

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.

**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 also came with the stigma of ritual uncleanness 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 practiced 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 that 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 had happened, and He probably wanted her, too, to know that it wasn’t any magical power contained 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 this woman did, in faith and submission, aware of our own helplessness? More important, how can we maintain faith and trust in Him when the healing that we ask for doesn’t come as we want it to?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Psalm 22:16, 18*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Examine the meaning associated with clothing in a variety of situations in which Jesus is involved.

Feel: Identify with the emotional context in which these stories take place and how these emotions highlight the human, yet divine, nature of Christ.

Do: Follow Christ's example of humble, unselfish service.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Vestments of Humanity

A What brought healing to the woman who touched Jesus' garment?

B What unintended message did the high priest send when he tore his clothing after questioning Christ?

II. Feel: Man and Savior

A We cannot feel healing virtue leave us, but what emotions with which we can identify did Christ reveal when He healed the woman with the issue of blood?

B How must Jesus have felt when He was robed as a servant? When He was dressed in a royal robe and mocked? When He hung naked on the cross?

III. Do: Christ's Humility

A In what ways can we imitate Christ's example of humble service and sacrifice?

B Are there times when we are mocked and ridiculed? How should we respond?

► **Summary:** Christ, as a man, wore clothing. Lack of clothing indicated a lower station, or humiliation, to which He submitted on our behalf. Although He was our Creator and King of the universe, He humbly bore the mocking and the insults of the high priest and the pagan soldiers.

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 be considered the greatest in the kingdom of 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 was wrong. In the midst of all this, when Jesus had every right to be disgusted with the whole lot of them, what did 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 servants’ 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?

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate**

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: While we are often quick to judge by appearances, the stories of Jesus challenge us to see the world in a different way. They challenge us to see God acting in ways we might not expect but in which He is in control, as is demonstrated by Bible prophecy.

Just for Teachers: We often judge people by how they are dressed. Perhaps we can tell some things about people and what they do, but we need to be careful in how we judge the value and heart of others by their outward appearance.

To explore this concept with the class, find a variety of photographs of people, perhaps from magazines or newspapers, and show these to class members, asking for their judgments. If possible, include photos that may lead class members to false assumptions, then tell them the real story behind each photo.

When considering the major players in the stories in this week's Bible study, ask the following questions: How would we have judged them if we were to judge them by how they were dressed? How would we have assessed them? How would we view the woman who touched Jesus, or Jesus Himself when washing His disciples' feet, compared with the priests and soldiers who had the appearance of power and prestige? God does not judge the outward appearance; instead, He looks into the heart. With our spiritual eyesight enlightened by the oil of grace, so should we.

► **STEP 2—Explore**

Just for Teachers: The Bible study this week shares five snapshots from the life of Jesus. If the class is larger, divide class members into five groups and assign each group one of the stories to explore, imagining how the characters who experienced and witnessed these scenes would have felt and reacted in that moment. Have the subgroups report back on their answers to the questions. For smaller classes, choose one or two of these stories on which to focus.

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“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 of 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 himself.

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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Have copies of *The Desire of Ages* available for use by class members or, alternatively, copies of *Messiah*, the contemporary adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* by Jerry D. Thomas. (The chapter numbers are identical to those quoted from *The Desire of Ages*.)

Bible Commentary

I. A Woman's Touch of Faith (Have the class review Mark 5:24–34 and Luke 8:43–48. See also *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 36, “The Touch of Faith,” pp. 342–348.)

Consider This: Choose one character in this story and imagine how they would have felt in this situation.

■ *Was there healing power in Jesus' clothes? Why was it important for the woman to touch the hem of Jesus' garment?*

■ *Why do you think Jesus did not let her just melt back into the crowd after she was healed?*

■ *What do we learn about Jesus from this story?*

II. He Washed Their Feet (Have the class review John 13:1–16. See also *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 71, “A Servant of Servants,” pp. 642–651.)

