

The Required Attire • Rev. 7

INTRO • Read Matt 22:2-14

Ever Dress Inappropriately?

1. Have you ever gone to some event; party, celebration, meeting – wearing the wrong clothes?
 - a. Somehow you missed the line on the invitation that said it was Formal Attire and you're wearing jeans & a T-shirt?
 - b. Or it's supposed to be business casual and you're in cargo shorts & flip flops.
 - c. Or, you assume it's a dress **UP** deal, so you Tee up to the 9's; only to discover everyone else is super-caz.
2. AWKWARD!
3. **Heaven has a dress code.** Here's the deal ...
 - a. God's throwing a huge party.
 - b. It's a wedding & reception for His Son, Jesus.
 - c. The invitations are sent out. That's what **this** is. **This sermon** is an invite.
 - d. In order to attend, there's a required attire.
 - e. We find out what that is in Rev. 7.
4. But we have some ground to cover before we get to it.

Vs. 1-8

¹ After these things I saw 4 angels standing at the 4 corners of the Earth, holding the 4 winds of the Earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

1. The 4 corners of the Earth means N,S,E&W.
 - a. Even today we speak of the wind coming from these directions.
2. But now, the wind **is held back**. It's a pause in judgment.
3. Over the last wks we've see John's vision of Jesus taking the title deed to Earth from the Father's hand.
 - a. It's time for Him to **close escrow** and take possession of what rightly belongs to Him.
 - b. But the devil **won't vacate**, so Jesus **evicts** him and his allies.
 - c. As Jesus breaks each of the 7 seals on the scroll, another judgment falls on Earth.
4. So far we've covered 6 of those seals.
 - a. Before He breaks the 7th, there's a pause.
 - b. Judgment is suspended for a time.
 - c. That's what this holding back the winds signifies.
5. For the ancients, storms were the thing they dreaded most.
 - a. Earthquakes we feared but were rare.
 - b. Storms came often and could cause great damage.
 - 1) Wind did most of it.
 - 2) They didn't have building codes.
 - 3) So when the winds were strong, they knocked things down.
6. So wind became an idiom, a symbol for divine judgment.
7. We see that's what it is here as we read on ...

² Then I saw another angel ascending from the East, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the 4 angels to whom it was granted to harm the Earth and the sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the Earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

8. The **4 angels** are the **agents** of God's judgment.
9. They're told by **another** angel to hold off for a spell.
10. This 5th angel has an assignment to complete before more judgment is unleashed.
 - a. He carries the **seal** of God.
 - b. Seals were a part of everyday life in the ancient world.
 - 1) A seal was a ring, or stamp that people pressed into a special wax.
 - 2) The wax was melted onto a document to seal it, then the stamp was pressed into it.
 - 3) It hardened quickly.
 - 4) It showed **ownership**.

5) Besides scrolls, seals were used to seal **shipping crates & doors**.

6) A wax seal certainly wasn't **strong** enough to **lock** a door.

7) What it did was let people know **that door** was under the authority of the owner of that seal.

11. This angel has an assignment to mark some people before the next round of judgment falls.

12. V4 tells us who's sealed

⁴ And I heard the number of those who were sealed. 144K of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed:

13. This passage has been badly abused throughout the ages.

a. A new group w/an exclusive corner on Truth claims to be this 144K.

b. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim *their elite* are the 144K.

c. Herbert W. Armstrong said double tithers in his World Wide Church of God were it.

d. The 7th Day Adventists claim to be the 144k. On & on it goes.

14. So – **Who ARE they?**

15. They're Jews who come to faith in Jesus during the Tribulation!

a. Note in v3 they're called "the servants of God."

b. Here in v4, John says they aren't **just** of "the tribes of Israel."

1) They are "of ALL the tribes OF THE CHILDREN of Israel."

2) The HS **knew** this aberrant groups would try to claim this for themselves,

3) So John was inspired to **make clear** these are literal Jewish followers of Jesus."

16. To put it to rest, he goes on

⁵ of the tribe of Judah 12K *were* sealed; of the tribe of Reuben 12K *were* sealed;

The same # is given for each of the tribes –

Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, & Benjamin.

14. 12K from 12 tribes is 144K.

15. In light of vs. 5-8, it's surprising there are groups who claim to be the 144K.

16. So: Just who are these 144K sealed Jewish servants of God? // Why are they marked?

17. In ch14 we learn they're given a unique task during the Tribulation.

a. We'll see what that is when we get there.

b. For now, all we need to know is that this seal acts as a protection from the judgments of that time.

Vs. 9-17

⁹ 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, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the 4 living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."

1. Now John sees a crowd so large it can't be numbered.

a. They aren't from the 12 tribes of Israel; they're ethnic groups from **all over the globe**.

b. They wear **white robes**, which reminds us of the martyrs under the altar we saw last wk in ch6.

c. There's not under the altar now.

d. They stand round God's throne w/a symbol of **victory** in their hands.

1) Palm branches were given to warriors after a successful campaign.

2) They waved them as they paraded thru the street to the acclamation of the people.

3) Today when a winning athlete takes his/her victory lap, they often wave their county's flag.

4) In the ancient games, they waved a palm branch.

2. In ch6, when the martyrs under the altar asked God how long it would be till they were avenged, they were told to wait till their number was full.

3. In the meantime, they were given **white robes** to mark their union with Christ.

4. Now John sees when the # of Trib martyrs is filled and they rise to stand round God's throne in praise & worship.

5. When they do, **all heaven** joins in.

¹³ Then 1 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."

