

A Garment *of* Innocence



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Luke 21:36; Gen. 2:20–25; 2:15–17; 3:6–11, 21.*

Memory Text: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (*Genesis 1:27*).

As we have studied, Lucifer’s fall wasn’t limited to heaven. He has brought his wiles and deceptions to earth, as well. What’s amazing, too, is how successfully he has perverted the most obvious truths of God’s Word and has made millions believe the opposite of those truths.

For instance, Genesis is so clear: humans started out at the top of the earthly “food chain.” They were created, immediately, in the “image of God.” This image wasn’t something that evolved over billions of years from natural processes. Evolution teaches the opposite—that humans started out at a lower level (as microbes) and eventually, through a brutal process of violence and death, clawed their way up the food chain. Scripture, in contrast, teaches that humans started out at the top, in the image of God, and through sin began a steady descent.

This week, with some garment imagery that appears in Genesis, we’ll take a look at how that descent began and what the only solution is.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 16.*

The First Days

Skim through the first two chapters of Genesis. Try to imagine what this earth, fresh from the hand of the Creator, must have been like, a world untainted by sin. In what overt ways does our world today differ from what it was like back then?

Adam and Eve were put in an environment beyond our wildest imaginations—a stunning home in a gorgeous garden with animals and other creatures as loyal friends. They reveled in the spectacular scenery, the scented flowers, the birds, and the animals, and in God’s love and in their love for each other. They neither wanted nor needed anything more, and they tended the Garden as they were bidden by their Maker. Adam and Eve surely looked forward to their Master’s visits as they strolled together in the Garden and actively communicated with Him. They knew that He loved them, and in return, their love for Him increased each day.

Adam’ and Eve’s connection with their Maker and their Master developed and grew through these cherished daily contacts, in a world that didn’t know sin and the decay and devastation that sin always brings. How might we have a similar relationship with our Creator, but now in a world long corrupted by sin? *See 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Luke 21:36; Matt. 6:25–34; John 17:3.*

Adam and Eve held open-faced communion with the Lord, a privilege that we don’t have now. However, we do have the privilege of living our lives in constant connection with the same God as did Adam and Eve. Sure, sin has gotten in the way. But through Jesus, who has connected heaven to earth with bonds that never can be broken, a way has been paved for us to live as closely and intimately with our Creator as is possible now.

How intimately and closely do you walk with God? As you mull over your answer, ask yourself, What things am I doing that strengthen that intimacy, and what things break it? What choices must you make if you want a closer walk with your Lord?

Naked but Not Ashamed

It's very hard for us—whose concepts of the world, of reality, of everything, actually, are filtered and tainted and distorted by sin—to imagine fully the moral condition of Adam and Eve in Eden. These were people who knew no pain, no suffering, no deception, no betrayal, no death, no loss, and no shame, especially sexual shame (which is perhaps the most prevalent kind in a world so steeped in the consequences of sin today).

Read Genesis 2:20–25. What kind of close relationship and intimacy between Adam and Eve is revealed in these texts?

As “one flesh” (*see Gen. 2:24*), Adam and Eve were close then, not only to God but to each other. The text is very clear, very unambiguous: they were naked and not ashamed (*vs. 25*). Talk about purity and innocence!

“The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

Exactly what this light looked like, how it functioned, what its purpose was, we aren't told. Only that, even with it, they still were deemed “naked.” The fact that they weren't ashamed must have meant that this covering of light didn't completely hide their nakedness, but in that sinless environment it didn't matter, for no shame existed.

In a sense, the emphasis on nakedness seems to reveal the kind of physical closeness the sinless couple enjoyed. There was an openness, a transparency, an innocence about them and all that they did that allowed for this state of affairs. They lived in complete honesty, openness, and freedom before each other and before God. It was, after all, how the Lord had ordained it. How nice it must have been.

How much openness and transparency exist in your own life? Or are you constantly hiding things, cutting moral corners, cloaking yourself in coverings that don't reveal what's really going on? (*See Matt. 10:26.*) If the latter, what aspects of your life must you start to change?

The Test

Last week’s lesson talked about a crucial truth: the freedom that God allows all His moral beings. Again, without that freedom, they might be able to do moral things, in the same way that a house alarm that protects people from crime does something “moral,” yet who would call the alarm itself moral? In the same way, beings who have no choice but to do the right thing aren’t moral either. Only free beings can be moral ones.

