

Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible

Lesson 8: "Garments of Splendor"

There's a recurring nightmare that some children have of appearing in public naked. It's possible that Christians can "walk naked" (Rev. 16:15) if they do not "watch" lest their natural-born selfishness is exposed through dishonesty, anger, or infidelity to colleagues, family, and friends. It's possible for a self-confident Laodicean church to be spotted publically "naked" (Rev. 3:17), according to "the Son of man" who holds "the seven stars" in His "right hand" (Rev. 1:13, 16). Evidently it will take some terribly embarrassing public self-revelation that will eventually cause her to "abhor herself" and repent (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 250).

Isaiah thought he could devote his life to the ministry until one day he wandered into the temple and saw "the Lord ... high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1). He saw the character of God, "holy, holy, holy" (vs. 3), and it flattened him on his face. "Woe is me" for I am "a man of unclean lips" (vs. 5). He had a heart-humbling appreciation of the love of God. It was a revelation of the cross. He could never have written chapter 53 without the experience of chapter 6. Uplifting the cross he became a soul-winner.

Sin has left man exposed naked. Will there be in these last days "rebellious children" that seek to "*cover with a covering*" (Isa. 30:1). There is a subtle counterfeit righteousness by faith which has become a popular cover for sin which is a spider's web for protection in the great and dreadful day of the Lord. "Their webs ["works"] shall not become *garments*" (Isa. 59:6).

The false christ has set up shop in a first apartment ministry of mere legal righteousness to cover sin. "*Satan* appeared ... to carry on the work of God" (E. G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 56). Such evangelical concepts of righteousness by faith are a "*cover* [for] themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity" (Isa. 59:6). Theologically manufactured, substitutionary garments, will never stand up to the "gold" standard "tried in the fire" (Rev. 3:18).

God does not cover sin, but He does cover sinners with His robe of righteousness--"a garment of splendour for the heavy heart" (Isa. 61:3, REB). "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the *garments* of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10). "This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His

humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us" (E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311). "The loom of heaven" was "His humanity." It is not alone a legal righteousness that He imputes to sinners. It is "a perfect character" He "impart[s] to us." This is the good news of the 1888 message.

Who among God's people is not sick and tired of sin and the world? Who does not long for the coming of Jesus? Yet, our thought patterns have subtly excused sin as a practical nuisance until Jesus comes and makes the great change. In so doing, we have demonstrated an antipathy to the second coming. The Lord diagnoses the problem: They "that take counsel, but not of Me; and that *cover with a covering*, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin" (Isa. 30:1). Our High Priest in the cosmic Day of Atonement says He ministers His righteous love from the holiest by means of "My Spirit." This is "the seal of God" (Rev. 9:4).

The ultimate meaning of the cross is the unique Adventist idea of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary which stops the flow of sin-pollution from the Laodicean church. Thus "your sins" are "blotted out" in "the times of refreshing [the latter rain]" (Acts 3:19). It is not a works trip program.

However, there is something the bride must "do" in order to participate in "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9). The "bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa. 61:10). Finally, "the bride makes herself ready" by receiving from her Supreme Lover the message of the Crucified One in a heart-humbling, spontaneous response of repentance from a corporate body of 144,000. They have grown up by learning from the history of the failures of God's people for over 6000 years, including their own "remnant" biography. 1844 was "our" great disappointment, but 1888 was Christ's great disappointment. "The disappointment of Christ is beyond description" (E. G. White, "A Call to Repentance," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1904).

Every one of the 144,000 become soul-winners with the message of the cross to bear to the world--the third angel's message of justification by faith, the sin-pardoning Saviour--which lightens the world with God's glory.

The seal of God's Holy Spirit is the intersection of the revelation of God's love in the cross, with the cleansing of the sanctuary truth; which manifests itself in obedience to all the commandments of God, including the seventh-day Sabbath--the "mark" of God's power to restore sinners to the image of God.

"Awake, awake, Zion, put on your strength; Jerusalem, Holy City, put on your splendid garments!" (Isa. 52:1, REB). The beautiful garments of Zion are the beautiful garments of

the inhabitants of Zion. What are they?--"To her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the *righteousness* of saints" (Rev. 19:8). The call, "*Put on thy beautiful garments,*" indicate that they are all prepared.

Rom. 8:3, 4 says that He was "sent ... to condemn sin in the flesh, that the *righteousness* [imparted, *dikaioma*] of the law might be fulfilled in us." The word "righteousness" used there means the righteous character of those who "walk after the Spirit." It's the imparted righteousness of saints. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness [imparted, *dikaikomata*] of saints" (Rev. 19:8). Whereas "by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18) is the imputed righteousness of Christ.

I give you a check for a thousand dollars and you have the check in your hands; but in fact you don't even have a dime. The money is still in the bank in my name. You only have an imputed \$1000, worthless to you until you take it to the bank and "cash" it.

But even the paper money is worthless unless it is backed up by what is of monetary value--gold, silver, or platinum. We could say that only that in your possession is value imparted. Until then money anywhere has had only imputed value.

Revelation 14:1-5 describes a people at the close of time who "are without fault before the throne of God," who "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Not part way, but totally. They will refuse "the mark of the beast" and will receive "the seal of God" (Rev. 13:16, 17; 7:1-4).

--*Paul E. Penno*