

More Clothing Imagery



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mark 5:24-34; Luke 8:43-48; John 13:1-16; 19:23, 24; Matt. 26:59-68; 27:27-29.*

Memory Text: “For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole” (*Mark 5:28*).

In one sense, it shouldn't be all that surprising that we can glean so many lessons from clothing in the Bible, should it? After all, clothing is so much a part of us; clothing can say a lot about us and who we are, even when no voice is heard. Rightly or wrongly, we often make judgments about others by what they wear or how they wear it.

This week's lesson will look at the question of clothing, all in the context of Jesus. We'll explore the woman who believed, rightly so, that all she had to do was touch His clothes, and she would be healed. Then there's Jesus, laying aside His garment in order to wash the feet of His disciples. Next we'll look at the high priest who, standing before the Lord, rent his own garments in an act that sealed the haughty ruler's doom. Then there's Jesus in the garments of mockery, put on Him by the Roman soldiers. And finally, we'll look at the soldiers casting lots for Christ's garment, thus fulfilling an ancient prophecy.

Just clothing, yes, yet full of symbolism and meaning, for sure.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 18.*

“Who Touched My Clothes?”

Mark 5:24–34 and Luke 8:43–48 tell the story of the woman who had “an issue of blood twelve years.” Besides being a dangerous medical condition in and of itself, this sickness in that culture came with the stigma of ritual uncleanness, as well, no doubt adding to her misery. Meanwhile, the doctors could do nothing; she was so desperate that she spent all her money on them, and yet, she became only sicker, which isn’t surprising considering the kind of medical treatments done back then. We barely can imagine how much suffering and shame she endured because of her ailment.

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

Read Mark 5:24–34 and Luke 8:43–48. What significance can be found in the fact that the woman believed all she had to do was touch Jesus’ garment to find healing?

This woman had a great deal of faith in Jesus, enough to believe that if she could touch even His clothes, she would be healed. Of course, it wasn’t the clothes themselves that healed her—not even the touch. It was only the power of God working in someone who, out of desperation, came to the Lord in faith, aware of her own helplessness and need. Her touching His clothes was faith revealed in works, which is what Christianity is all about.

Why would Jesus ask who touched His garment?

By asking the question and making the woman’s act and healing public, Jesus used her to help witness to those around Him. He certainly wanted others to know what happened, and He probably wanted her, too, to know that it wasn’t any magical power in His clothes that brought her healing but the power of God working in her through the act of faith on her part. However embarrassing her condition had been, she now was healed and could give witness to what Christ had wrought in her.

How can we learn to come to the Lord, as did this woman, in faith and submission, aware of our own helplessness? More so, how can we maintain faith and trust in Him when the healing that we ask for doesn’t come as we want it to?

He “Laid Aside His Garments”

In the last few days of Christ’s life on earth, He met with His disciples in the upper room for the Passover, Israel’s national celebration of the Exodus from bondage and slavery. Yet, all was not well. The atmosphere in the upper room must have been thick with tension and ill will. Not much earlier, the disciples had been fighting over who would have the highest place in heaven (*Matt. 18:1–5*). Now they had come together to celebrate the Passover, which should have spoken to them of their great need of God’s saving grace in their lives and how dependent they were on Him.

Read Matthew 20:20–28. What important lesson had the disciples totally failed to grasp, even after all this time with Jesus?

As if the disciples’ attitudes hadn’t been bad enough, to top it all off there was Judas, His betrayer, acting as if nothing were wrong. In the midst of all this, when Jesus had every right to be disgusted with the whole lot of them, what does He do?

Read John 13:1–16. What lesson is Jesus giving here? Why is this in so many ways key to what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

It was the custom for the disciples to make provisions for washing the filth of the streets from their feet. This was a servant’s work. But the disciples had no servants. And none of them would stoop to this humiliating and menial task. As Jesus took off His outer garment and began to wash their feet, their hearts melted. They had declared Him to be the Son of God. That God’s Son should stoop to do the work of a slave shamed them. The text said that before doing this, He took off His outer garment, showing His willingness to lower Himself and humble Himself to whatever degree was needed in order to reach His followers.

