



“How did you get in here?”

Jesus told the parable of a king who invited people of every class to his son’s wedding. In that culture, a wealthy host always provided wedding attire for the guests. One man apparently decided that his own robe was perfectly fine and refused the king’s offer. When the king came in and saw this, he asked the man, “How did you get in without a wedding robe?” The guest, without an excuse, was speechless. Angered by his guest’s arrogance, the king ordered the man expelled from the wedding.¹

God’s Word tells us that we cannot make ourselves acceptable to God, so the great King of the universe offers us His perfect robe of righteousness, suitable for His holy kingdom and the wedding of His Son. Perhaps we feel insulted that God is not satisfied with us as we are. Well, He certainly accepts us as we are, but He won’t leave us that way. We have a very limited idea of His perfection and how much sin has degraded us. Yet God invites us to the marriage of His Son to the church, His bride, in the New Jerusalem. But we will need ...

THE WEDDING GARMENT

1. What is the wedding garment that everyone in God’s kingdom must have?

“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” (Revelation 19:8 KJV).

2. Who provides it?

“The days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘[when] a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.... Now this is His name by which He will be called:

“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”

(Jeremiah 23:5-6)



¹ Matthew 22:2-13.



3. Why is it needed?

“There is none righteous, no, not one.”
“‘Their righteousness is from Me,’ says the Lord” (Romans 3:10; Isaiah 54:17). We inherited the tendency to sin and its result, death, from Adam. Whatever good we do is a result of God’s working in us.

4. What is wrong with our human righteousness?

“All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). After they sinned, Adam and Eve covered their nakedness with fig leaves, but God was not impressed. Instead, He sacrificed animals and gave our first parents coats of animal skins.² This sacrifice symbolized the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whose righteousness alone is acceptable. The very best that a human being can accomplish with his natural, sinful nature is equal to filthy rags.

5. But why can’t we just decide to be good—and make ourselves righteous?

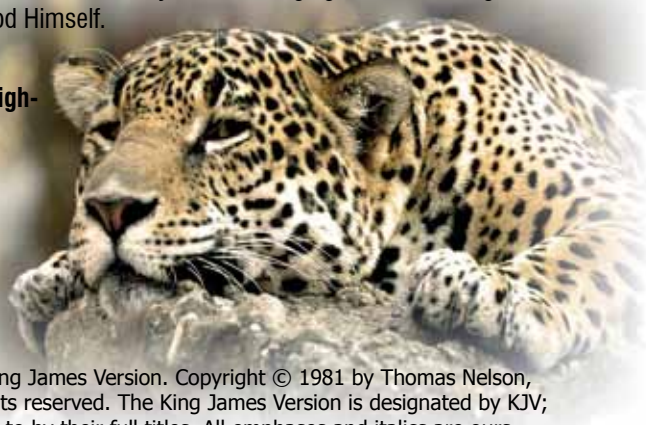
“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil” (Jeremiah 13:23). Sin is inherent in our natures. That means that by ourselves we cannot do anything that is good—not even the smallest thing. To repeat, if we do anything that is good, it comes from God. Everything that sinful nature produces by itself is polluted with self.

6. By what standard does God measure righteousness?

“Gracious is the Lord, and righteous.” *“Your Testimonies, which You have commanded, are righteous”* (Psalm 116:5; 119:138). God is righteous. His testimonies, the Ten Commandments, embody the unchanging standard of right and wrong, the character of God Himself.

7. How can God’s perfect righteousness become ours?

There are three phases to righteousness—three steps to salvation:



² Genesis 3:7-10, 21.

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(1) justification, (2) sanctification, and (3) glorification. Each of these three steps is Christ's gift to us. We do not earn a gift, but we may gratefully receive it.

