

More Symbols About Clothes



SABBATH—JUNE 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Mark 5:24–34; Luke 8:43–48; John 13:1–16; John 19:23, 24; Matthew 26:59–68; Matthew 27:27–29.

MEMORY VERSE: “She thought, ‘I just need to touch his clothes. Then I will be healed’ ” (Mark 5:28, NlrV).

IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE that we can learn so many lessons from clothing in the Bible. After all, clothing is so much a part of us. Clothing can say a lot about us and who we are. Rightly or wrongly, we often make judgments about others by what they wear or how they wear it.

This week's lesson will study the question of clothing in stories about Jesus. We will study about the woman who believed, rightly so, that all she had to do to be healed was to touch His clothes. Then we will study about Jesus, putting aside His garment in order to wash the feet of His disciples. Next we will study about the high priest who, standing before the Lord, tore his own garments in an act that sealed the proud ruler's fate (sad end). Then we will study about the robe put on Jesus by the Roman soldiers who laughed at Him. And finally we will study about the soldiers casting lots for Christ's garment, thus fulfilling an old Bible prophecy.¹

Just clothing, yes; but so full of meaningful symbols, for sure.

1. prophecy—a message from God about what will happen in the future.

SUNDAY—JUNE 12**“WHO TOUCHED MY CLOTHES?”
(Mark 5:24–34)**

Mark 5:24–34 and Luke 8:43–48 tell the story of the woman who had a bleeding problem for 12 years. Her disease was a dangerous medical condition. But this sickness also came with the label of being religiously unclean in that culture. No doubt this added to her suffering. Meanwhile, the doctors could do nothing. The woman wanted to get well so much that she spent all of her money on doctors and medicine. But she only grew sicker. This is not surprising, because medicine was not advanced back then. We cannot imagine how much suffering and shame she went through because of her illness.

And then comes Jesus, the One who is doing all these wonderful miracles.

What does it mean that the woman in Mark 5:24–34 and Luke 8:43–48 believed that all she had to do was to touch Jesus’ garment in order to find healing?

This woman had a great deal of faith in Jesus. Her faith was enough to believe that if she could touch even His clothes, she would be healed. Really, it was not the clothes themselves that healed her—not even the touch. It was only the power of God working in someone who came to the Lord in faith. The woman also knew of her own helplessness and

need. Her touching Jesus’ clothes was faith shown in works. This is what Christianity is all about.



The woman believed that if she could touch the clothes of Jesus she would be healed.

Why would Jesus ask who touched His garment?

Jesus asked the question and made the woman’s act, and healing, public. By doing this, Jesus used the woman to help witness to those around Him. Jesus wanted others to know what happened. And He probably wanted the woman to know that it was not any magical power in His clothes that brought her healing. It was the power of God working in her through the act of faith on her part. The woman’s condition had been embarrassing to her. But she now was healed. And she now could give witness to what Christ had done for her.

How can we learn to come to the Lord in our helplessness as this

woman did? More important, how can we keep faith and trust in Him when the healing that we ask for does not come as we want it to?

MONDAY—JUNE 13

HE “TOOK OFF HIS OUTER CLOTHES” (John 13:5, Nlrv)

In the last few days of Christ’s life, He met with His disciples (followers) in the upper room for the Passover. The Passover was Israel’s national celebration of the Exodus (escape) from slavery. But all was not well. The atmosphere in the upper room must have been thick with tension and bitter feelings. Not much earlier, the disciples had been fighting over who would have the greatest place in the kingdom of heaven. Now they had come together to celebrate the Passover. This celebration should have spoken to them of their great need of God’s saving grace² in their lives and how dependent they were on Jesus.

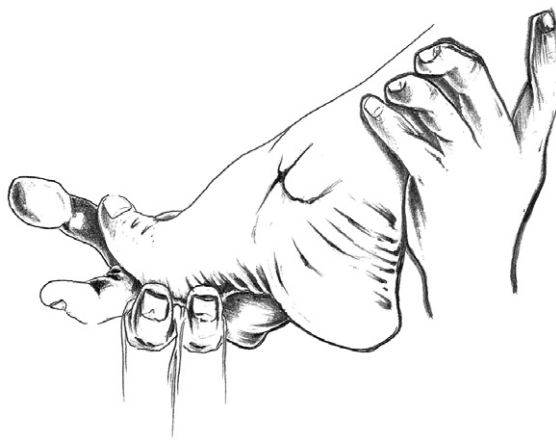
According to Matthew 20:20–28, what important lesson had the disciples totally failed to understand?

