
QUESTION:

Why does Mark 14:51–52 mention a young man wearing a linen cloth who, when seized, leaves it behind and runs away naked? What is the deeper meaning behind this peculiar detail?

ANSWER:

Let’s begin by reading the passage:

> *Mark 14:50–52 (NIV)*
> *“Then everyone deserted him and fled.*
> *A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him,*
> *he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.”*

This is a unique scene found only in the Gospel of Mark, and the

young man’s identity is left anonymous. Some biblical scholars and Church traditions suggest that this may have been John Mark, the author of the Gospel, who discreetly included himself in the narrative (similar to how John refers to himself in the third person in his Gospel). However, the text does not confirm this, and ultimately, his identity is not the central point. What matters more is why this moment is included in the biblical record and what spiritual lessons it conveys.

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1. The Linen Garment and Its Symbolism

The Greek word used for “linen cloth” is “sindōn” (σινδών), which refers to a fine linen garment. This kind of clothing was often worn during the night or by the wealthy, and symbolically, linen garments are associated throughout Scripture with purity, righteousness, and sanctity.

In the Old Testament, linen was the only material permitted for the garments of the Levitical priests (see Exodus 28:42, Ezekiel 44:17–18). It symbolized holiness and separation from the world.

> *Revelation 19:8 (NIV)*

> *“Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.”*
> (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

This means the linen cloth worn by the young man can be seen symbolically as a representation of spiritual righteousness or the garment of salvation.

> *Isaiah 61:10 (NKJV)*
> *“He has clothed me with the garments of salvation,*
> *He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...”*

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2. Why Did He Flee Naked?

When the young man was seized, he left his linen garment behind and ran away naked. Nakedness in Scripture is frequently a metaphor for spiritual shame, sin, or loss of covering.

> *Genesis 3:7,10 (NIV) – Adam and Eve’s first awareness after*

> *sin was their nakedness, prompting shame and hiding.*
> *Revelation 3:17 (NIV) – Jesus rebukes the church in Laodicea, saying:*
> *“You say, ‘I am rich…’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”*

Likewise, in Revelation 16:15, Jesus gives a sober warning:

> *“Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps their clothes with them, so that they may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.” (NIV)*

In light of this, the young man’s literal flight in physical nakedness can also be seen as a figurative warning to believers: when persecution or fear comes, we must not let go of our spiritual garment—the righteousness of Christ and a life of holiness.

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3. Theological Interpretation: A Lesson on Perseverance and Holiness

This incident portrays how, in moments of testing and opposition, even committed followers can be tempted to abandon their spiritual integrity—to “flee naked,” so to speak.

The young man’s linen cloth (symbolic of righteous acts) was easily removed—perhaps a reminder that righteousness that is not rooted in Christ but based merely on self-discipline or emotional zeal can be quickly lost under pressure.

> *Philippians 3:9 (ESV) – Paul says:*
> *“...not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ...”*

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4. Satan’s True Target: Your Garment

Our true enemy, Satan, does not aim primarily for our bodies, reputations, or external identities—his goal is to strip us of our spiritual garment, our walk with God, and our testimony of righteousness.

> *Job 1:11 (NKJV) – Satan’s accusation against Job:*
> *“But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”*

Satan’s strategy is to create conditions—fear, loss, persecution—where believers abandon their faith. This is precisely what the young man did: to save himself, he let go of the very thing that covered him.

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5. Call to Action: Guard Your Garments

Jesus instructs us not only to put on righteousness but also to guard it carefully:

> *Revelation 3:18 (NIV) –*
> *“I counsel you to buy from me… white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness…”*

This is a call to repentance, baptism, sanctification, and perseverance:

- Repent: Turn away from sin (Acts 3:19).
- Be baptized: For the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
- Receive the Holy Spirit: The seal of God’s ownership (Ephesians 1:13).
- Walk in holiness: Without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

Final Reflection:

The story of the young man is a prophetic illustration—a spiritual mirror. It reminds us that, in the hour of crisis, many will be tempted to abandon their convictions. But blessed is the one who holds fast to their garment of righteousness through Christ.

> *Matthew 24:13 (NIV) –*
> *“But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”*

So, the question is:
Are you clothed in the righteousness of Christ? Have you put on the garment of salvation?

If not, Jesus invites you today:

> *Isaiah 55:1 (NIV)*
> *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!”*

Receive Him. Be clothed. Be ready.

May the Lord bless you richly.

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