

TWO LAWS OF CLOTHING

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THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Before we can discuss the laws of clothing, we need to understand the principle of the spirit of the law. Herbert Armstrong once told a story illustrating the spirit of the law. He said that his daughter spent too much time reading. So he commanded her to stop bringing home books from the library. He noticed after a day or two that she had more books. So he said, "I thought I told you to stop bringing home books from the library." She said, "I didn't get these from the Library. I got them from my friend." Thus she had obeyed the letter, but not the spirit of the law.

Jesus gave examples of the spirit of the law when he said that if you hate in your heart, you are the same as a murderer and if you lust in your heart you are the same as an adulterer. (Mat 5:21-22, 27-28)

There is yet another dimension to the spirit of the law and this is the dimension of symbolism. The best example in the New Testament of this is 1Cor 9:9 where the Apostle Paul was defending his right to be supported by the church. He said, "Say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Thus we see that the law of the ox treading the corn is symbolic of the minister who is laboring to provide the spiritual needs of the church. And the spirit of the law or inner intent of God when he gave that law was not to take care of oxen but to take care of the needs of the ministry.

In our discussion of the laws of clothing, we need to understand this principle. Just as God is not primarily concerned about oxen, he is not primarily concerned about what we wear. We need to examine the symbolism of these laws and thereby uncover God's underlying intent for giving them.

THE LAW OF WOOLEN AND LINEN MIXED

Lev 19:19 Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woolen come upon thee.

Deut 22:11 Thou shalt not wear a garment of diverse sorts, as of woolen and linen together.

Linen is a lustrous durable fabric woven from flax fibers obtained from the stem of a plant *Linum usitatissimum* and processed to be spun into thread. Wool fabric comes from the soft dense curly hair of sheep processed to make yarn. There is much symbolism in the bible about

clothing. We know that nakedness is a type of sin. (Rev 3:18, 16:15) And here is some spiritual clothing that we should keep in our wardrobe. Strength and honor are her clothing. (Pr. 31:25) Be clothed with humility. (1Pet 5:5)

Notice the symbolism of wool. Isa 1:16-18 says, "Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Now notice the symbolism of linen in Rev 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him: for the marriage of the lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

What is the difference between these two fabrics? Both represent a type of righteousness that we are clothed with. But wool is the righteousness which is shown by exerting yourself to learn and do good works and linen is a type that is GRANTED to us to be clothed in.

A disadvantage of wool is that it causes you to lose body fluid (sweat) as a result of exerting yourself and 'working' in it. Notice this in Ezek 44:15-18 "But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God: they shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge. And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat." As we see here, those who minister in the temple must only wear linen while they are there.

So we see that the two types of fabrics are the two types of righteousnesses. One is the righteousness of our efforts in good works and the other is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by which we have salvation.

Rom 4:6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works

Rom 5:17 For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.

Does the fact that we have salvation by the righteousness that is imputed to us mean that we are no longer required to exert ourselves to do good works? The godly woman in Prov 31 shows us that God's will is for us to have BOTH righteousnesses. She seeks both wool AND flax (linen) and worketh willingly with her hands. (verse 13) She maketh fine linen and selleth it (verse 24) She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet

(verse 21 - Compare Heb 9:19 which says scarlet wool) One benefit of wool is that it protects from the cold just as our being diligent to maintain good works protects us from the cold of the lack of love in Mat 24:12.

God's will is for us to be diligent to maintain good works. (Tit 3:8,14) The letters to the seven churches in Revelation in which he says to each one "I know thy works" show that God is judging us according to our works. On the other hand, we need to be careful that we do not become ignorant of and fail to submit to the righteousness of God that he imputes to us through Jesus Christ as we go about trying to establish our own righteousness by our good works. (Rom 10:3) and think that we can have salvation by these. God does not say that we are only allowed to wear linen and never woolen. He says that we are not to mix them into one fabric.

The story of Job is an excellent example of these two righteousnesses. Job was so righteous in good works that God challenged Satan to find any fault with him. Job 1:8 "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" God took everything away from Job to show him that in spite of all his virtue, he could not save himself by it, but only God by HIS power and might could save him. (Job 40:7-14) And Job repented (Job 42:6)

So now we can see from the symbolism why God says that we should not mix woolen and linen, not because he cares about fabrics, but because we need to understand the difference between the two types of righteousnesses and not mix them up for they show the true way to his salvation.

THE LAW OF FRINGES

Numbers 15:37-41 And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, "speak unto the Children of Israel and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God which brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God."

Deut. 22:12 Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of your vesture wherewith thou coverest thyself.

Here we see that God commands his people to make fringes with a ribband of blue for their garments. Notice that this commandment was not just for the priests, nor only for males. It was a commandment for "all the Children of Israel". Notice also that the commandment is not contained in the book of Leviticus, but in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Therefore, it cannot be said that the commandment was only for the Levitical Priesthood.

Notice further that this commandment is to be maintained "throughout your generations". Therefore this is to be done in every generation whether or not styles of clothing change.

In this case God gives us the purpose of the commandment, that we may look upon the fringe as a symbolic remembrance of all the commandments of the Lord as opposed to our own eyes and heart after which we have gone whoring.

