

Zechariah 3:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, 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.

Analysis

And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him—The Angel of the LORD commands the removal of defiled robes. The imperative *hāsīrū* (הָסִירוּ, 'remove/take away') effects instant cleansing—not gradual improvement but decisive justification. The *mal'ākīm* (מַלְאָכִים, 'angels/messengers') serve as heaven's wardrobe attendants executing divine pardon.

And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee—Direct address to Joshua: *he'ēbartī* (הִעָבַרְתִּי, 'I have caused to pass away') in the perfect tense indicates completed action. God doesn't merely cover sin but transfers it away. The noun *'āwōn* (עוֹן, 'iniquity/guilt') encompasses both sin and its punishment. **And I will clothe thee with change of raiment**—*machalātsōt* (מַחְלָצוֹת, 'festive robes/rich garments') replaces filth with finery, shame with splendor. This pictures imputed righteousness: 'He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness' (Isaiah 61:10). The divine passive voice emphasizes grace—Joshua contributes nothing to his re-robing, anticipating the wedding garment parable (Matthew 22:11-12) and Revelation's white robes washed in the Lamb's blood (Revelation 7:14).

Historical Context

The actual priesthood restoration ceremony would have included ceremonial washing and investiture (Exodus 29:4-9; Leviticus 8:6-13). This vision transcends ritual to show spiritual reality: forgiveness precedes service. The cleansed priesthood could now mediate between God and the restored community, offering acceptable sacrifices in the rebuilt temple.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does instant robe-changing (not gradual cleaning) illustrate justification versus sanctification?
2. Why must God both remove filthy garments AND clothe with new robes (both negative and positive righteousness)?
3. In what areas do you struggle to accept that God has 'caused iniquity to pass away' rather than dwelling on shame?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעַן	וַיֹּאמֶר	אֶל	הַעֲמֹדִים	לִפְנֵי	וַיֹּאמֶר
And he answered	and spake	H413	unto those that stood	before	and spake
H6030	H559		H5975	H6440	H559
הָסֵירוּ	הַבְּגָדִים	הַצֹּאִים	מֵעַל יוֹ	וַיֹּאמֶר	אֵלַי יוֹ
Take away	garments	the filthy	H5921	and spake	H413
H5493	H899	H6674		H559	H7200
הָעֵבֶר רִתִּי	מֵעַל יָדָיו	עֲוֹן בִּי	וְהִלְבֵּשׁ		
to pass	H5921	I have caused thine iniquity	from thee and I will clothe		
H5674		H5771	H3847		
אֶתְּךָ	מִחֲלָצוֹת:				
H853	thee with change of raiment				
	H4254				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 61:10 (Parallel theme): I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Luke 15:22 (Parallel theme): But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

Revelation 7:14 (Parallel theme): And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Ezekiel 36:25 (Parallel theme): Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Isaiah 43:25 (Sin): I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Isaiah 61:3 (Parallel theme): To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

1 Corinthians 6:11 (Parallel theme): 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.

Zechariah 3:7 (Parallel theme): 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.

Micah 7:18 (Sin): Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Hebrews 8:12 (Sin): For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.