

Garments of Grace Clothing Imagery in the Bible Lesson 6 2Q 2011

Elijah's and Elisha's Mantle

SABBATH

Memory verse – 2 Cor 7:10 “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”

Thoughts? What does it mean?

What is the difference between Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow?
Any examples?

Is Godly sorrow, sorrow for sin, sorrow for the wickedness in the heart, sorry for iniquity? And would worldly sorry be sorry for the consequences of sin?

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. .." This is genuine repentance. **It will lead to a transformation in the life.** It is the absence of this true sorrow for sin that makes many conversions superficial. Reformations are not made in the life. **But when sin is viewed in the light of the law of God, and its true character is realized, it will be put away from the heart and life.** {RH, June 8, 1911 par. 10}

Thoughts? What does it mean to view sin in the light of God's law, to see its true character? What is the true character of sin?

How wide the difference between those schools taught by the prophets of God, and our modern institutions of learning! How few schools are to be found that are not governed by the maxims and customs of the world! ... Superficial talk, mere sentimentalism, passes for instruction in morals and religion. The justice and mercy of God, the beauty of holiness, and the sure reward of right-doing, **the heinous character of sin, and**

the certainty of its terrible results, are not impressed upon the minds of the young. {CE 63.1}

There are but few who have an appreciation of **the grievous character of sin, and who comprehend the greatness of the ruin that has resulted from the transgression of God's law**. By examining the wonderful **plan of redemption to restore the sinner to the moral image of God**, we see that the only means for man's deliverance was wrought out by the self-sacrifice, and the unparalleled condescension and love of the Son of God. He alone had the strength to fight the battles with the great adversary of God and man, and, as our substitute and surety, he has given power to those who lay hold of him by faith, to become victors in his name, and through his merits. {CE 112.1}

What is the character of sin? What is the purpose of the plan of salvation? To restore the moral image of God in man!

Jump to Tuesday's lesson – Ahab wanted the vineyard of Naboth, Naboth would not sell. Jezebel laid a trap to kill Naboth and then Ahab took the vineyard. Elijah meets Ahab in the vineyard with a message, read third paragraph, “you shall speak...”

What do you think about this message? What does it mean? Why did God send this message to Ahab? Is God threatening Him? What is the God's goal for Ahab? Does God love Ahab? What does God want to see for Ahab? Does God want to see Ahab repent and be saved? Is this message from Elijah designed for this purpose?

And then read last paragraph, “When Ahab heard...” thoughts?

What about the “judgments” of God? What purpose do they serve? Are the judgments of God some infliction of “just desserts” on the wicked to make them pay? Or are they “God's judgments” i.e. What God judges will most likely bring people to repentance and salvation, or some action by God to protect, or to keep open the channels of blessings, or to save?

What about the judgment of no rain until Elijah gives word? Was this a punishment or a therapeutic intervention to heal and save?

It was only by the exercise of strong faith in the unfailing power of God's word that Elijah delivered his message. Had he not possessed implicit confidence in the One whom he served, he would never have appeared before Ahab. On his way to Samaria, Elijah had passed by ever-flowing streams, hills covered with verdure, and stately forests that seemed beyond the reach of drought. Everything on which the eye rested was clothed with beauty. The prophet might have wondered how the streams that had never ceased their flow could become dry, or how those hills and valleys could be burned with drought. But he gave no place to unbelief. **He fully believed that God would humble apostate Israel, and that through judgments they would be brought to repentance.** The fiat of Heaven had gone forth; God's word could not fail; and at the peril of his life Elijah fearlessly fulfilled his commission. Like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, **the message of impending judgment fell upon the ears of the wicked king;** but before Ahab could recover from his astonishment, or frame a reply, Elijah disappeared as abruptly as he had come, without waiting to witness the effect of his message. And the Lord went before him, making plain the way. "Turn thee eastward," the prophet was bidden, "and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee."
{PK 121.2}

When you think of God's judgments to you understand them as punishments for wickedness to exact proper recompense, or do you understand His judgments as wise interventions to resolve the sin problem and bring healing?

Does it make a difference?

Why did Elijah bring this message? How is this connected to:

“But before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes, I will send you the prophet Elijah. ⁶He will bring fathers and children together again; otherwise I would have to come and destroy your country.” Malachi 4:5,6

Who is this Elijah of Malachi 4?

