

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible **Lesson 1: “From Exalted to Cast Down”**

God is holy. When the Son of God was born to Mary He was “that holy thing” (Luke 1:35). God created the angels holy (Matt. 25:31). The very nature of God is *agape*; therefore, His holiness is love (1 John 4:8). The law of God is a perfect description of His character.

Lucifer, the shining one, was created “perfect in beauty,” garbed with “every precious stone” as his “covering” in holiness (Eze. 28:12, 13). God gave Lucifer *agape*—a love that is self-denying in service to others. He was “the anointed cherub that covereth” (vs. 14). “This prince of the angels” was appointed service at the center of the universe which is God’s throne (*The Great Controversy* [GC], p. 494). “The holy mountain” and “the stones of fire” are where God dwells, and there Lucifer rendered worship and service to his Maker (Eze. 28:14).

In the days of eternity past God the Father revealed to the angels their commander-in-chief. His Son, in whom was life original, unborrowed, and undervived (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530), was made manifest as Michael “the archangel” (“Thou art my Son” Psalm 2:7; 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 1:9). Lucifer knew Michael was God; yet he became insanely jealous and coveted “the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son” (GC 494). Thus Lucifer corrupted his holiness of self-denying love and invented a new principle of governance—“the exaltation of self” (GC 494). The love of self necessitated the overthrow of God’s government and the murder of the Son of God.

However, Lucifer’s new principles of self-governance were so appealing and devious that they were not readily recognizable to the intelligent angels; and so, one third of the angels were “taken in” by his persuasive theological arguments (Rev. 12:4). Just how did Lucifer’s new philosophy emerge since he was created a holy cherub?

God’s law written in the fiber of every sentient being is, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). Lucifer reasoned within himself: God’s Son is one of three persons in the Godhead. He is the co-regent sitting on the throne of God. He is the archangel. I am “the prince of the angels” clothed in garments of holiness. My royal status entitles me to God’s throne just as much as His Son. Thus he became the anti-christ. He put himself in the place of Christ.

The Apostle Paul describes the principle in operation with the heathen, but Lucifer invented the philosophy of spiritualism in heaven. “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). Spiritualism teaches that God is everything, which is pantheism. Lucifer changed the truth that God is the Creator into the creature is “god.” “Thine heart was lifted up

because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Eze. 28:17). Lucifer credited all his God-given talents and attributes as self-developed.

Lucifer actually came to believe that all his talents and ability were self-made. “Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of his creatures, it was Lucifer’s endeavor to win their service and homage to himself” (GC 494).

God is not responsible for sin. God gave Lucifer love for others and a self-denying spirit of service. There is no reason to explain the origin of sin. If there was the trail would lead back to God Himself; and this is exactly what Satan charges—that God is responsible for sin and is basically selfish. “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes” (Psalm 50:21). Satan charges the divine government responsible for the rebellion. “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Rom. 9:20). Why have you, God, made me sinful? You created me with an inherent flaw. “The aim of the great rebel has ever been to justify himself and to prove the divine government responsible for the rebellion” (GC 670, 499).

Spiritualism teaches there is no law. “Spiritualism declares that there is no death, no sin, no judgment, no retribution; that ‘men are unfallen demigods’; that desire is the highest law; and that man is accountable only to himself” (*Evangelism*, p. 608).

The spiritualistic Baal cult to which ancient Israel succumbed was the pantheistic philosophy that God is everything. Ellen White, in supporting the 1888 message, makes a definite connection with this philosophy and modern Israel, who are repeating their history: “The prejudices and opinions that prevailed at Minneapolis are not dead by any means; the seeds sown there in some hearts are ready to spring into life and bear a like harvest. ... The tops have been cut down, but the roots have never been eradicated, and they still bear their unholy fruit to poison the judgment, pervert the perceptions, and blind the understanding ... in regard to the message and the messengers. ... Infidelity has been making inroads into our ranks; for it is the fashion to depart from Christ, ... With many the cry of the heart has been, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ Baal, Baal, is the choice. The religion of many among us will be the religion of apostate Israel, because they *love their own way*, and forsake the way of the Lord. The true religion ... the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, that advocates righteousness by the faith of the Son of God, has been slighted, spoken against, ridiculed, and rejected. ... What kind of future is before us. ...?” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 467, 468; cf. GC 583.)

Jesus has diagnosed this love of self as the quintessential condition of His Laodicean church. Baal worship is the love of self-disguised ever so subtly as the worship of Christ. Christ wants us to identify with his diagnosis of our self-assurance of salvation: “Because thou sayest, *I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*”

(Rev. 3:17). “The religion of many among us” is to “*love their own way*” (op. cit., p. 468). This is that cocksure self-satisfied attitude which Lucifer invented—spiritualism.

The good news is that our Heavenly Physician is giving Laodicea corporate repentance (“be zealous therefore, and repent” Rev. 3:19). He invites us to enter into heart-sympathy with His diagnoses (vs. 20).

In this our cosmic day of at-one-ment, the Holy Spirit is lifting up the message of the cross convicting “the world of sin” (John 16:8). He convicts us of both conscious and unconscious sin. The taproot of sin is self-centeredness, which would murder the Son of God. Repentance is taking personal responsibility for putting Jesus on the cursed cross and dying our second death. Such self-denying love wins our hearts and we experience the atonement—two become one. Our robe of Christ’s righteousness will become an incorruptible nature of holiness bestowed at His second coming.

—*Paul E. Penno*