A simple test was given to Adam and Eve, to see whether they would—in their freedom—obey the Lord. It was, in a sense, a time of probation for these free creatures. Freedom means just that, *freedom*, and they had to prove that they would do the right thing with the freedom given them.

Read Genesis 2:15–17, the probationary test given to Adam (and, eventually, Eve). Think about the environment in which this test was given. Why did that environment make their transgression that much more egregious?

Read Genesis 3:1–4. Look carefully at what Satan said to Eve. What unfortunate truth did he mix in with all his lies?

It’s interesting that the tree was of both “good and evil.” God, obviously, didn’t want to keep Adam and Eve from good. Indeed, the whole world God had created, including them, was good, even “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*). It was from the knowledge of evil that the Lord wanted to spare them.

Which is not hard to understand, is it? Even in our fallen world, what parent doesn’t want to protect his or her children from the knowledge of evil? How much more so, then, did God want to protect Adam and Eve from evil, from the knowledge of the one thing that would cause them to lose their garments of light and to know shame, suffering, and death?

Evil doesn’t always come in blatant manifestations, which are so easy to see and detect and, often, avoid (after all, how many people are serial killers and the like?). There are, however, very subtle manifestations of evil. What might these be? How can we learn to identify these forms of evil and then to protect ourselves from them?

A New Set of Clothes

As we know all too well, Adam and Eve failed their test, even one as simple as that. To call the results tragic would, of course, be the greatest understatement in human history. *Tragic* hardly conveys the horrible results of our first parents' disobedience.

Read Genesis 3:6–11. What was the first thing that happened to Adam and Eve (which is exactly what Satan, in verse 5, said would happen) after they fell, and what does that mean? What did it imply the results of their transgression were?

Their eyes were opened, just as Satan said they would be, only now they were seeing the world and reality differently than they ever had before. All through those verses, the theme of their nakedness reoccurs. It's the controlling motif in the section. Their fall from innocence, their transgression, and their new relationship to God and to each other are all expressed in the theme of their now knowing that they are naked.

Notice, too, the Lord's question to them: " 'Who told you that you were naked?' " (*vs. 11, NIV*). It implies that in their innocence they never realized their nakedness, that it just seemed a natural way to be, and so they didn't give it any thought. Now, though, not only did they think about it, they were dominated by the shame that it brought.

What is the significance of Adam and Eve's response to their nakedness?

Imagine Adam and Eve hiding behind some bushes, looking at themselves with mouths agape and attempting to cover themselves before the Lord. Looking at the possibilities for coverings, they must have decided that the fig leaves were the best. Thus, here we have the first lesson in salvation by works, in humans attempting to solve the problem of sin by their own works and deeds. As pathetic as their attempts were then, they are no more so than ours are today.

Animal Skin

“And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them” (*Gen. 3:21, RSV*).

Yesterday we saw Adam’s and Eve’s response to their sin; today we’ll look at God’s. In the above text, we have, in a sense, the gospel message prefigured.

First, we can see that Adam’s and Eve’s fig-leaf covering was not adequate. If it were, there would have been no need to kill innocent animals in order to clothe the fallen couple. In the same way, all our efforts to keep the law well enough to be saved are inadequate. If working our way to salvation were adequate, Christ would not have had to die for us. Just as fig leaves would have been less costly and traumatic than the death of innocent animals, so, too, our works would have been cheaper than the death of Jesus. In both cases, our works, fig leaves, couldn’t suffice; that’s why Jesus had to die for us; that’s why innocent animals needed to be slain. It could be no other way (*Gal. 3:21, Rom. 3:21–28*).

Second, what’s the main difference between fig leaves and animal skins? What inevitably comes from the latter that doesn’t from the former? Of course, the answer is blood. That alone should tell us how the gospel appears in Genesis 3:21 (*see Lev. 17:11; Rev. 12:11; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Heb. 9:22*).