JUSTIFICATION

8. What is justification?

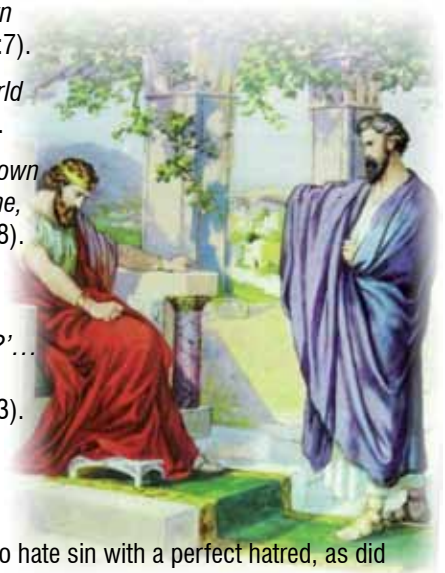
Justification means pardon from sin. We are "*justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24). Justification is immediate. It **entitles** us to attend Christ's wedding. It is acceptance of the invitation to the wedding.

9. How does one obtain it?

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:9; Romans 5:1). Faith responds to Christ's loving invitation. When we trust God, we can be honest about our sins and readily give them to Him. Faith, though, does not **merit** God's favor.

10. By what means does God lead us to repentance and confession?

- a) **His Word:** *"For all have sinned"* (Romans 3:23).³
- b) **The moral law:** *"I would not have known sin except through the law"* (Romans 7:7).
- c) **His Holy Spirit:** *"He will convict the world of sin ... and of judgment"* (John 16:8).
- d) **Fellowship with Christ:** *"Peter ... fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'"* (Luke 5:8).
- e) **Other people:** *"Nathan said to David, ... 'Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight?' ... So David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord'"* (2 Samuel 12:7, 9, 13).



SANCTIFICATION

11. What is sanctification?

It is the lifelong process whereby we learn to hate sin with a perfect hatred, as did Christ, and to obtain "*sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience*" (1 Peter 1:1-2). While justification is forgiveness of our past sins and takes only a moment, sanctification prepares us to attend Christ's wedding. This process lasts a lifetime. When we invite Him to do so, He lives within us through His Holy Spirit; our responsibility is to cherish His presence and allow Him to do what He wishes in and through us. Sanctification is to wear the wedding garment that He provides.

³ See also verses 10-22.

12. In what ways will sanctification change us?

"[It will] cleanse us from all unrighteousness." *"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself"* (1 John 1:9; 3:3). Sanctification changes our attitudes. Thus, Jesus cleanses, develops, and ennobles our characters, reforms our habits, and gives power over sin. As we focus on Him, His perfect character replaces ours. Right thinking leads to right doing.⁴

13. What has God provided to help everyone obtain sanctification?

- a) **His Word:** *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth"* (John 17:17).
- b) **His Holy Spirit:** *"God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit"* (2 Thessalonians 2:13).
- c) **The prayer of faith:** *"Ask, and it will be given to you.... How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask!"* (Luke 11:9, 13).
- d) **Life situations for practice and to gain experience with God:** *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:12-13).

14. What examples are there of people who received Christ's righteousness?

"[Zacharias and Elizabeth] were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). John the Baptist's parents were called righteous, because their faith led them to trust and obey God.

GLORIFICATION

15. What is glorification?

*"God ... chose you for salvation through **sanctification** by the Spirit and belief in the truth ... **for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**"* *"We shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.... The dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"* (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). In short: (1) Justification changes our record. (2) Sanctifi-

⁴ Proverbs 23:7.

cation changes our actions, then our habits, and thus, in time, our characters. (3) Glorification⁵ changes our natures. When He comes, Jesus will change us so that all tendency to sin is removed. Glorification is the final change in preparation for and attendance at Christ's wedding.

16. What is the KEY in our hands that will bring us God's gift of salvation?

"For by grace are ye saved through FAITH; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8 KJV).

While all three steps of salvation are gifts from God, the first two require our active cooperation. That cooperation won't happen without FAITH. If someone hands you a million-dollar check, you won't deposit it if you don't believe it is real. Neither will we humble ourselves, confess our sins, nor work with God to change our characters if we don't TRUST that His instructions and promises are real. Frequently, it is our proud natures that refuse to BELIEVE God when He says that we are not OK and need help. With FAITH, anyone can confess his or her sins, pray, read God's Word, and obey Him. Therefore, we are SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH."

