

Garments of Glory



SABBATH—MAY 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 1–5; Isaiah 6:1–8; Isaiah 51:6–8; Isaiah 61; Luke 4:16–20.

MEMORY VERSE: “We take great delight in the Lord. We are joyful because we belong to our God. He has dressed us with salvation as if it were our clothes. He has put robes of godliness on us. We are like a groom who is dressed up for his wedding. We are like a bride who decorates herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10, NlrV).

ISAIAH LIVED DURING THE REIGNS (RULES) OF UZZIAH, JOTHAM, AHAZ, AND HEZEKIAH. He preached for more than forty difficult years. But during these years Isaiah wrote some of the most beautiful verses of the Bible. He also wrote during a time of great political, moral (spiritual), and economic confusion. His book is filled with both warnings of gloom (sadness) and doom upon sinners. But it is also filled with themes of salvation and hope. This hope is found in “the Holy One of Israel. He sets his people free. He says to them, ‘I am the Lord your God. I teach you what is best for you. I direct you in the way you should go’ ”(Isaiah 48:17, NlrV).

Isaiah encouraged the people to put on the glorious garments (robes) of righteousness (holiness) and to accept God’s salvation. His book describes garments, coverings, and sackcloth which help to teach spiritual truths throughout the history of the world. For people in Isaiah’s time and for us, the question is, again: do we claim the garments for ourselves? Or do we go on living with the shame of our own sin and nakedness?

SUNDAY—MAY 15**BRING NO MORE USELESS SACRIFICES (Isaiah 3:18–23)**

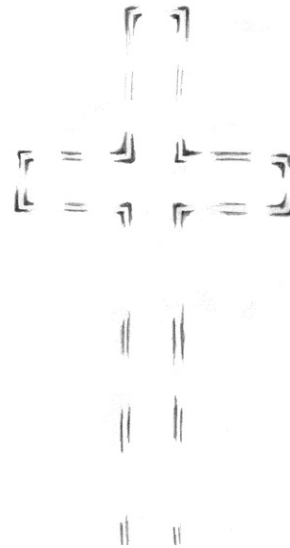
The opening chapters of Isaiah show a sad picture of the spiritual condition of Judah, the southern kingdom. Over time, the people had backslidden away from God. Most of them still believed in all the wonderful miracles of the Exodus.¹ But they might have been asking themselves, So what? What has any of that to do with us today? What happened to the people of Isaiah's time can still happen to us today. Why?

Quickly read through the first five chapters of Isaiah. What were the people doing? What attitudes (feelings) did they have? What caused Isaiah to give the people such a serious warning? What comparisons can you find in our church today?

Perhaps the scariest part in all this is found in the first chapter. Here the Lord shows disgust for all of the people's religious practices. They were the people who claimed to worship the Lord. But what does the Lord say about them and their worship? (Read Isaiah 1:11–15.)

The Lord is merciful, as always. He is trying to save all whom He can. The Cross is all the proof we will ever need to show how much the Lord wants to save us. Even in these first few chapters, the Lord calls out to His people and offers them a way to avoid disaster.

How do you worship the Lord? What are you thinking about when you do? How much is show, and how much is true? How can you know the difference?



The Cross is all the proof we ever need to show us how much the Lord wants us to have salvation.

MONDAY—MAY 16**UNCLEAN LIPS (Isaiah 6:1–8)**

Yesterday's lesson described well the horrible picture of Judah in Isaiah's youth. That is when the prophet Isaiah gets his call. It came about 740 B.C., the year King Uzziah of Israel died. Uzziah started out as a good king but later fell into backsliding (2 Chronicles 26). Uzziah finally met a terrible end. At this time, Isaiah began his ministry after he received a powerful vision of the Lord.

How does Isaiah answer the Lord's

1. the Exodus—Israel's deliverance (freedom) from Egypt.

call in Isaiah 6:1–8? What kind of reaction does Isaiah have? Why is this so important to our understanding of the plan of salvation?

Read verse 5. Notice that Isaiah's answer was not about the power and greatness of God as compared with (as different from) his own weakness. He did not speak about the eternity (everlasting life) of God in comparison with man's short life on earth. Instead, the answer was about man's spiritual condition. In his vision, Isaiah saw that "His [the Lord's] long robe filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1, NIV). The big difference between God's holiness and Isaiah's own sinfulness impressed Isaiah. At that moment, Isaiah knew that his great problem was a spiritual one. He also understood that his fallen nature and sinfulness could destroy him. Isaiah was a "man of unclean [sinful] lips" (verse 5, KJV). So, how could he speak for the Lord of hosts?