And then, if all that wasn’t enough, knowing full well what was in Judas’s heart, He washed Judas’s feet, as well.

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 the needs of those around you?

“Nor Rend His Clothes”

“And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes”
(Lev. 21:10).

Read Matthew 26:59–68. What can we read into the high priest’s rending of his garments in response to Christ’s answer to him?
See also Mark 15:38, Heb. 8:1.

The high priest rent his clothes to symbolize that Jesus was to be put to death. Tearing his garments symbolized Caiaphas’s righteous indignation and signified his horror over Jesus’ allegedly blasphemous claim to be the Son of God. Mosaic law forbade the high priest from tearing his ecclesiastical clothes (*Lev. 10:6, 21:10*), because his garments symbolized the perfection of God’s character. To tear those robes would be to profane God’s character, to mar its perfection. Thus, the irony was that Caiaphas was guilty of breaking the very law he defended. It made him unfit for his office. More sobering than that, the penalty for tearing his garments was death. The great irony in all this was that Jesus, who had done nothing wrong, was to be put to death at the instigation of the very priest who, through his actions, deserved death.

The symbolism of that rending was profound. This was the beginning of the end of the entire earthly sacrificial system and priesthood. A new and better one was soon to be inaugurated, with Christ as the new High Priest ministering in the sanctuary in heaven.

The clothes of the earthly high priest, so full of symbolism and significance in their time, were soon to become symbols of a system that was now devoid of all meaning and about to end. How terrible that the religious leaders were so blinded by hatred, jealousy, and fear that when Christ came—the One to whom their whole religion pointed—many of these leaders (but not all) missed Him, and it was the common people who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and took up the work that these priests should have been doing.

In what ways could we be so caught up in our own sense of self-righteousness, our own sense of moral and spiritual superiority, that we could be blind to the important truths that the Lord wants us to learn?

Garments of Mockery

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!” (*Matt. 27:27–29*). **Think about what is happening in these verses. What terrible irony do you see? What do these verses tell us about human ignorance, cruelty, and foolishness? How do these verses, in their own dramatic way, symbolize what the world does to its Creator and Redeemer, even today? See also Luke 23:10, 11; Mark 15:17–20.**

Jesus was stripped and garbed in a scarlet or purple robe. This robe could have been a soldier’s cloak or one of Pilate’s old cast-off garments. Purple was the color of royalty. This robe was thrown in mockery around the shoulders of the Man who claimed to be King.

Of course, no king is complete without his crown. Jesus’ tormenters fashioned Him one of thorns, from the sharp shrubs growing in the region of Palestine, and placed in His hands a reed in imitation of a royal scepter. They bowed to Him in mockery, hailing Him as King of the Jews. But whereas the priests’ mockery consisted of an attack on Christ’s spiritual authority, the soldiers mocked His political sovereignty. The true King was paraded around in a mock ceremony, wearing mock garments. He who offered to clothe a sinful world in His own garments of righteousness and perfection was now clothed in the garments of mockery.

And yet, the incredible thing is that Jesus endured this, at least in part, because of His love for those who were treating Him this way. How many of us, the moment anyone treats us badly or even looks at us crossly, react with anger and seek to fight back? Look, though, at the example Jesus leaves us here regarding how He responded to this treatment.

How do you respond when treated unfairly? What can you take from His example that could help you deal differently the next time it happens?

“They Parted My Garments”

“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (*Ps. 22:18*).

It’s hard to imagine the humiliation Jesus was to endure. After the mock ceremony of the soldiers, He is brought to the cross and then, there, stripped of the last vestiges of His earthly possessions, the clothes off His back. Beaten, rejected, humiliated, mocked, and now stripped and crucified, Jesus was, indeed, drinking the bitter cup that, from “the foundation of the world” (*Rev. 13:8*), was to be His.

Read John 19:23, 24 (*see also Matt. 27:35*). **What prophetic significance does the Bible give to what happened there, and why is it important?**

Here is the greatest act in all cosmic history unfolding right before them, and these soldiers are dealing with something as petty as dividing up the clothes of one of their victims!

And yet, their action itself isn’t so trivial, because the Bible shows that what the soldiers did was a fulfillment of prophecy. John directly links it to the psalm, saying that it happened so that “the scripture might be fulfilled” (Matthew does, as well), thus giving us more evidence for our faith.