The disciples’ attitudes (thoughts and feelings) had been bad enough. But what made things worse was Judas, Jesus’ betrayer. Judas was acting as if nothing were wrong. Jesus had every right to be disgusted with the disciples, but what did He do?

What lesson is Jesus giving in John 13:1–16? Why is this very important to what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

It was the custom for the disciples to wash their feet from the filth (dirt) of the streets. This was a servant’s work. But the disciples had no servants. And none of them would bend low to this humble work. When Jesus took off His outer clothes and began to wash their feet, the disciples’ hearts melted. They had declared Him to be the Son of God. That God’s Son should bend so low to do the work of a slave shamed them. The verse said that before doing this, Jesus took off His outer clothes. This shows how Jesus was willing to lower Himself and humble Himself in order to reach His followers.

And that is not all. Jesus knew full well what was in Judas’ heart. But He washed Judas’ feet too.



Jesus began to wash their feet.

² grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness that is not deserved) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

How “low” are you willing to go for the good of others? When was the last time you “took off your outer garment” in order to minister to (help; serve) the needs of those around you?

TUESDAY—JUNE 14

“THE HIGH PRIEST TORE HIS CLOTHES” (Matthew 26:65, NlrV)

“ ‘The high priest is the one among his brothers whose head has been anointed with olive oil. He has been appointed to wear the priest’s clothes. When someone dies, the high priest must not let his hair hang loose. He must not tear his clothes to show how sad he is’ ” (Leviticus 21:10, NlrV).

What can we learn in Matthew 26:59–68 about the high priest’s tearing of his garments as a result of Christ’s answer to him? Read also Mark 15:38; Hebrews 8:1.

The high priest Caiaphas tore his clothes to symbolize (show) that Jesus was to be put to death. Tearing his garments symbolized Caiaphas’ “righteous [holy]” anger and showed his horror over Jesus’ seemingly boastful claim to be the Son of God. Moses’ law forbade (did not allow) the high priest from tearing his priestly clothes (Leviticus 10:6; Leviticus 21:10). This is because the high priest’s clothes symbolized the perfection of God’s character. To tear those robes would be to stain God’s character and to

spoil its perfection. How odd, then, that Caiaphas was guilty of breaking the very law he defended! It made him unfit for his office. More serious than that, the punishment for tearing his garments was death. How strange that Jesus, who had done nothing wrong, was to be put to death at the command of the priest. It was the priest, not Jesus, who deserved death because of his actions.

The symbol of that tearing was deep. This was the beginning of the end of the entire earthly sacrificial (offering) system and priesthood. A new and better one would soon begin with Christ as the new High Priest working for us in heaven.



The high priest tore his clothes to symbolize Jesus was to be put to death.

The clothes of the earthly high priest were so full of symbolic meaning in their time. But they were soon to become symbols of a system that

was without any meaning and was about to end. How terrible that the religious leaders were so blinded by hatred, jealousy, and fear that when Christ came, many of these leaders (but not all) did not accept Him. But it was the common people who accepted Jesus as the Messiah (Chosen One). It was the common people who took up the work that these priests themselves should have been doing.

In what ways could we be so caught up in how right and good we think we are that we could be blind to the important truths that the Lord wants us to learn?

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 15

GARMENTS OF MOCKERY (BEING MADE FUN) (Matthew 27:27–29)

Think about what is happening in Matthew 27:27–29. What terrible and strange thing is happening here? What do these verses tell us about how stupid, cruel, and foolish humans can be? How do these verses symbolize what the world does to its Creator and Savior, even today? Read also Luke 23:10, 11; Mark 15:17–20.

Jesus' clothes were taken away from Him. Then the soldiers put a scarlet (red) or purple robe upon Him. This robe could have been a soldier's

cloak or one of Pilate's³ old cast-off garments. Purple was the color of a king. This robe was thrown as a cruel joke around the shoulders of the Man who claimed to be King.

