1.7.19 – A Little Research About Clothing

I did some research to get some idea how a common Hebrew might have dressed during the Old Testament times. I soon learned that the only information about clothing comes from pictures in tombs or in mosaics. The Hebrews did not do either of this form of art. So, it would appear that the Hebrew names of garments were made the "same" as Egyptian or Greek or Roman garments. Where there are pictures, they show the rulers and the wealthy not the common everyday person living their everyday lives in the field or fishing or in the carpenter's shop.

I was searching to see if there was some evidence of how many garments that a common person would own. Based on Jesus' statement that "if you have two garments sell one and buy a sword" I believe the case can be made that most individuals had only one garment or Christ wouldn't have placed the qualifier "if" in His statement. When I found so little on the subject I changed tactics and looked for how to make linen from flax.

Linen production requires a lot of labor, which translates to expensive in Bible times or any time for that matter. The plant needed to be grown, harvested, rotted just the right amount of time, then fibers removed from the woody part of the plant, spun into thread and woven into cloth. Extremely time consuming now and even more so then. Wool might be a little less labor, but the sheep still need care all year long. If you look at all the threads in a piece of cloth and think of the loom to make the cloth. The threads in one direction had to be under tension and arranged so the threads in the other direction could be woven between them. One article I read said that some of the linen on the mummies of Egypt had 540 threads per inch, which the article said we cannot match even today. The person or persons doing all this work need food and clothing and shelter which comes from the sale of the cloth or clothing they produce even if they are slaves. This cost must be

added to the cost to make the clothing. The sewing machine was not invented till long after Bible times, therefore changing the cloth into a garment was extremely time consuming and costly.

The point that I am trying to make here is that the average person did not have more than the minimum of clothing due to cost of even the simplest of clothing. And to that point they would do whatever necessary to keep it clean and well preserved, meaning they would most likely not work in that clothing. I do not believe that the average person had undergarments and certainly not more than one outer garment. Slaves had what the master provided, which was minimal till the slave held a ranking position as Joseph did in Potiphar's house. When the slave represented the master to the public he reflected on his master both good or bad based on his or her attire. If poorly attired, then a bad image of the master was cast, just as we do on God if improperly dressed. We believe in being naturist as often as possible and properly reflecting the image of God, but when we must be clothed we should remember who we represent and be sure to properly look the part.

What then is the reason for clothing? If it cost so much, why the expense? I think it can be reduced to two main reasons, protect the body and make a statement.

> Protection from cold.
> **Exo 22:26,27 If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.**
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> Protection in battle.
> **1 Samuel 17:5,6 And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the**

weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders.
1 Samuel 17:38 And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

Adam and Eve needed protection from the thorns after the fall and that is still needed if you are going to work or walk near thorns. I cannot think of a verse to illustrate this, but they certainly needed protection from the wind, sun and blowing sand when crossing the deserts. There are many other illustrations as to why clothing can be used for protection against the elements, but we will leave it at this for now.

Make A Statement.
Proverbs 7:10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.
This verse is certainly one that gets a lot of use for clothing standards. This woman's attire said, "I am available.".
2 Samuel 13:18 And she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled.
The robe said, "I am a daughter of the king and unmarried."
1 Kings 22:30, 32 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out.
The robes said I am a king" …not a very good time to make that statement and indeed it did almost cost him his life.

> The priest's garments told everyone that he was a priest. Any uniform tells us what position a person holds from judge to police officer to postal employee to the employee at Lowes or Home Depot.

What we wear always makes a statement!

A nicely dressed person's clothing says, "Appearance is important to me." Or it could say, "I am wealthy." Or it could say, "Notice me." Or it could say, "I want to make a good impression upon you." The statement is not always clear and depends on the setting. Sloppy clothing could say, "I do not care." There is clothing that says, "I belong to this gang." Clothing can say, "Things are bad, this is the best I can do." A rain coat says, "I believe the weatherman." We dress up to go to church to say, "This is important to me."

When we are dressed, we need to ask ourselves, "What does my attire say?" When we are able to be without clothing as God intended, this concern is gone. We should try to be as God intended any time the body does not need protection and we are in a legal environment to do so.

We would never teach that being naked is a command of God's as we cannot find that anywhere in Scripture, but we do believe that since that is how God intended us to be from the beginning that is how we should be whenever possible. When protection is needed or when required we should be attired properly so as to convey the proper statement.