

## The Required Attire – Revelation 7:13-17

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Set The Scene

1. In Chapter 6, when Jesus breaks the 5<sup>th</sup> seal on the title-deed to Earth, John sees the souls of those who have been martyred during the Tribulation for their faith in Christ.
2. They cry out to God for justice on those who persecuted and put them to death.
3. But they're told to wait a little while longer until their number is filled up.
4. As we come to 7:9, John *now* sees the *whole* group.

#### B. Vs. 9-14

**<sup>9</sup>After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup>and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup>All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup>saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."**

**<sup>13</sup>Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" <sup>14</sup>And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."**

1. In the verses just before this, John tells about a special group of 144,000 Jews who we learn a bit more about in chapter 14.

- a. they appear to comprise a great, last days evangelistic presence that covers the earth and leads countless multitudes to faith in Christ.
  - b. don't think that the Tribulation is a period in which only a tiny handful of people turn around and come to faith in Christ.
  - c. in v. 9 John says this was a great multitude which no one could number!
2. Think about all the people you've shared the Lord with who are still lost.
    - a. maybe you've even told them about the Last days and the rapture.
    - b. what do you suppose they are going to do when it happens?
    - c. what about all the Bibles that will be left behind?
      - 1) how many will be picked up and read by those who are left behind
      - 2) they'll find your notes in the margin from today's message
      - 3) in fact, this tape is about what to do if a person finds him or herself left behind.
      - 4) so maybe you should get a copy of it and put it in an envelope and label it for your loved ones & Below their name write – "If I suddenly disappear, LISTEN TO HIS TAPE!"
    - d. one thing I've found interesting is how many unbelievers are hooked on the *Left Behind* series.
    - e. they love the story and wait for each new volume to come out – but for them it's just fiction.
    - f. how many of them will be quick to repent and put their faith in Christ *after* the rapture and the things they thought were just an interesting story start unfolding before their eyes?
  3. All of this coupled with the anointed and powerful preaching of a mighty evangelistic force of 144,000 Jewish believers will result in thousands, if not millions of people coming to faith in Christ.
  4. But of course, during the Tribulation, their faith in Jesus will result in tremendous persecution and widespread martyrdom.
    - a. believers will see the antichrist for the devil he is and resist him.
    - b. for this they'll be hounded and slain by the thousands.
  5. And that is why the elder tells John in v. 14 -

**“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation”**

- a. the original Greek is even more clear
  - b. literally it reads, “these are those who come out of the tribulation, *the great one.*”
6. But it’s the next words that I want to focus on this morning.

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 13-14

**13**Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

**14**And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

1. As John ponders this great multitude standing before the throne of God, one of the 24 elders asks him, “Who do you think these are?”
2. John isn’t certain, so he wisely defers the question back the elder who tells him they’re Tribulation saints; people who have come to faith in Christ during the Tribulation.
3. And they’ve obtained their salvation the same way we obtain ours.
4. Notice what the elder says in v. 14 –

**[they] washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

### B. Washed In The Blood Of The Lamb

1. This seems an awkward image – to make something white by washing it in blood.
  - a. if you’ve ever gotten blood on clothing you know how it *stains*.
  - b. so the picture here seems *backward*.
2. When the elder says these Tribulation saints have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, he’s referring the *basis of their salvation*.
3. In Isaiah 64:6 we have the well-known words of the prophet –

**We are all like an unclean *thing*, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.**

- a. the image is that of a man or woman who stands before God with his/her works covering them like a garment.
  - b. no matter how good a person may be *in comparison to other people*, compared to God, they are unclean.
  - c. as it says in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and *fall short* of the glory of God.”
  - d. in ourselves, we don’t measure up to God’s standard.
  - e. the very best we can do is like an unclean garment – filthy rags that do not cover us.
4. If we would stand before God, then we must receive a *new garment*.
- a. one not based on our own works and righteousness
  - b. but one *given* to us and is woven of better stuff than we can bring.
5. Many years ago as a young boy, I went to a costume party
- a. I thought I would be clever and made my own costume
  - b. I have to admit, I thought it was pretty cool and I strolled in to the party thinking I would get a lot of compliments
  - c. but the moment I entered the room, I realized I’d made a terrible mistake
  - d. everyone else had on a *professional-grade* costume
    - 1) either it was something they had purchased at the store
    - 2) or their parents had made it for them
    - 3) and they must have spent hours on it, because they were good!
  - e. I felt completely out of place.
  - f. what I thought was going to earn me bragging rights had instantly turned in to the cause of tremendous shame and embarrassment.
  - g. in Eph. 2 we read,

**<sup>8</sup>By [God’s favor] you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

- 5. Our righteousness, based on our works and goodness appears before God like a set of gross, smelly, soiled rags.
- 6. The only way to appear before Him is in a white robe; not of one’s own weaving, but that’s given to us.

