

Mark's case was finally going to trial. He had been charged with attempted assault and theft. Mark had been having troubles at work and it didn't help he had anger issues. One day his foreman made him so mad he took a swing at him.

Mark didn't get along very well with his co-workers either. So, he lied about their job performance on an evaluation. Then, he spread rumors about them cheating on their spouses. His lies damaged reputations and created marriage problems.

Soon, Mark began helping himself to some of the products that the company he worked for made, and ... took them home, along with the tools the company provided for him to do his job.

Eventually, the company realized what Mark had been doing. Charges were filed: attempted assault and theft. The police showed up one afternoon and escorted him out handcuffs. Mark was locked up. Within days, a hearing was held and bail was set.

He posted his own bail and hired a lawyer. What kind of defense would he use? The charges were true. He swung at his boss. He stole from the company. Not to mention all the lies he told and reputations he damaged along the way.

The day of the trial, the judge read the charges against Mark and asked him how do you plead? *"Guilty, your honor."* Without any hesitation, the judge picked up his gavel, slammed it down and responded: *"I declare that you are NOT guilty. Case dismissed."*

Mark was stunned and confused. How could the judge declare him innocent? That's when Mark's lawyer explained: *"I paid the fine for you and I will do the time for you. You're free to go. You won't have to suffer the penalty for what you've done."*

What happened to Mark is what has happened to you and me. The day of judgment is coming when each of us is going to stand in God's courtroom. The charges against us are all true. We're just as guilty as Mark. We deserve to have the judge say: *"The evidence is over-whelming. You're guilty as charged. You're sentenced to hell."*

But that's not what we're going to hear. Our defense attorney has paid our fine. He's also done our time. He's responsible for our *"not guilty"* verdict. Which is just like the Apostle John described it in his first Epistle: **"If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins."**

The Apostle John unveils even more good news in today's Revelation lesson: **We Are Washed in the Blood of the Lamb.** 1) We entered this world with filthy robes, but 2) God has cleaned us up.

Dirty clothes are often smelly and make a person disgusting to others. We don't want to be near anyone who stinks. When you and I arrived in this world our parents may have thought we were cute and cuddly, but we stunk. Our sinful natures made us filthy, stained with sin and far from the standard of perfection God demands. As we grow up those imperfections become more apparent ...

- In the words that cross our lips. We're rude and unkind in how we speak to and about others.
- In the thoughts that race through our minds. Someone else has something that we want. Why should they have it and not me? Jealousy and greed grow in our hearts.
- In our actions. Somebody pushes us and we push them back. We get angry and punch the door or the wall.

We're no better than Mark, the criminal in our story. That's not what we want to hear. No one likes to be told they've said or done things that are wrong. We'd like to think we're good people, who do good things. But God's Word says even the good things we do in the eyes of others are **"like we're wearing filthy robes"** in the eyes of God.

That makes Judgment Day both frightening and terrifying. But it doesn't have to be. In John's Revelation he explains how God cleans us up and gives us a clean set of clothes to wear.

Whenever you get a chance to read the Apostle John's vision called Revelation don't you find it breath-taking? That's true in today's lesson as he

describes the magnificence of heaven and the multitude **“from every nation, tribe, people and language,”** who are there.

There were way too many to count, but he noticed several things about all of them. One - they were all doing the same thing: **“Standing before the throne and before the Lamb.”** Two - they were all wearing the same outfit or uniform - white robes. And Three - they were all singing the same song: **“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.”**

What they're singing is significant. They supply the answer to how this great escape and present glory are even possible. They give credit where credit is due. God and the Lamb are 100% responsible for cleaning them up and dressing them alike. The answer lies in the white robes there're all wearing.

An elder wondered who all these people in white robes were. But then the light bulb went on and he remembered: **“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.”**

They're all the believers who died trusting in God's promises from the Garden of Eden to the time of John. They've left all the sorrows and sadness and sin of earth behind. Their filthy robes of sin were washed clean in the blood of the Lamb.

The Lamb keeps popping up in our lesson. Lambs were significant in OT worship. An endless cycle of sacrificed lambs - death and blood - was etched into the minds of the OT believer ... to teach an important lesson: if sins are going to be forgiven, blood needed to be shed.

THE Lamb – Jesus Christ, is significant in our NT worship. Not only is he in the middle of everything John sees in heaven, he's at the center of everything we do as Christians. A bloodstain is impossible to get out. But this Lamb's blood gets the impossible stain of sin out.

In case you're wondering, the number of those wearing white robes in heaven continues to grow and includes every believer who has died since the writing of Revelation. It includes our loved ones who trusted in Jesus. One day, it will include you and me, since

our robes have also been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Leave it to the Apostle Paul to remind us that we wore more than a baptismal gown on the day of our Baptism: **“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”** When God looks at us now, he sees us wearing the white robe of Jesus' perfection. It covers up the filthy ones we wore into this world.

The elder then goes on to describe for John and us what it's like to be in the presence of God after the last judgment. Since we can't even comprehend that kind of joy, the best the Bible can do for us is list what won't be in heaven - no pain, no sadness, no sickness, no sin. Those who might imagine heaven as a boring place with nothing to do but float and play harps are wrong. We'll only know when we experience it ourselves first hand.

There are two final pictures in today's lesson that I want to leave with you. To provide a level of comfort that can only be experienced by those who are connected by faith to Jesus.

Here's the first: **The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd.** A lamb can't also be a shepherd. That's crazy talk. That's not crazy at all ... for the Christian. In fact, it could be one of the most comforting pictures in all of Scripture. The Lamb, whose blood washed you clean of our sin, is the reason you'll be in heaven. The shepherd, whose constant care, is the reason your eternal stay will be perfect. You won't be too hot or too cold. You'll be well fed. The green pastures – no hunger. The quiet waters – no thirst.

Here's the second: **“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”** No more crying because of physical pain. No more crying because of emotional hurts and disappointments. No more crying because of the loss of a loved one through distance, or death.

When Judgment Day will be, we don't know. But we do know the verdict for all who trust in Jesus because our filthy robes have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb.