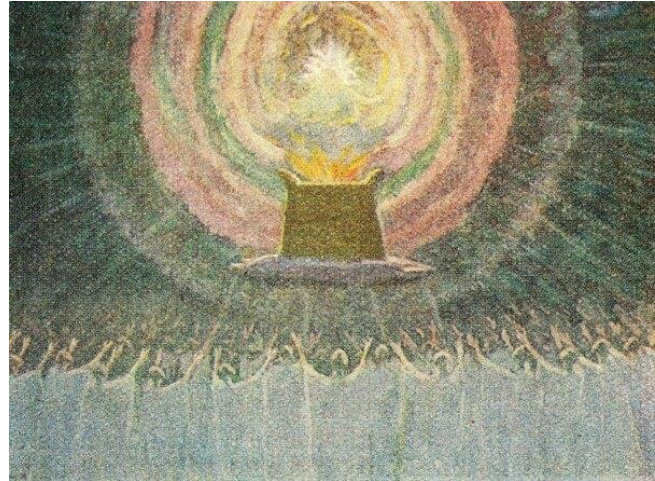


**GROWING INTO THE ROBES**  
**A Devotional Meditation from**  
**Exodus 27:20-30:10; Ezekiel 43:10-27; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 2:9-10;**  
**Revelation 1:4-6, 13, 3:4-5, 6:9-11, 7:9-17, 19:6-8**  
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Where did we get the idea that eternity for the redeemed would be flying around heaven in white robes? The picture is complete when we add harps and halos, but that's all it is – a picture. We don't think much about what eternity is like, who we will be, what we will do, where we will do it, or any of those other details that would fulfill our hopes by making eternity more pleasant than our present reality. More pleasant, and more fun, that is. Who really wants to spend endless days playing a harp on a cloud anyway?



*Gerhard Fugel, "Apocalypse, chapter 6, Souls at the Altar," 1933, [via Wikimedia Commons](#).*

Such is the stereotypical depiction of our eternal reward. It's woefully distorted, of course. The Bible explains that heaven comes to earth, not that we leave earth to populate heaven. As to what we shall do, there are some clues. We'll most certainly be praising our Creator. That's what we're designed to do, after all. We'll probably also be spending considerable time and effort cleaning up the earth and tending it in the way our Creator intended from the beginning. The details, though, are up for debate.

Except for the robes. We'll definitely get those. That's what John saw in the vision given to him. He first mentions white robes, or white clothes, in the letter Messiah Yeshua told him to write to the church at Sardis:

But still, you have a few people in Sardis who have not stained their clothes. They will walk with Me in white, because they are worthy. The one who overcomes thus will be dressed in white clothes; I will never blot his name out of the Book of Life, and will confess his name before My Father and His angels.

Revelation 3:4-5

That's encouraging, until we read further and find that overcoming means staying true to our Redeemer even at the cost of our lives. John saw that in the form of multitudes of martyrs under the altar in heaven crying out to God to render judgment and make things right. Those holy ones received white robes and instructions to wait until the full number of the righteous slain was complete.

We see that multitude at last as they stand before the throne of the Almighty and the Lamb, clothed in white robes, waving palm branches, and praising God. John is told:

These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are

before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His Temple. The One seated on the throne will shelter them. They shall never again go hungry, nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them and guide them to springs of living water, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7:14-17

How curious that the lasting comfort we all seek comes only when we minister before our Creator unhindered by the cares and traumas and distractions of this present life. There is no comfort apart from Him, of course, much though our thoughts and actions betray our wish that it were otherwise. That's why our ancestors at Mount Sinai pleaded with Moses to mediate between them and the Holy One. It's scary to be in His presence, not just because of the thunder and lightening and manifestations of His glory, but because of the alarms going off in our hearts that indicate our dark secrets and hidden places are about to be uncovered.

So Moses became the mediator, but he couldn't do that job alone. That's why God established a priesthood through Moses' brother Aaron. The priests would learn the Torah Moses received from God, apply it to the daily life of Israel, and teach from it to instruct the people how to recognize the difference between the holy and the profane. Somewhere along the way, the people were supposed to go beyond learning about righteousness, and actually practice righteousness as representatives of God on earth.

That's what it means to be a Kingdom of Priests.

It's a funny thing that priests have robes, and that their daily lives revolve around the altar where people transact their business with God. If we want to be specific, the Hebrew word for the garment of the ordinary priests is often translated *tunic*, while the word for the outer garment of the High Priest is translated *robe*. As I look at illustrations of these garments, though, the tunics certainly look like what we modern western people would call robes.\* That might be an important point for a biblical linguist, but it seems the most important point is that there is a distinct garment to set the High Priest apart from the ordinary priests. There can be only one High Priest, after all. That's what we see at the end of the book: in Revelation, John uses the Greek word for robe, or long garment, to describe what he sees the Messiah wearing, and uses a different word for the robes given to the overcoming saints.

Is John seeing a multitude of priests coming out of the Tribulation? If so, then that answers the question about the identity and occupation of the redeemed. With that in mind, consider that John is seeing in his vision the fulfillment of what he and Peter and Paul explained about the identity of Messiah's followers:

John, To Messiah's seven communities in Asia: Grace to you and *shalom* from Him who is and who was and who is to come, as well as from the seven spirits who are before His throne, and from Messiah *Yeshua*, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us

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\* "Priestly Garments of the High Priest & Ordinary Priests," The Temple Institute, 2020, accessed February 10, 2022 (<https://templeinstitute.org/priestly-garments/>).

and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, *kohanim* [priests] to His God and Father—to Him be glory and power forever! Amen!

Revelation 1:4-6 TLV

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9 TLV

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, training us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live in a manner that is self-controlled and righteous and godly in the present age. We wait for the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah *Yeshua*. He gave Himself for us so that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and so that He might purify for Himself a chosen people, zealous for good deeds.

Titus 2:11-14 TLV

The apostles write persuasively of a connection between the priesthood of believers in Messiah *Yeshua* and the priestly kingdom that God established in Israel. That's why we're adopted into that same priestly kingdom, governed by our High Priest and King, Messiah Son of David. The Levitical priests were consecrated by the blood of the ram; we are consecrated by the blood of the Lamb. Their holy garments were sprinkled with the blood from the holy altar; our holy garments will be washed white in the blood at the heavenly altar. The Levitical priests wore garments for beauty and holiness, symbols of the righteousness imparted from God, and lived out by the people. The garments of the redeemed are likewise symbols of righteousness walked out in faith by those consecrated by the Redeemer.

Do we earn those white robes, or are they given to us by God's grace? Maybe the answer is somewhere in between: the robes are free for the asking, but it takes a lifetime of righteous service to our King to grow into them.