

8.10.20 – Too Expensive to Risk Clothing Costs and Nakedness

It is not hard to show that clothing was very costly in Bible times, I do not think we can get the full impact of that fact, because clothing is so inexpensive now as a result of machine-made fabric, sewing machines and synthetic fibers. Clothing in Bible times would be much like a vehicle for going to work is today. Because it is a major expense, you do what you can to extend its life. Your income is often reflected by what vehicle you drive and is often used to judge your social status. Your clothing served much the same function in Bible times.

There were no credit cards in Bible times, but they did borrow money. **Luk 19:23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?** The weaver/tailor might sell a garment on a payment plan and reclaim it if the buyer missed payments. This way the tailor would get interest in addition to the sale price of the garment. The buyer would have periodic payments to make if he wanted to keep his garment. This would be a reminder to care for the garment. The buyer was expecting the garment to last beyond the payment period, but he knew that depended on how he cared for it.

The care of a garment is different than the care of a car, but if the values were similar, we would learn some methods to make the garment last longer. They both wear out with use. When you are shopping for a used car you want to know how many miles the car was driven which is used to judge how much wear is left. We make a car last longer by caring for it...regular oil changes, tire rotations, periodic maintenance and inspections for wear. But, how do you make clothing last longer? The simple easy answer is that we could avoid wearing a garment to make it last longer. Certainly the "washing machine" in Bible times would have been hard on any garment. Keeping the garment clean would avoid the wear caused by washing it and not wearing it would help keep it clean thereby extending its life.

Obviously to avoid wear and tear on a garment, you go naked whenever possible. **Luk 17:8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?** The servants needed to depend on the master providing clothing. The cost of a garment for a servant would be the same as for everyone else. Only those servants that were in public view and would reflect on the master's wealth or those the master wanted clothed were provided with a garment. The verse before this indicates that this servant was outside working and came in at the end of the day. Gird in this verse would mean to put on a garment. Therefore, we can safely conclude that if the servant needed to put on a garment that meant that he didn't have a garment on before that. For those of you in Rio Linda, this means that he was naked while out in the field working. This teaching from Jesus indicates that nakedness was a common condition of the day in order to keep one's garments clean and in good condition.

To keep a garment clean you do work that is dirty with your clothes off and kept somewhere safe and protected. **Jhn 21:7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.** This is the group of disciples who were headed back to their old life after the crucifixion of Christ their leader. Of the disciples listed 3 were fishermen before Jesus called them. Since there are two unnamed disciples and two that are named, we have no record of their work before Jesus called them, they may have all been fishermen in their old life. If one fisherman was not wearing a garment to keep it clean and in good condition then it stands to reason that the other fishermen were naked also. It would not be hard to assume they were all naked to keep their garments clean even if they were not accustomed to fishing.

As with cars today, some people had two, some had but one garment and some had none. **Luk 22:36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that**

hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. This is Jesus talking to the disciples just before he was betrayed. There are a few takeaways from this verse. Notice that a used garment had enough value to buy a weapon. Also note it does not say sell some clothing. Jesus said "his garment" so it might be the only one he has, but we usually assume it would be a second garment. Either way, it does not seem to be one of many. Baby Jesus was not wrapped in some of Mary or Joseph's extra clothing, He was wrapped in burial cloth. We can assume if someone was being buried in it that it probably was not very valuable. The soldiers valued the clothing Jesus wore before the crucifixion even in its stained and dirty condition so much so that they cast lots to see who was going to get to keep it. Achan took a garment with the silver and gold he kept from Jericho so he included it in with the items he considered valuable. Gehazi took two garments with the silver from Naaman again proving that clothing was a valuable item just as silver was. This should be enough to justify the similarity between the cost of cars today and garments in Bible time...at the very least it should verify in our minds that clothing had value and was not a cheap inexpensive item like today.

Unlike not having a car, not having a garment was not much of a choice. If you are in a city with public transportation you could choose to not bother with a car. Having no garment would mean you were too poor to have one. And being poor in Bible times was not the same as it is today. It was almost a cast system. You were considered an inferior human being if you were poor. **Jas 2:2, 3 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:** The Greek word for "footstool" comes from the custom of putting a foot on the neck of the conquered king or general. Not a good way to make someone feel welcome. There was very little chance of escaping from poverty back then. There was no welfare program to help get you over whatever may have caused the poverty. Poverty was seen

as a curse from God...an idea which the poor usually accepted, making their condition one that they were unlikely to ever try to get out of. The Bible sometimes refers to nakedness in the context of shame. Hopefully now you can see that it was not the nakedness that was shameful, it was the fact that it exposed one's poverty and therefore one's position in society. The message that you were too poor to afford even a ragged garment was the shame of nakedness not the nakedness itself.

By now, hopefully we can see the commonplace of nakedness due to the need to keep the clothing in good condition and in some cases due to the lack of money.

In conclusion, some of the motivation for writing this article was a claim that Ruth was not naked while gleaning in Boaz's field. Grain is harvested when it is hot outside. The body cools itself by sweating. Ruth was not from one of the wealthy families in the area or she would not have been working the fields following the harvesters around looking for grain that had been missed. Based on what we know of the poor it is likely that Ruth only had one garment and that it would have been a treasured and valuable item. That would be reason enough to assume that she did not wear it while working the fields. If she kept it on while bending over to pick up heads of grain she would quickly sweat through it, she could end up stepping on the bottom of it, it would most likely be drug through the briars and the dirt and with her sweat it would quickly turn to mud. The men were most likely naked judging from the verse above and while it is not obvious that the women would be also...since women's clothing would be as expensive or more than men's clothing it seems likely that they would be naked. We can also safely assume that in this society men got the new clothes before the women did making it even more likely that the women would be extra careful to protect their clothing by not wearing it to work in. Since everyone bathed and washed in the rivers or streams most likely the genders were used to seeing their opposites naked on a regular basis. Thus, the men and women probably worked the fields in similar condition if for no other reason than to save their one and only garment.