

# JOSHUA'S CHANGE OF CLOTHES

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When the remnant of Israel returned from their captivity in Babylon, the High Priest was Joshua the son of Jozadak. In Zechariah 3:3, Joshua “was clothed with filthy garments.” The angel of the Lord then instructed the people who stood before Joshua, “*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.*” And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zech 13:4-7). Joshua’s change of clothing had great spiritual implications for Israel at that time, but also looked beyond that time to the time of the New Testament, when Christians, God’s holy priesthood, would be clothed in righteousness.

## **Changing from a wicked to a righteous priesthood in Israel**

The High Priest’s physical clothing had its origins in Exodus 28:1-4, where the Lord commanded that holy garments be made for Aaron and his sons for the office of the priesthood in Israel, including the miter for Aaron’s head. In Exodus 40:13-15, the Lord said to Moses, “And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.” About a thousand years later, Joshua the son of Jozadak was now serving in Aaron’s office. Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, had sent the captives of Israel back to their land (Ezra 1:1-3), and Joshua the High Priest accompanied them (Ezra 2:1-2). Joshua was a righteous man, who, along with Zerubbabel, led the work to rebuild the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:1-9; 5:2). So why was this righteous man’s clothes changed? The putting away of the filthy garments represented the putting away of the high priest’s iniquities (Zech 3:4). The priests had become corrupt and had helped lead Israel astray (Neh 9:34). God rebuked the priests through many prophets until he finally sent them into captivity with the people (Isa 28:7; Jer 2:8,26; 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; 23:11; 32:31-32; Lam 4:13-14; Ezek 22:26; Hos 4:6,9; 5:1; 6:9; Mic 3:11; Zeph 3:4). Now, the temple was going to be rebuilt and the priesthood was getting a new

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(continued)

beginning as the priestly miter and clothing was put upon Joshua with the approval of God's angel who stood by (Zech 3:5). Along with the literal priestly clothes, God was requiring a change in the conduct of his priests. The putting away of Joshua's iniquities also represented the putting away of the iniquity of the priesthood and now the priests were to wear new "clothes." The things which were done to Joshua in Zechariah chapter 3, and the promises made to him, along with the fact that Joshua as an individual was a godly man, demonstrate that this chapter concerns the priesthood as a whole and not just Joshua as an individual.

## **The holy and royal priesthood under Christ**

But Zechariah chapter three is about more than the Levitical priesthood of physical Israel. The chapter closes with a prophecy of the coming of The Branch, Jesus Christ (Zech 3:8-10). It is not uncommon to find New Testament prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to the spiritual priesthood that would exist under Christ. For example, Ezekiel 44:15-24 foretold a faithful and holy priesthood that would serve the Lord wearing pure garments. God's concern was not physical clothing itself. That is why in Joel 2:13, he told the people of Israel, "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." Psalms 132:9 says, "*Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.*" Malachi 3:1-4 contains a prophecy of the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Christ would "sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal 3:4). Christians are these spiritual children of Levi. In 1 Peter 2:5, the Lord says to Christians, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, and verse 9 says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Revelation 19:7-9 describes the Lord's church, his bride, at the marriage of the Lamb in heaven: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for 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.* And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." May we be blessed to be at that great supper, clothed in righteousness, as the spiritual heirs to Joshua's change of clothing.