

Clothed or Naked - A Strange Bible Story for the End Times

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | August 3, 2020



The events surrounding the crucifixion of Christ are the most important in the universe's history, and all four Gospels record that pivotal weekend in great detail. But amidst Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane, Peter's betrayal, the corrupt trial, the back and forth to Pilate's court, the mob's bloodthirsty cries, Jesus' calm and forgiving demeanor, His death and victorious resurrection, there appears one strange detail that is recorded only in the book of Mark.

This peculiar side-note has left many Bible students puzzled as to why it, seemingly little more than trivia, was deemed valuable enough to take up this precious space of Scripture.

We find this detail recorded in chapter 14:51, 52:

A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind (NIV84).

The young man is not identified. He doesn't appear to be one of the disciples, as a previous verse

reports they had already fled the scene. Is this just one of those little details that catches the eye and makes a lasting memory – to give the account that certain “eye-witness” veracity? Perhaps, but another possibility is that this true and historical event was included, because it serves as a simple yet powerful object lesson.

In the Bible, the perfection of Christ is often metaphorically described as a robe – the robe of His righteousness. Being disrobed or being naked would symbolically suggest that one is in a position of sinfulness, unhealed, terminal, thus ashamed, naked, and exposed. Being covered by Christ’s robe of righteousness is a symbolic way of saying that one’s sinfulness is taken away and that we are restored to holiness or righteousness.

In fact, Scripture describes God’s heavenly army as being dressed in fine linen, white and clean (Revelation 19:14). And Jesus counsels the Laodiceans, the last generation of people living on Earth at the time of the second coming, to “buy from me ... white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness” (Revelation 3:18 NIV84).

Putting these Bible symbols together, this little detail of history may be providing a powerful truth: As long as we follow Jesus, we are covered in fine white linen – the pure robe of His righteousness; our sinfulness is effectively taken care of by Christ. But if we run away from Jesus, we leave His righteousness behind and are on our own without remedy; thus, we are left ashamed, naked, and exposed.

Add in the fact that the boy ran when Christ was seized and the lesson is even more poignant. As long as things were good, the boy followed Jesus – but when Christ was arrested, when persecution came, when sacrifice was required, when personal safety was threatened, then fear took control of the boy’s heart and he ran away from Christ. How many today follow Jesus when it is easy, convenient, doesn’t require sacrifice, but are now struggling because events in the world are inciting ever-increasing amounts of fear – of COVID, global warming, racial inequality, financial ruin, riots, loss of liberty? How many are being consumed with fear and running away from Jesus and His methods, perhaps seeking the power of the state to make them feel safe? The sad reality is that away from Jesus, we are left naked and ashamed.

We are living in the last days of Earth’s sinful history. Satan is depicted as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And what does a lion’s roar do? It incites fear. Look around at the messaging coming from the world – do you see messages that incite fear? Do you recognize it as the roar of our enemy?

More than ever, now is the time to cling to Jesus. When fear is raging, cling to Jesus. When the world is in chaos, cling to Jesus. When family accuses, cling to Jesus. When it seems the heavens will fall, cling to Jesus. Turn off the media, get back into God’s Word, spend quiet time in prayer, meditate on God in nature, listen to inspiring music, but whatever you do – do not run away from Jesus; He will see you through.
