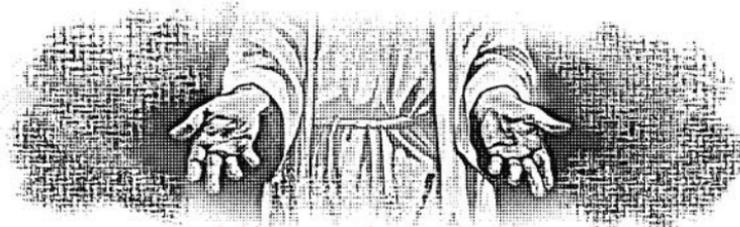


Clothed *in* Christ



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gal. 3:26–29, Rom. 6:1–6, Col. 3:1–10, Eph. 4:22–24, 1 Cor. 15:49–55, 2 Cor. 5:1–4.*

Memory Text: “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (*Romans 13:14, NIV*).

Have you ever dropped an egg and watched it break into messy pieces? One thing, though, you have *never* seen is the messy pieces of that broken egg dropped again, only to turn back into an egg. Reality just doesn't work that way.

A fundamental law of our natural world, at least our fallen natural world, is that objects tend toward decay, toward disorder. What do things left alone do—increase in energy, order, and structure, or decrease, decay, and move toward disorder? The answer's obvious. We see it all around us and even in ourselves (for instance, our aging bodies).

A lot of complicated science goes into explaining this phenomenon, but you don't need a PhD in physics to see it. To quote a text from an earlier lesson, “And the earth shall wax old like a garment” (*Isa. 51:6*).

And yet, amid all this, we have the gospel, the plan of salvation, which at its core is about restoration, about taking the old, the broken, and the decaying and making it new.

This final week we'll look at some special clothing imagery from the Scriptures that reveals these promises of renewal and restoration.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 25.*

Heirs According to the Promise

One of the great struggles of the Christian church from the earliest days, a struggle that was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation (and one that in various ways continues today, even in our church), deals with the question of the gospel, of salvation, of how we are saved. Paul, with the church in Galatia, had to deal squarely and directly with the issue, where false theology had crept in and threatened the integrity of the gospel itself.

Read Galatians 3:26–29. What is the main point that Paul is making? (As you read, note that the Greek word translated “put on” comes from the word meaning “to be clothed.”)

In verse 27, Paul says that all those who were baptized “have clothed yourselves with Christ” (*NIV*). Though all were sinners, their sins had been washed away, their old filthy garments were gone, and they were now “clothed,” covered in the righteousness of Jesus. His life, His perfection, and His character, they can now claim as their own. All the covenant promises have been fulfilled in Jesus, and now, clothed in Christ, they can claim those promises for themselves. They are heirs of the promise first made to Abraham (*Gen. 12:2, 3*), not because of status, gender, or nationality but only through faith in Christ.

Read Romans 6:1–6. What is Paul saying that should help us understand what it means to be “clothed” in Christ?

Being clothed in Christ is more than just a legal standing with God. Christians are united with Christ; they are surrendered to Him; and through Him they are being renewed, rejuvenated, and restored. Christians who refuse to change their old ways, their old habits, and their old lifestyle need to look in the mirror at what they are really clothed in.

What are you wearing? Is what you wear in public different from what you wear when no one (you think) is watching? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

No Provision for the Flesh

For all of Paul's deep and complicated theology, he also can be very practical. Any theology, any version of the "gospel" that focuses solely on salvation in cold and legal terms alone misses the point. Christianity is all about Jesus, but it's not about Jesus in isolation. It's about Jesus and what He has done for our fallen race through His life, death, and High Priestly ministry. It's not just about a change in our legal status before God; it's about a change, a renewal, a new birth in us; it's about a new life in Christ.

Read Romans 13. Focus on the daily, practical points that Paul is dealing with here for those who are Christians.

Most of the chapter deals with, in many ways, what could be considered being a good citizen and a good neighbor. It's a reiteration of the principles of the law, culminating in the famous words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (*vs. 9*).