IOW "Why don't you tell me?"

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.

6. There it is. These are those put to death for their faith in Christ during the Tribulation.

7. Take careful note of HOW the elder identifies them.

a. They came out of literally in Greek – **the** Tribulation, **THE Great one**.

b. The **grammar** here is absolutely clear There's going to be a time yet to come when God's wrath will be poured out on Earth.

c. What's spoken of here isn't general trials & tribulation everyone who's ever lived has tasted.

d. The Definite article "THE" is used twice in reference to this time so we'll LKNOW it's a specific, set time in history.

8. Again, the HS knew this would be a point of contention, so He made it crystal.

9. The promises made to this special group of martyrs make sense when we realize what they've had to endure.

¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

10. They've suffered the consequences of the judgments God's unleashed on Earth.

a. Those judgments are **directed** at the rebel "earth-dwellers" as John repeatedly refers to them.

b. By they create global conditions everyone is effected by.

11. But now, safe in heaven, all that is forever behind them.

12. There's no more tears in heaven.

a. And I'm not talking about the Baby Shampoo.

b. All that causes sorrow, pain and suffering is not allowed into Heaven.

c. There's no sin, so no death, no loss. No regret.

13. All that is captured by that phrase at the end of v14 –

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

1. Blood is not bleach. It stains, it doesn't make things white.

2. So this seems an awkward image.

3. The elder tells John **HOW** these martyrs **get into** heaven.

4. It's by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.

5. In Isaiah 64:6 the prophet says ...

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

a. While someone might do well in **comparison to other people**, they don't compared to God.

b. Rom 3:23 "All sin and *fall short* of the glory of God."

c. We don't measure up to God's standard; not even close.

d. As Isaiah says, even our best is like appearing before God in threadbare & stinky rags.

6. To stand before God we need **new threads**.

a. Heaven has a dress code.

1) And you can't get it at H&M.

2) J Crew does not sell it.

3) Armani Exchange, Hugo Boss, Donna Karen & Michael Kors do not have the style.

b. Only God can give us what we need. He and He alone supplies our uniform of glory.

7. Look at v10 again. The great multitude cries out

"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

a. If you want to be saved, you have to ask for it from the one it belongs to God.

b. It's a gift He gives; a gift we receive by Faith in Jesus.

c. Eph 2:8-9 says ...

By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

8. This takes us all the way back to the beginning; to Eden.

- a. Adam & Eve sinned and ate of the forbidden fruit.
- b. Guilt & shame moved them to hide, so they grabbed some nearby fig-leaves & sewed some quick duds.
- c. Now, I've been told fig leaves are hairy and would not be very comfortable next to the skin.
- d. What a perfect picture of man-made religion.
 - 1) Man's attempt to make Himself presentable to God by his own efforts.
 - 2) And attempt to cover his guilt and shame.
 - 3) But all it does is add more suffering.
- e. God took pity on Adam & Eve and replaced their fig-leaves with skins.
 - 1) You see, all the way back there at the start, God was already giving a hint what it would take save us.
 - 2) Blood was spilt so we could be atoned.

CONCLUSION

1. This brings us to where we started today; the story Jesus told in Matt. 22.
 2. A king announced the wedding of His son, the prince & notified all the **nobles** of the realm to save the date.
 - a. When the time came, messengers called them to the wedding feast.
 - b. But the nobles all had excuses; really lame ones too.
 - c. Being **annoyed** by the urgent call of messengers, some of the nobles beat & killed them.
 - d. So the king sent troops to punish them.
 - 1) To kill the king's messenger is the same as trying to kill the king.
 - 2) All of this was prophetic of the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus & the Gospel.
 - 3) So the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD & a hundred years later, banished them from their land altogether.
 - e. But Jesus' story goes on. The wedding wasn't cancelled.
 - f. The feast was laid out, so the messengers called any & everyone to come.
 - g. A huge crowd turned out and the celebrating was great.
 - 1) This is prophetic of the Gospel going to the Gentiles who've come to faith in Jesus by the hundreds of millions.
 - h. But the king noticed a guy sitting at the table with everyone else who wasn't wearing the right clothes.
 - i. His was no wedding attire. He wore his regular work clothes.
- ¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹²So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then 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. Within the **visible organization** we call “the Church,” there are people who **look** like believers but aren't born again.
 - a. They're church people; they're here – regularly; maybe even weekly.
 - b. But the truth is, they've never repented of their sin & put their trust in Jesus.
 7. As hard as it is for me to say this: There's a good chance there are people here right now, listening to this, who think they're going to heaven, but they **aren't**.
 8. They assume because they're a good person, heaven is their reward.
 9. So everyone please hear me:
 - 1) Heaven is **not** a reward. Heaven is a **gift**.
 - 2) There are **no good people** in heaven. The **only** people in heaven are **forgiven sinners**.
 10. I'll bet just about all of us took at least a few seconds to think about what to wear to church today.
 - a. Some took longer.
 - b. Some of the ladies put on 3 different outfits before settling on the 1 they wore.
 - c. And even now are thinking, I should have worn that other 1.
 11. So, here we sit in our twill, denim, polyester, linen, or wool.
 12. What clothes you spiritually? What's your spiritual garment made of?
 - a. Is it the threadbare & soiled rags of your own works & attempts at righteousness?
 - b. Or are you clothed in the white robe of the righteousness of Christ?

