

## **Revelation 19:8 "The fine linen is the righteousness of saints"**

What is your righteousness before a holy and just God? Is it your own righteous acts or the imputed righteousness of our precious Lord Jesus Christ? The imputed righteousness of Christ is illustrated and clearly taught throughout the King James Bible of 1611.

In the beginning, after Adam and Eve had sinned and hid themselves from God because they were naked, we are told in Genesis 3:21: "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skin, and clothed them." An innocent animal was slain, and its coat was made a covering for the naked, guilty pair. God has to cover us; we cannot cover ourselves acceptably before Him.

Isaiah 61:10 beautifully expresses this truth: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

Zechariah 3:1-4 illustrates the same truth. Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua the high priest to resist him. The Lord rebuked Satan. The Bible tells us that: "Joshua was clothed with filthy garments." But God said: "Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."

In Matthew 22 our Saviour gives us a parable about a wedding where the guests were bidden to the feast. But the king saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. "And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." Then the man was bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness.

You and I have no righteousness of our own doing. Isaiah 64:6 tells us: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him".

Philippians 3:9 the apostle Paul expresses his desire to "be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Revelation 19:7-9 tells us again of the wedding feast: "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; FOR THE FINE LINEN IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF SAINTS."

This last phrase is consistent with the rest of Scripture that it is not our righteousness that makes us acceptable unto God, but the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Versions that read just like the King James Bible are Tyndale's New Testament of 1534, Miles Coverdale 1535, the Great Bible 1540, Matthews Bible (John Rogers) 1549, the Bishop's Bible

1568, the Geneva Bible of 1599, Green's interlinear and Green's 2000 Literal Translation, John Wesley's 1755 translation, Daniel Webster's of 1833, the Spanish Reina Valera of 1909 (el lino fino son las justificaciones de los santos), the 1744 French Martin - ("ce fin lin désigne la justice des Saints."), Luther's 1545 German Bible, Whiston's Primitive New Testament 1745, the 1918 New Testament Translation from the Sinaitic Manuscript, Noyles Translation 1869, Worsley Version 1770, the 1998 Laurie Translation, Darby's translation 1890, the Bible in Basic English 1970, Lamsa's translation of the Syriac Peshitta, Murdoch's Translation 1852, Etheridge's Translation 1849, the Third Millennium Bible 1998, the 21st Century KJB version 1994, the 2000 English Jubilee Bible and even the 2002 paraphrase called The Message which reads: "She was given a bridal gown of bright and shining linen. The linen is the righteousness of the saints."

However, the Catholic Douay, the Catholic New American Bible (St. Joseph of 1970), and the Jehovah Witness Bibles read in a similar way to many modern versions. St. Joseph: "the linen dress is THE VIRTUOUS DEEDS of God's saints." That Catholic doctrine of works righteousness is now being taught by such modern versions as the NKJV, NIV, ISV, Holman Christian Standard, and the NASB.

The NKJV, NASB, ISV (2003 International Standard Version), the 2001 ESV (English Standard Version), the brand new Holman Christian Standard Bible, and the NIV have, "the fine linen is the RIGHTEOUS ACTS of the saints." (or "the fine linen is THE RIGHTEOUS DEEDS of God's people").

The Holman Standard reads: "For the fine linen represents THE RIGHTEOUS ACTS of the saints."

If our righteous acts or righteous deeds are going to make up our wedding dress, it will be pretty soiled and tattered, don't you think? How many "righteous acts" did the dying thief on the cross manage to accumulate during his short life? Will he have just a thread or two to make up his individual robe of "righteous acts"? If our righteous acts make up our fine linen robes, then some will have much finer robes than others and some will be dressed in tatters or just a few threads of material. At the very least, you have to admit that not all these versions teach the same truth in this verse. So which one is right?

A couple of Christian Bible agnostics I have run into on the internet clubs (if you are not KJB only then you are a bible agnostic - <http://brandplucked.webs.com/biblebelieveragnostic.htm>) - have tried to defend the reading found in such modern versions as the NKJV, NIV, NASB and ESV. They point to verse 7 where it says: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Verse 8 - "And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness (MV's "righteous acts") of the saints."

They tell us that the phrase "his wife hath made herself ready" means that we are looking at what the wife did, her righteous acts of obedience". However this is still teaching a works based

righteousness that makes the bride ready to meet her Husband. No, the truth of the matter is that the only way the wife (the redeemed members of the church) can "make herself ready" is by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ - "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." - and by believing on Him as their Saviour and Redeemer - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." They also fail to notice the next verse where it says "And to her IT WAS GRANTED that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white". The verb here is a passive verb; that means she did not do it herself but Someone else did it for her - it was granted or it was given to her. This means that she did not earn it in any way nor did the bride make up this robe herself. It was a gift and righteousness itself is a gift from Almighty God our Redeemer (Romans 5:17)

The Greek word used here for "righteousness" is dikaioma. It can have several different meanings depending on the context. Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon list: "act of righteousness, judgment, punishment, plea of right, ordinance, decree, making or accounting righteous, a just claim or judgment of what is right".