7. In 6:11 we learn that the white robes of the Tribulation saints are *given* to them.
8. And here in 7:14 we learn *how* they are made white.
9. The agent that bleaches them and removes the filthy stain of sin is the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away and purges the sins of the world.

### **C. The Substitute**

1. You'll remember in our study last week how John saw Jesus in heaven bearing the marks of the crucifixion.
2. It was from those wounds that His blood flowed and His life poured out as atonement for our sin.
3. The blood of Christ speaks of *the Cross* – where Jesus paid the debt for our sins, and not for our only, but for the sins of the entire world.
4. He was our substitute, dying in our place, that we might live.
5. For many people today, the idea of the *substitutionary atonement* of Christ is a barbaric and hideous concept.
  - a. they're repelled and repulsed by the image of the blood of Christ.
  - b. they find it highly offensive and see the Gospel and the Christian faith as uncouth, an uncivilized throw-back to primitive times.
6. They think that if God demands the shedding of blood for sins to be removed, then He must be some kind of blood-thirsty deity with whom they want nothing to do.
7. But that is not it at all! They miss the whole point.
8. You see, what's hideous, what's tragic and gross, is not the shedding of innocent blood, but the **SIN** that *demand*s such a terrible price be paid.
9. Above all, God loves us.
  - a. the life we have is His gift, and was originally designed to be lived in fellowship and communion with Him.
  - b. God desired this fellowship to be close and intimate – an expression of the deepest kind of love and sharing
  - c. and since love has to be *free* in order to be real, God created man free to chose to give or with-hold his love.
  - d. we know what happened – man rejected God and turned his

- love on himself.
- e. the result is that our world has been plunged into a cesspool of sin and a graveyard of sin's evil result – death.
  - f. every sin is a spiritual crime which justice demands *must* be punished.
  - g. as it says in Romans 6:23, the wages of sin are death.
  - h. but death is not what God desires for us – He created us for life and love.
  - i. so in His love, He allows a *substitute*; the life of an innocent can be offered *in our place*.
  - j. as both science and scripture affirm, the life is in the blood.
  - k. so in the OT, God made provision for the sins of those who wanted to be forgiven and *return* to a love relationship with Him.
    - 1) they could bring a sacrifice to the temple; one from their flock or herd
    - 2) they would then place their hands on the sacrifice's head, symbolically identifying with the lamb or ox, and transferring their guilt to it.
    - 3) then they would turn the animal over to a priest, who would lead it a short distance away, take the ritual knife to it's throat, spilling it's blood.
  - l. barbaric? severe? horrifying? Sure!
  - m. but from the perspective of the one who *brought* that sacrifice, what they realized is *truly* terrible, is their sin – not the death of the animal.
  - n. in that place of *substitution*, they realize both the *terrible consequence* of their sin, and the precious gift of sweet release from guilt.
10. But the best all those OT sacrifices of bulls and goats could do was provide a temporary covering for sin.
- a. their blood could only *cover* sin, not remove it.
  - b. a better sacrifice was needed – a perfect substitute whose death would once for all purge sins.
11. That's what Jesus did at the cross. As the Lamb of God, He takes away, once and for all, the sins of the World.
12. And just as in the OT, the way a person identified with their sacrifice and made it their personal substitute was by placing their

hands on its head, so we identify with Christ and make Him *our* substitute by placing our *faith* on Him.

13. The moment we do that, believing He died for us, God takes from us our filthy rags and gives us a robe made clean by the blood of Christ.

#### **D. The Wrong Attire**

1. Have you ever shown up at a party or event to which you've been invited, only to discover the way you're dressed is totally inappropriate?
2. Maybe it's a *formal-dress* event and you show up in jeans & polo shirt.
3. Or it's *beach casual* and you arrive wearing an evening dress with nylons.
4. No matter whether you're too dressed-up or not enough, if you wear the wrong attire, you feel terribly out of place.
5. Jesus told a parable about this very thing in Matthew 22 –

**2**“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, <sup>3</sup>and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. <sup>4</sup>Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle *are* killed, and all things *are* ready. Come to the wedding.”’<sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. <sup>6</sup>And the rest seized his servants, treated *them* spitefully, and killed *them*. <sup>7</sup>But when the king heard *about it*, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

- a. the King in this parable is God the Father and His Son is of course, Jesus.
- b. the invitation to the wedding is a call to find salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and so to *become* His bride.
- c. God originally sent that invitation to the nation of Israel through the prophets.