Read top paragraph FRIDAY,

“Elijah, who had been translated to heaven without seeing death, **represented those who will be living upon the earth at Christ's second coming, and who will be "changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump;"** when "this mortal must put on immortality," and "this corruptible must put on incorruption." 1 Cor. 15:51-53. Jesus was clothed with the light of heaven, as He will appear when He shall come "the second time without sin unto salvation." For He will come "in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Heb. 9:28; Mark 8:38.” DA 422.

What is the message this Elijah is to bring? What did the first Elijah do? Do we have a similar role to play?

Elijah gave a message calling people back from idolatry to the true God and went to heaven without seeing death.

We are told that Elijah will present again a message before the coming of the Lord and those who give it will then be translated without seeing death – (maybe not every individual but as a group/generation).

Elijah confronted idolatry, notice the dynamics of that day:

Religious leaders in Elijah’s day were leading people to worship Baal.

- Do you think the prophets and priests of Baal thought they were worshipping a false god?

- Do you think they were thinking, “Let’s lead these people to worship a false god?” Or did they actually believe Baal was the true God?

The religious leaders, with their position, prestige, and conviction of heart, deceived the people of God into worshipping Baal.

What was the problem with worshipping Baal?

What made Baal a false God? Was it that the word “Baal” was the wrong group of letters pronounced when worshipping God? Was it because they were not saying Yahweh? Was it something else?

The Hebrew noun *ba'al* means ‘master’, ‘possessor’ or ‘husband’. Used with suffixes, *e.g.* Baal-peor or Baal-berith, the word may have retained something of its original sense; but in general Baal is a proper name in the OT, and refers to a specific deity, Hadad, the W Semitic storm-god, the most important deity in the Canaanite pantheon. ¹

Yahweh was ‘master’ and ‘husband’ to Israel, and therefore they called him ‘Baal’, in all innocence; but naturally this practice led to confusion of the worship of Yahweh with the Baal rituals, and it became essential to call him by some different title; Hosea (2:16) proposed *ʾiš*, another word meaning ‘husband’.²

The phenomena associated with thunderstorms were closely linked to Baal. Baal was said to appoint the season of rains. Clouds were thought to be part of his entourage. Lightning was his weapon, and it may have been his invention. The windows of Baal’s palace were thought to correspond to openings in the clouds through which rain flowed. Rain was important to Canaanite agriculture, and Baal was

¹ Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (108). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

² Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (108). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

consequently a god of fertility—a prodigious lover as well as the giver of abundance.

The Ugaritic literature preserves a cycle of myths in which Baal is the protagonist. They tell of his battle against Lotan (Leviathan) and of his struggles against other adversaries called Yamm (Sea) and Mot (Death). The struggle between Baal and Yamm has left its mark on Israelite literature in the form of stories about and allusions to Yahweh's encounters with watery enemies (e.g., Isa. 51:9b-10; Ps. 74:13). Through his struggles, Baal achieves the first rank among the gods. Along the way Baal perishes and revives, providing the Ugaritic literature with stirring themes and dramatic moments.³

What was the problem with worshipping a god who controlled thunder and lightening, who brought rain, sunshine, fertility, blessed with full harvest, who warred against the great serpent and death, who died and was resurrected? What was wrong with this god?

What was Elijah opposing? Is there a lesson for us if we are to give the Elijah message at this time to recognize what was wrong that caused this worship to be false?

Was it that Baal represented the characteristics of Satan's version of God? What would be central to that?

Determined to keep the people in deception, the priests of Baal continue to offer sacrifices to their gods and to call upon them night and day to refresh the earth. **With costly offerings the priests attempt to appease the anger of their gods;** with a zeal and a perseverance worthy of a better cause they linger round their pagan altars and pray earnestly for rain. Night after night, throughout the doomed land, their cries and entreaties arise. But no clouds appear in the heavens by day to hide the burning rays of the sun. No dew or rain refreshes

³ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). *Harper's Bible dictionary* (1st ed.) (84–85). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

the thirsty earth. The word of Jehovah stands unchanged by anything the priests of Baal can do. {PK 124.2}

What caused Baal to be false? Is it false to worship the creator? The giver of life? The conqueror of death? The sacrificial God? The God who wars against the great serpent? The God of the weather?

