

11. Build Up the Church by What You Wear

Human beings are clothes conscious. Designers know this, and they are always changing fashions. Neckties are skinny and then wide; skirts are long, then short; denim is in, then out. One set of clothing never changes—the clothing that Christians wear. However, in the Bible, wearing clothes is a metaphor of the righteous and obedient life. Paul describes even the act of baptism as being clothed in Christ in Gal 3:26-27: “26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Just as clothing reflects the nature and character of people in their daily lives, so also the clothing of a Christian reflects the nature and character in their spiritual lives. This reflection shines within the church and outward to the world, speaking a message true beyond words. By being clothed in Christ, Christians build up the church.

Glorious and Grand Dress for All Christians Builds Up the Church

Jesus warned the church at Laodicea in Rev 3:18, “I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.” Christians must buy white clothes to wear, and they should not soil them. The Lord used the same clothing metaphor to describe favorably some of the members at Sardis in Rev 3:4-5, “Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

The Revelation clearly explains the meaning of the dress that Christians wear in Rev 19:7-8

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.
8 Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

A Christian, baptized into Christ, puts on the righteous acts of Christ. One so gloriously and grandly dressed will always have his name in the book of life and have Christ acknowledge his name before the Father.

Christians Clothed in These Righteous Acts Build Up the Church

The metaphor of clothing to describe the Christian appears in 1 Peter 3:3-4, where Peter describes women with the inner self adorned with the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit: “3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes . 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.”

The Lord, appearing on the Mount of Transfiguration, wore white garments in Matt 17:2-3, “2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.”

The Lord cautions us not to be concerned about this world's clothing. In Matt 6:28-32, he taught:

28 "And why do you worry about clothes ? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall

we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Christians Armored by God Build Up the Church

There is no more splendid show of clothing than the armor of God as described in Eph 6:11-17:

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Nothing will build up the church more than to have each member put on the whole armor of God, and to stand against the devil's schemes and to stand ground against the heavenly hosts of wickedness.

Conclusion

Today, let us ask the questions: How are we dressed? Are we as a congregation of the Lord's people purchasing white garments (righteous acts of the saints)? Are we putting on the whole armor of God? If so, our name will not be in *VOGUE* or *PEOPLE* magazine, but it will be in the Book of Life. Jesus himself will confess our name before the Father and His angels.

Jesus has said that he will come unexpectedly, and when he comes, we must be wearing acceptable clothing. In Rev 16:15, the Lord said, "15 "Behold, I come like a thief ! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

Rev 7:13-17 describes a heavenly scene of people in white robes. Will we be properly dressed to be included in that great scene?

13 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes — who are they, and where did they come from?"

14 I answered, "Sir, you know."

And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore,

"they are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.

16 Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.

The sun will not beat upon them,
nor any scorching heat.

17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd;
he will lead them to springs of living water.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Lives made white with the blood of the lamb and garments made of the righteous acts of the saints will build up the church with the indescribable power of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.