Third, perhaps the most insightful part of the text is the last part, in which it says that “[He] clothed them” (*Gen. 3:21*). The Hebrew is clear: it was the Lord who placed the animal skins on Adam and Eve. It was His act, it was what He did for them that covered the shame of their nakedness. As we saw yesterday, the immediate consequences of their sin were revealed in the nakedness motif; now, however, God Himself solves the problem by clothing them Himself, in a covering made from innocent animals who were slain. The text says only that a “skin” covered them; it doesn’t tell us what kind. It might not be hard to make a correct guess, though, would it? (*See Gen. 22:8, John 1:36, 3:16*.)

Thus, right from the start, the Lord revealed the plan of salvation. However horrible Adam’s and Eve’s sin, it wasn’t greater than God’s grace to save them from it, a point we should never forget ourselves.

Dwell on the wonderful promise of salvation by faith in Jesus. Dwell on the promise that our salvation is found in what He has done for us and not in what we can ever do for ourselves. How can we learn to make the promise of the gospel, of Christ’s righteousness as our own robe, the center and foundation of our lives and our walk with the Lord?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “The Creation,” “The Temptation and Fall,” and “The Plan of Redemption,” pp. 44–70, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“The white robe of innocence was worn by our first parents when they were placed by God in holy Eden. . . . Nothing can man devise to supply the place of his lost robe of innocence. . . . Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God’s presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. . . . 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.”—Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 78.

“The Lord Jesus Christ has prepared a covering, the robe of his own righteousness, that he will put on every repenting, believing soul who by faith will receive it. . . . Then when the Lord looks upon the believing sinner, he sees, not the fig-leaves covering him, but his own robe of righteousness.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 15, 1898.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read Genesis 3:6. What were the avenues to Eve’s soul that the devil was able to take advantage of in seeking to make her fall? How do these same things work for him today, as well?
- 2 Dwell more on the centrality of nakedness in the Eden narrative. What else can we take from this idea that could help us understand what was going on there?
- 3 Read the two Ellen G. White quotes in Friday’s study. How is the wonderful truth of the gospel revealed in those words?
- 4 Look at Hebrews 5:14: “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Dwell more on the whole question of evil. What do we mean by the term *evil*? Is it something that is always absolute and unchanging? Or is evil a relative term, in that what some cultures deem evil other cultures might deem good, or that what was once deemed evil in one culture now no longer is? How much does culture itself influence our concept of what is and isn’t evil? How can we step beyond our culture and know for sure what is good and what is evil? How are we to understand Isaiah 5:20: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter”?

Seeing the Light

by FAUSTINO MENDEZ

Life for my family was hard. I sold bread on the streets of Veracruz, Mexico. But I used a good portion of my income to buy cigarettes and alcohol. Then one day a blind man stopped to buy some bread. Orestes was friendly and invited me to his house for a drink of water. After that he often stopped to talk to me.

Orestes loved to talk about God, and when he invited me to study the Bible, I agreed. My wife and I belonged to another church, and she didn't understand why I wanted to study the Bible with someone from another faith. But I told her I needed to know more about God, so she agreed to study with me.

My sister joined us for the Bible study, and we often talked about how our new knowledge of God was influencing our faith. But we hesitated to make a decision to change churches. Then, suddenly, my sister died in an automobile accident.

My wife and I realized how unsure the future is and that we mustn't delay in acting on what we knew was the truth. So, when the man teaching us the Bible invited us to church, we went. The people of the church were friendly and kind; we felt welcome.

Saturday had been my busiest day selling bread. I didn't think we could survive unless I worked on Saturday. But when I tried to sell bread on Saturday, God didn't bless my business. I realized that I was losing God's blessing by not obeying Him in this matter. I stopped selling bread and found work that wouldn't require me to work on Sabbath.

I realized that smoking and drinking were wrong, and I stopped buying cigarettes and alcohol. The money we save more than pays for our tithes and offerings.

I'm convinced that we're where God wants us to be. I invite others to church, and we have started a small group that meets in our house.

Our church is growing, and I pray that one day soon we'll have a church building in which to worship and invite our friends. I want to bring my large family—my ten brothers and sisters, their children, and many other relatives—to God. I want them to know that His truth is for today, for us.

Your mission offerings helped support the work in our country, so a blind man could show us the light of God's love. And a recent Thirteenth Sabbath Offering is helping to build a church in our city so others can come to Christ, as well. Thank you!

FAUSTINO MENDEZ *shares his faith in Veracruz, Mexico.*