What was the answer to this problem?

The symbol of the angel's touching Isaiah's lips with the coal showed Isaiah's true conversion (life change). Isaiah's sin was now forgiven. He had a new life in the Lord. And the fruit of Isaiah's true conversion was shown in verse 8. This is when Isaiah cried out, "Here am I, send me." Isaiah now knew that his sin was forgiven. He moved ahead in faith, trusting the righteousness and holiness of the God he had seen in vision.

Isaiah's guilt was removed. His sin was forgiven. He was "born again." And the quick fruit (result) was Isaiah's willingness to answer the call, "Who will go for us?" Now ask yourself, what kind of fruit is being shown after your own conversion?



The angel touched Isaiah's lips with the coal.

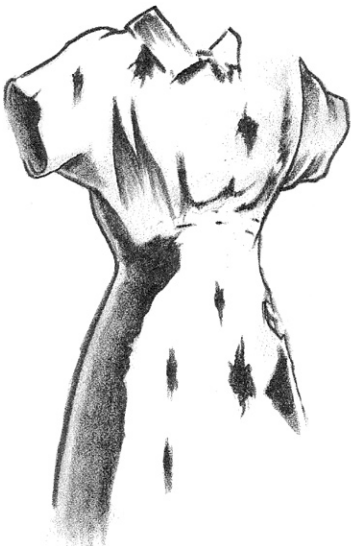
TUESDAY—MAY 17

GARMENTS THAT DO NOT LAST (Isaiah 51:6–8)

As we read earlier, Isaiah spent a lot of time warning about judgment. But he mixed those warnings with encouraging promises from God. After Isaiah explained why the Lord destroyed the earth, he spoke to those in Israel who had looked forward to the fulfillment of all of God's promises. But they had forgotten the many miracles that happened when the Lord led His people through difficult times.

What message is the Lord giving to the people in Isaiah 51:6–8? What differences are presented? What hope too?

Who has not known how easily, and quickly, clothing can wear away or be destroyed? It does not take much. The finest and richest clothes can be ruined. The same is true for this world and the people on it. How quickly we are here, how quickly we are gone! In the New Testament, James compares our life to a “vapor” or a “mist” (James 4:14). Welsh poet Dylan Thomas encouraged his dying father to “not go gentle [softly] into that good night” but to “rage [fight], rage, against the dying of the light.” We can rage all we want, but sooner or later, like a garment, we are gone.



How quickly people, like clothes, can wear away or be destroyed!

Isaiah talks about God’s salvation, God’s righteousness, and the gar-

ment of Christ’s righteousness, which alone brings salvation. This salvation lasts forever. Now the Lord is pointing us to the only two choices all humans have to make: eternal death or eternal life in a new earth. Eternal life is the one that will not “wear out like a garment” (Isaiah 51:6, NIV). Instead, it will remain forever. From the days of Adam and Eve in Eden until the day of Christ’s coming, there are always the two kinds of fate (end) for all people. It is either one or the other. Each person must decide for himself or herself between eternal life and eternal death.

The message in Isaiah 51:7 is for those who know what is right and who have God’s law in their hearts. What should that mean to us today? How does having the law in our hearts help us to know what is right? Is knowing what is right enough to cause us to do right? Or do we need more? If so, what?

WEDNESDAY—MAY 18

GARMENTS OF GLORY (GREAT BEAUTY) (Isaiah 52)

When we read the Old Testament, it is easy for us to get put off by all the warnings of gloom and doom. Doubters and critics of the Bible love to point these things out and ask, “Who would want to worship or love a God like that?”

But we need to read carefully.

Often the Lord gives warnings to offer a way out of the doom. Yes, rebellion (turning away from God) and disobedience lead to destruction. But always the Lord pleads with His people that this does not have to be: salvation, righteousness, and security (safety) are there. We only need to claim them in the name of the Lord.

What is the message in Isaiah 52? What hope is being offered? What is the meaning of those “clothes of glory” (NirV) that the people are told to wear?

Again, we have the Lord calling His people back to repentance,² obedience, and salvation. The “clothes of glory” are the garments of righteousness. They are the covering for all people who surrender themselves to the Lord and who live by faith and obedience to His commandments. It is that simple. From Eden onward, all God has asked of His people is to live by faith in obedience to Him.

