

Text: Rev. 22:14-17

Title: "Blessed are they who wash their robes"

Time: 1/13/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: As we begin our study of the passage before us this morning, we are confronted in the providence of God with an issue related to the preservation of God's Word. An issue like this is incredibly rare because God's Word is so very well-preserved in both our King James Version and the newer English translations available to us. In fact, this is the first time in our study through Revelation that I have felt that a difference between our English versions is significant for the meaning and interpretation of the passage we are studying.

Verse 14 speaks of a blessed people. That much is very clear. In our KJV it tells us that the blessed people are those that do the Lord's commandments. Newer translations read differently. They say that the blessed people are those who have washed their robes. The obvious question for a congregation like ours that is blessed with both readings becomes which of these was in the original manuscript inspired by the Holy Spirit and written down by the Apostle John. All translators would define the issue that way.

There are really two different ways that question has been answered by believers. Some take by faith that the KJV is the perfectly preserved Word of God for English-speaking people, and so everything that differs from it is necessarily a mistake. That is one way to answer the question, but I do not think it is the best way, because the Bible never says it is perfectly preserved in the KJV. Not even the KJV translators believed this about their own translation, and they made that clear in the translation's Preface.

The other way to answer the question is to examine the evidence available in the Greek manuscripts, compare them, and try to find reasons from that evidence why one reading is preferable to another. The KJV translators faced this issue that way, but today we have more manuscript evidence than they had in 1611, so our conclusions may differ.

That evidence tells us some things about our passage this morning: one reading is older than the other – 4th century vs. 10th century; one reading seems closer to John’s style than the other (John normally says “keep commandments” not “do commandments”); and one reading seems more likely the result of a medieval adjustment than the other – we can see how a medieval monk would want to emphasize keeping commandments over washing robes. It is more difficult to understand why he would want to change keeping commandments to washing robes. So these are the reasons the newer translations differ from the KJV.

That said, the Book of Revelation is clear that those who have had their robes washed are also those who keep God’s commandments (Rev. 12:17, 14:12). But in our passage this morning, I believe with our newer translations that we find here the Revelation doctrine of the washed robes of the believer as the true basis for his every blessing in this life and in the life to come (Rev. 7:9-14, “that they may have the right”). Our right to the glories of heaven comes to us not by keeping commandments, but by the shed blood of the Lamb, which washes our robes.

So following the newer translations, the title of the message this morning is “Blessed are they who wash their robes,” and I want to notice three of these blessings.

I. Those whose robes are washed are blessed with a right to enter (vv. 14-15).

Illustration: Verse 15 mentions dogs. When the Lord says that dogs are not allowed access to the tree of life or to enter the New Jerusalem, He is using a metaphor – He is not talking about a literal dog. If you have a normal dog as a pet, you have probably noticed that the dog does not enjoy taking a bath. In fact, the normal dog likes to get dirty. This was especially true in first century Palestine. Few dogs were kept as pets. They roamed the streets like rodents.

Application: So the blessing mentioned here is access to the tree of life and entrance into the New Jerusalem, and only those with washed robes are given the right to have that access and entrance. Dogs like what is unwashed, so those who refuse this washing are dogs in that sense.

Now we wash things that are dirty, not things that are clean. In this passage the difference between the clean and the unclean is the washing. In other words, the Bible teaches that the nature of every man is dog-like, preferring the dirt of sin. We all have hearts and lives of sorcery, fornication, murder, idolatry, and that love and practice lies. That is the robe of every man. We are all filthy this way, and we have no right to the tree of life nor the eternal city of God, for God is holy and cannot tolerate sin in His presence.

But there will be some whose robes are washed, and washed in the blood of the Lamb. Rev. 7:14, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Those who are blessed with eternal access to the tree of life and the city of God have had their robes washed in the Lamb’s blood.

Ill: Joshua was the high-priest of Israel, but even he was filthy before the Lord. He needed his robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Zech. 3:1-7). God washes sinners so that they can serve Him in His house.

