

# **The Worn Garment**

## **“In the Hands of a Dangerous God”**

### **I. SCRIPTURE**

**Isaiah 51:6 – “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment, and those who dwell in it will die in like manner; but My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not be abolished.”**

### **II. YAHUAH [GOD] LEADS**

**A couple months ago, back in August, Hydie brought up the idea that she would really like to visit Yosemite: the very majestic National Park that is only just a little over an hour’s drive from us. Meanwhile, when she said this, I had also been trying to figure out what I should be doing to celebrate her birthday this year, that was at the time fast approaching, coming the very next month. Does anyone here today have anyone in their life who is almost impossible to buy gifts for... who is kind of hard to please? Well... that exactly describes my wife... whom, bless her, seldomly asks me or anyone for anything.**

**Meanwhile, my sister and brother-in-law – who also had a birthday fast approaching, and whom Hydie and I kind of owed a debt of gratitude for their help in tutoring our daughter Rica this summer – had also separately expressed interest in entering the Park as well. Well... thank you Jesus! ... for dropping the perfect idea of how I could “kill two (2) or more birds with one stone”: getting everyone to a place they wanted to go, before they would close the Park entrance on our side, for the winter season.**

**(Discuss difficulty of getting access to the Park, due to COVID-19 restrictions and ongoing fires, and having to have a very difficult-to-get booking, either for a vehicle drive-in or for an in-Park hotel reservation... but getting a call back from a Park ranger, and YAHUAH [God] saying “go for it”) In short, with YAHUAH [God]’s help, we got access... and little would I know until later, that there was a reason He wanted me to experience Yosemite at this particular time, beyond me trying to please my wife and satisfy the wish of others.**

### **III. A SIGHT TO BEHOLD!**

**By early September, as the time was approaching for our trip, something very serious was happening in our high-desert area in Nevada: the air around us had become very, very smoky and it became hard to breath due the numerous fires that were happening, burning out-of-control in the Western United States. This was and still today includes the states of California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Montana, and even Alaska with its “zombie” fires (explain).**

**Recently, on September 16 (2020), Joseph Winter, US News, wrote that “as wildfires rage across much of California and the Pacific Northwest, smoke continues to clog the air and tinge the sky with apocalyptic reds and oranges. In some parts of Oregon this week”, he reported, “the air got so smoky that it maxed out the scale used by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to measure hazardous air quality.”**

**“The EPA’s Air Quality Index (AQI) measures five types of air pollution on a scale of one to 500. “Healthy” air gets a rating between 0 and 50. Then, things start getting dangerous in the mid-100s, especially for sensitive groups like those with a heart or lung condition. And an AQI reading of 301 or greater is considered “hazardous,” causing the EPA to declare “emergency conditions” for those who are exposed for 24 hours or more.”**

**“On Wednesday afternoon (Sep 9) and Thursday morning (Sep 10)” he wrote, “the area around Eugene, Oregon, clocked AQI values well into the 700(-800) range ... greatly exceeding the scale’s maximum value of 500.”**

**Well, despite all of this, on the morning of Friday, September 11, Hydie, family, and I proceed into Yosemite National Park, with all of its smoke. And as we stopped at the first Visitors’ Center on the eastern side of the Park, the ranger would tell us: “you know, don’t you, that although the air quality here is bad, this the best that there is inside the park. It’s going to get much worse as you drive further inside”. (Give a personal account of the Park burned up, and its treasures hidden from view, and fires still burning, including on the way back...)**

### **IV. A WORN-OUT GARMENT**

**On the front of today’s bulletin is a picture of what looks like a very worn out sweater. The light blue color looks like it is fading and the white below the blue looks a little dirty, doesn’t it? Then the sleeves... they look very dirty and there are many holes. If I would guess, I would say that those holes are result of moths that**

have eaten away at it. This picture reminds me of what the Word of YAHUAH [God] uses to paint a picture of our earth for us, where He tells you and me to...

“lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like *smoke*, the earth will grow old like a *garment*, and those who dwell in it will die in like manner...”

Before Isaiah wrote this particular scripture, he had written YAHUAH [God]’s words when He talks to you and me, and says, “why, when I came [to you], was there no man [or woman]? Why, when I called, was there no one to answer? Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem [you]? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold! By my rebuke: I dry up the sea! I make the rivers a desert!... their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst!” and then ADONAI EL SHADDAI [the Lord God Almighty] says this... “I clothe the heavens with blackness and make sackcloth their covering” (from Isaiah 50:2-3). This text reminds me of what I’ve seen in our community in its darkest, most smoke-filled days and our fires ablaze, very smoke-filled trip through the National Park: when and where the air filled with filled ash, and the way ahead not clearly visible. Where there wasn’t even a breeze to blow the dark smoke away.

And when the ash fell on us during our recent local and worldwide 10-days of prayer and repentance, between September 18 and 27, my good friend and brother in YAHUSHA [Jesus] said to me, something to the effect that... “you see Rich, YAHUAH [God] is sending the ash to fall on us so we can see it... because we are praying... we are repenting... and we need the ash to fall on us as a sign from Him, that this really is a time that we really should be repenting... seeking His face, and turning around from our wicked ways... so that He will hear us.. He will forgive us... and He will heal our land”.

## V. SACKCLOTH & ASHES

Sackcloth and ashes are mentioned in the Bible. They are used at times as a symbol of self-debasement, mourning, and repentance. If someone wanting to show his or her repentant heart, they would often wear sackcloth (a very coarse, roughly woven fabric), sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of their head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of black goat’s hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear; the ashes signified desolation and ruin.