1 John 5:4 KJV

MEN OF FAITH

Here are examples of men who exchanged their own righteousness for Christ's:

Saul (martyred about A.D. 67), a Pharisee, fought zealously for the traditions of his fathers. He arrested and condemned to death those who believed in Jesus—until Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus. This meeting changed his life. Paul, as he was afterward called, became a most zealous apostle to the Gentiles, ever exalting Christ as *"the righteousness of God"* (Romans 10:3-4).

Martin Luther (1483-1546), a devoted monk, disciplined himself harshly with fasting, vigils, and scourging of his body to subdue evil and earn pardon. But he found no peace. One day, when in Rome, while ascending "Pilate's staircase" on his knees to obtain a promised indulgence, he heard as it were a voice like thunder say to him, *"The just shall live by faith"* (Romans 1:17). Instantly he rose to his feet. From that moment on, he was keenly aware of the fallacy of trusting in human works for salvation and of the necessity of constant faith in the merits of Christ.

Charles and John Wesley (in the 1700s) zealously kept the forms of religion. On a voyage to America they experienced a severe storm that brought them face to face with death. Terrified, they marveled at a group of Christians who were not at all afraid. Charles and John realized they needed a faith that would support them no matter what the circumstances of life might be. They learned that trust in their own works was useless, that salvation is a free gift that cannot be "earned," and that they could trust their salvation to Jesus and still maintain their zeal for Him. Charles became a renowned hymn writer, while John became a successful evangelist and the founder of the Methodist Church.

⁵ Philippians 3:21; Matthew 5:8.

What about ...

CHRIST'S INVITATION TO RECEIVE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Did Jesus Himself invite people to accept His righteousness?

Yes, many times. Here is one such invitation: *“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30 KJV). Pride causes a lot of unrest. All too often, we pretend to be something we are not. We feel as if we have to strive to live up to everyone else’s standard, or at least to what we think their standard is. As a result, we are constantly offended, or hurt, or wondering what people think of us. Christ offers to get rid of all this and to give us His yoke of humility.⁶ He leads us to repentance and confession and loves us unconditionally. Here Christ makes it clear that faith and humility are much easier to live with than is pride! Wearing His yoke sanctifies us and prepares us for glorification.

In our next lesson, “The Final Exam,” we will go to the lessons of history for clues to unlock the door to God’s courtroom and hear His final judgment-hour message.



⁶ Humility does not mean that we think we are worthless. It simply means that Jesus, not self, is now the center of our little universe. Conversely, pride is actually being self-centered.

REVIEW QUESTIONS



Please answer the following questions—and send them back so we can help you with any misunderstandings. Note that multiple-choice questions may have more than one correct answer. *Circle the letters of all correct answers.*

1. In Jesus' parable, the king expelled his guest because the man ...

- a) was not invited.
- b) couldn't afford to buy a wedding robe.
- c) was arrogant.

2. The wedding garment symbolizes ...

- a) socio-economic status.
- b) Christ's righteousness covering our unrighteousness.
- c) our inherent righteousness.

3. We can obtain Christ's perfect righteousness by ...

- a) concentrating on being kind to everyone.
- b) studying and obeying the commandments perfectly.
- c) humbling ourselves and accepting His righteousness as a gift.

4. God's standard of righteousness ...

- a) is the character of God.
- b) depends on the situation.
- c) is the moral law.

5. Justification ...

- a) is unfair.
- b) means receiving pardon for sin.
- c) is the result of confessing sin.



6. Sanctification is ...

- a) what the Lord does, and we shouldn't interfere.
- b) something God does *with* us.
- c) the process whereby we learn to hate sin and love to do what is right.

7. Glorification ...

- a) is what God does, and we cannot help.
- b) makes us able to stand in the presence of God and live.
- c) is when God removes all sin from our genes.

8. "With _____, anyone can _____ his
or her sins, _____, read _____,
and _____ Him."



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