What about Malachi's prophecy regarding Elijah returning? Will we face a similar problem, a god construct, taught by religious leaders, in which people are led to believe that the god who controls the weather, the god who blesses with fertility and abundance, the god who fights against the great serpent and death, the god who died and rose again, also requires appeasement or payment in order to be just? Could this be the very lie we are to confront as Elijah did? Could those who confront this lie be the ones translated without seeing death?

Is it wrong to worship a god who must be appeased? One who requires payment? One who must have sacrifice to assuage his wrath? Is this not the heart of pagan worship and what Elijah is supposed to oppose?

Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal. Are we worshiping the true God as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshiping the true God. {FLB 59.8}

Elijah was sent with a message that Baal is false, the true God is not like this. The proponents of the false god, outnumbered the people of God and sought their destruction.

God empowered His representative to stand firm and call to account the leaders who misrepresented Him and led the people to believe in a god who required payment and sacrifice to appease.

Do we find any parallels today? Has the idea that God requires blood to be forgiving entered Christian thought? Has the idea that Jesus died to appease the wrath of God or to assuage the wrath of God entered Christian thought? Has the idea that God requires a legal payment entered Christian thought? Is this part of what the Elijah message is to oppose?

Here is a statement from a paper called, "A Call to Evangelical Unity," from *Christianity Today*, June 14, 1999:

- We affirm that the atonement of Christ by which, in his obedience, he offered a perfect sacrifice, propitiating the Father by paying for our sins and satisfying divine justice on our behalf according to God's eternal plan, is an essential element of the Gospel.

Recently a book was recommend to shed light on what some believe are deficiencies in our class. Here are some excerpts from this book:

"Paul always speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He never refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact**, however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity's rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ's sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God's side.**" Knight, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 74.

"Leon Morris writes that *if God's 'wrath is regarded as a very real factor so that the sinner is exposed to its severity, then **the removal of the wrath will be an important part of our understanding of salvation.***' Of course, 'if we diminish the part played by divine wrath we shall not find it necessary to think seriously of propitiation.' Thus Morris comments in

another connection, ‘if people are to be forgiven, then the fact of that wrath must be taken into consideration. It does not fade away by being given some other name or regarded as an impersonal process.’ **In other words, Gods’ wrath must be propitiated or turned away from the sinner. That was one aim of Christ’s self-sacrifice on the cross.**” Ibid p 64.

Here is from the SDA 27 Fundamental Beliefs:

“Christ’s self-sacrifice is *pleasing* to God because this sacrificial offering **took away the barrier between God and sinful man** in that **Christ fully bore God’s wrath on man’s sin**. Through Christ, God’s wrath is not turned into love but is turned away from man and borne by Himself.” SDA 27 fundamental beliefs page 111.

“For a loving God to maintain His justice and righteousness, the atoning death of Jesus Christ became ‘a moral and legal necessity.’ God’s ‘justice requires that sin be carried to judgment. **God must therefore execute** judgment on sin and thus on the sinner. In **this execution the Son of God took our place, the sinner’s place, according to God’s will**. Ibid.

And this has led to theologians writing things like this:

“Why did **God the Father choose** a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through with a spear or sword? **Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross** when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightning, or a lethal injection?”

(<http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/February/sinners-in-the-hands-of-god.html>).

Angel Rodriguez said in December 2007 World Review “One of the fundamental problems of the Moral Influence Theory is that it rejects the substitutionary nature of Christ’s death. The idea that **God had to kill the innocent** instead of the guilty

in order to save us is considered a violation of justice.” (p 40, emphasis mine).

Did God choose to execute His Son on the Cross? Or was this done at the instigation of Satan and unholy men? Is God the source of killing, execution and death or does death arise from sin?

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, **yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.** Isa 53:4

Did God afflict Him, or did Isaiah prophecy we would misunderstand and attribute to God the murder of Christ?

What did Jesus say about what His Father did to Him? “My God, My God why have you forsaken my?”

What about EGW, who actually killed Christ?

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings.** Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken. {DA 761.2}

Did God execute His Son? No! Does Elijah need to stand up and oppose this view of God?

What about the idea that God needed to be appeased or have His wrath assuaged?

