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## "RAIMENT WHITE AND CLEAN."

"They shall walk with me in white [robes]; because they are worthy. The overcomer shall thus be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name in the presence of my Father, and in the presence of his angels." – Rev. 3:4,5. –

UNDER the symbol of white raiment the Lord throughout his Word represents the righteousness of those whom he accepts as his people. Their righteousness in the future state will be a personal righteousness or holiness; and the guarantee of this is the promise that all who are accounted worthy, as "overcomers" of the world to be joint-heirs with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom, will in the resurrection be granted new, perfect, spiritual bodies, free from sin and impurity of every kind, and fully in harmony with their new wills or characters developed during the trial-time of this present life. That will be a time of which the Apostle speaks, saying, – "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." Those who attain to that glorious condition are symbolically represented as being clothed in white linen, representing their personal purity, completeness and perfection at that time: as it is written, "to her [the bride, the victorious Church] was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." – Rev. 19:8.

Thus, seen, the Church in glory will stand arrayed in its own righteousness – the "righteousness of the saints;" but at the present time the saints have no righteousness of their own in which to present themselves at the throne of grace. As expressed by the prophet, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The very best of humanity, it must be confessed, are so imperfect in thoughts, words, and deeds as to be wholly unfit for a share in God's Kingdom or for any notice or favors at his hands. However, human necessities only made manifest the riches of divine grace and wisdom. [R2160 : page 159] It was for

this very reason, because we were all defiled through sin, and unfit to approach into the divine presence, that God graciously provided, through the sacrifice of his Son, our Lord, a spotless robe of imputed righteousness, for all those who accept of him and the covenant of divine grace sealed with his precious blood. When by repentance and faith we desire to forsake sin and approach God, we are, by reason of obedient faith in the sacrifice, reckoned as covered before the divine eyes with the merit of him who "bought us with his own precious blood," which merit is symbolically represented as a linen garment, *Christ's righteousness*, instead of the filthy rags of our own righteousness. While covered by this robe, we may by faith exercise all the privileges and opportunities, which could be ours if the robe were actually our own – instead of merely a loaned or imputed robe, the property of our Redeemer. So long as by faith we are trusting in the great sacrifice for sin, and seeking to walk worthy of the Lord, this robe is ours, to have and to enjoy; but to lose this faith would be to lose all the advantages which come with the robe, and which continue only to the wearers.

The object of the granting of these robes at the present time (not to the whole world, but only to the true believers) is that they may constitute, for those who accept them, "wedding garments," giving the wearers a right to a place at the "marriage of the King's Son." This "wedding garment" (justification) is a prerequisite to an invitation to the marriage, or rather the receipt of it is itself the invitation to enter in and become participators in the present "sufferings of [R2160 : page 160] Christ" and in the future "joys of our Lord." And as no one can enter in to the marriage without first having received the robe, so any one who subsequently rejects this robe of Christ's righteousness and attempts to stand before his fellows or before the King without it, will be "cast out" of all the privileges and blessings which it secures. See parable of the wedding garment. – Matt. 22:11-13.

This "wedding garment" when presented to us is clean and white, representing the absolute purity and spotlessness of our Lord's

holiness; and the instruction to each one who receives the robe is "to keep his garments unspotted from the world." This command is equivalent to our Lord's injunction, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect" – a standard to which we are seeking to attain, but whose absolute attainment in an imperfect body, and surrounded by the world, the flesh and the devil, is admitted in the Scriptures and proved by experience to be impossible. But, as the robe covers all the repented-of blemishes of the past, so it likewise covers the unintentional and unwitting imperfections of the present; so that only those things to which we give more or less of mental consent are reckoned as ours – either good or evil. Thus seen, under this arrangement it is possible for the Lord's people to walk so carefully, so circumspectly (*looking all around*) at every step, as to keep his garments unspotted from the world. But alas, how few there are, if any, who have ever lived up, in all the past of their lives, to this high standard, – so that at no time in all the past, since they accepted the robe of Christ's righteousness, could it be said of them, that in no sense of the word had they ever, either outwardly or mentally, given any degree of mental consent to anything that was sinful.