Ashes accompanied sackcloth in times of national disaster or repenting from sin. We talked about Esther just last week. And Esther 4:1 describes her uncle, her adoptive dad Mordecai, tearing his clothes, putting on sackcloth and ashes, and walking out

into the city “wailing loudly and bitterly.” This was Mordecai’s reaction to King Xerxes’ declaration giving the wicked Haman authority to destroy his people: the Jews (Esther 3:8–15). During that time, Mordecai was not the only one who grieved. “In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes” (Esther 4:3). They responded to the devastating news concerning the elimination of their race with sackcloth and ashes, showing their intense grief and distress. And so, sackcloth and ashes were used as a public sign of repentance and humility before YAHUAH [God].

In the story of Jonah, as another example, the Ninevites put on sackcloth and ashes, and even sackcloth on their animals (Jonah 8). (I can even imagine putting something like this on our dog Boomer.) Their reasoning was, “who knows? ELOHIYM [God] may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish” (Jonah 3:9). It is interesting because the Bible never says that Jonah’s message included any mention of YAHUAH [God]’s mercy; but mercy is what they received, *because* of their repentance. It’s clear that the Ninevites’ donning of sackcloth and ashes was not a meaningless show. YAHUAH [God] saw genuine change — a humble change of heart represented by the sackcloth and ashes — and it caused Him to “relent” and not bring about His plan to destroy them (Jonah 3:10).

## VI. A MESSAGE OF BOTH GREAT HOPE & GREAT TRAGEDY

Before Isaiah wrote to you telling you to “lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like *smoke*, the earth will grow old like a *garment*, and those who dwell in it will die in like manner...” (in Isaiah 51:6)... He wrote and reminded his readers (in Isaiah 50:4) that...

ADONAI YAHUAH [Lord God] had given to him a tongue of those [people] who are taught [educated], that he could know how to sustain you, to support you physically or spiritually... you “who are weary”... yes, with a hopeful word, but *only* if you are one who “awakens morning by morning with an awakened ear, [so you will] hear YAHUAH [God]’s messages” (Isaiah 50:4).

Do you awaken morning by morning to hear YAHUAH [God] messages? Are you getting your daily portion, wisdom from Him each morning? Do you realize yet what it means in YAHUAH [the LORD]’s prayer, when YAHUSHA [Jesus] tells us to demand from our Father: “give us today our daily bread”!? This is not a polite request, by the way, that we are told by our Savior to ask of His Father, our Father. For this specific

request is something that we can expect from Him each and every day, in faith, when we awaken and demand it. Ask...! and then wait and listen... because YAHUAH [God] will speak to you, through the RUACH HA'QODESH, if you demand it, if you are in tune with Him... when your ears that are awake and attentive to Him.

Dear family and friends, are you weary with what is going on in today's world? It's fires? It's drought? It's *pestilences* (the original bible world for today's fatal epidemic diseases, such as COVID-19)? It's earthquakes? It's riots and man-made disasters? (Many of today's so-called "wildfires" were arson, caused by wicked people starting them intentionally.) The worsening world situation of brother against brother? So... I ask you again... did you awaken this morning ready!? Are you prepared today? Each and every day? To take on the world and all of its problems?! Do you know by your faith that YAHUAH [God] helps you?! That you are not being disgraced by others... despite what evil is in their hearts?! Despite how they might be treating you?

Did you know that we are told to love the ungodly, despite what they do to you? Do you remember how Isaiah describe what these people were doing to him? He says, "ADONAI YAHUAH [the Lord God] has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. [But] I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and [their] spitting [at me]. For ADONAI YAHUAH [the Lord God] will help Me; therefore, I will not be disgraced; therefore, I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. He is near who justifies Me; [So,] who will contend with Me? [So] let us stand together. Who [then] is my adversary? Let him come near Me. [For] surely ADONAI YAHUAH [the Lord God] will help Me; [so] who is he who will condemn Me? [For] indeed, *they* [and not I] will all grow old like a garment; [and] the moth will eat them up." (Isaiah 50:5-9) (Yes, that is the same garment and moth devouring the rest of world, with its evil people and the evil product of their hands.

## VII. LOVING THE WICKED

Our ADONAI [Lord] and Savior tells us, "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. [And] to him [or her] who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him [or her] who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him [or her] who takes away your goods, do not ask [for] them back. And just as you want men [or women] to do to you, you also do to them likewise." (Luke 6:27b-31)

Last week we talked about how we are to treat these wicked people while we are enjoying the blessed and living hope that we have in MESSIAH YAHUSHA [Christ Jesus]. We need to be ready to give a reason for our hope to them, whomever asks us . To describe to others just how much that we love of our Betrothed? To describe our faith in Him. As so, even when it's dark outside... filled with smoke... and the earth is growing old like a garment... we remain of good cheer as "we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of [our] hope, firm [until] the end" (Hebrews 3:6b).

#### VIII. IN THE HANDS OF A DANGEROUS YAHUAH [God]

For those of you who joined us last Wednesday, we're back to studying Hebrews. The title of our study is "All about Faith", and it includes the great faith chapter, Hebrews 11. What probably no one has figured out yet, is that this topic of great faith will lead us into the next (chapter 12) that gives us the same warning that Isaiah gives us: that we should "awaken morning by morning with an awakened ear, to hear YAHUAH [God]'s messages". For Hebrews 12 say: "see that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if *they* did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, 'yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven'. Now this, 'yet once more', indicates the removal of those [people, those] things that are being shaken, as of things [people] that are made, that the things [and people] which cannot be shaken may remain." (Hebrews 12:25-27)

My prayer today is this, that you "**do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**" (Matthew 6:19-21) For "therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve YAHUAH [God] acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our YAH [God] is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28-29)

So, may our ADONAI YAHUAH [Lord God] richly bless you today as you go out from this place, having an awakened ear to hear Him and heed His voice.

Amen.

**References & Credits:**

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