

The Biblical Purpose for Clothing

“God clothed Adam and Eve! That’s good enough for me!!”

I’ve heard Bible teachers say essentially that

(actual quote: *“Whatever the reason God clothed Adam and Eve, He clothed them, and nowhere instructed them to remove the clothing. Without any biblical instruction whatever on the value of nudity, I am going to follow God’s example with Adam and Eve and clothe myself.”*)

The assumption is, of course, that God clothed Adam and Eve because He wanted our bodies to be hidden from view. We can no longer look upon nakedness in purity—it is assumed—so now we have to keep our bodies covered unless we are with our own spouse.

But... is that really why God gave Adam and Eve clothing? Was God’s purpose for clothing at that moment in time to provide a future means by which sexual purity would be upheld?

There is no such declaration in the text that that is the case, nor is there any command associated with the clothing of Adam and Eve in [Gen. 3:21](#) (Read the entire context). Of course, that fact by itself does not prove the idea wrong, but it certainly should give us pause, and call us to reevaluate the assumptions.

This introductory article is actually the first in a series that will survey the biblical purpose for clothing. I want to see if there is any merit to the assumed purpose stated above, and if not, what other valid biblical purpose would offer a credible explanation of why God clothed Adam and Eve.

My initial assumption is this: *God’s purpose for clothing Adam and Eve must be a Biblically valid purpose.* For example, If the purpose above is a valid purpose, then we should see the principle of covering nakedness to promote sexual purity as a Scripturally demonstrable purpose for clothing. If not, we should look for a different purpose altogether.

Starting at the Beginning.

To set a baseline for this survey regarding clothing, we need to start at the very beginning.

In [Genesis 1-2](#), we find that the nudity of the first couple was evidently God’s original intent. There were no such things as “clothes” or any need for them at all. It was such a good and

right thing that God made a special point of mentioning their nudity as part of the Creation account ([Gen. 2:25](#)). We also have to conclude that their nudity was literally part of the Creation which God declared to be “very good” in [Gen. 1:31](#).

This leads us to our first and foundational observation that we can make about clothing. It is this:

Baseline Observation

There was nothing about life in the Garden of Eden that required clothing.

That’s an important observation because wherever we find a purpose for clothing in the Scriptures, we should be able to point out how the context was *different* than the Garden context.

This observation works for both sides of this particular discussion, since one of the main points of those who believe in the purpose stated above is that we could only handle nakedness *before* sin. They believe that the introduction of sin into the human equation is the wild card that changed the context so significantly that clothing is now required to serve as an inhibitor to sin.

But it also means that there may be other “before/after” differences that could adequately explain the purpose of God’s clothing Adam and Eve. It would be a mistake to lock onto that one notion and reject all other possibilities without examination.

Before and After the Fall.

So if clothing was not needed before the Fall, but clothing *was* useful or needed after the Fall (we can assume that God had a *good* reason for clothing Adam and Eve), what changes took place for which clothing is an appropriate and effective solution? This is a question that we will keep in mind for the duration of this survey.

As I stated above, it is further assumed that whatever purpose God had for the clothing after the Fall, we should be able to find confirming evidence for the same purpose elsewhere in the Scriptures. Once identified, we will examine each biblically discernable purpose for clothing to see if it might offer a reasonable explanation of God’s purpose for clothing Adam and Eve.

Part 1 - Shame and Fear??

In the Introduction of this series, I looked at [Gen. 1-2](#) and observed that while living in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had no need at all for clothing. However, after the Fall and banishment from Eden, God clothed Adam and Eve with no fanfare and no explanation or mandate.

Despite the fact that God did not tell us why He clothed our first parents, many are confident that God's purpose for clothing them was to prevent or minimize lust since—it is assumed—humans can no longer experience nudity in purity after the Fall.

The very first effort at clothing is found in the account of the Fall. Adam and Eve crafted their own clothing.

Leafy Loin Coverings...

It is only a few verses after “naked and unashamed” was declared ([Gen. 2:25](#)) that we read the story of how “unashamed” was lost and problem of nakedness was “fixed” ([Gen. 3:1-14](#)).

It's pretty clear that Adam and Eve's purpose for clothing at that moment was to address two problems: Shame, and Fear. In point of fact, “shame” is never actually mentioned in the text except when the pair were described as UN-ashamed. However, I count that sufficient to conclude that shame was evidently part of their experience.

It is also worth noting that Adam and Eve were not satisfied with the leafy loin coverings that hid their genitals... for they also ran and literally hid themselves entirely from God. When God called to Adam, “*Where are you?*” ([Gen. 3:9](#)), Adam's answer was that “*I was afraid because I was naked...*”

We might at this point be tempted to conclude that the first biblical purpose for clothing is to address our sense of shame and fear... as that surely was the reason that Adam gave for clothing himself and hiding. However, that would be stopping our analysis too soon, for we also must take into account that God had something to say about Adam's actions... “*Who told you that you were naked?*”

Is that an affirmation... or is it a rebuke?

Personally, I hear God saying to Adam, “*What makes you think that the way I made you is the problem at all?*” This understanding is further supported by the fact that God didn’t wait for an answer, but immediately got to the real problem by asking “*Have you eaten from the tree...?*” ([Gen. 3:11](#))

No, God’s response was *not* affirmation. Consequently, we can reach this conclusion:

Observation #1

Addressing shame and fear is not a Scripturally valid purpose for clothing.

If God did not approve of clothing to address shame and fear in Adam and Eve (after the Fall), He does not approve of those reasons for clothing for us today. The correct response to Shame and Fear is to run to the God of Mercy and Love... just as we are. That’s true today; it was true after the first sin.

If anyone disagrees with my conclusion that fear and/or shame are not valid purposes for clothing, I’ve addressed further implications of the idea in the Epilogue.

Divinely Designed Duds...

The next incidence of clothing is in [Gen. 3:21](#) when God Himself makes coats of skin for Adam and Eve. Oddly enough, the text does not tell us what prompted God to do so. As already noted, many assume that it is because of the need for clothing to promote sexual purity. But since that is not found in the text, we should leave that idea on the table until we find some sort of affirmation in the rest of the Scriptures that this actually is a Scripturally sound purpose for clothing.