Consider This: Choose one character in this story and imagine how he or she would have felt in this situation.

■ *What does it mean that Jesus showed His disciples “the full extent of his love” by washing their feet (see John 13:1, NIV)?*

■ *Why is it important for God's people to follow Jesus' example by washing each other's feet? What kind of actions and service might the washing of feet also symbolize? How does it teach us to serve others?*

■ *What do we learn about Jesus from this story?*

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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, however, 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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

III. Tearing the High Priest's Garments (*Have the class review Matthew 26:59–68. See also The Desire of Ages, chapter 75, "Before Annas and the Court of Caiaphas," pp. 698–715.*)

Consider This: Choose one character in this story and imagine how he or she would have felt in this situation.

- *Why did Jesus have such a difficult relationship with religious leaders?*
- *Does Jesus' submission to this sham trial mean we should always be silent when faced with injustice? Explain.*
- *What do we learn about Jesus from this story?*

IV. Mocking the King (*Have the class review Matthew 27:27–29 and Mark 15:17–20. See also The Desire of Ages, chapter 77, "In Pilate's Judgment Hall," pp. 723–740, particularly pp. 733, 734.*)

Consider This: Choose one character in this story and imagine how he or she would have felt in this situation.

- *What did the different items in which Jesus was dressed symbolize?*
- *Why were the soldiers so concerned with humiliating Jesus in the way that they did?*
- *What do we learn about Jesus from this story?*

V. Casting Lots for His Clothes (*Have the class review John 19:23, 24 and Matthew 27:35. See also The Desire of Ages, chapter 78, "Calvary," pp. 741–757, particularly pp. 746, 751.*)

Consider This: Choose one character in this story and imagine how he or she would have felt in this situation.

- *How often does God use people who do not know Him to fulfill His purposes in the world? Why do you think this is so?*
- *Reflect on the many prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus' life. What does their fulfillment mean to you?*
- *What do we learn about Jesus from this story?*

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“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 was 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 of 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 provided 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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED► **STEP 3—Apply****Application Questions:**

- ❶ It seems we are always tempted to judge others by appearance. How can we learn not to do that and to treat people with respect, regardless of their appearance?
- ❷ Consider Jesus' relationship to power. While He was willing to be a servant and to humble Himself, He was oppressed, rejected, and ultimately killed by the religious and political powers of His day. How should we relate to powerful people and systems of today?
- ❸ When we consider all the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled in His life, why did so many religious people of His day not recognize Jesus for who He was? What should this tell us about our understanding of prophecy today?

► **STEP 4—Create**

Just for Teachers: The stories from the life of Jesus provide important examples of how we can enter into the life God offers to us in practical ways. By acting these out in our various circumstances, we can come closer to Jesus and accept the gifts of hope and salvation He offers. We will also be able to serve and share love and hope with others.

Individual Activities: Jesus was abused, mocked, unjustly tried, tortured, and, ultimately, horribly killed. He endured this for the larger purpose of securing our salvation, but He also provides an example of patience, endurance, and long-suffering. Reflect back on a time in your life during which you experienced injustice, grief, pain, or other suffering. Write a journal entry, poem, or other reflection about how your faith in God and your knowledge of Jesus' suffering helped you persevere, understand, or hope in difficult circumstances.

Group or Team Activities: Jesus said we should follow the example of what He had done for His disciples (*see John 13:15*). Plan to conduct a foot-washing ceremony for your Bible study class or for the following worship service.

Reflect on the story of what Jesus did for His disciples on that night. Retell the story, reading it in the Bible and *The Desire of Ages*, watching a filmed reenactment of this moment in Jesus' life, or finding other ways to enter into the story.

Consider inviting community leaders and servicepeople to visit your church to wash their feet as part of thanking them for their contribution to your community (they will need to have the meaning of this ordinance explained to them in advance).

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:

- ❶ 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?
- ❷ 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?
- ❸ 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.