Seeing that the vast majority, if not all, have at some time or other given at least a partial mental assent to sin (however regretful and repentant of the thing they may afterward have been), and seeing that any such deflection from purity of heart would constitute a stain or spot upon our robe, we inquire with great concern, Is there any possibility of having such stains or spots removed and getting the robe white again? Thank God, yes; there is a way by which the spots and wrinkles may be removed from our robe and leave it once more as white and clean as at first. The stain remover is the "precious blood." As the Apostle says, "If we confess our sins he is just to forgive us our sins and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness."

While all of our efforts (groaning of spirit, tears, fasting, etc.) could not remove a single stain, which the precious blood alone can remove; yet, nevertheless, it is expedient for ourselves that while

realizing our Lord's forgiveness and the cleansing of the robe, we should promptly seek to discipline ourselves in repentance, fasting and tears: otherwise we may expect that while our Lord will hear our earnest prayers and cleanse our robe, he nevertheless would put upon us certain *chastisements* for our correction in righteousness and for the strengthening of our characters in respect to the points of weakness. The Apostle teaches thus, when he says, "If we would judge [correct, chastise] ourselves, then we should not be judged [corrected, chastised] of the Lord; but when we are judged of the Lord we are chastened, that we might not be condemned with the world."

While our robe covers all our unwilling personal blemishes and uncleanness in our Lord's sight, and in the sight of brethren who see each other from the Lord's standpoint, yet the Lord desires and requires that we shall come into such close sympathy with absolute purity and righteousness in thought, word and deed that we will "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting* holiness in the reverence of God." (2 Cor. 7:1) And to this end he grants his sanctified (consecrated) and white robed ones the cleansing power of his truth, that thus his elect bride might be cleansed by "the washing of water, by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." – Eph. 5:26,27.

But oh, how few of the consecrated have so great a love for purity, so great a desire to keep the garment unspotted from the world, that they are thus careful to have every wrinkle quickly removed, and thereafter to guard the robe more zealously than ever. Yet, these, and these alone, walk with the Lord in white and are overcomers, who in due time shall be glorified with him and sit with him in his throne – and it is their names that shall not be blotted out of the Lamb's book of life.

We are to understand from the Master's words that all who do not thus walk with him in white raiment are unworthy, shall not be joint-

heirs in his Kingdom, will not be confessed as his bride and joint-heir in the presence of the Father and the holy angels, but on the contrary, will have their names blotted out of the Lamb's book of life – erased from amongst the names of the "elect" Church.

### **THE "LITTLE FLOCK" AND THE "GREAT COMPANY."**

While the number of those who wear the robe of Christ's righteousness is, as compared with the numbers of the world, small indeed, yet how large a proportion of these are not walking in white, but have their robes greatly spotted by contact with the world, the flesh and the devil – by unfaithfulness or by carelessness, worldliness. We do not refer to those who deny the Lord and repudiate the ransom, thus taking **[R2160 : page 161]** off the wedding garment and standing with the world (or really in a worse condition than the world, in that they have rejected the grace of God): we refer to the true believers, who have made a full consecration of themselves to the Lord, and who for the sake of worldly advantages or earthly hopes or friendships or for the favors of nominal churches, are failing to live according to their covenant and privileges, and are thus, like Esau of old, selling their *birthright* (as new creatures in Christ) for a mess of pottage. Is there no hope for these, who fail to be overcomers, who fail to walk in white, who fail to gain the crown and the immortality to be bestowed only upon the "elect," "worthy," "overcomers?"

Yes, thank God! We rejoice that there is hope for these, *because* they have not cast off their wedding garments, even though they have gotten them sadly spotted and soiled by contact with the world. The class referred to are neither open nor wilful sinners, but those who unwisely are seeking to please and serve the Lord and to please and serve themselves and the world – "foolish virgins." They make a failure in every direction so far as pleasing is concerned: they do not please the Lord, they do not please themselves and they are not half satisfactory to the worldly. The only ground upon which divine favor can continue with them at all and could go after them to reclaim

them is the merit of the robe of Christ's righteousness, which they still love and wear, although they have not loved it sufficiently to keep it unspotted. But, he who began the good work in them will continue it and perfect it for all who really love and trust him – even though it be completed in the great tribulation at the inauguration of the Millennium or "the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6.) Since Christ became the surety for all who at heart still trust him, although not overcoming by complete self-sacrifice in full obedience to his instructions, it does not surprise us that he points out in his last communication to his Church how he will deal with this numerous class of his followers and how it will result to them, – altho he made no such proposition in their "call."