From the following scriptures we can discern the symbolism of fringes on garments...

1Sa 15:27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

1Sa 15:28 And Samuel said unto him, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou.

Eze 5:10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds...

Isa 10:20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return.

Mt 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The entire house of Israel is symbolized as a garment as we see in the verses of 1 Samuel. In Ezekiel, we see that because they rejected the Lord, even the remnant (which would symbolize the hem) would be scattered into the four winds. But there would be a small remnant which would return to the Lord. These would return, as it says in the commandment about the fringes, from whoring after their own eyes and their own heart back to the commandments of the Lord. This remnant who return to the Lord are called the elect whom the Lord will gather out of the four winds (the four corners of the garment) and into his kingdom when he comes.

Here is another dimension to the symbolism...

Heb 1:10-12 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

In this verse the Lord is so great that the entire heavens and the earth are symbolic of a garment which the Lord can change like a change of apparel. From the point of view of the entire universe as a garment, the earth is a very tiny insignificant fringe isn't it? Yet it is here on the earth where the Lord has chosen to work his great work of salvation which will someday encompass the entire universe.

The Pharisees in their religious garb emphasized phylacteries and fringes. The phylactery was a little box of metal, or bands of parchment, which was fastened to the hand or forehead by straps. It contained passages of scripture referring to the Passover and the redemption of the first-born from Egypt. This custom was based on Ex. 13:9,16 which says that it shall be for a sign on thy hand and frontlets between thine eyes. There is no commandment of the Lord to wear phylacteries as there is fringes. This is an example of the difference between the commandments of God and the traditions of men. The Pharisees had unusually broad phylacteries and very long fringes. Jesus denounced them in Mt. 23:5 for making broad their phylacteries and enlarging the borders of their garments, not because he was doing away with the commandment of God to wear the fringes, but he was reproving their attitude that they were enlarging their fringes in order to be seen of men and display their religiosity.

Jesus himself kept the commandment concerning the fringes. Notice the account of the woman with an issue of blood for twelve years who deliberately sought to touch the hem or border of his garment. In my interlinear it says fringe. (Mat. 9:20-22, Mrk. 5:25-34, Luk. 8:43-48) Why would she seek to touch the fringe of his garment? Why not touch Jesus himself, his hands, or his hair, or his feet? She obviously knew that the fringe on a garment had great spiritual significance. And when she touched it, she was healed.

Should we keep this commandment of God in the church today and put fringes on our garments? That is the question.

The answer to this is to see that this commandment is similar to the commandment of circumcision. Circumcision is a sign in the flesh that you belong to God and keep his commandments. "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God" (1Cor 7:19) The law of fringes is a sign in the clothing that you are returning to a remembrance of all God's commandments after you have gone whoring away from him. Like physical circumcision which means nothing unless you keep God's commandments, wearing fringes means nothing unless you return to the Lord from your whoredoms and keep his commandments. Therefore, like physical circumcision, we can say that we are no longer required to keep this law in the letter but we are certainly required to keep it in the spirit.

On the other hand, we do keep the physical command to remove leaven from our homes during the days of Unleavened Bread don't we? And it could be argued that unless we understand the spiritual meaning of removing leaven and remove sin from our lives, the keeping of the commandment to remove physical leaven really means nothing. So why not keep the law of fringes? It would be very easy for anyone to buy a length of inch long white fringe from a sewing store, cut it into four pieces, tie a little piece of blue ribbon around each one, and attach it with safety pins onto the inside four corners of one or two garments that you have. In Jesus' day, the fringes were attached to the mantle which was an outer garment like a coat. They were not attached to the inner garment which was called the tunic. The tunic was either with or without sleeves. It reached either to the knees or to the ankles. Among the lower classes, it was often the only garment worn in warm weather and convenient to work in. So, it is not necessary to wear the fringes all the time or on every garment. It is sufficient to attach the fringes on the inside four corners of one or two good shirts which is the usual outer garment we wear in the summer, and

perhaps on a coat we usually wear in the winter. Why not do this, and like the leaven, teach the spiritual meaning of it?

We understand that just as with the leaven, we must not allow the performance of the letter of the law to become an end in itself. It is not the physical leaven that is important. We know that the importance is the sin that we must be putting out and that it does absolutely no good to put out physical leaven unless we are conscientious of putting out sin. Likewise, the wearing of a physical fringe is not an end in itself or a sign of self righteousness.

Certainly, it would be appropriate to wear the fringes especially for the Sabbaths and Holy Days remembering the purpose that God gave this commandment: "that ye may look upon the fringe and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God." As we reflect on the fringes we can conscientiously meditate on some of our Lord's commandments and ask for enlightenment concerning where we might have gone astray from his will.

The law of fringes symbolizes a call to repentance and a returning to God to become part of the remnant who truly love and worship him in spirit and in truth. In Ps 119:176 David says, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." And again Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him (Jesus Christ) the iniquity of us all." Let us return unto Jesus Christ, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. (1Pet 2:25)

Here are scriptures expressing a converted attitude concerning God's commandments...

* Ps. 1:1-3 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly... but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season...

* Ps. 19:7-11 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

* Mat. 5:17-19 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

* Jhn 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

* 1Jhn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.