What is interesting about Isaiah 52 is how it ends and what comes next. In Isaiah 52 Isaiah calls the people to put on “garments of splendor [great beauty].” Isaiah 53 gives the Old Testament’s best description about Jesus’ death as man’s Substitute. Jesus’ death has made the “garments of glory” available for all who want them. Only through Christ’s life and death could humans be saved from the ruin that sin has brought.

It is interesting, too, Isaiah 52:3 sug-

gests that salvation is a gift. It is something we cannot earn or buy. “The Lord says, ‘When you were sold as slaves, no one paid anything for you. Now no one will pay any money to get you free’ ” (NirV). How true—we do sell our souls for nothing, for things of this world, a world that will wear out like a garment. And this has created a problem for us. We cannot buy our way out of this problem. We cannot work our way through this problem. We can only be saved by God’s grace (divine favor). This is the grace shown through Jesus’ wonderful sacrifice for us on the cross.



Only through Christ’s life and death could humans be saved from the ruin that sin has brought.

THURSDAY—MAY 19

**THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION
(Isaiah 61)**

Some of the most famous verses in all the Bible appear in Luke 4:16–20. This is when Jesus stood up in His

² repentance—the act of feeling sorry for your sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

hometown synagogue (church) and read from the book of Isaiah, chapter 61. Then, to the surprise of those people listening, Jesus said, “Today this passage [section of verses] of Scripture [the Bible] is coming true as you listen” (Luke 4:21; NIV).

Read through Isaiah 61. What is the theme of the chapter? How is the gospel given here? What themes in Isaiah 61 are picked up (quoted) and preached in the New Testament? Read, for example, verse 6.

These verses are so rich because they are filled with many symbols from the Old Testament that have become part of the New Testament. One interesting example is verse 10: “‘We take great delight in the Lord. We are joyful because we belong to our God. He has dressed us with salvation as if it were our clothes. He has put robes of godliness on us. We are like a groom who is dressed up for his wedding. We are like a bride who decorates herself with her jewels’ ” (NIV).

“The gift of salvation is complete. The eternal righteousness of Christ is placed into the account [credit] of every believing soul. The costly, spotless robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has been given to the repenting,³ believing sinner. And he may say: ‘I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed [clothed] me in a robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10, NIV).’ ”—Adapted from

Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 394.

The verb translated as “decks himself [decorates; KJV]” comes from a Hebrew word that means to “do the work of a priest.” This is a New Covenant (agreement) prophecy⁴ for all of God’s people to understand. They are dressed in the garments of salvation and work as “priests.” They work, not as go-betweens as the Old Testament priests did, nor do they work as Jesus did. Instead, they are witnesses to others about the mercy and grace and salvation of God.

Read Isaiah 61 again. What promises can you learn from those verses? How can you make those promises true for yourself? For example, what practices in your life must you change so that these promises may be fulfilled in and for you?

FRIDAY—MAY 20

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Lost and Is Found,” pages 206, 210, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*; “Instructed in the Law of God,” page 668, in *Prophets [Special Messengers] and Kings*; “Calvary,” page 754, in *The Desire of Ages*; “A Work of Reform [Change],” page 460, in *The Great Controversy [War]*.

“The white robe is a pure heart. This means the righteousness of Christ given to the sinner. This is truly a garment woven in heaven that

3. repenting—feeling sorry for sin and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

4. prophecy—a message from God about what will happen in the future.

Christ has bought for a life of willing obedience.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 4, page 88.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Think more deeply about the theme found in the early chapter of Isaiah about worship. Even true forms of worship can be unacceptable to God. What kinds of worship are offered today that might be unacceptable to the Lord? Is the problem the worship itself or something else?
- ❷ What is going on in Isaiah 61:3? How can we experience the promises given here?
- ❸ Delmore Schwartz wrote a short story about a snowfall in New York City. By a miracle, the snowfall created these beautiful statues through-

out the city. People were surprised. The whole city was thrilled. A person in the story was so touched that he even quit his job. Without his job, he now could do nothing but stare at the statues. The statues seemed to have given him a meaning and purpose in life that he got from nothing else. As the story continued, a foul rain fell and all the statues disappeared overnight. They were gone, and things went right back to where they were before the statues came. As the story ended, the person in the story either fell or jumped in front of a train and died. The story teaches us that by placing hopes in things of this world we are sure to be disappointed. This is because the earth wears away “like a garment.” Think about your own experiences with how easily the things of this world disappoint you? What have you learned from those experiences?