

Biblical Standards of Dress

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” (Revelation 19:6–8)

The text above shows us that the Bride of Christ is to be clothed in fine linen, clean and white. This fine linen is described as the righteousness of the saints. We know that this is symbolic of our justification in Christ (cf *Isaiah 61:10*). One cannot enjoy the wedding feast without this garment, provided by the King (*Matthew 22:11-14*).

We are told that Christ is making for Himself a bride that is pure: *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”* (*Ephesians 5:25–28*) Jesus died to present to Himself this holy bride. Jesus purifies His bride with His own blood, thus justifying her, and then sanctifying her. Jesus desires and will have a pure bride. Paul was zealous to do his part in this work. *“Would to God you could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* (*2 Corinthians 11:1–2*)

When we look at Christ’s bride, who is clothed in this clean and white fine linen, we see that the church has been purchased, cleansed, and prepared for her heavenly bridegroom: she is pure. If the fine linen represents the righteousness of the saints in Christ, should not our fleshly reality conform to this spiritual reality? Certainly there is no great separation between the fleshly and the spiritual in the child of God. Although the flesh has sinful tendencies, we are to submit it to Christ; and we know that what is in our heart is made obvious in our flesh (*Proverbs 27:19; Matthew 12:34; Mark 7:14-23*). This being the case, we must assert that the Scriptures teach us that our clothing matters, and is often representative of what is within our hearts.

Why Clothing?

Why is clothing even necessary? After all, God made man without any clothing; and Adam and Eve were “naked and not ashamed” when God first created them. Even to this day we read, *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”* (*Hebrews 13:4*) This demonstrates that there is a place in which nakedness is still acceptable and not shameful. This is why the law states that uncovering nakedness, which is probably a euphemism for fornication or adultery, is a sin (*Leviticus 18*). We must understand Leviticus chapter eighteen to be an exposition and application of the commandment prohibiting adultery. Sexual relations should only occur within the bonds of heterosexual marriage and to uncover the nakedness of another violates that bond, because nakedness and sexual activity are honorable and pure within marriage.

When sin entered, shame accompanied it. That is what we see when we read of Adam’s fall: *“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”* (*Genesis 3:7–10*) Good desires for food and wisdom had become perverted (See *Genesis 3:6* and compare *1 John 2:15-17*). We know that, along with those desires, all other passions became misdirected. In fact, Scripture describes man thusly, *“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* (*Genesis 6:5*) The inward man became sinful, and thus nakedness and sexuality became things to protect from the

lustful eyes of the ungodly, as this would help protect the sanctity of marriage. This is why the young man is warned against lusting after the harlot: her revealing clothing is demonstrative of her heart, and he is to respect God and marriage enough that he does not long after adulterous deeds (*Proverbs 6:25-35*).

Nakedness apart from the marriage bed is described as shameful all through the Scriptures. Noah was naked to his shame, and his grandson's descendants were cursed because of looking upon him in that state (*Genesis 9:20-25*). When Aaron led Israel into the worship of a golden calf, "*they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.*" (*Exodus 32:6*) This play was sexual in nature, as was most idolatrous worship and play in those times, and the Scriptures say that "*Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame amongst their enemies:)*" (*Exodus 32:25*). Isaiah speaks of Israel being made naked to their shame (*Isaiah 47:1-15*), Nahum speaks of nakedness as being synonymous with shame and deserving of mockery (*Nahum 3:4-7*), and we find that this is the case even when it is spoken of regarding one's spiritual state (*Revelation 3:17-18;16:15*). Obviously nakedness needs to be covered.

What Is Nakedness?

Nakedness is, first of all, the state of being uncovered or bare: but what is it that is bared that makes one naked? Most of us recognize that one's face can be uncovered and the person not be naked. We can say the same about hands and feet. Where do we go with this, then? As seen above, nakedness often carried with it sexual connotations. Nakedness is the uncovering or revealing that is sexual in nature. This means that we shall have to speak plainly here, and it may be a bit embarrassing; although there is no intent of being crude or vulgar. The plain truth must be spoken, however.