However, before we leave this story, it should be noted that whatever God’s purpose was in clothing Adam and Eve, it cannot have been because He was contradicting His rebuke in [Gen. 3:11](#). In other words, ***God’s purpose for clothing them was not to address their fear or shame.***

Part 2 - Clothing as Currency

In the Introduction of this series, I looked at [Gen. 1-2](#) and observed that while living in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had no need at all for clothing. However, after the Fall and banishment from Eden, God clothed Adam and Eve with no fanfare, explanation or mandate.

God did not tell us why He clothed our first parents, so we're surveying the Bible to see if we can find a purpose for clothing that fits the account in [Gen. 1-3](#).

Clothing as Currency?

Here's an unexpected purpose for Clothing that seems to have biblical sanction... it is permitted to leave your only garment with someone as collateral for a financial loan ([Exo. 22:25-26](#))!

I'm not sure this helps the discussion about the purpose of clothing much, but at very least it makes it pretty clear that, relative to today, clothing was much more valuable in Bible times than it is today. It was evidently common enough that someone would have one and only one multi-purpose garment... worn during the day and used as a blanket at night. And when they needed a loan, they were permitted to strip it off and give it to the "loan officer" during the day... until they needed it to stay warm at night.

Another passage in the Scriptures that uses clothing as currency is the story of Samson and his 30 Philistine companions at his wedding ([Judges 14:12-18](#)). They agreed to a bet—in the form of a riddle—and the loser had to provide clothing to the other party in payment of clothing for the lost bet. Oddly enough, the Philistines were so hard pressed to pay the change of clothes (one change of clothes each) that they threatened murder and arson if Samson's Philistine wife didn't tell them the answer.

Well, she must have known that they meant it, since she found out the answer and told them. So, Samson lost the bet. To pay the 30 changes of clothing, Samson had to go out and kill 30 other Philistines, strip them their clothing, and bring them to the 30 men with whom he had the bet.

Not only were the men willing to accept clothing as payment for a gambling debt, they were willing to take second-hand clothing, that was undoubtedly well-worn, sweaty, and dirty (Would Samson have washed them first?).

This story demonstrates pretty clearly how valuable clothing was in Bible times and illustrates how different a role clothing played in ancient cultures as compared to today's norms.

Observation #2

In the Bible, clothing was so valuable that it could be (and was) used as currency!

This observation also helps us understand why God's people were told repeatedly that should clothe the naked. The command is repeated so frequently that we have to conclude that it was a reality of life that one would encounter naked people that needed clothing. Why were some people in bible times naked? Most likely because they were very poor; if they owned a garment but had no food, they could literally use "the shirt of their backs" to pay for a meal.

Does it Fit "Before and After" the Fall?

Well, there certainly wasn't any need for currency in the Garden, but neither was there immediate need for currency after the Fall! So, this Biblically discernable purpose for clothing does not help us understand God's purpose for clothing Adam and Eve.

Part 3 - Sign of Position

In the Introduction of this series, I looked at [Gen. 1-2](#) and observed that while living in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had no need at all for clothing. However, after the Fall and banishment from Eden, God clothed Adam and Eve with no fanfare and no explanation or mandate.

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Clothing to Denote Position

[Genesis 41:39-42](#) - *“So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.’ Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.’ Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck.”* (NASB)

When Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the entire land of Egypt, He gave him a fine linen garment and some impressive jewelry... all to signify his important position in the land of Egypt.

[Exodus 28:2-3](#) - *“Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron to give him dignity and honor. ... 4 These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests.”* (NIV)

When God established the nation of Israel, it was established as a *Theocracy*. This means that God was their “King” and the “Government Officials” were the priests. God never established any particular requirements of the Israelites in reference to clothing, but for the Priests—or more specifically, the sons of Aaron—God prescribed in great detail the “uniform” (down to their underwear!) they were to wear during their service in the temple before the altar.

[Exodus 28](#) gives all the details, but the purpose of the clothing was stated very clearly in [Exodus 28:2-5](#)...

The garments were specifically for the *position* of the Aaronic Priestly line. They were designed specifically to give the priests “dignity and honor” in their role as priests. They were to be the mark of their peculiar ordination as priests ([verse 41](#)) and were required to be worn whenever the priests entered the tent of meeting or approached the altar... *on pain of death* ([verse 43](#))!

Another evidence of clothing denoting an exalted position can be found in [Isaiah 6](#). The Prophet was in the temple when he saw a vision of the Lord on His throne. The Lord is described in this vision as having a robe with a train. The train, Isaiah tells us, is “filling the temple.” ([Isa 6:1](#))

[Isaiah 6:1](#) *“In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.”* (NASB)

This raises some interesting questions... like why was the Lord “wearing” anything at all? Does God need clothing? And what is the purpose of the “train” of a robe?

Like a wedding dress that may have a train, the purpose of a robe with a train is to bring honor to its wearer. The train itself can serve no other function. Consequently, the purpose of God’s “robe” and its train in Isaiah 6 is to denote or portray the “lofty and exalted” position of its wearer.

Observation #3

Clothing is used in the Bible to signify the exalted position of its wearer.

So, clothing can serve as an outward indication of the wearer’s positional stature. Not only did God prescribe it for the Aaronic priests, He allowed Isaiah to see Himself in a robe with a train to emphasize His own greatness as King.

Does it Fit “Before and After” the Fall?

So, if the exaltation of a person’s position is a biblically valid purpose for clothing, could this be why God provided clothing for Adam and Eve in Gen. 3:21?

Clearly, it was not. Adam and Eve were not being exalted by the animal skin coats that God made for them. These were not clothes that would indicate to everyone who saw them of the

great honor and positional status that they held. The truth is that they had suffered a pretty significant *demotion* rather than any sort of elevation of position.

Part 4 - Communicate About the Person

In the Introduction to this series, I looked at [Gen. 1-2](#) and observed that while living in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had no need at all for clothing. However, after the Fall and banishment from Eden, God clothed Adam and Eve with no fanfare, no explanation, and no mandate.

