, it is our turn to live on this earth. And God is preserving a complete record of everything that is being thought, said, and done here on planet earth as a permanent protection against such a thing ever happening again.

A million or even a billion years into eternity as we are living in complete harmony and peace together, someone may again decide to rebel. Then, God will only need to pull out the “videotape” of the history of this world from the divine museum to remind everyone what the consequences of such a decision would be. God only needs to let sin happen once.

Our little planet is and will forever be the lesson book of the universe. God has declared that love is the best way—even the only way—to run a universe. The Devil and this earth are in the midst of an experiment to try to prove that God is wrong. We may choose which side of this whole great controversy we are going to be on. But, as we decide, let us remember that the consequences and implications of each choice are far from simple!

8. Read John 1:1-3. Clearly, God the Father and God the Son created everything. (Colossians 1:16,17) Scientists who study astronomy and such matters realize that our universe is unbelievably large—full of an unbelievable number of stars, planets, even galaxies, etc. (There are more than a billion stars just in our galaxy!) In addition to all the things we can see, there is apparently an enormous amount of dark matter or dark energy in between the things we can see. The passage in Colossians suggests that “all things are created for Him.” The *New English Bible* says, “All things are held together in him.” He is over all spiritual powers, lords, rulers, and authorities.
9. Why do so many of us human beings accept Satan’s temptations rather than faithfully following God’s guidance for our lives?
10. Much of what we know about the early history of Lucifer is contained in two passages: Isaiah 14:12-16 and Ezekiel 28:1,11-19. These passages are addressed to the King of Babylon and the King of Tyre, respectively. So, why do we think that they are references to Lucifer the light-bearer, the one who used to stand next to the throne of God? In the passage from Ezekiel, Lucifer is described as wearing a garment—a covering—made perhaps of rubies, diamonds, topaz, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, emerald, chrysolite, and turquoise, mounted on gold. That would suggest it is a covering reflecting beautiful shades of red, yellow, green, azure blue, turquoise, and olive green. Is it possible that he wore a breastplate something like the one that the high priest wore in ancient Israel? Notice that God used a human example on this earth to teach us something about Lucifer in heaven.
11. Read Isaiah 14:12-14. What does this passage tell us about the “blasphemous, satanic, King of Babylon”? (*Amplified*) Do we, like Satan, sometimes pretend that we can play God? In our day, Satan goes about like a roaring lion! (Peter 5:8) At other times, he disguises himself as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14)
12. Read Ezekiel 28:17. Why do you think Lucifer’s beauty and splendor led to his pride and corruption? Did God make him so beautiful that God was at least partly responsible for his rebellion? Didn’t Lucifer realize that everything he had, including his beauty and his position, were gifts from God?
13. How many of our Christian friends interpret Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 as we do? It is interesting to note in Isaiah 14 that the dwelling place of God is described as the “mount of assembly.” When transliterated into Greek, this place is called “Armageddon.” Compare Revelation 16:16!

At the end of the seven last plagues, is Satan still fighting for a place on the “mountain of God”?

14. Why would anyone living in an environment where everyone was accustomed to love every other being want to leave such an environment? Of course, it is quite likely that Satan never intended to leave heaven. Probably, he was hoping to advance his position without ever having to be cast out from heaven. He tried to teach the other angels that if they organized themselves, they could demand that God share more of His Divinity and power with them.
15. When reviewing all the issues between God’s side and Satan’s side, they can be summed up largely by the use of two words: on God’s side, *love*; on Satan side, *selfishness*.
16. In God’s kingdom everyone is free. Each person does what he does because he chooses to do so. On Satan’s side much of what happens is done under force or coercion. Why would anyone choose that side? Is it because we are born inherently selfish? Why is that? Didn’t God foresee that this would happen?
17. Does Satan still believe that he might be victorious in the great controversy? Apparently so, because he will be still rallying his troops at the third coming as if he might be able to conquer the New Jerusalem! What does that tell us about our ability to deceive ourselves?
18. Read Deuteronomy 8:1-18. Notice all that God promised the children of Israel. He promised to take care of them, to provide for them, and to protect them. In our days of supposed wisdom, success, and prosperity, do we believe that we need God’s care for us?
19. In reading about Satan’s/Lucifer’s original position, it is important to note that he was called a “light-bearer” and not a light source! His beauty was only a reflected beauty. God was the Source.
20. All of us are aware of spiritual leaders of one kind or another who have fallen out of grace. We may even have had personal experiences in which some sinful tendency that we thought had become a thing of the past suddenly reared its ugly head again.
21. Why does sin so easily separate us from God? (Isaiah 59:2) Don’t each one of us have a conscience and the capacity for moral reasoning? Are these tools always reliable?
22. Read Revelation 12:7-12. In this brief passage, we recognize that Satan was cast down to this earth before the days of creation. What was here at that time? Satan was certainly here by the time God created the Garden of Eden. This same passage also reminds us that Satan is a modern-day “adventist”—he believes that the second coming is very near.
23. Our only safety is in explicitly following God’s directions and guidance and step-by-step being transformed into His likeness.
24. This includes banishing evil thoughts as soon as they appear in our consciousness. That is not easy, but we do have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. In what sense is He able to take our guilt upon His own soul? (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69)
25. Why do those of us who believe in the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation so readily accept the idea that Satan is a formerly-honored member of the family of heaven? Do we have any questions about his current existence? If Satan does not exist, where does temptation come from? (James 1:13-15)
26. Certainly, Satan’s fall from grace should be a warning to every one of us. If one could get to know God so well and stand beside the throne of God in heaven and yet become the most evil person in the universe, how easy would it be for us to follow Lucifer’s footsteps? We need to understand the issues in the great controversy as clearly as possible so that we will not make that mistake.

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