- d. but Israel rejected the prophets and their message.
- e. the terrible and tragic result was the loss of their nation to the Romans in 70 AD, which Jesus is *foretelling* here.
- f. but this isn't the end of the parable – there's more . . .

**8**Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. **9**Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' **10**So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding *hall* was filled with guests.

- g. with Israel's rejection of Christ, the gospel went to the Gentiles.
- h. and for the last 2000 years, God has gathered many into the *new community* of His people we call the Church.
- i. but Jesus says something interesting here: Both *bad & good* were gathered into the wedding hall – What does this mean? We read on . . .

**11**"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.

**12**So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.

**13**Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**14**"For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

- 6. Jesus is saying that within the *Visible Church*, there will be some who aren't really *a part* of the REAL Church.
  - a. they may be in the hall,
  - b. but they aren't wearing the right clothes.
- 7. Living here in Southern CA, we see people coming to church wearing everything from T-shirts, shorts and sandals; to a suit and tie.
- 8. If we lived in the South or one of the Bible Belt states, going to church would involve the weekly ritual of dressing up in our finest.



- a. why, if you're on vacation in Georgia and decide to go to the Presbyterian church one Sunday,
  - b. don't show up wearing shorts because the ushers may not let you in!
9. And in this regard, heaven is more like Georgia than Southern CA!
10. What I mean is – we can only appear before God dressed in the right attire.
11. You see, God has sent out an invitation to a wedding party.
- a. it's going to be a glorious feast and celebration.
  - b. and the invitation is to be the guest of honor – the bride.
12. How many of you wives walked down the aisle on your wedding day wearing a pair of stained jeans and a soiled T-shirt?
13. The idea is ludicrous – if there ever was a day that you wanted to be clothed in a garment of shining white – it was your wedding day!
14. And that's the only way we can appear before God – dressed in the attire of a Bride who has made herself ready by donning the garment He's made for us, spun of His righteousness and washed in His blood.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. *Clothed In What?***

1. What makes up your spiritual garment today?
2. As you got up this morning and went to the closet, you thought about what you would wear to church.
3. And so, there you sit, in twill, or denim, or polyester, or linen, or wool.
4. But spiritually, what clothes you? What's your *spiritual* garment made of?
5. Do you come here today clothed in your own works, your own righteousness?
6. Or are you covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ?
7. Do you trust in yourself or Jesus this morning?
8. If you were to stand before God right now and He asked you *why* He should let you into the wedding, into heaven – what would your answer be?
  - a. “Well, I was a pretty good person. After all, I didn't murder

- anybody.”
- b. friend, that won't cut it!
  - c. God's standard isn't a comparison of your life to Adolph Hitler or Joseph Stalin - most people are pretty good in comparison to fiends like that.
  - d. the standard is God Himself – and no one measures up to that – no not one!
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- e. will your answer be – “I went to church regularly. I was a member of CC.”
  - f. again, that's not enough. Remember in the parable Jesus said there were people in the wedding hall with the wrong garment on.
  - g. maybe you've been coming to church for weeks, months, even a few years.
  - h. ARE YOU BORN AGAIN?
  - i. have you been cleansed by the blood of Christ?
  - j. what are you trusting in this morning for your salvation?
9. Your righteousness isn't enough – You need His, which He offers to you as a gift, a gift that is received by believing in Jesus Christ.

## ***B. Salvation Belongs to Our God***

1. As we end, look with me at the words of the Tribulation saints at the end of v. 10. They cry out with a loud voice, saying –
 

**“Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”**
2. Salvation *belongs* to God.
  - a. He is it's author, owner, and origin.
  - b. it resides with Him.
  - c. we do not save ourselves, and we don't devise our own way to heaven.
3. If you would be saved today – then you must come in faith to God and ask Him.
4. For while salvation belongs to God, He gives it freely to all who ask.
5. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
6. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus
7. Oh, precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow,

8. No other fount I know – Nothing but the blood of Jesus.