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In Review...

Up to this point, we have observed that:

- While Adam and Eve wore “clothes” to address fear and shame, God did not approve of that purpose for clothing, so it cannot be why He clothed them.
- Clothing can be used as collateral or currency, but this cannot be why they were clothed.
- Clothing was sometimes used to denote a person's exalted position, but again, this does not explain why God clothed Adam and Eve.

So, we continue our survey of the Bible to see if any other valid reason for clothing matches the context of the Fall and would give us a clue as to why God gave Adam and Eve their coats of skin.

Clothing to Communicate Something about a Person

A survey of the Scriptures also shows that there are times that clothing was used to communicate something about its wearer. This is related to the purpose described in Part 3 (a sign of position), but it allows for other—perhaps more mundane—messages. Let me highlight some and briefly comment on each one.

- **Clothing to show that the wearer is in mourning.**

[Genesis 37:34](#) - *“So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.”* (NASB)

The wearing of *sackcloth* is recorded some 44 times in the Old and New Testaments. 42 of those 44 times, the wearing of sackcloth is associated with mourning as it is in the passage above. Interestingly, the rending of clothing often precedes the donning of sackcloth and is part of the expression of mourning.

- **Clothing to show that the wearer is rich.**

[Luke 16:19](#) - *“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. (NASB)*

[James 2:2-3](#) - *“For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, “You sit here in a good place,...” (NASB)*

We can see from these passages that God is not impressed with fine clothing—nor should we give special treatment to those with such clothes—but we can also see here that clothing and jewelry have the power to tell us that their wearer is wealthy.

- **Clothing to show that the wearer is a harlot.**

[Proverbs 7:10](#) - *“And behold, a woman comes to meet him, Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart” (NASB)*

In this case, the woman is dressed in such a way as to alert others that she was sexually available. Of course, the Scriptures would not condone such activity nor the message, but we do see that the clothing communicates something very specific to the observer about the person wearing the clothes.

- **Clothing to show that the wearer is a favored.**

[Genesis 37:3](#) - *“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.” (NASB)*

I don't think the Bible condones our having “favorites” among our children, but Joseph's father Israel did show such favoritism. The way he expressed it was by giving Joseph a unique tunic that was very different from all his brothers' clothing. Every time his brothers saw it,

they would be reminded of the favored status that Joseph held in their father's heart. This special and unique garment communicated the favored status of the one wearing it.

- **Clothing to show that the wearer is holy.**

[Revelation 19:7](#) - *"It was given to her [the bride of Christ] to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."* (NASB)

[Revelation 19:14](#) - *"And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses."* (NASB)

The clothing worn by the bride of Christ and the armies which return with Christ at His second coming may not be literal clothing, since they are actually defined here as "righteous acts." However, we can still see that the purpose of the white garments— as described in John's vision—was to reflect the righteousness of the wearers.

A Point of Note...

It is important to note here that the precise message of that which is worn is not absolute, but rather, it is culturally determined. In the examples I have given, we are told the meaning of the garment without being told much (if anything) about the garment itself.

- Today, no one girds their loins with sackcloth to show that they are in mourning. This was only a convention in ancient times.
- The exact style or nature of the ornate clothing of the rich is not recorded and is different for every culture.
- There is nothing recorded about exactly what the harlot wore. Every culture has harlots, and within every culture, it is defined how they dress to communicate it, but no two cultures are the same.
- In John's vision, God inspired him to actually *record* the precise meaning of the white linen garments, lest the reader define a meaning according to his or her own cultural understanding.

Observation #4

Clothing is used in the Bible to communicate something about the person wearing the garment.

Biblically speaking, we can see that clothing is sometimes used to communicate something about the wearer of the clothes. Notably, the specific content of the message is dependent on the cultural norms in which it is used. Furthermore, the morality of what is worn will depend upon what is intended to be communicated. Even God utilized this method of communication about a person, therefore, it must be considered Scripturally valid.

Does it Fit “Before and After” the Fall?

What about the clothing of Adam and Eve? Was there something that God was intending to communicate about them that He used the leather garments to say?

At first consideration, this is plausible. Could it be that their new clothes were to signify that they were now sinners? Was their clothing intended to be a constant reminder of their sin?

While this idea does seem like it could have some merit, there is no corroboration for it anywhere in the Bible. We do not find that message assigned to the garments in the immediate context, nor is there any other time where clothing is ever used for that particular message. Furthermore, that meaning is never mentioned regarding Adam and Eve anywhere in the Bible.

Consequently, I conclude that this purpose for the clothing of Adam and Eve—while plausible—is not satisfactory. We simply have to read too much meaning into the text to have any confidence that we are understanding the correct “meaning” that their clothes were intended to communicate.

For those who may disagree with my conclusion on this possible purpose for God clothing Adam and Eve, I’ve addressed further implications of the idea in my Epilogue to this series.

Part 5 - Gender Distinction?

God created Adam and Eve with natural, physical gender distinctions. Later, after they sinned, He clothed them. At least in some measure, their gender-specific attributes would now be covered. Could it be that the clothing was intended to show gender distinction?.

Men's Clothing vs. Women's Clothing

I can only think of one verse that addresses gender-specific clothing. It's found in [Deut. 22:5](#).

[Deut. 22:5](#) - *"A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God. "*
(NASB)

At first reading, it does seem that clothing can be used for gender distinction. However, this is worth a closer look. Let me make some observations:

- The Bible never ever defines what "man's clothing" is so as to distinguish it from "women's clothing."
 - Such stylistic ideas are culturally invented.
 - At the time this was written, the typical clothing for men AND women was essentially the *same!* They wore a simple tunic, and perhaps an outer garment like a robe. Headwear was the same and so was footwear.
 - Pants/shirts/dresses/etc. were not in the picture *at all*, and so they cannot be what the passage is talking about.
- This passage must be interpreted in light of the clear Scriptural truth that while *"man looks on the outward appearance, God looks upon the heart."* ([1 Sam. 16:7](#))
 - If such a thing is truly an "abomination" to the Lord, then it must be that there is something about this law that reveals the heart.
 - If we stop at the surface understanding that God is saying that people must conform to cultural norms for gender-distinct clothing, we are elevating cultural conventions to moral absolute. This simply cannot be the force of this passage.