In verses 11–14, however, the tone somewhat shifts. Paul begins the chapter by talking about obeying the present political powers, and then he shifts to an emphasis on the "lateness" of the time, the idea being that considering the times the Romans were living in, they needed to get serious about their conduct. At the end of the chapter, we have the phrase "clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ" (*vs. 14, NIV*), which uses the same Greek root found in Galatians 3:27. Thus, both verses are saying similar things.

The context here in Romans 13 makes it clear what Paul basically means. The verses that come before and the rest of the verse following the phrase itself show that being clothed in Christ means living a life of faith and obedience. The same Greek root for "clothed" appears in verse 12, as well, in the context of donning the "armour of light." Christ is the light of the world; those who walk in Him don't walk in darkness. They have "cast off the works of darkness" and now walk in light. Whatever else to "be clothed" in Christ means, it certainly deals with character building, with conduct, with loving as Christ loved, and with reflecting His image. In a sense, while all things around us tend to get worse, those clothed in Christ should be getting better and better (*see 2 Cor. 3:18*).

How different would your life be were you fully clothed in Christ? That is, what parts of your life have you held back from the kind of surrender and death to self needed in order for the Lord to work in you? How would your life differ were you to make that complete surrender?

Putting Off, Putting On

Read Colossians 3:1–10. Keep in mind that, in verse 10, the verb *to put on* is from the same verb *to be clothed* that appeared in the previous verses we have studied. With that in mind, what are these verses saying to us?

Scholars see in these verses, as in some of the other ones we've looked at, references to the idea of baptism. (Where in the texts do you see a hint of that?) In no uncertain terms, we are shown again the idea of renewal, of regeneration, of something made better than it was before. In Christ we are no longer the same people we once were, living as we once did. Here, too, Paul is very clear in linking what we experience of Christ now with what we will experience when He returns. Indeed, how we respond to Christ's first coming will decide what happens to us at His second coming!

Read Ephesians 4:22–24 (yes, the Greek verb in verse 24 is *to clothe*). What point is Paul stressing here, as well?

Notice the contrast between the “old man” and the “new man.” In principle, the old man, the former self, has died (symbolized by baptism), and a new man, a new creation in Christ, results. Here, too, the idea of being “clothed,” either in Christ or in the new man, arises in the context of Christian behavior. Read the verses that come before and after. We are dealing with a transformation of character, of actions, of a person's whole moral being. This motif, this idea, keeps recurring. As baptized Christians, we are new people in the Lord; to be clothed in Christ isn't a metaphor just for justification, for Christ's righteousness covering our sins and giving us a new legal standing before God. Being clothed in Christ means being a new person, one “created in righteousness and true holiness” (*Eph. 4:24*).

Go back over the verses for today, looking at specific commands regarding behavior. In what areas do you need change? If you are struggling, why not seek out someone you can trust and ask for help in how you can better live out the principles taught in Scripture?

In the Twinkling of an Eye

No question, to be clothed in Christ is to become a new person in Jesus. It is to be restored, at least somewhat, into “the image of the One who created him” (*Col. 3:10, NASB*). Untold numbers of lives have borne and still today bear testimony to the reality of what the Lord has done in and for them. Many of our own lives, regardless of our faults, struggles, and falls, witness to the reality of what it means to be clothed in Jesus.

Yet, let’s be honest. If what Christ did for us ended with this life here, in the end—whether we are clothed in Christ or not clothed in Christ—the grave would still await us. Many have suffered a great deal in this life for Jesus and for their faith. Whatever the immediate rewards, what are these rewards, what *could* they be, in contrast to the real reward awaiting us at the Second Coming?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:49–55. What great hope is presented here? As you read the text, guess which words come from the same Greek root we’ve seen all week, “to clothe” or “to be clothed.”

In verses 53 and 54, the verb (often translated “clothed”) is the same one we’ve already seen. Here, though, the apostle takes it to a whole new level. Being clothed in Christ doesn’t mean only to bear the moral image of Jesus, to reflect His character, and to live out the principles that He taught us. In other words, it’s not just a legal change, not just a moral change: it also will include a radical *physical* change. Our mortal flesh, our aching and hurting and dying flesh, will be clothed with the same kind of immortal body that the resurrected Jesus had. Talk about a change of clothing, talk about wearing a new garment! That’s the ultimate hope that awaits us, the only hope that really makes our faith worthwhile (*see 1 Cor. 15:12–19*).

