

9.14.20 – Then and Now

Much of the misinterpreting of what the Bible says about clothing is caused by assuming that what is today was always the case. In other words, because we rarely see a naked person in public today, we think that people being naked in public was always rare. Today we are surprised by the sight of a naked person, but this was not the case in Bible times. Today nakedness is largely associated with sex, but that also wasn't always the case. Nakedness during the Bible times was associated with two issues largely tied together with a single common denominator...money! People were naked for a majority of their day if they performed some sort of dirty work such as fishing, working the fields, carpentry, etc. as they did not want to get their clothing dirty or damaged due to the fact that clothing was extremely expensive. People were also naked for a large part of their day or all day every day simply because they could not afford to buy any clothing for the very same reason...in other words if they were poor. Poverty and dirty jobs were the two main causes for nakedness in Bible times...notice that neither of these reasons have anything to do with what we deem nakedness to be about today. Today all nakedness is assumed to be sexual in nature. Almost no consideration is given to simply living everyday life in the naked and not ashamed condition that God intended from the beginning.

The prominent teaching today that nakedness is sinful is largely due to the misconception of why a person might want to be naked. It is almost never assumed that if a person desires to be naked they may simply want to enjoy life naturally. It is almost exclusively assumed that if a person wants to be naked, they are in some sort of sexual sin. A problem with the person making the assumption, not always with the person being assumed about. The teaching that nakedness is a sin gives people permission to at least point the finger at the naked person and declare, "how shameful". The teaching that poverty is a curse from God allowed people in Bible time to look down on the naked person with scorn. When a fundraising advertisement comes on the television today wanting to show people in poverty, they do not show people without

clothing, they typically show people with no food, an indication that clothing is no longer out of reach for poor people.

Nakedness was not the only condition of poverty in Bible times. As mentioned above...poverty was considered a punishment from God, but so was sicknesses like leprosy, so was hunger, so was having a disability. Notice that today we do not have the church saying that it is a sin to be hungry or sick or disabled. Poor people can be exposed to cold or heat because they do not have money for fuel or air conditioning. Again, there is no cry that being cold or overheated is a sin. Homelessness can result from poverty. Where are the people calling homelessness a sin? We don't have an answer to this question, but we are going to try to show how poverty might leave a person without a garment.

In order to show the relative cost of clothing, I first looked for the world poverty income line. I know that there is one for the USA. but our poor people are wealthy on the global scale. All I could find was a daily income for the line which is \$1.90. We are accustomed to annual income so we will make the math simple. We will round up the daily income to \$2 and the number of days in a year to 400. Annual income would be \$800. Poverty level in the USA is \$12,760 which is 16X more than the global value. I am suggesting that the global value is close to poverty in Bible time.

The next number we will look at to understand the problem of people going naked in Bible time is the cost of clothing from raw materials without modern machines. No one could sell a garment today made like it would have been made in Bible times. At the Farm Show in Pennsylvania and Maryland they have a contest called "From Sheep to Shawl" where they have 5 or 6 people shear the sheep, card the wool by hand, spin the wool into yarn using a spinning wheel and weave a shawl. The spinning wheel was invented sometime after 500AD. No there were no spinning wheels in Bible times. I have no idea how the loom they used compared to the ones used in Bible times, but I would bet that

today's loom is way faster than anything available in Bible times. The electric clipper used to shear the sheep today would save a lot of time over the hand clippers available then as well. The shawl was to measure 22 inches by 70 inches and took less than 2.5 hours to make.

I have no idea how to guess at the man-hours needed to make a square about 70 inches on a side with a head hole since the greater width would take more than twice as long to weave but it is the simplest garment I could imagine. Three shawls would make a covering about that size and that would cover most of the upper body. I am also assuming a loom large enough to make it without needing to sew the pieces together. At the end of the contest they auctioned off the shawls. The one I was reading about sold for \$1450. That makes our simple garment worth over \$4,000. If we divide that by the 16 X higher poverty rate for the USA, we are left with \$250 for the garment.

Granted the garment price is probably high and the poverty line is probably low, but the same reasoning as suggested above applied to food. The only machine we can be sure of was some kind of a plow. Even iron hand tools could be in short supply. **1Sa 13:22 So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.** If there was no iron for swords, maybe the hand tools were bronze, which would make them heavier or more fragile. Both problems would add to the cost of food.

You can see that our person at the global poverty line may not own a garment at the price above. Food was grown mostly by hand labor. They had beasts of burden, but they take a lot of care also. Therefore, relative food prices would be much greater than today. Next, I looked for percent of income spent on food and housing in poor countries. Food can be as high as 55% and housing as high as 40%. The lower the income the higher these percents become. If we assume 10% left for clothing, that leaves \$80. Even with 30% left this person is likely to

choose to be naked because there are other expenses that we did not include.

So, we can easily understand how a poor person would be unable to afford to clothe themselves making nakedness a common condition. The problem we have today is that Satan has been so effective at changing the thought process from “it’s just a naked body” to “OMG, it’s a naked body.” We believe he has done this by changing the view of the body to a sexual object rather than the beautiful image of the Creator. Thereby convincing even the Christian community to cover that which God meant to be visible. He has successfully made the cure into the problem. In other words, the very thing that would desexualize society...the commonplace of nonsexual nakedness, is exactly what he has made extremely rare turning the majority of people into nothing more than Pavlov’s dogs. Today the naked body instantly triggers thoughts of sex for the majority of people. That said, ask anyone living the naturist lifestyle as a daily routine...sex is not any more part of their thought process when seeing a naked body than the man on the moon is. Again, the problem is actually the cure. Just because clothing has become inexpensive and is available for all people including the poor does not mean that we should all be donning clothes and covering up in shame today. If nonsexual nakedness could become the norm in society again then once again, we would desexualize society and cure most people of porn addiction and nearly eliminate the objectification of women (and men).