These observations by themselves should give us pause before we conclude that clothing is to be a means of gender distinction. But if we look closer at the meaning of the Hebrew terms behind the English text, that interpretation becomes even more unlikely.

Is it Really Clothing God is Talking About?

Let's look more closely at the words God used here:

"A woman shall not wear man's clothing..."

The word translated "clothing" here is the Hebrew word, [*kelē*](#). A review of how this word is used reveals that even though it is found in the OT over 300 times, it is *never* translated "clothing" except here! The most common word used is "vessel" (122 times). Also used are these words: "instrument" (39), "weapon" (21), & "jewel" (21).

So is it really clothing? Or could the passage actually be intended to forbid a woman from taking up the *role* of a man, along with the items a man uses to fulfill that role?

Perhaps the [*King James Version*](#) is actually more accurate here: *"The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man..."* It's not just about wearing men's styles in clothing, it's about assuming the place of a man.

This understanding finds corroboration in the New Testament in Paul's words to Timothy:

[*1 Tim. 2:12*](#) - *"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence"* (NASB)

But what about the next part of the verse?

"...nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing..."

The word translated "clothing" here *does* refer to a garment of some sort. But again, can we conclude from this phrase that some kinds (or styles) of garments are truly gender-aligned?

Is there any sort of garment described in the Bible as a "woman's" garment? I don't think there is. If God never defines what a "woman's garment" is, how can we possibly know how to follow this command? Once again, we dare not elevate cultural norms to the level of moral absolute.

May I suggest that there is one type of garment that would be identifiable as "woman's clothing"? It is the one which she uses to catch the flow of blood during her menstrual cycle. There are no other laws in the Bible about any gender-identified clothing, but there are

plenty that regulate the response to a women's period. [Lev. 15:19-24](#) make it clear that she is to be considered ritually "unclean" during her flow. Furthermore, her bed and anything she sits on are likewise unclean. Finally, anyone else who touches anything that she has made unclean is also considered unclean.

In other words, it is possible that the "woman's clothing" that [Deut. 22:5](#) refers to is actually her menstrual cloth. This would be identifiable in *any* culture or time, and it is consistent with the fact that there are other laws which govern a woman's menstrual cycle.

What the Passage May Really Mean...

If we take the passage to mean what it sounds like on the surface, we are faced with a HUGE gap in our knowledge of exactly what God is referring to... *what kind of clothes are to be identified as gender-specific?* We simply don't know.

Based on my discussion of the Hebrew words above, let me offer an alternative interpretation of this the verse in [Deut. 22:5](#)...

God wants women to respect the role of men... including the implements men use to fulfill that role. God wants men to respect the role of women... including the garments that she must use specifically as a woman.

But there could be a simpler meaning...

God wants both genders to accept themselves as God made them. If a woman rejects her own gender and longs to be a man, or if a man rejects his own gender and longs to be a woman... she, and he, are literally rejecting God's will for their lives. That rejection would indeed be an insult—an "abomination"—to God.

One way or the other, there is simply not enough information to conclude that clothing is intended to be a means by which we identify gender.

Observation #5

Clothing for gender distinction is not clearly confirmed in the Bible.

There is only one verse that would come close to validating this purpose for clothing, but there is no way to know from the Bible how it should be followed if we were to interpret it

that way. Close examination of that one verse makes it yet more doubtful that such an interpretation is sure.

But let's go one more step and see if it could fit the context of [Gen. 1-3](#).

Does it Fit "Before and After" the Fall?

There was no need for any external gender-identification for Adam and Eve before the fall. Did anything change at the Fall that now required clothing to identify gender?

Obviously not. The physical distinctions of male and female were the same after the fall as before.

Furthermore, for all we are told in [Gen. 3:21](#), God made the coats of skin the same for Adam as for Eve. They wore clothes of the exact same "material" and in the same "style."

Finally, if they were clearly and naturally gender identifiable while naked, there would simply be no reason at all to give them ambiguous and unnatural external garments to "distinguish" their gender.

Even if we were to conclude that clothing does have some purpose for gender-distinction, it does not in any way offer an explanation for why God clothed Adam and Eve in [Gen. 3:21](#).

Part 6 - Warmth and Protection

While living in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had no need at all for clothing. However, after the Fall and banishment from Eden, God clothed Adam and Eve. But why?

We continue our survey of biblically valid purposes for clothing.

Clothing to Keep the Body Warm

A very clear purpose for clothing in the Bible is for warmth and protection. Here are some examples in the Scriptures where it can be found.

[1 Kings 1:1](#) - *“Now King David was old, advanced in age; and they covered him with clothes, but he could not keep warm”* (NASB)

The clothing which they gave the aging king was for the purpose of keeping him warm.

[Job: 31:19-20](#) *“If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, Or that the needy had no covering, If his loins have not thanked me, And if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep...”* (NASB)

Job claimed innocence from any sin that he could think of, including the sin of failing to provide clothing for the needy... that is, neglecting to provide them a way to keep warm.

[Exodus 22:25-27](#) - *“If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in?”* (NASB)

[Deuteronomy 24:12-13](#) - *“If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge. When the sun goes down you shall surely return the pledge to him, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you;”* (NASB)

We looked at this one before, noting that clothing could be used as collateral and/or currency. But we can also see from these passages that if we held someone’s cloak as a “pledge,” we were not to keep it overnight. He would need it to “sleep in”... protecting him from the cool of the night.

It should be noted that this law only applied if you held the cloak of a man who was actually poor. This underscores the fact the poor often had only one garment (if that much). Those who were wealthy evidently had other means to keep warm at night.

[James 2:15-16](#) *“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?”* (NASB)

This is perhaps the clearest passage that shows that a central purpose for clothing is to provide warmth for the body. It would be wrong to say to someone “be warmed” without providing clothing, just as it would be wrong to say “be filled” without providing food. Clothing is used to keep the body warm.

