

# The Examiner



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## Modesty by Mark Mayberry - Part Two

### God Is Not Always Satisfied With Our Choices

Certain eternal and unchanging principles are set forth in the opening chapters of Genesis. In the beginning, God created man as a free-moral agent (**Gen. 1:26; 2:16-17**). In the beginning, God placed man in a position of dominion over all the creation (**Gen. 1:26; 9:1-2**). In the beginning, God instituted marriage and ordained the proper relationship between husbands and wives (**Gen. 2:20-24**). In the beginning, God emphasized the gravity and guilt of sin (**Gen. 3, 4, 6**). In the beginning, God accentuated the difference between authorized and unauthorized worship (**Gen. 4:1-7**). In the beginning, God stood in judgment of man's vice and violence, wickedness and corruption (**Gen. 6-8**). In the beginning, God ordained capital punishment in order to ensure social justice and a respect for human life (**Gen. 9:5-6**).

Christians recognize that the Law of Moses has been superceded by the Gospel of Christ (**Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:13-14**). Nevertheless, the aforementioned principles predate the covenant of blood that was instituted at Sinai. They are founded

in the very character of God himself. Because they express the unchanging will of God, these ethical ideals are eternally valid. Thus, we should not be surprised to discover that they are reflected in the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations. The New Testament repeatedly refers back to the opening chapters of Genesis to emphasize the unchanging nature of certain truths, especially in those passages that relate to marriage, the roles of men and women, and modesty (**Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:1-12; 1 Cor. 14:34-35; Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Tim. 2:9-15**).

Let us give special consideration to how the third chapter of Genesis addresses the issue of modesty. In their original ignorant and innocent state, the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (**Gen. 2:25**). However, after eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve realized they were naked and were ashamed (**Gen. 3:6-7**). Please note that nakedness is not something shameful in the private and personal relationship of a husband and wife (**Heb. 13:4**). Rather, shame and embarrassment occurs when third parties are present. Adam and Eve were ashamed when

God came to visit with them in the cool of the evening (**Gen. 3:8-10**).

### Man's Choice of Clothing

When Adam and Even realized they were naked, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (**Gen. 3:7**). Some Bible versions say "aprons" (KJV, ASV, RSV), while others say "coverings" (NIV, NKJ), "loin coverings" (NAS), or "loincloths" (NRS). Strong defines the Hebrew word *chagowr* as "a belt for the waist."<sup>14</sup> Brown, Driver & Briggs define this word as "(1) a girdle, a belt; (2) a girdle, a loin-covering, a belt, a loin-cloth, armor."<sup>15</sup> This Hebrew word appears in **Genesis 3:7; 1 Samuel 18:4; 2 Samuel 18:11; 20:8; 1 Kings 2:5; 2 Kings 3:21; and Isaiah 3:24**. It always refers to a girdle, a belt, a sash, a loin-covering, a loin-cloth, or to armor that would cover the mid-section of the body.

### God's Choice of Clothing

Yet, their original efforts to correct this problem were wholly inadequate. Adam and Eve still felt ashamed at their naked condition even though they had made loin coverings for themselves (**Gen. 3:7, 10**). Furthermore, the Lord was not satisfied with their feeble efforts. To correct this deficiency, God gave them modest clothing (**Gen. 3:21**). According to the KJV and the ASV, God made "coats of skins" for Adam and Eve and clothed them. The RSV, NAS, NIV and NRS say that God made "garments of skins." The NKJ says that God made "tunics of skin, and clothed them."

Strong defines the Hebrew word *kethoneth* as "to cover, a shirt."<sup>16</sup> The KJV renders this word as "coat," "garment," or "robe." Brown, Driver and Briggs say it describes "a tunic, an undergarment; a long shirt-like garment usually of linen."<sup>17</sup> Gesenius says the word refers to "a tunic, an inner garment next to the skin (**Lev. 16:4**); also worn by women (**SOS 5:3; 2 Sam. 13:18**); generally with sleeves, coming down to the knees, rarely to the ankles."<sup>18</sup> Wilson describes "garments" as "a tunic, worn next to the skin . . . generally with sleeves, to the knees, but seldom to the ankles."<sup>19</sup> This Hebrew word occurs in many other passages where it is usually translated "tunic(s)." It refers to Joseph's coat of many colors (**Gen. 37:3, 23, 31-33**), the priestly garments of the Levites (**Exod. 28:4, 39-40; 29:5, 8; 39:27; 40:14**), etc. The Revel Bible Dictionary describes a cloak as "an outer garment. In biblical times, this important garment was typically a large square of cloth with armholes. It fell to or below the knee. Even though other clothing was worn under the cloak, and the cloak might be taken off when working in the heat, a man without his cloak was spoken of as 'naked'" (**1 Sam. 19:24, KJV**). The cloak also served as a covering at night. There are several different Hebrew and Greek words for cloak in Scripture. These are sometimes translated as garment, wrapper, robe, coat, or merely clothes."<sup>20</sup>

How were the God-made garments

different from the loincloths of Adam and Eve? First of all, animal skins were more permanent than fig leaves. Secondly, they were more effective in covering the body. The concealment afforded by fig leaves was flimsy and faulty, but animal skins provided an opaque, non-transparent covering. Finally, while the fig leaves covered only the generative portions of the body, the tunics that God made covered the body from the shoulders to the knees. In the third chapter of Genesis, God established clothing — specifically, modest clothing — as a permanent institution among men and women.

It is also instructive to note that God prescribed tunics for the Israelite priests (**Exod. 28:4, 40**). Jesus wore a tunic (**John 19:23-24**), as did the disciples (**Luke 9:3**). Dorcas made tunics for the widows (**Acts 9:39**). Hence, from the beginning to the end of Holy Writ, God approved of tunics as decent apparel. In fact, they continue to be worn in the Middle East even today, and they still cover the body as they did in Bible times. Of course, the significant point here is not to bind a particular style of clothing, but rather to show the consistent manner in which God required the human body to be covered.

