



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Does God care how we dress?"

This month I think I should commence with an apology! The question with which I hope to deal reached me some time ago, but, unfortunately, became lost in one of several stacks of paper in my little study and only 'surfaced' the other day when I was attempting a 'Spring-clean'! I am sorry for the delay.

The question is a simple one - or so it appears at first glance! In fact, it raises a number of issues, which need to be considered.

"Does God care how we dress?" There is the question! Well, *does*, He? I suggest we should allow His Word to tell us!

1. *The Old Testament Law*

Duet. 22:5 states: *"A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God"*.

I believe that the meaning of these words is perfectly plain. God *does* care how we dress, and the revulsion with which He regards those who are guilty of breaking this rule is equally obvious. Women should not wear men's clothing, nor should men wear women's clothing. Let me spell this out in case anyone is in any doubt.

Any item of clothing that is obviously *masculine* should not be worn by a woman, and any item of clothing obviously *feminine* should not be worn by a man.

We are all aware that, in Bible times, men wore a form of dress which would certainly create a stir if seen on our streets today. Indeed, when, occasionally, it is seen, we recognize that the wearer is not native to this country, although we know that the same sort of dress is still worn in the Middle East.

Obviously, then, proper dress is that which is recognized as being appropriate to a particular country or culture.

And yet, I can almost hear someone saying, *"That verse in Deut. 22 belongs to Law of Moses, and we are not under the Law!"* Well, both assertions are correct. What we need to consider, therefore, is *the reason* for this prohibition; and here again, the reason seems obvious. God issued this command in order to establish and maintain a distinction between the sexes. That being the case, the fact that we are not under the Mosaic Law has nothing to do with it, because the principle, which endorses the distinction between men and women, goes a lot farther back than the time of Moses.

In the beginning God did *not* make them '*male and male*', or '*female and female*'. He did not create '*Unisex*'. He did not create another man to be a companion for Adam,

nor another woman to be a companion for Eve. **Gen. 2:27** tells us that, "*male and female created He them*". Thus, although today, in an age which is as morally bankrupt as any age the world has ever seen, 'Unisex' fashions in dress and hair-styles may be acceptable in a certain section of our society, and we see women trying to look like men and - (though, *thankfully, not very frequently!*) - men trying to look like women, this is against both Nature and the law of God.

The Lord Jesus Himself, when, in **Matt. 19:4**, speaking about marriage emphasized God's intention and endorsed the principle of the distinction between male and female.

"Have you not read that HE who made them from the beginning made them male and female?"

He went on to say, *"For this reason a MAN shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his WIFE . . ."*

Incidentally, I might add that it is surely an indication of how far modern Judaism has strayed from the scriptures in which it is supposed to believe, when, within the last few days, newspapers carried the news that Jewish Rabbis are now willing to recognize 'unisex' marriages. Jesus certainly did not.

'Cross-dressing' - (I *think* this the term used to describe the behaviour of those who take to wearing the clothing of the opposite sex) - remains an abomination to God, and those who practise it should be regarded as either very sick and in need of special attention, or destitute of moral sense.

Fairly recently, the fashion world paraded a few men wearing skirts. They probably did not realize how embarrassingly ridiculous they appeared to the overwhelming majority in Western society, although one suspects that the newspapers, which published the pictures, were aware how bizarre they looked. The principle is basic and simple; in any society the accepted norm should be followed, with men dressing in a manly way and women wearing clothing appropriate to women.

This was intended by God to maintain social morality, and, as Christians, we should never countenance any fashion or style, which violates that law.

2. *New Testament Worship*

But perhaps the questioner has something else in mind; something less odd but certainly more important.

It is possible that what we are considering is a question relating to the way Christians should dress when they attend service and, particularly when the Church comes together to worship God on the Lord's Day.

I know, from my own observation, that this is something, which concerns young people in the Church, and especially, though not exclusively, young men in the Church.

In these days, what might be described as '*formal*' dress - (for example, suit, shirt and tie) - is not in favour. Everything has to be '*casual*'. Even the days of '*mix and match*' seem to have passed and we see people coming to worship dressed '*casually*'.

Well, I know of no chapter and verse which decrees that those coming to worship should be formally dressed, or wear collar and tie. This also applies to those men, young and old alike, who assist in the actual conduct of the service - those who assist at the Lord's Table, for example. But I think I could put up a pretty powerful argument for coming to services dressed *neatly and tidily!* And I think I could give sound reasons why a young man who knows that he has a duty to fulfil in the service, should not stand in front of the congregation wearing jeans that have been '*customized*' by being deliberately torn; nor should he look as though he has just tumbled out of bed! (I write of what I have witnessed!)

I am not suggesting that when we attend the worship of the Lord we should turn out

as the 'dedicated followers of fashion', or that it is necessary for us to be smartly dressed. *Casualness* is one thing, but *scruffiness* is something else!

In one who expects to assist in a time of worship, to be untidily dressed proclaims that he does not realize the sacredness of the occasion or the importance of the service he is about to perform.

Remember the principle given by Paul to the church in Corinth, **1 Cor. 14:40**. "*All things should be done decently and in order*". We have no reason to suppose that God has changed this rule.

Something else to consider: It has often been observed that no intelligent, sensitive person would present himself at a job interview dressed untidily and still expect to be successful. Furthermore, I am quite sure, that none of those people who, in recent weeks, went to Buckingham Palace to receive the honours that have been awarded to them, turned up without having taken care about their appearance.

How much more concerned should Christians be to present themselves in worship before God and at the memorial table of His Son, in a manner that befits the occasion?

I suggest, therefore, that the answer to the question is: "*Yes, God does care how we dress, especially when we come before Him in worship, because how we dress reveals how important we consider the occasion to be*".

On reflection, perhaps the question ought to be, "*Do WE care how we present ourselves before God?*"

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