Whenever in the Scriptures we are told to clothe the naked, this passage confirms to us that the core purpose for that provision is to allow them to keep their bodies warm.

Clothing for Protection

[Eph. 6:11](#) - *“Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”* (NASB)

References to armor abound in the Scriptures, but only in [Eph. 6:10-17](#) do we ever see a clear description of the various pieces of armor. We know that Paul attached spiritual meaning to each piece in this passage, but without much doubt, he used his knowledge of a Roman soldier’s real armor to guide his writing. In fact, it’s probable that he could actually see a Roman soldier as he penned the words, since it is generally believed that he was in a Roman prison when he wrote the book of Ephesians.

Each piece of the armor was designed and worn to protect the body from physical harm.

Observation #6

Clothing is used in the Bible to protect the body from cold or harm.

Biblically speaking, we can see that one very important purpose for clothing is to protect the body from cold or some other form of physical harm, therefore, it must be considered Scripturally valid usage for clothing.

Does it Fit “Before and After” the Fall?

Did Adam and Eve have a need for warmth or protection? Did anything change from before the Fall that would introduce the need for physical protection of the body from cold or harm after the Fall?

I submit that there is! Let’s look at Genesis 3:

[Gen. 3:17-18](#) *“...Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;” (NASB)*

[Gen. 3:24](#) *“So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.” (NASB)*

- When Adam and Eve sinned, they were subsequently cursed by God. As a part of that curse, the ground would now yield thorns and thistles which would impede the man’s efforts to work the ground to produce food. Thorns, of course, represent a real danger to a person’s physical body.
- Before the Fall, Adam and Eve lived in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. It had been custom designed for the human couple to live in without any need for clothing. The temperature must have been such that day or night, they were comfortable.

However, once they were cast out of the Garden, they had to find their way in other places. These places could have easily been more hostile to them with a wider range of temperatures throughout the day and night. We are not told the environment outside of the Garden, of course, but this is definitely a plausible reality.

The Real Reason God Clothed Adam and Eve.

The Scripture text does not tell us directly why God clothed Adam and Eve. However, we can certainly assume that He did so for a distinct purpose. We can also assume that God’s purpose was good. As stated at the outset of this study, any purpose that we suggest must be in keeping with Scripturally valid purpose for clothing, and it must also fit the “Before/After”

context of the Fall. We could legitimately add one more condition for God's purpose: it must also be in keeping with the character of God Himself.

With the suggestion that God's purpose for clothing Adam and Eve was to provide warmth and protection to their bodies, we see that all three of those requirements are met:

- Life outside of the Garden of Eden would include thorns—and likely a less hospitable climate.
- Warmth and protection are biblically valid purposes for clothing.
- God is a God of mercy and grace. While cursing the serpent, He promised a Savior; when expelling Adam and Eve from Eden, He provided physical protection in the form of warm and durable clothing.

None of the other biblical purposes for clothing fit the context as well as this one. I find that this purpose for the clothing of Adam and Eve is both compelling and satisfying since the reasons for which warmth and protection might be needed are found in the immediate context.

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Part 7 - Controlling Lust??

Up to this point, I have outlined a number of different purposes for clothing that are biblically valid, based upon evidence of their usage in the Scriptures where God commands it, acknowledges it, or simply reports it without any reprimand or condemnation.

Notably, there was one usage of clothing that *was* rebuked by God, and that was the effort by Adam and Eve to address their own shame and fear by clothing themselves. For this reason, I have concluded that the use of clothing to address fear and shame is *not* Scripturally condoned.

The Culturally Assumed Purpose

There is a purpose for clothing that is assumed so universally in our world today that most people likely consider it the most important of all the purposes for clothing... and it is certainly the most inviolate. All other purposes for clothing may be applicable at some times but not others—except this one. The adherence to this one “purpose” is the only one that is considered impossible and immoral to lay aside...

I speak of the idea that *clothing is for controlling lust*.

Everyone “knows” that when the unclothed form (or even “too much” skin) is seen by the opposite sex, it will “automatically” incite sexual desires and lust. So, according to that assumption, the obvious way to minimize a lustful response is to make sure we keep clothed. And this—it is assumed—is why God clothed Adam and Eve.

Is the Purpose of “Controlling Lust” Found in the Bible?

In a word... *No*.

It’s easy to demonstrate that something *is* in the Bible... you just find it and quote it. But showing that something is *not* in the Bible is nearly impossible... there’s nothing to quote!

However, let me take a look at a couple of passages that some may believe teach this purpose for clothing. I will examine them to discern if they really do teach it. In each case, I find that the interpretations that reach that conclusion are actually in error, for they are not consistent with the careful reading and understanding of the texts.

Do not “uncover the nakedness of...”

In [Leviticus 18](#), the command “Do not uncover the nakedness of...” is repeated time and again. It is also clear that the passage is talking about sexual conduct. But does this mean that nakedness must be “covered” in order to control our sexual lusts?

[Lev. 18:6-7](#) - *“None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the LORD. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother; you are not to uncover her nakedness.”* (NASB)

I have dealt with this extended passage at length in my article, [Nakedness in the Old Testament](#), which looks at the usage of the Hebrew word here translated “nakedness” in order to discern its true meaning as it is actually used in the Bible. Let me summarize some of the key points that help us understand this passage.

First of all, I think we can all agree that the word “nakedness” here is not talking about simply being unclothed. The word as used in this context connotes sexual activity and “uncover the nakedness of...” is clearly a euphemism for sexual intercourse. This conclusion is not in debate at all, and modern translations such as the NIV simply translate the phrase as [“have sexual relations with....”](#)

However, these Scriptural prohibitions are not simply about avoiding sexual relations. As you can see in the passage above, they apply specifically and only to “blood relatives.” In other words, this passage is about defining and prohibiting incest in all its variations. The text itself invokes that limit on its application four times ([verses 6, 12, 13, & 17](#)), and every relationship for which “uncovering nakedness” is forbidden is a close family member.