After telling of the sealing of the elect class, the spiritual Israel, the peculiar people zealous of good works, the little flock, the bride, the overcomers, a definite, predetermined number, "a hundred and forty and four thousand," gathered out of Babylon before the winds of the great tribulation are let loose upon the world, all of them bearing the seal or mark of God's favor in their foreheads – a noticeable *intellectual* evidence of divine favor, the impress of the spirit of the truth as well as the word of truth, our Lord shows us the "great multitude" of his followers, [R2161 : page 161] "whose number no man is able to tell" (that is, it is not a foreordained or fixed number, – none were called to be of this company), who will eventually stand before the Lord "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," crying, "salvation to our God which sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb." Who are these who are not of the bride, the elect class, the overcomers, is the question? The answer is "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have *washed* their robes, and *made them white* in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." – Rev. 7:9,10,13-15.

The marks of distinction between this "great company" and the "little flock" are very pronounced, both as respects their present course

and their future blessing. The faithful overcomers watch and keep their garments unspotted from the world. And this is given as one of the special conditions of acceptance as "overcomers" to joint-heirship with the Lord – "they have not defiled their garments." (Rev. 3:4.) They have kept "their garments unspotted from the world." They have not been willing to permit sin to contaminate them and to separate them from the Lord, but have quickly applied for and obtained the precious blood to remove every stain. They are so heartily opposed to sin and so earnest about the keeping of this garment unspotted that the adversary gets no hold upon them – "the wicked one catcheth them not." (1 John 5:18.) All of this indicates a full submission of their wills to the will of Christ – they are "dead with him," and hence could not willingly practice sin. Their reward is the crown of life, immortality, to be seated in the throne, and to constitute the temple of which our Lord is the cap-stone, the chief corner-stone. Now contrast with these the "great company:" lacking the intense love and zeal of the overcomers, they do not keep their garments with sufficient care, and as a result they lose all the rewards promised the overcomers; and, having failed in the race, they would get nothing, if it were not for our Lord's grace.

But God's grace cannot admit to heavenly perfection those who have not robes of spotless righteousness; and hence we are shown that these who have not cared for their garments and kept them white must be put through a severe experience before they can in any sense of the word be sharers of heavenly favors. These severe experiences are shown in the symbol as *washing their robes* in a great *tribulation*. But to show that not the penances or sufferings would cleanse the robes, tho these might be necessary as proper punishments and disciplines, it is particularly stated that the efficacy for the cleansing is the "*blood* of the Lamb." Many will thus be purged, purified, and their garment, now sullied by contact with the world, often in the garb of [R2161 : page 162] nominal Churchianity, will be cleansed of every guilty stain, when they, realizing the folly of their course, shall repentantly appeal to the Lord and use his help.

But sad disappointments attach to the experiences of this company: it is because they *fear* the reproaches of Christ that they shirk present privileges and opportunities for walking with him in white in the "sufferings of this present time:" behold, they not only miss the present joy and rejoicing of those who are faithful, but eventually they must come through *still greater* sufferings, if they would attain even to a lower place. Although loving the Lord and his people they are somewhat ashamed of them and hide, as it were, their faces from them, in the presence of the worldly: and behold the Master at his coming for his "bride" cannot confess their names in the presence of the Father and the holy angels. The little flock is informed of the Bridegroom's care, and obediently watching she shall be "accounted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the world" (including the great tribulation), but the "great company," although the Lord's people, in that they have not rejected him, must be treated like the hypocrites and pass through the great tribulation in order to their purification. These, be it observed, are not a class who in any sense repudiate the Lord, they are not of those who "draw back" from the Lord, for in such he declares he has "no pleasure" (Heb. 10:38): and the Apostle declares that such "draw back unto *perdition*" – Second death. On the contrary, these are still "virgins," but foolish in that they are vainly trying to please and serve both God and mammon. They are wasting precious opportunities trying to find an easier way of following their Lord than "being made conformable unto *his death.*"

We rejoice that ultimately these will sing praises to the Lord, and be glad in his wondrous grace. But we notice that even after their robes will be washed white in the time of trouble by the blood of the Lamb and in much tribulation, they wear no crowns as overcomers; but, having finally overcome, they are granted palms as emblems of their victory through Christ; and although they can never be the living temple of which Christ is the Head, we are told they shall be *servants* in that temple; and although they shall never sit in the throne, they are highly privileged to serve "before the throne." Grand and glorious privileges will be theirs, but Oh, they will lose the great

prize, having sold it for the mess of pottage of present seeming advantage, which proves unsatisfying and brings bitter after results. What exhortation to holiness, to complete consecration to his will, could be stronger than this supplied by our Lord's statement of the results of more and of less faithfulness?