Most of us (particularly as we age) realize the frailty and untrustworthiness of our flesh. If we don’t yet see that frailty in ourselves, we can see it in others. Think about the hope we have in Jesus, as revealed in these verses. What could this world, in any conceivable manner, offer that would make it worth losing the promise revealed here?

Our Heavenly Dwelling

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1–4. What is Paul telling us here? What hope is again presented? How does clothing imagery fit in?

As long as we are in this world, in this body, in this “house,” we are going to “groan” (from a word that means also “to sigh deeply”). Who hasn’t groaned while in our “earthly dwelling,” which is our present body? Look at the chapter that comes before (*1 Corinthians 4*), talking of the woe that followers of Jesus have encountered in this existence. It’s after this recitation that Paul goes into the verses for today.

Sure, we groan, we suffer, and we die, but that’s not the whole story. We have the promise of being clothed in “our heavenly dwelling.”

What two metaphors, or images, does Paul use in these verses to depict our present situation and the hope that awaits us?

In some ancient writings, the idea of being clothed was seen as similar to being inside a house. Both are external to us, and both present a certain amount of protection and covering (in Paul’s time, the name of the garment worn by the poorer class came from a word that meant “little house”). Whatever the reasons, Paul uses different images to contrast two basic ideas—a temporal earthly dwelling in contrast to an eternal heavenly one; being naked in contrast to being clothed; and mortality (the certainty of death) in contrast to life, eternal life in Christ. In the end, these metaphors all are talking about the same thing: the hope that we have, at Christ’s return, of being clothed or housed in immortal bodies. In other words, these verses (2 Corinthians 5:1–4) are another way of expressing the promise of eternal life that we have in Jesus.

Think about death, about the apparent finality of it. Without hope of something beyond it, what hope is there for any of us? Dwell on all the reasons that we have for our hope that death doesn’t have the final say. Bring your answers to class and discuss them there.

Further Study: “The Controversy Ended,” p. 665, in *The Great Controversy*.

“All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving—the robe of Christ’s righteousness. All nature in its surpassing loveliness will offer to God a constant tribute of praise and adoration. The world will be bathed in the light of heaven. The years will move on in gladness. The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold greater than it is now. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, ‘There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 348.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 As a class, go over your answers to Thursday’s final question. How can you help each other find hope in this wonderful promise? How can you help those who might find themselves struggling with doubt?
- 2 So often, in our day and age, people have placed so much hope in science. Many have seen science as the only way of coming to know truth and as the only hope of humankind. Dwell on why that’s such a false hope, especially in the context of the last few days’ lessons. What hope can science offer us for the greatest problem we face—death? Why must our hope be in something “supernatural,” as depicted in those promises?
- 3 Think about Paul’s question in Romans 7:24, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (a reference to a punishment of the time, when a criminal had to wear a dead body chained to his body). What answer do we have that all the world’s wisdom cannot supply?
- 4 Dwell more on what it means to be “clothed” in Christ in terms of how we are to live. Think through how you are living—your practices, your habits, your thoughts, your attitudes toward others, and so forth. How well do you reflect the reality of Christ in these areas? Though we all struggle with cultivated and inherited tendencies toward sin, what overt and conscious choices can you make that would go a long way in helping you live as you know you should? Also, how can we help each other, as a community, in living out the biblical ideals presented before us?

A Passion for Souls

Razzak stopped at the door of the Christian church in Kolkota (Calcutta), India. Ever since he was a child he had wondered about Jesus. The door was open, and being curious, he walked inside.

The pastor greeted him and told him more about Jesus and introduced him to the plan of salvation. Razzak left the church feeling a sense of peace; somehow he knew that the Christians' God was real.