The fact that this passage speaks so specifically to various family relationships shows that it is not intended to prohibit the uncovering of nakedness between any man or woman, but only in relationships that are incestuous—that is, between blood relatives. In other words, non-family men and women are permitted to marry and have sexual relations. This understanding is further in evidence two chapters later:

[Lev. 20:17](#) *“If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace. They are to be publicly removed from their people. He has dishonored his sister [‘uncovered his sister’s nakedness’ - NASB] and*

will be held responsible.” (NIV)

Sexual intercourse with one’s sister is incestuous, even if a man attempts to formally marry her. Sexual union (uncovering nakedness) between a man and his wife otherwise is expected and blessed.

This passage again underscores the fact that the phrase “uncover the nakedness of...” is a biblical euphemism for incest. It is not a general command to keep clothed in order to control lust. If it were, then there would be no limitation of its application to “blood relatives.”

[Leviticus 18](#) defines and prohibits incest. It does not define a purpose of clothing to control lust.

Priestly Garments and Altars with Steps

In [Exodus 20:26 and 28:42](#)

[Exodus 20:25-26](#) - *“If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it. And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it.” (NASB)*

[Exodus 28:42-43](#) - *“You shall make for them linen breeches to cover their bare flesh [nakedness]; they shall reach from the loins even to the thighs. They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, so that they do not incur guilt and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him.” (NASB)*

In both of these passages, we see that God expressly forbids the exposure of the genitals (the word is *ervah*/“nakedness” and the context makes it clear that it’s talking about the genitals) at the altar. Notably, God never forbids that exposure anywhere else... only at the altar.

In the first passage above, we see that steps leading up to an *altar* with is forbidden... but, notably, *not all steps*. Hebrew homes very typically used their rooftops for usable living space. They built steps on the outside of their homes to provide that access. Such steps were not forbidden... only those going up to an altar. Clearly, it is the context of an altar that made the exposure a problem, not just any exposure any time.

In the second passage above, the special linen breeches were prescribed for the Aaronic priestly line for when they entered the “Tent of Meeting” (the tabernacle where the altar was). It was not required for the other priests; it was not a command for the the general populace, and it was not even a requirement for the Aaronic priests when they were *not* serving in the Tent of Meeting. Again, this passage is very limited in its application and is not a general “rule” or “law” for all people everywhere.

Since both of these passages have to do with exposure of the genitals at the altar, it does beg the question, “Why?” What is it about exposure in *that* specific context was offensive to God? Why were God’s commands to keep their genitals covered limited to only those special places of worship?

While we cannot know the reason for sure, we can at least say with confidence that if God intended this for all times for all people, He would not have given the commands for such a limited and specific context. Furthermore, the idea that God’s intent was to avoid exposure so as to minimize lust is completely foreign to both passages. The presence of absence of other people who may “see” the exposure is completely missing, and therefore irrelevant to both commands.

In my article, [Nakedness in the Old Testament](#), I have offered what I consider to be a reasonable explanation of why God included these laws in the Bible. There is insufficient space here in this article to summarize or defend them, so I recommend that you read that article where I cover it in detail. Suffice it here to say that the very limited scope where these laws apply indicates that they are *not* about covering the body to prevent lust in others.

What about “Modest Attire”?

Many people would likely point to [1 Timothy 2:9](#) as a clear command that women “dress modestly” since Paul said it so plainly there. So, let’s look at the passage to see if it supports the assertion that women should keep dressed to prevent lust in men.

[1 Timothy 2:9-10](#) *“I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. ”*
(NIV)

Let me say up front that I do not believe this is a very accurate translation of the passage. A full review of the reasons why can be found in the online article [Rightly Dividing 1 Timothy 2:9](#).

But let's assume for the sake of this survey that this is an accurate translation. Even as it is stated here in the NIV, can we reach the conclusion that clothes are needed to prevent lust? I don't believe so.

- Paul's command is that a woman should not attract attention to herself by things that she wears. Paul lists hairstyles, jewelry, and expensive clothing as things to avoid, but nothing is said about skimpy clothing or covering certain body parts.
 - If I live in a "modest" house and drive a "modest" car, it means that I'm not putting on airs or trying to impress people with my house or car. It has nothing to do with how sexually alluring they are... that's a completely different meaning for the English word, "modest."
 - Paul's meaning is that women are to avoid ostentation to impress people with their wealth. He was not telling them to make sure "this and that" are adequately covered.
- Paul tells the women *not* to adorn themselves with those things, but *instead...* to adorn themselves with "good deeds." This is, quite literally, a *de*-emphasis on clothing, not an emphasis upon it.
 - [1 Peter 3:3-4](#) affirms the same de-emphasis on clothing: "*Your adornment must not be [merely] external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit...*" (NASB) [Note: the words in brackets are not in the original Greek text]
 - Neither Paul nor Peter require clothing; in both cases, they only warn against the misuse of clothing. If clothing were required for the prevention of lust, then both would have made note of that need.

[1 Timothy 2:9](#) is the *only* passage in all the Bible that speaks to dressing "modestly." But upon close examination, it cannot by itself prove that clothing must be worn to inhibit lust in others. Lust is not even mentioned by Paul.

If preventing lust really were a valid biblical purpose for clothing, surely we would find that purpose stated *somewhere* in the Scriptures and there would be a clear description of which

parts of the body need to be covered to accomplish that purpose. Such a passage is utterly missing in all the Bible.

Do some people today use clothing to attract attention to themselves? Absolutely. It happens with some when they wear skimpy clothing. It also happens with others who are covered neck to toe. Both are forbidden by Paul in [1 Timothy 2:9-10](#), but any requirement to wear clothes to prevent lust is completely missing... both in this text and the rest of God's word.

Who is Really Responsible for Lust Anyway?

Could it be that the real responsibility for avoiding lust rests with the *observer* and not the *observed*? If we place that responsibility on a woman and how she dresses, are we not—at least in some measure—absolving the man who sees her of that responsibility? Isn't lust always a choice? Is a man any less responsible for his own lust, even if a woman is literally trying to seduce him?

I'm not condoning a woman's use of clothing to incite lust, but if a woman does that, her *real* problem is with her heart, not her clothing. Nevertheless, no matter what her motives or actions are, the man is still fully responsible for his own choice to lust or not.