Eph. 5:25-27, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with 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; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Tit. 3:3-7, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

1 Cor. 6:9-11, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

It is interesting that the participle *ones who wash* in the reading we are considering this morning is a present tense participle. It views this washing as an ongoing reality in the lives of those who are blessed with the right to the tree of life and

entrance into God's city. Remember what Jesus told Peter when Peter refused to have the Lord wash his feet? (John 13:6-15). Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me." Peter then wanted a bath, not just his feet washed. Jesus said, "You have already had a bath; now I just need to wash your feet when they get dirty."

So it is in that sense that we continue to wash. As those who have robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, we can still get dirty feet, and we need to apply that same blood of the Lamb again with the same purifying results. This is the ongoing washing that John mentions in his epistle to believers: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. . . . If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7-9). We never need to rewash our robes, but we need to keep our feet clean, and we need to be willing to help one another do so.

Are your robes washed in the blood of the Lamb? How about your feet? Is there sin that needs to be confessed so that like Joshua, you can be a faithful priest whom the Lord uses as a blessing to His house? He shed His blood for you.

II. Those whose robes are washed are blessed with a glorious Savior (v. 16).

Application: In verse 8 we read, "I, John." Now in verse 16 we have, "I, Jesus." He who speaks to us in the Scripture is first the prophet, and second, the Lord of the prophet.

Jesus, of course, means *Jehovah saves*. The baby was named that by the angel because He was Jehovah, and He would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). It is the God of

true Old Testament Judaism who became a man and shed His own blood for the sins of His people.

He sent His angel, and so He is the Lord God of verse 6 who sent His angel. The emphatic and exclusive "I" comes again in our verse and lays claim to the titles "Root and Offspring of David" and "The Bright and Morning Star." Old Testament prophecy spoke of both David's root and the shoot that would come from that root. The root gives us David and David gives us the shoot or offspring. The One who gave us David is Jehovah Himself - this is Jesus; and the one who David gave us is the Messiah - and this too is Jesus. And so He is the God who became man. He is the One who promised salvation and the One who brought it fulfilling His own promise.

And in this dark night of sin, Jesus is the Bright and Morning Star. His light shines prior to the full noon Day of the Lord's judgment. Balaam prophesied that a star would come out of Jacob and a scepter would arise out of Israel (Num. 24:17). The morning dawned when the wisemen saw the star and worshipped the child King. We live in that morning light, but the full day of His scepter - His judgment and rule as king - is coming.

Those whose robes are washed are blessed with a glorious Savior. Is He yours? He is the best blessing of the blessed.

III. Those whose robes are washed are blessed with power for a mission (v. 17).

Illustration: Over vacation we were in Virginia with our family, and I received a kind phone call from the Schmechels who inquired whether I would be able to come

for a visit to their home. I was unable to do so, but it was a blessing to have David call and say, "Come."

That word *come* summarizes the mission of those whose robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb. It defines what the life-purpose of every believer is in the Lord's eyes, and I think we can summarize that purpose with three responsibilities as we close. The first is implied by the passage; the other two explicitly mentioned by the passage.

1. Come to church. Did you notice that Revelation is a message for the churches (v. 16)? So the life-purpose that Revelation communicates to us is a communication that comes to local churches. Believers today are faithful local church members, or their mission is not being executed faithfully.

Ill: The Dean family was a great blessing to my heart in this regard. They understood what it takes to complete the mission of the believer.

2. Come, Dear Lord. This is the prayer of the Spirit and the Bride in v. 17. If we have ears to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, we too should say, "Come, Dear Lord." *Come* is a second-person singular verb, so it is addressed to the One who has promised to come quickly. It is our mission to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to desire and pray that Jesus comes. He is our hope. He will be our deliverance and comfort. He is whom we live for, only Him.

3. Come, thirsty sinner. This is the gospel we preach. You may come and drink of the water of life freely, for Jesus paid the penalty for your sins. Are you thirsty for life this morning? If so, today you can come. Tomorrow you may not.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching