

## A QUESTION OF CLOTHING

I've got a question for you: **WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?**

What you've come in here wearing this morning says a lot about you. It even speaks about how you see your relationship with Christ. But the type of clothing that Revelation is talking about doesn't have to do with your stylish threads!

As chapter 18 of Revelation focused on the **judgment and fall of Babylon** (*that's to say, the civilized community of humanity without God*), chapter 19 switches to a different angle by highlighting the **victory of Christ**.

**In chapter 19, there are actually three themes in play:**

1. God's cosmic victory.
2. Two very different suppers.
3. The clothing that is being worn.

We'll go into all themes this evening, but this morning we're going to focus on just the third; the **clothing**.

**Clothing has provided major imagery all through the Bible.** Sometimes, there are subtle nuances we miss if we're not familiar with the culture of that day. Sometimes we have to look very closely at the wording to get the full meaning. And the full meaning may make the difference between having a **balanced** faith, or struggling with an **imbalanced** or partial faith-system. Revelation 19 contains just such a passage, so let's read it carefully:

### Revelation 19

<sup>7</sup> Let us be glad and **rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.** <sup>8</sup> And **to her it was granted to be arrayed** in fine linen, clean and bright, for the **fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

**Doesn't that sound a little strange to our "evangelical ears";** the verse doesn't say the "righteousness of Christ, it doesn't say "the righteousness of the saints", which would imply the Righteousness of Christ; it says "the fine linen is the **righteous acts** of the saints" ... our acts. So how does that work? Let's go back and revisit; just WHO are God's people.

## WHOSE CLOTHING? THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "CHURCH" & "EKKLESIA"

The Greek speakers, and the Jewish Christians had a different view of this bride. The Greek word we understand for church is "**Ekklesia**", so we see the "church" as we understand it, as "Ekklesia", and "Ekklesia" as church. "Ekklesia" actually means "**community of the called.**" To be part of such a community means two things:

1. You have been **summoned**; you have received a call.
2. You have **responded** to that call.

**The idea of "Ekklesia" isn't simply a New Testament idea.** God **called His people in the Old Testament**, they responded in faith *or they did not*. They strayed or remained true. The difference, as The Book of Hebrews explains it, is; the people of the Old Testament had faith in a **Messiah yet to come**; and in the New, have placed their faith in the **Messiah who has come**.

Just as "**Babylon**" is human community without God; the **bride** is human community with God.

The main criterion, Old or New Testament, comes down to this: **God's community are those who have answered, or, are *now answering*; His call.**

**The concept of a God-calling** is directly linked to the "***fine linen***" we wear, so this "call" is very important. **What exactly is God's call into His community?**

**It's not** simply *belief or tradition*, but a *living relationship* with God; not *converting to a religion*, but *being transformed* in our contact with a living God; not *observing ceremony about* God, but *acting from* the *nature* of God. That is the "***fine linen***" we wear, is clean and bright even though we walk the streets of a filthy world!

**"Ekklesia" is the community of Saints.** What's a saint? -"A ***holy one***", consecrated, set aside; as they answer God's call into ***relationship*** with Him. -The "***fine linen***" a saint wears is the fabric of his or her own transformed nature. That's why Revelation 19:7 says it like it does...

**Did you notice? The bride doesn't have a garment of her own.** She is dressed in the ***fine linen of the saints***.

**The bride, is clothed by us.** That's some ***serious accountability*** because that means the church can be no more beautiful than we are. It can be no better clothed, than we are. **-So what are we wearing?**

## THE FINE LINEN

**Well, what exactly is this "fine linen"?**

The verse is very clear, it is the righteous ACTS of the saints. In the original language, it is the "DIK-AH'-YO-MAH" of the saints, that is; *the equitable deeds, good statutes or decisions, or judgments, of the sacred, pure, morally blameless, consecrated, holy ones.*

The ***heart*** is filled with Christ; the heart sets the ***Christ-like judgments of the mind***; the mind sends the body into ***Christ-like activity***. The "***fine linen***" is woven from that.

**Wedding receptions back in Biblical times** must have really been something, because Scripture repeatedly borrows from that imagery; especially royal weddings. Remember the parable about those invited to the wedding feast in **Matthew 22**? All the people who first received the CALL, ignored it. So the call went out to others:  
Mathew 22

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.

**The call was all inclusive; you didn't have to be good of your own merit**, you just had to answer the call. But that's not to say there was no standard. To the people of that time and culture, the end of the parable would've been more obvious to them than us. Jesus winds it up with this curious ending:

Mathew 22

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."

In ancient days, when a person was summoned to a royal wedding, **the royalty had a tradition of giving the garment, or at least, the fabric**, that was to be worn at the wedding. It was an honor and a proof of invitation rolled up in one.

If you weren't summoned, or if you ignored the king's standard of preparation and just did your own thing, you would not be allowed in. **Your authenticity to the CALL was in the garment.**

**Fine linen was a very special fabric.** Fine linen was the cloth in which Christ was buried. Fine linen was worn by the rich of that day. Fine linen was also one of the luxuries solid by "Babylon" in Revelation 18. But the distinctive difference here is, it isn't a *luxurious squandering*, but *appropriate* to the event. It is not scarlet, but "clean and bright."

**Revelation 7:14 talked about our clothing as well.** It spoke about our garments being **whitened**, there is only one whitening agent, not the efforts of our own "scrubbing" or the personal soap of our own morals, but the "blood of the lamb"; only Christ Himself. **-So, what are you wearing?**

## PUTTING IT TOGETHER

**When I put it together in my mind;** the king's garment, the bride's garment, and our own, I guess I see it like this:

**God gives us the fabric of our lives;** it is upgraded to the finest linen when we answer His call. Whatever the specifics, *every call is a call to an ongoing, living relationship with Him.*

**The fabric is every circumstance we are given to live in, and live out.** We are born in such and such a place, we bestowed with certain looks, I.Q., temperament, and skin color. We are wired in certain ways. And when we are in this living relationship, we are endowed with certain spiritual gifts. The fabric is ours to tailor.

**Our entire lives are really one thing; preparation for the greatest wedding of eternity.**

- We are making the garment we will wear. Some of us, with great patience, will try to follow the King's pattern as **closely as possible**.
- Others will be **casual or careless** with the fabric, and that garment will not be as beautiful as it could've been.
- For some, it may even be embarrassing.
- Some will try a **cheap substitute** that will seal their rejection from the feast.

**One of the themes of Revelation 19 deals with suppers.**

- There is the wedding supper of **celebration and union**.
- There is the supper of **Armageddon**; where God treads the rebellious of humanity like grapes on a winepress.
- There is the supper where **those of God will honor**, bring honor, and be honored.
- There is the supper where those without God **will BE dinner**, the corpses eaten by vultures.

**The difference really comes down to what you are wearing:**

Revelation 19

<sup>7</sup> Let us be glad and ***rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come***, and ***His wife has made herself ready.***<sup>8</sup> And ***to her it was granted to be arrayed*** in fine linen, clean and bright, for the ***fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.***

Right at this moment, ***you and I are preparing the garments of our lives*** and eternity. We'll be wearing them a long time!! So I ask one last time: **WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?**