Imagine for a moment how Jesus (as a man) would respond to a woman attempting to seduce Him to lust after her. Would He do so? No, He would not. Men, we are called to be like Christ; His response to such a woman must be ours as well. We can *never* blame the woman—or her choice of attire—for our own sin.

Observation #7

*The use of clothes to prevent or inhibit lust
is NOT a biblically valid purpose for clothing.*

Biblically speaking, there is no evidence that God intended clothing to inhibit lust. The fact that we have a culture full of men that lust when they see skin and do not lust when they don't only reveals the fact that we have set up a cultural expectation that assumes—and therefore condones—lust in the hearts of men.

Does it Fit “Before and After” the Fall?

What about “Before and After”? To be fair, those who promote this purpose for clothing correctly observe that after the Fall, men and women now possessed a sin nature, and were

no longer “naked and unashamed.” They would claim that before the Fall, men and women were able to see the nude form of the opposite sex without sin, but thereafter, they were no longer able to see nakedness without lust.

Indeed, this appears to be plausible. Without a doubt, most Christians in the world believe this is absolute truth.

The problem is, however, that there’s not a shred of evidence in all the Bible that this claim is true. We have, quite literally, taken a cultural experience and elevated it to being equal to the Word of God.

But let’s ask the question anyway... if “controlling lust” were a valid purpose for clothing, would it fit the context of the life before and after the Fall?

A simple reading of the text in [Genesis 1-3](#) shows that when Adam and Eve sinned, there were no other people in the world; there simply was no need to “control lust” at that moment (Did God intend to limit Adams’s sexual desire for Eve?). We cannot conclude that God’s purpose for clothing Adam and Eve was a purpose that did not even apply at that moment. In other words, it also fails the before/after test.

If we want to be Biblical Christians, we must be honest enough to recognize when our interpretations of God’s Word are being influenced by subjective experience. We must be ready to reexamine them and—if necessary—lay them aside.

The belief that God intends for clothing to be used to control lust is a belief that must be laid aside.

Conclusion

So, what is the conclusion of this study? What are the biblically valid purposes for clothing, and which of those purposes best explains why God clothed Adam and Eve in [Gen. 3:21](#)?

Let me review.

Fear and Shame? No.

At the outset, we observed that Adam and Eve's purpose for clothing themselves—to address the fear and shame—met with God's reprimand rather than His approval. This established a baseline understanding that such a purpose for clothing was not biblically valid, and therefore, could not have been God's purpose for clothing them [10 verses later](#). [For further discussion of this point, see the Epilogue]

Clothing as Currency? Yes, but No.

We next observed that clothing was actually used as currency in the Bible. But this would not explain God's clothing of Adam and Eve.

Sign of Position? Yes, but No.

Clothing in the Bible sometimes was worn to signify that the wearer held a position of great honor. Once again, this does not fit God's clothing Adam and Eve at all.

Communicate About a Person? Yes, but Not Likely.

Sometimes clothing was used to communicate the role, mental state, or status of a person. Could this explain why God clothed the first couple... to declare them to be sinners in need of covering? That might make some sense, but there is no corroboration in the text for that idea, nor is it stated anywhere else in the Bible. Consequently, it is highly suspect and uncertain. [For further discussion of this point, see the Epilogue]

Gender Distinction? I Doubt it, but No.

The biblical support for the notion that clothing is for gender distinction is very weak, However, even if it *is* a valid purpose for clothing, it does not explain why God would clothe Adam and Eve.

Warmth and Protection? Yes, and Very Fitting!

It is very easy to discern in the Bible that warmth and protection are fundamental purposes for clothing. Also, upon examination of the account of the Fall and the Curse, we can discern from the immediate context offers evidence that warmth and protection would likely be needed for life outside of the Garden of Eden.

Controlling Lust? No.

Despite the fact that this purpose for clothing is almost universally assumed to be valid, there is no credible evidence for it in the Bible... Not in [Genesis 3](#), and not anywhere else. Since it is not a biblically valid purpose for clothing, it *cannot* explain God's purpose for clothing Adam and Eve.

Any Others?

Have I missed any other purpose for clothing that might be found in the Bible? I welcome any feedback that would offer evidence that I have. I would be happy to add to this series of articles to include any oversight.

The Most Reasonable Answer...

Of all the purposes for clothing found in the Bible, only one fits the context of God's provision of clothing for Adam and Eve. Without any doubt, *Warmth and Protection* provide the most reasonable explanation of God's purpose for the coats of skin. Consequently, we can conclude with a good measure of confidence that God graciously clothed the first couple to protect their bodies from cold, thorns, and other potentially harmful factors that would have been reality outside of the Garden of Eden.

Of course, the Word of God does not give us a direct answer to our question of why God clothed Adam and Eve, so we cannot build doctrines or moral standards upon our conclusion, no matter how firm we believe it to be. However, it is very important that if we are going to offer any suggestion as to what God's purpose was, we must offer an explanation that is both biblical and reasonable.

Sadly, the most common view of why God gave Adam and Eve clothing—to control lust—is neither biblical nor reasonable. Despite that fact, entire systems of moral standards have been based upon its faulty logic. This view and its false standards must be rejected.

Epilogue

During the course of this study, we've looked at all of the biblical purposes for clothing in order to attempt to discern why God clothed Adam and Eve after the Fall. In the end, it was concluded that the best explanation was that God provided clothing for warmth and protection.

Along the way, we looked at other potential reasons for the clothing, but rejected them for a variety of reasons. I suspect, however, that two of those reasons that I rejected may still be held as viable by some. Specifically...

- Some believe that we really do need clothing to address our sense of shame.
- Others may still maintain that God *did* give clothing as a sign that mankind needs a covering for his sin.

Yet both of these positions overlook a very important implication of holding to such a view. I want to address those implications here in the Epilogue.

What if Clothing IS Supposed to Address Our Fear and Shame?

I've heard people talk of Adam and Eve's scramble for fig leaves as if it were the most natural and normal thing in the world... *they were NAKED, after all!* And we all know how ashamed we would feel to be seen naked. We would just *die* if someone saw us without our clothes! Adam and Eve were just doing what any of us would do, right? We're *supposed* to feel shame like that... isn't that why they got dressed?