### The Bible Condemns All Forms of Public Nakedness

The Hebrew and Greek words that are translated “naked” or “nakedness” can have several distinct meanings: First of all, these words may refer to one who is completely

nude and bereft of any clothing (**Gen. 2:25; 3:7; Job 1:21; Eccl. 5:15; Amos 2:16; Mark 14:51-52**).

Secondly, these words may refer to a state of partial nakedness or inadequate dress. Often these words are used to describe someone who is raggedly, badly, or poorly clad (**Gen. 3:10; Deut. 28:48; Job 22:6; 24:7, 10; Isa. 58:7; Ezek. 18:7, 18; Matt. 25:35-44; Acts 19:16; Rom. 8:35; 1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 11:27; Jas. 2:15**). On other occasions, they describe someone who, having taken off his mantle, is clad in his tunic only, without an outer garment (**1 Sam. 19:24; Isa. 20:2-4; John 21:7**).

Thirdly, these words may be used metaphorically. In certain passages, these words carry a figurative and symbolic meaning. Nakedness may express desolation (**Jer. 49:10**), the soul without the body (**2 Cor. 5:1-4**), the things that are exposed to the all-seeing eyes of God (**Heb. 4:13**). It may describe the carnality of a local congregation (**Rev. 3:17-18**), the degradation of a soul unprepared to meet its Maker (**Rev. 16:15**), or the utter desolation that would befall imperial Rome (**Rev. 17:16**).

While it may be difficult to determine which specific meaning applies in a given context, nevertheless, in all cases, except for **Genesis 2:25**, nakedness carries a distinct sense of shame. Adam and Eve were ashamed to meet with God after they ate of the tree of knowledge (**Gen. 3:8-10**). Dishonor is clearly manifest when Noah became drunk and uncovered himself

(**Gen. 9:20-27**). Foreshadowing the overthrow of Egypt and Ethiopia, Isaiah said that prisoners from both countries would be led away captive, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt (**Isa. 20:3-4**). Lamenting over the Chaldeans, the prophet pictures the humiliation of the virgin daughter of Babylon: She sits on the ground, stripped of her skirt, with her nakedness uncovered and her shame exposed (**Isa. 47:1-3**). Because the citizens of Jerusalem had given themselves over to idolatry, they would experience the humiliation of a harlot whose lewdness and nakedness are uncovered before the eyes of her lovers (**Ezek. 16:35-39; 23:28-30**). Finally, the shame and disgrace of nakedness is twice alluded to in the Book of Revelation. Jesus admonished the church at Laodicea to “buy from me . . . white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed” (**Rev. 3:18**). Emphasizing the need for continued watchfulness, the Lord said, “Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame” (**Rev. 16:15**). Each of these examples presupposes that nakedness outside the marriage relationship is dishonorable. If such were not the case, then all symbolism and significance is lost.

Recognizing that the biblical concept of nakedness refers not only to complete nudity but also to a state of being partially unclothed, an important question now arises: What parts of the body must be covered to insure that we are not exposing our nakedness? The clothing God provided Adam and Eve reached from the shoulders to the knees. A thorough study of Scripture reveals that, in order for apparel to be modest, it must cover the thighs, the hips, the waist, and the breasts.

Someone might object by saying, “But your citations come from the Old Testament. You cannot refer to those passages without binding the Law of Moses.” No, we quote these passages, not to bind the Old Covenant, but to define and illustrate the biblical meaning of nakedness. Many important concepts are set forth in the Old Testament. **Hebrews 11** refers back to the example of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, etc. Their collective examples illustrate and define the obedient nature of saving faith.

**HEAR HIM IN ALL THINGS**  
*DEUT. 18:15, 18, 19; ACTS 3:22, 23; JO. 12:48, 49*

**HEAR JESUS & ALSO THROUGH HIS APOSTLES - JO. 14:26; 16:13; LK. 10:16**

LOVE - MK. 12:30  
 BELIEVE - JO. 3:16  
 LIKE THIEF - LK. 23:42, 43  
 LIKE PUBLICAN - LK. 18:13, 14  
 LIKE JAILER - ACTS 16:30, 31  
 NOT BY WORKS - EPH. 2:8, 9  
 CALL ON - ACTS 2:21; ROM. 10:13  
 ABRAHAM - ROM. 4:2-5  
 NOT BY RIGHTEOUSNESS - TIT. 3:4, 5  
 NOT CONDEMN - JO. 8:10, 11  
 FOLLOW HIM - JO. 10:27, 28



MT. 13:15

LOVE DEFINED - 1 JO. 5:3; JO. 14:21  
 OBEY HIM - HEB. 5:8, 9  
 WHEN GIVEN? - MK. 16:15, 16  
 SAUL - ACTS 22:16  
 BAPTIZED - ACTS 16:32, 33; 2:38  
 DO WILL OF GOD - MT. 7:21-23  
 HEAR THE REST - ROM. 10:14-17; LK. 6:46  
 ABRAHAM'S FAITH - JS. 2:21-24  
 WORK RIGHTEOUSNESS - ACTS 10:34, 35  
 SIN NO MORE - JO. 8:11  
 WALK NO MORE - JO. 6:66; 1 TIM. 4:1  
 TRANSITIONS - MK. 7:7-9 CHURCH - MT. 16:18  
 OTHER DOCTRINES - GAL. 1:6-9 OBEY NOT -  
 2 TH. 1:7-9 + REV. 22:14 JUDGED - REV. 20:12