When Scripture speaks of nakedness, we immediately realize that it will refer to the uncovering of the genital area. In fact, when the LORD gave Moses commandment regarding the priests' clothing, He specifically directed him to make breeches (This was a legged undergarment.) that reached below the thigh. "*And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach:*" (*Exodus 28:42*) Isaiah also spoke of the shame of the thighs being revealed (*Isaiah 47:1-4*). Based on this, we can certainly say that nakedness is revealing the leg above the knee. This establishes a sort of buffer zone that prevents prying eyes from seeing more than they should see and prevents inadvertent exposure of private areas. This is Most of us recognize that undergarments have typically been worn in a fashion that prevents them from being seen, so that the outer garment is actually covering and concealing even more than the undergarments. We also see that the buttocks are similarly spoken of in Scripture, as it logically follows that they would (*2 Samuel 10:1-6;Isaiah 20:1-6*). We can conclude that nakedness is any revealing of the flesh surrounding the private areas, from the waist to below the knee.

We can and must go farther to say that Scripture also associates the revealing of a woman's breasts as being nakedness. We know that nakedness is the private pleasure of the marriage bed (*Genesis 2:25;Hebrews 13:4*), and the young man is told to rejoice with his wife and to enjoy her breasts (*Proverbs 5:18-20*). Solomon's Song also mentions this explicitly (*Song of Solomon 1:13;4:5;7:37-38*). And when the LORD spoke to Israel of His rescuing her and making her a great nation, He used the analogy of clothing one who was naked, and giving covering that included her breasts (*Ezekiel 16:1-14*). Finally, Hosea is very plain about this, saying, "*Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; And to your sisters, Ruhamah. Plead with your mother, plead: For she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: Let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, And her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, And make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, And slay her with thirst.*" (*Hosea 2:1-3*) Notice how God's Word associates sexual sin and nakedness by saying that Israel's adulteries were between her breasts. Just as an adulterous woman exposes what should be held sacredly private for her husband, so Israel had given herself away to idol gods. The results? Israel would be stripped naked to her shame by God. Thus we see that the revealing of a woman's breasts is nakedness.

Thus it is that we have seen the biblical definition and description of nakedness. This is very plain, but the Word of God is plain, and we should respect and honor the precepts found therein. It is very important that we be the pure bride to Christ that we should be. It is important that the principles of holiness are exhibited in our lives as we honor the Lord and the holy state of marriage by living according to principles of modesty.

The Purpose of Clothing.

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” (Genesis 3:7)

“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21)

With sin came shame, so Adam and Eve rushed to cover their nakedness by making aprons out of leaves. Thankfully the good Lord had a better plan. Taking the life of an animal and making clothing from the animal's skins, He clothed them so that their nakedness did not appear. With this in mind, let us consider the Lord's purpose for clothing, and what Scripture tells us about our apparel.

First of all, we need to consider the common objection that says, “The Lord looks on the heart!” Yes, that is true; but we need to consider the whole of the verse that is referenced. *“And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”* (1 Samuel 16:6–7) Samuel had been sent to Jesse's house to anoint the next king of Israel. Having seen Eliab, Samuel thought that he had surely found the next king, because Eliab was kingly looking. God told Samuel that he was looking at the man from the wrong perspective. The LORD had told Saul that He was seeking a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14); so God was not looking at the outward appearance, although Samuel was. The interesting thing is that God told Samuel that man looks on the outward appearance. The reason that this is so, is because we cannot see a person's heart. We can, however, see signs of what is in their hearts; because what is inside will most often show up on the outside. Thus what is in our hearts comes out of our mouths (Matthew 12:34), and the wickedness that is within a person's heart shows up in his deeds (Mark 7:21-23), and the faith that is within a person shows itself strong by love (Galatians 5:6). While God does indeed look on the heart, that which is on the outside matters; because the outside normally reflects what is on the inside. Man will look at our outward appearance and decide many things about us by that. What does your outward appearance say about you? This is why modesty is spoken of along with shamefastness (inward modesty) and sobriety (self restraint and moderation of desires and passions): true modesty begins within the heart and manifests itself outwardly.

Why clothing? Clothing was given to mankind to cover and to conceal nakedness. Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness after they had sinned. They instantly experienced shame, knowing that nakedness is not to be shared except within the private confines of the marriage bed. For this cause they made aprons for themselves; but those aprons were insufficient, just as our own attempts to cover up our sin are insufficient. As a symbol of the coming lamb whose blood would wash away our sins, and whose righteousness would clothe the believer, an animal gave its life so that Adam's and Eve's shameful nakedness would be covered. Clothing is to keep the shame of nakedness from appearing (Revelation 3:18), so we see that clothing is not simply a cover, but also a concealer. It is important to note this, because some clothing covers everything while revealing many things. Whether the clothing is form fitting, tight, low cut, or with slits very high, or even being somewhat transparent, a person can be covered and yet not concealed. Clothing is given to cover and to conceal: let us be sure to wear it appropriately.