And (it is believed)... God "agreed" with their solution to fear and shame, so He provided them coverings that would last longer and cover them better than the leaves ever could. Now that they were fallen, God knew that shame would simply be a human reality, so he provides clothing to deal with that shame and the fear of being seen naked.

As I said in Part 1 of this article, [Gen. 3:11](#) cannot at all be understood as anything other than a reprimand. It is not reasonable to just ignore that fact and conclude that God later affirmed that which He had just rebuked.

But for the sake of discussion... let's assume for a moment that God *did* give Adam and Eve clothing because He knew they needed a covering for their bodies to address their fear and shame.

What then?

Well, what impact does the work of Christ have on that purpose for clothing?

The Bible teaches that when a person is in Christ, old things are passed away and all things are made new ([2 Cor 5:17](#)). It tells us that God has not given us a spirit of fear ([2 Tim. 1:7](#)). We know that perfect love—God's love for us—casts out fear ([1 John 4:18](#)). We know that Jesus took our guilt and our shame ([1 Peter 2:24](#), [Hebrews 12:2](#)). *We no longer have any reason to fear or be ashamed!!*

If God provided clothing for Adam and Eve to address their fear and shame, Christians should be the first to shed their clothes! In fact, continuing to wear clothes would amount to telling a lie about the power of Christ's love in my heart. Let's live the truth without fear... we do *not* need clothes to cover our shame... *shame has no place in the heart of a redeemed child of God!* As the worship song says, "I know He rescued my soul, His blood has covered my sins, ... My shame He's taken away, My pain is healed in His name, I believe! My Redeemer lives!!" (*My Redeemer Lives* - © 1999 Hillsong)

What if Clothing IS Supposed to Remind Us That We're Sinners?

In Part 4 of this article, we saw that sometimes clothing was used to communicate something about a person... perhaps their state of mind (sackcloth = mourning), their social status (distinguishing the rich from the poor), or to symbolize their righteousness (white linen garments).

This suggests the possibility that God may have intended that the coats of skin with which He clothed Adam and Eve were to be perpetual reminders that they were now sinners in need of covering for their sin. This meaning, of course, is never stated in the Bible, but many Bible teachers have offered this idea as the true meaning of the clothing.

But there's a very important implication that those who promote the idea evidently overlook or simply ignore...

Let's suppose for a moment that this is true—that clothing is intended to be a “sign” that people are sinful and in need of salvation.

What then?

Well, what impact does the work of Christ have on that purpose for clothing?

The Bible teaches that when a person is in Christ, old things are passed away and all things are made new ([2 Cor. 5:17](#)). It tells us that Jesus took our sin away from us... as far as the east is from the west ([Psalm 103:12](#)). Because Jesus became sin for us ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)), we know that God will *not remember our sins* ([Isaiah 43:25](#))!! And the Bible never ever refers to a follower of Christ as a “sinner” once they've chosen to enter into Christ's work on the Cross... instead, they are called “saints” ([Eph. 2:19](#))!

So, if I am in Christ and my sin is taken away, do I still need to wear clothes that shout, “sinner”? *No!* Instead of wearing clothes to remind myself and everyone else that I am a sinner in need of redemption, shouldn't I go *without* clothes to remind myself and everyone else that I *am* redeemed? Jesus has cleansed me from every sin ([1 John 1:9](#)); though my sins were like crimson, now I am as white as snow ([Isaiah 1:18](#))! While the unredeemed continue to cower under clothing that ever condemns them, I walk free of all such condemnation, for I am in Christ ([Rom. 8:1](#)).

If God clothed Adam and Eve to proclaim that they were sinners, then Christians should be the first to be shed their clothes! In fact, continuing to wear clothes would amount to telling a lie about the efficacy of the work of Christ. Let's tell the truth about our redemption... we do *not* need clothes for *that* purpose anymore! As the hymn says, “*Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.*” (*The Solid Rock* - PD)

But, That's Not What They Mean...

In both cases above, the ideas are not really being presented to teach credible and biblical purposes for clothing. Rather, they are put forth in the attempt to create a requirement for clothing where the Bible simply does not give one. They are presented and taught as evidence that clothing is required for us today.

But the reasons given for clothing are fully and completely addressed by the work of Christ! Naturally, If the reason for the clothing has been otherwise addressed in a person's life, then

the need for the clothing is gone. *To continue requiring clothing for these reasons is to deny the power of the cross.*

In other words, these reasons actually argue for the *abandonment* of clothing rather than the requirement of clothing...

... but that's not what they mean.

Why is it So Hard to Accept?

The idea that God clothed Adam and Eve to protect them from the post-Fall environment outside of the garden makes good sense. It has biblical corroboration as a valid purpose for clothing, and there were harmful factors (thorns) mentioned right in the same Scriptural context ([Genesis 3:18](#)). Furthermore, the explanation actually reveals the loving character of God, who expresses grace and mercy, even as He issues judgment.

So... why would anyone object to such a simple and fitting explanation for God's actions?

I can think of only one reason why the explanation of "warmth and protection" would be rejected: because it does not support the idea that clothing is a moral requirement.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this series, I've had a Bible teacher tell me, "if it was good enough for Adam and Eve, it's good enough for me!" There's no other passage in the Bible that is quoted more frequently as "proof" that God wants us to be clothed.

But if God's purpose really was only to protect Adam and Eve from thorns and from the cold, is there any *moral* requirement to wear clothes at all times "around other people"? Of course not. When the weather is warm and the thorns have been cleared away, there is literally no need for clothing.

But that notion is utterly untenable to the modern Christian's mind. Their belief before even examining the Scriptures is that clothing *must* be required by God. And since God's clothing of Adam and Eve is the best proof-text available for that belief, explaining God's purpose for the coats of skin some other way—one that would *not* mandate clothing today—is unacceptable.

From my point of view, that path to arriving at moral truth is what is “unacceptable.” We should all be more interested in being biblically accurate and intellectually honest than protecting a culturally contrived moral standard.

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