Kittel's Theological Dictionary shows: "a legal claim, statute or ordinance, a judicial sentence especially of punishment, the actualization of justice, fulfillment of a legal requirement, righteous acts or righteous judgments".

The NASB complete concordance itself on page 1643 says the word comes from the verb meaning "to show to be righteous or to declare righteous". The NASB has variously translated the word dikaioma as: "justification, act of righteousness, ordinance, regulation, requirements". Likewise the NIV has translated it as: "regulation, righteous, act of righteousness, justification, requirements, righteous decree, and righteous requirements".

The context is very important in determining the sense of the word, and overall theology is paramount. If the NASB, NIV, NKJV had translated this as "the fine linen is the righteous requirements of the saints" there would not be much of a difference from the King James Bible, Geneva, Tyndale, Green, Darby, Spanish of 1909, Websters, and Third Millenium Bibles. The fine linen provided by Christ Himself meets all the legal requirements of the laws of a holy God. However to translate this phrase as: "the fine linen is the RIGHTEOUS ACTS of the saints" overthrows the correct doctrine that there is no righteousness acceptable to God save that of Christ's alone - He is the LORD our righteousness. It is really quite simple. Revelation 19 is talking about the fine linen, clean and white that makes up the dress or robe of the bride of the Lamb and it IS (estin -singular verb and singular linen) the same robe that covers the whole bride collectively and individually. There is only one same fine linen for all the redeemed members that make up this bride or wife of the Lamb. It has to be the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; otherwise, if these robes were made up of the individual "righteous acts" of each believer, there would have to be many different robes of differing sizes, beauty and make up. The King James Bible is right and the versions that say "righteous acts" are wrong.

I will show four traditional Bible commentaries relating to this verse. Those by Matthew Henry,

John Gill, Matthew Poole and Jamieson, Fausset and Brown.

Matthew Henry says: "You have here a description of the bride, how she appeared; not in the gay and gaudy dress of the mother of harlots, but in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints; in the robes of Christ's righteousness, both imputed for justification and imparted for sanctification—the stola, the white robe of absolution, adoption, and enfranchisement, and the white robe of purity and universal holiness. She had washed her robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and these her nuptial ornaments she did not purchase by any price of her own, but received them as the gift and grant of her blessed Lord. 2. The marriage-feast, which, though not particularly described (as Mt. 22:4), yet is declared to be such as would make all those happy who were called to it, so called as to accept the invitation, a feast made up of the promises of the gospel, the true sayings of God.

John Gill on Revelation 19:8 - "for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints, or "righteousnesses"; not good works, or their own righteousness; for though these are evidences of faith, by which the saints are justified, and are what God has prepared for them, that they should walk in them; yet these are not comparable to fine linen, clean and white, but are like filthy rags, and cannot justify in the sight of God; but the righteousness of Christ is meant, and justification by that; for that is the only justifying righteousness of the saints: and though it is but one, yet it may be called "righteousnesses", or "justifications", in the plural number; partly because of the many persons that are justified by it, as also because of the excellency of it."

"Christ's righteousness may be compared to fine linen, clean and white, because of its spotless purity; those that are arrayed with it being unblamable and irreprovable, and without spot and blemish, and without fault before the throne;... all the Lord's people will be righteous, they will have on the best robe, and wedding garment, which was despised by the Jews in Christ's time, who refused to come to the marriage feast; and their being arrayed with it will be owing to the grace of Christ, who grants it; and so Christ's righteousness is called the gift of righteousness, the free gift, and gift by grace, and abundance of grace; and faith, which receives it, and puts it on, is the gift of God, (Romans 5:15-17) (Ephesians 2:8) . Not only the garment is a gift of grace, but the putting of it on is a grant from Christ, and what he himself does, (Isaiah 61:10) (Zechariah 3:4)."

Matthew Poole comments: "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. *And to her was granted*; that is, to the Lamb's wife, whether Jews or Gentiles, or both. *That she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white*; that she should be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, reckoned to her for righteousness. *This is the righteousness of the saints*; called *the righteousness of God*, *Romans 1:17* ; a righteousness *through the faith of Christ*, Phil. iii. 9 : called *righteousnesses*, in the Greek, because there are many saints to be clothed with it; and because it is imputed both for justification and sanctification, not to excuse us from holiness, but to make up our defects."

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown comment: "granted--Though in one sense she "made herself

ready," having by the Spirit's work in her put on "the wedding garment," yet in the fullest sense it is not she, but her Lord, who makes her ready by "granting to her that she be arrayed in fine linen." It is He who, by giving Himself for her, presents her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, but holy and without blemish.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown continue: "righteousness - Greek, "righteousnesses"; distributively used. Each saint must have this righteousness: not merely be justified, as if the righteousness belonged to the Church in the aggregate; the saints together have righteousnesses; namely, He is accounted as "the Lord our righteousness" to each saint on his believing, their robes being made white in the blood of the Lamb."

The King James Holy Bible gives us the correct doctrine of the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are clothed in HIS righteousness, not our own "righteous acts".

For another article I have written about the religion of works being promoted by all modern versions, including the NKJV, see:

<http://brandplucked.webs.com/satansreligionworks.htm>

Will Kinney

Return to Articles - <http://brandplucked.webs.com/articles.htm>