He found a Christian church closer to his home and began attending services every day. Within a few months he was baptized. Razzak started preaching and led many people to Christ. But when his infant nephew died, the child's parents were refused burial space in the community cemetery because Razzak was a Christian.

Razzak wept to God about this problem. When people from another village learned that the religious leaders had refused to bury the child, they offered to bury him in their cemetery. Razzak praised God for solving the family's dilemma. During the funeral, Razzak read from the Bible and preached to the people. Later Razzak asked God to send him as a missionary to the very people who had refused to bury his nephew.

He studied for a year to prepare himself to preach to these people. Then he worked with another man who had more experience leading these people to Christ, and together they led some one thousand families to Christ in less than ten years.

One day at the railway station Razzak met a man who introduced himself as a Seventh-day Adventist. "I, too, am a Christian," the man said. "And I want you to know what we believe." The man, Solomon, began explaining what Adventists believe and showed Razzak Bible texts to back it up.

Razzak listened as Solomon explained the Sabbath truth to him. He was convinced and began studying his own Bible more carefully. Within a few months, he was baptized. Razzak quit his work with the Protestant pastor and became a lay evangelist in the heart of Kolkota, one of the largest cities in the world.

In less than three years, God blessed him with more than seventy converts in an area where it takes great effort to lead a person to Christ. He worships with the new believers in one of four house churches because the believers have no church home.

In India people believe that if a religious organization can't provide a house of worship, they're not serious about their faith.

Your mission offerings help support outreach such as Razzak's in India. And part of a recent Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build at least one church in Kolkota, India. Thank you.

RAZZAK KHAN shares his faith in the suburbs of Kolkota, India.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we often cite the message in Revelation 14:6, 7, in terms of last-day events, but these verses also can help us to understand what true worship is. The third quarter guide on *Worship*, by Rosalie Zinke, will delve into this topic. Foundational to all of our worship should be the death of Jesus on our behalf and our response to it, which includes not only going to the Cross but going to Christ, our High Priest, in the heavenly sanctuary.

Worship should be permeated by a sense of reverence and awe for our God to give us the humility and surrender needed for true worship. Our worship must be about Him, and about giving glory to Him. As we worship, we need to do so with a sense of accountability to God for what we do and with a realization that we can hide nothing from Him. This fact should drive us to the Cross, our only hope in judgment.

Finally, we are told to worship the Creator. Creation is foundational to all worship, because all that we believe is based on the fact that God is the Creator. We worship Him because He is the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Judge. Creation, Redemption, and judgment all are closely tied, and all true worship needs to be firmly rooted in these objective theological truths. These truths are central to what worship should be about. It is our hope that this upcoming quarter study will teach each of us what it means to truly worship the only One in all creation who, by virtue of who He is, is worthy of all our worship.

Lesson 1—Worship in Genesis: Two Classes of Worshipers

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Worship in Eden** (*Gen. 2:1–3*)

MONDAY: **Worship Outside of Eden** (*Gen. 3:15*)

TUESDAY: **Two Lines of Worshipers** (*Gen. 6:1–8*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Faith of Abraham** (*Gen. 12:1–8*)

THURSDAY: **Bethel, the House of God** (*Gen. 28:10–22*)

Memory Text—*Genesis 28:16, 17, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: In the story of Cain and Abel, we find the motif of true and false worship, which appears throughout the Bible. The acceptable form of worship is based on salvation by faith and focuses on God's power, glory, and grace, while the unacceptable form is based on works and focuses on humanity and self.

Lesson 2—Worship and the Exodus: Understanding Who God Is

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Holy Ground** (*Exod. 3:1–15*)

MONDAY: **The Death of the Firstborn: Passover and Worship**
(*Exod. 12:1–36*)

TUESDAY: **No Other Gods** (*Exod. 20:1–6*)

WEDNESDAY: **“These Be Your Gods . . .”** (*Exod. 32:1–6*)

THURSDAY: **“Show Me Your Glory”** (*Exod. 33:12–23*)

Memory Text—*Exodus 20:2, 3, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: Early accounts of the children of Israel and their encounters with the Lord reveal to us the nature and character of the God we profess to serve and worship.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.