Think, too, what this could have meant to Jesus, as well. 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. This easily could have given Him extra courage to endure what He was facing on the cross. These actions by the soldiers were more evidence that, no matter how terrible His trial, no matter how dreadful the suffering, prophecy was being fulfilled, His earthly ministry was nearing its grand climax, and the provision would be made that would give salvation to any human being who claimed it by faith. Thus, Jesus had to endure, and He did.

What biblical prophecies have you found the most faith affirming, especially in times of need, especially in times when trials have tested your faith?

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

“The enemies of Jesus now awaited His death with impatient hope. That event they imagined would forever hush the rumors of His divine power and the wonders of His miracles. They flattered themselves that they should then no longer tremble because of His influence. The unfeeling soldiers who had stretched the body of Jesus on the cross, divided His clothing among themselves, contending over one garment, which was woven without seam. They finally decided the matter by casting lots for it. The pen of inspiration had accurately described this scene hundreds of years before it took place: ‘For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. . . . They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.’ Ps. 22:16, 18.”—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 223, 224.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 In class go over whatever Bible prophecies each person finds especially encouraging. How do these prophecies reveal to us the fact that God truly has given us very good reasons for belief?
- 2 Review the last few days of Christ’s life and the incredible humiliation, self-denial, and suffering He had to endure. What lessons can we take from them for ourselves? How can we learn to die to self the way that Jesus has revealed to us here?
- 3 Think of the utter ignorance of the soldiers who mocked Jesus with the scarlet robe and the crown of thorns. Or the ones who divided up His clothes beneath His feet, totally unaware of what was really happening. Or even that of the high priest, who rent his own garment in supposed righteous indignation at Christ’s answer to him. All of these men acted in sheer ignorance, and yet, all took part in perpetrating a horrible crime. Does this ignorance of what they were doing in any way excuse their actions? Why should they be punished for something they did without knowing exactly what it was? Discuss.

Faith Full Circle

Maria Villaroel lives on Easter Island, one of the most remote places on earth. This small island, known for its mysterious stone statues, lies more than two thousand miles west of South America.

Maria's husband, Atilio, traveled to Easter Island in 1975, leaving Maria and their infant son behind in Chile. During her husband's absence, Maria was introduced to the Adventist message. She embraced these new truths and was baptized just before she joined her husband on Easter Island.

When Maria arrived, she discovered that she was the only Seventh-day Adventist among the 3,000 people living on the island. Maria worshiped and taught her children Bible stories in her home on Sabbath.

For years she prayed that God would help her to share her faith with others. Then she met Sergio Celada, a Chilean police officer who was visiting the island on business. She wanted to share the gospel with him, but she wasn't sure how. Then she remembered the Voice of Hope tapes that she had just received. She offered them to Sergio. The tapes made a deep impression on Sergio's heart, and he arranged to have the recordings broadcast over the local radio station.

Sergio had to leave Easter Island, but he urged Maria to take the tapes to the radio station every week. Maria did this for more than twenty years. She became the Voice of Hope on Easter Island. People wanted to know more about the Bible, and Maria wrote to the Voice of Hope in Chile and asked for Bible study guides.

Maria prayed for help to raise up a church on the island. In 1998 Gabriel Montoya, an Adventist from Chile, visited the island. Maria begged him to send someone to Easter Island to teach her and others who were interested more about the Bible. Gabriel sent his wife, Luz. Within a month, 30 people were studying the Bible with Luz and Maria.

Luz continues to visit the island whenever she can, studying the Bible with people whom Maria has introduced to the Savior. Maria's dream of a church on Easter Island has come true at last. Each Sabbath, 30 members and many visitors worship together.

The chain of faith has come full circle. Maria's first interest, Sergio Celada, was baptized in Chile, and her own son is studying theology. He plans to return to Easter Island to pastor the church his mother helped to plant.

Easter Island had no Adventist presence until an untrained believer prayed that God would use her to plant a church. Our mission offerings help make such outreach possible through programs such as Global Mission. Thank you for giving.

MARIA VILLAROEEL is a *Global Mission pioneer living on Easter Island.*