Of course, no king is complete without his crown. The soldiers made Jesus a crown of thorns from the sharp shrubs growing in the region of Palestine. They put in His hands a reed (long stick) that looked like a royal scepter.⁴ They bowed to Him in fun. They "honored" Him as King of the Jews. The priests made fun of Jesus in the form of an attack on His spiritual authority. But the soldiers made fun of Jesus' political authority. In a false ceremony, they paraded the true King around wearing false garments. Jesus, who offered to clothe a sinful world in His own garments of righteousness and perfection, was now wearing clothes that made fun of Him.

And yet, the surprise is that Jesus went through all this because of His love for those who were treating Him this way. If anyone treats us badly, how many of us would become angry and try to fight back? But look at the example Jesus leaves us here of how He acted toward this treatment.

How do you answer when treated unfairly? What can you learn from Jesus' example? How can this help you to respond differently the next time it happens?

3. Pilate—ruler of Judea.

4. scepter—something that a king holds in his hand to show his authority as king.



A purple robe was thrown about Jesus' shoulders as a cruel joke.

THURSDAY—JUNE 16

“THEY DIVIDE UP MY CLOTHES” (Psalm 22:18, NIV)

It is hard to imagine the humbling experience Jesus went through. After the soldiers made fun of Him, Jesus was brought to the cross. There, the last few things He owned were taken from Him. They were the clothes off His back. Beaten, made fun of, and now without His clothes, Jesus was really drinking the bitter cup that was given to Him to drink on behalf of all He came to save.

Read John 19:23, 24 (read also Matthew 27:35). What prophetic⁵ meaning does the Bible give to what happened there? And why is it important?

Here is the greatest act in all history, both in earth's and heaven's. But these soldiers are dealing with something as small as dividing up the clothes of one of the victims!

But their action itself is not without great meaning. This is because the Bible shows that what the soldiers did was a fulfillment of prophecy (see Psalm 22:18). John connects it to Psalm 22, saying it happened so that “the scripture [Bible] might be fulfilled” (Matthew does too). So, this gives us more proof for our faith.

Think about what this could have meant to Jesus too. The weight of the world's sin is falling on Him. And the separation from the Father weighs Him down too. But then Jesus sees these soldiers, right beneath Him, dividing up His clothing and casting lots. He understands that all of this is a fulfillment of prophecy. This easily could have given Him extra courage to go through with what He was facing on the cross. These actions by the soldiers were more proof that prophecy was being fulfilled. Jesus' earthly ministry (work) was nearing its grand close. And soon the way would be made that would give salvation to any human who accepted it by faith. So, Jesus had to go through with dying on the cross, and He did.

What Bible prophecies have you found that help strengthen your faith in times of need?

5. prophetic—having to do with what God has shown will happen in the future.

FRIDAY—JUNE 17

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Touch of Faith,” pages 59–63, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “The Touch of Faith,” pages 342, 343, “In Pilate’s Judgment Hall,” pages 728–731, “Calvary,” page 746, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“The enemies of Jesus now waited for His death with impatient hope. They thought that His death would forever silence the rumors of His power as God and the wonders of His miracles. They flattered themselves into thinking that they no longer should be afraid of His influence. The unfeeling soldiers stretched the body of Jesus on the cross. They divided His clothing among themselves, and quarreled over one garment [robe], which was woven without seam. They finally decided to settle the matter by casting lots for it. The Bible had accurately described this scene hundreds of years before it took place: ‘A group of sinful people has closed in on me. They are all around me like a pack of dogs. They have pierced [nailed] my hands and my feet. . . . They divide up my clothes among them. They cast lots for what I am wearing.’ Psalm 22:16, 18 [NirV].”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*

[*Saving Sinners*], pages 223, 224.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ In class, go over the Bible prophecies that class members find very encouraging. How do these prophecies show us the fact that God truly has given us very good reasons for believing in Him?
- ❷ Review the last few days of Christ’s life and the great suffering He had to go through. What lessons can we learn from them for ourselves? How can we learn to die to self the way that Jesus has shown us here?
- ❸ Think of the great lack of understanding of the soldiers. They made fun of Jesus with the purple robe and the crown of thorns. They divided up his clothes under His feet. They did not fully understand what was really happening. Now think of the great lack of understanding of the high priest. He tore his own garment while pretending to be angry at Christ’s answer to him. None of these men truly knew what they were doing. But still they all took part in a horrible crime. Does this lack of understanding in any way excuse their actions? Should they be punished for something that they did not truly understand they were doing? Why, or why not? Discuss.