

Does God Have A Dress Code?

Joe Slater

Sometimes what you wear makes the difference between being allowed inside and being denied entrance. Certain restaurants require men to wear a coat and tie (and then charge a king's ransom for the meal)!

Does God have a dress code? We could discuss proper attire at worship assemblies, but let's save that for another time. I'm talking about how we're dressed spiritually. To be acceptable to God and gain access to Heaven, we must put on Christ.

How, then, does one put on Christ? *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Galatians 3:27). Romans 6:3 also uses the expression "baptized into Christ." Once you have been baptized into Christ, you can accurately say you are "in Christ." Likewise, when you have put on a garment, you can correctly say you are "in" that garment. The fancy restaurant will let me eat there because I am "in a coat and tie." Bottom line, getting into Christ and putting on Christ are the same thing, and happen at the same time.

There is more involved in "putting on Christ," however, than baptism. Paul wrote Romans to people who had already obeyed the gospel (6:3, 4), yet he exhorted them to *"put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts"* (13:14).

When an actor on stage puts on a costume, (s)he is supposed to act like the character who would wear such things. If you put on a pirate costume, it would be rather strange for you to come on stage juggling bowling pins like a clown! Likewise, when you put on Christ, you obligate yourself to live in a Christ-like manner. That rules out such behaviors as revelry (loud, rowdy parties),

drunkenness, sexual immorality, contentiousness, and jealousy (see Romans 13:13).

Do you meet God's dress code? Have you been clothed with Christ (i.e. have you put on Christ in baptism)? Is your behavior consistent with wearing Christ?

<> <> <> <> <> <> <>

The Tongue Is A Fire

I remember an event from my youth that taught me a lesson. A friend and I went to a Little League baseball game together. We were watching a team both of us had played for just a year earlier. As we sat in the bleachers, we began to critique their "young" pitcher. We said things like, "If that's all the harder that kid can throw, we'd destroy him if we were still playing," and "He's terrible!"

All of a sudden, a lady sitting on the bleachers behind us tapped both of us on our shoulders and said, "Boys, that's my son out there that you're criticizing, and I think he's pretty good."

Well, if there had been a hole to crawl into, we would have crawled into it. There was no way to take back what we had said. There was no way to make it any better. The words had been spoken. The damage was done. And we regretted it.

Though thirty years have passed since that incident, I still remember the sting of our loose speech. And I dare say that, while you may not have been at that Little League ball game, you, too, can recall a similar situation in which it was your tongue that offended.

Friends, we would do ourselves a favor if we would be slow to speak (James 1:19) and choose our words wisely. Remember, *"By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* (Matthew 12:37).

--Steve Higginbotham

Senseless

"Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord" (Proverbs 1:29).

I have decided to quit trying to make sense out of the world's behavior. A fallen world is just senseless, and no matter how hard I try to make sense of it, the task is impossible. The problem is that the world refuses to recognize its Creator.

I realize that I shouldn't be surprised. After all, the Spirit described a world that ignores its Creator. *"For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"* (II Timothy 3:2-4). Sounds like this time and this generation; however, this has been true of every time and every generation.

Why does the Lord allow this to continue? He holds off on executing judgment as Peter wrote, *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance"* (II Peter 3:9).

Christians are to be lights in the darkness of a senseless world (Matthew 5:16). We are to tell people about God (I Peter 2:9). We are challenged to love unconditionally like our God (Matthew 5:43-48). We are called to show mercy, just as we have been shown mercy (Luke 6:36). Our mission is exactly the same as our Lord and Savior's, *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). Of course we don't do the saving, but we actively tell people about Jesus. We are even to beg people to be reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:20).

We are to call people out of a world that is senseless into a God-ruled world that makes sense.

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)