Probably the majority of this "great company" of tribulation saints are living to-day; for at no time in the past was there the same degree of knowledge of God and his Word, except in the early Church of apostolic times: never did so many profess to be the Lord's by consecration; and never were there so many subtle seductions from the "narrow way" of self-sacrifice. In centuries past the cleavage between the Lord's people and the world's people was much more distinct than to-day: persecution was more open and recognized, and while fewer named the name of Christ, they counted and appreciated the cost, as the larger number of to-day do not. (We of course ignore the professions and "great swelling words" of antichrist.) However, there was a great time of trouble in the end of the Jewish age in which many unclean may have been permitted to wash their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. And since then our Lord has not been without the power to bring as many as he chose through great tribulations for purification. Since the "overcomers" suffer *with* Christ *voluntarily* and the "great company" suffer *because* of Christ *involuntarily*, it might be difficult, if not impossible, for any except the Lord and the sufferers to know whether they suffered as self-sacrificers or as unwilling "tribulation" saints: but in the end of this age it will be different; for the overcomers will be taken to glory before the closing tribulation is fully poured out upon "Babylon."

### **THE QUEEN AND HER VIRGIN COMPANIONS.**

It is appropriate that we should remind ourselves afresh of the beautiful suggestion laid before us through the prophet David respecting the wedding garment of the bride. (Psa. 45:9-14.) Here the Lord, through the prophet, tells us that the bride as the Queen shall be

presented before the King in "raiment of fine needle work" as well as in "clothing of wrought gold." The gold clothing, as we have heretofore seen, represents the immortality (an element of the divine nature) with which the Church shall be invested in her resurrection glory. The raiment of fine needle work can be none other than the fine linen garment, clean and white, mentioned in Revelation. But here we have the additional suggestion given, that this garment will be finely embroidered.

The robe that was merely loaned to us at first, and which constituted our invitation to the marriage, to joint-heirship with the King's Son, was not at first our own, it was merely loaned or imputed to us. But it became a permanent gift from the Bridegroom to as many as accepted the invitation to union with him; and examining it carefully, they found upon it in delicate outline a stamping in graceful lines, corresponding to the richly embroidered robe worn by the King's Son. The suggestion of copying his robe was not only thus [R2161 : page 163] hinted at, but it was plainly declared that all who would be accounted worthy to be his "elect" companions, should in all respects be copies of the Bridegroom. – Rom. 8:29.

The careful setting of the stitches in the embroidering of this wedding garment has been the chief duty and constant occupation of the espoused virgin while waiting for the nuptial feast, at the return of the Bridegroom. True, much of the embroidering now done by us is very imperfect, because of first, our unskillfulness, secondly, our imperfections, and thirdly the disturbing influences about us (the world, the flesh and the devil). Nevertheless, we can well understand that it is the blessing of experience that is designed, and that every painstaking effort is strengthening character, and bringing us into fuller sympathy with our Lord; and that he, when he inspects his Church, will take pleasure in even our imperfect results, if they give evidence that we have bestowed *effort*, because desirous of bringing all into conformity with his will; and he will accept of our imperfect work as tho it were perfect, and in the resurrection he will grant us

ideal bodies with ideal powers and the ideal character embroidered perfectly upon the new robe, which will be *ours* through his grace.

And even here, the great company, the foolish virgins, not worthy to be the bride, and hence rejected from that place of the "elect," are nevertheless pictured, **[R2162 : page 163]** in verses 14 and 15 – "The virgins her [the Queen's] companions that follow her shall be brought to thee, with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought [even tho it be through great tribulation they shall ultimately shout Hosanna!]; they shall enter into the King's palace."

Please read here the poem of page 120, POEMS AND HYMNS OF DAWN.

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