“The atonement **of Christ was not made in order to induce God to love those whom he otherwise hated**; it was not made to produce a love that was not in existence; but **it was made as a manifestation of the love that was already in God's heart**, an exponent of the divine favor in the sight of heavenly intelligences, in the sight of worlds unfallen, and in the sight of a fallen race. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." **We are not to entertain the idea that God loves us because Christ has died for us**, but that he so loved us that he gave his only-begotten Son to die for us. **The death of Christ was expedient in order that mercy might reach us with its full pardoning power**, and at the same time that justice might be satisfied in the righteous substitute.” {ST, May 30, 1895 par. 6}

Is the message of Elijah that is to lighten the world a confrontation with paganism even more insidious than the original Elijah faced? And do we have a message which will demolish all of the false god concepts being taught?

Would it be wrong to consider this message, the final message to lighten the world for Christ's return is the message about God's character of love which will confront paganism.

“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth...**The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love.**” Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

SUNDAY

We have the Mt Carmel experience of 1 Kings 18, where Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal, calls fire down, has the prophets of Baal slaughtered and then ran ahead of Ahab's chariot for 20 miles! Then what happens – fear, panic, discouragement after being threatened by Jezebel.

Elijah runs away, later Jezebel is killed and eaten by dogs.

What do we learn from this?

Satan is a blowhard – Satan threatens, intimidates, makes noise to get us to doubt our position, standing, safety, security, to turn our mind's attention away from our mission and back onto ourselves.

Peter, while looking to Christ was walking on water, when he looked to self to show the others, look at me, he sank.

We must fix our eyes on Christ – keep our focus on mission, trust God with how things turn out, with our reputation and keep fulfilling our duty to the best of our ability.

Elijah, ran trying to save self – rather than trusting God with His life.

This is easy for me to say, thousands of years downstream and not in that situation – it is much harder to do. This is the battle with which we all struggle, how to stay surrendered to Christ, trusting Him with how things turn out in the face of threats of various kinds!

Elijah ends up at a cave and while there he sees a great wind, an earthquake and a fire – but the Lord was not in any of these. Then he hears the sound of the still small voice, and the Lord was in this.

What does this mean? What lessons do we learn from this?

- God is not found in the great shows of thunder, fire, and miracles
- God does not want to reach us through “shock and awe” Why not?
- God prefers the still small voice, why?

What happens to thinking and reasoning when we are shocked and awed? What happens to capacity to comprehend, understand, develop? What happens to love?

What does God want for us? Can His goals for us be accomplished through the exercise of might and power?

Bottom pink section asks, “How can we learn to recognize the still small voice?”

WEDNESDAY

Read top paragraph, “Whatever one can...” thoughts?

How did Elijah leave earth? In a chariot of fire – what does this mean? What lessons do we learn?

In Daniel 7 when God takes His throne what flows out from Him? Rivers of fire.

Did Elijah get hurt in the fire? Or the intelligent beings in Daniel 7?

What is the source of this fire? Why didn't it destroy Elijah?

Is the fire harmful? What about the fire that at the end of time – is it different?

Does the fire in which the wicked are consumed cause suffering and pain? Or does their unhealed sinful condition cause the suffering, pain and ultimate death?

Is God the source of life? What is the cause/source of death?

If you were Satan who would you try and get people to believe is the source of death?

What about the idea that it really doesn't matter whether God inflicts the death of the wicked by raining fire upon them, or He merely lets them reap the consequences of sin in the fire, God is the one who designed the system in which they die so God is ultimately causing it?

Who designed the system in which sin could arise? God, did God cause sin? Then can God create a system in which certain things occur which He did not want, choose or cause? Like sin and the death of the wicked in the end!

We must stop casting God in the role of cosmic executioner – how can we fulfill our mission to lighten the world for Christ's return if we don't present the truth about God's character of love!

THURSDAY

Read top dark section:

Was there something magical about the mantle? Did the mantle possess some supernatural power?

What if someone were to discover in a sealed clay jar, the actual mantle of Elijah and Elisha today? What would happen?

Do you think people touching it would experience miraculous healing? Do you think this would lead to greater understanding and enlightenment regarding God and His kingdom?

Read last paragraph, "In the end.." thoughts? What does this mean? What is faith, where does it derive?

What helps you strengthen your faith?