

# EXODUS: The Person, Promise, and Power of God

## Exodus 28 – The Priestly Garments

**“Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests – Aaron and Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. <sup>2</sup> And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. <sup>3</sup> You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him for my priesthood.” (Ex. 28:1-3)**

Adapted from *CHRIST AND THE DESERT TABERNACLE* by J. V. Fesko:

Though God dwelled in the midst of Israel, the people could not approach God’s presence in any manner they saw fit. Rather, just as there were ritual sacrifices that had to be performed to enter God’s presence, such as the burnt offerings, so too the priests, especially the high priest, had to be clothed in specific garments. The garments were to express not what Aaron was in \_\_\_\_\_ but what he \_\_\_\_\_, what he was meant to be, what his office ideally required him to be, even though the human reality may have been so tragically different. It is for this reason that the garments come \_\_\_\_\_, before the solemn inauguration of the persons in chapter 29. By his robes, the \_\_\_\_\_ priest is revealed.

### The Priestly Garments

#### Holy garments for Aaron (vv. 1-5)

God told Moses that Aaron and his sons, Nadab and Abihu, were to serve as priests for the people. They were to be the \_\_\_\_\_ of the people in the presence of God. They were to be clothed in ‘holy garments’ which are to be ‘for \_\_\_\_\_ and for \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 2). The garments were to be made out of the same materials as the \_\_\_\_\_: gold, blue, purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen (v. 5).

#### The ephod (vv. 6-14)

The ephod was similar to a \_\_\_\_\_ made out of fine linen. It had four parts: the main part of the garment, two shoulder pieces, and an elaborate belt. The two shoulder pieces were to have an onyx stone mounted on each one with the names of the \_\_\_\_\_ of Israel engraved upon them in order of their birth. It was the responsibility of the high priest to bring his people before the Lord on his \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (12, 30). He was responsible for securing their entrance into the Lord’s presence (cf. Heb. 9:24; 10:19-20). They could enter only because they rested on him (Heb. 10:21-22).

#### The breastpiece (vv. 15-30)

The breastpiece was something like a \_\_\_\_\_ that was worn over the chest. It was a perfect square, nine inches by nine inches, and had four rows of precious stones placed upon it, with three stones in each row. This represented one stone for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and each stone had the name of a tribe engraved upon it. The idea is that the high priest represents the people of God and carries them with him into the holy of holies, into the presence of God.

The priest is essentially wearing a miniature replica of the \_\_\_\_\_!

His garments reproduce the tabernacle, as they are made out of the same material, and the perfect square upon his chest represents the holy of holies. There, God said what he would do from above the mercy seat in the holy of holies: *'There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel'* (Exod. 25:22).

God would render his judgements and give commandments for the people; that is, reveal his will. In similar fashion, therefore, Aaron was to place the Urim and Thummim, which were for casting lots, that is, \_\_\_\_\_ for making decisions: *'And in the breastpiece of judgement you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the Lord. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgement of the people of Israel on his heart before the Lord regularly'* (Exod. 28:30).

### **The robe (vv. 31–35)**

The robe is called the 'robe of the ephod', which indicates that the robe was to be worn \_\_\_\_\_ the ephod and breastpiece. The robe was to be made out of the same materials used in the tabernacle, and had openings for the head and arms, and was to be put on like a sweater. The robe was decorated with embroidered pomegranates, which were symbolic of God's fruitfulness, reminding us of the Garden of Eden. Recall that the spies brought back pomegranates from their reconnaissance of the promised land (Num. 13:23), a land flowing with milk and honey ... Additionally, the walls of Solomon's temple were adorned with bronze pomegranates. The overall intent is that the priest was wearing a replica of the tabernacle, in a sense conveying that the priest himself was a part of the tabernacle.

Upon the hem of this robe the Israelites were to attach \_\_\_\_\_: *'And it shall be on Aaron when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the Holy Place before the Lord, and when he comes out, so that he does not die'* (Exod. 28:35). These bells were necessary to keep the high priest alive—he could not enter the holy of holies without them.

*As to the precise function of the bells, we cannot be sure, though there are some suggestions:*

### **The head plate (vv. 36–38)**

Aaron was supposed to wear a turban on his head, and on the turban was a gold plate with the words 'Holy to the Lord' engraved upon it. Given Aaron's function to represent Israel as a nation, not only does this head plate remind Aaron that HE was holy, set apart to the Lord and his service, but that \_\_\_\_\_ as a nation was set apart as well. Recall that God told the Israelites that they were to be a *'kingdom of priests and a holy nation'* (Exod. 19:6).

### **Linen coat (v. 39)**

Aaron was supposed to wear a coat woven out of fine linen, one that bore a chequered pattern, and the turban was to be made of the same material. There was also a sash, or a belt, apparently to secure the fine linen coat. So, then, it appears that Aaron would first put on the fine linen coat, which seems to be an undergarment, and the turban. He would then don the robe, followed by the ephod and the breastpiece of judgement.

### **Garments for Aaron's sons (vv. 40–43)**

Lastly, the other priests were to be clothed in a similar fashion to the high priest, though not in precisely the same clothing. They were also to wear linen undergarments, because they were not to appear naked in the presence of God.

Remember that God made clothing out of animal skins to cover the shame of Adam and Eve's sin. The same shame still hung over fallen man, which thereby necessitated that the priests not appear naked in any way in the presence of the Lord. The Israelites were never to be naked in the presence of God, as it revealed their sinfulness, guilt and shame. The priests were always to be clothed in their special garments.

### **The priest's garments in the light of the New Testament**

Christ is our high priest but there is a great difference between his ministry and that of Aaron and his descendants ...

*5 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup> He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. <sup>3</sup> Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. (Heb. 5:1-3)*

Jesus Christ, as we know, was not only the high priest but also the SACRIFICE – the lamb without blemish.

*<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. (1 Peter 1:18-19).*

One of the major differences between the Old Testament high priest and Christ as our high priest is the fact that the Levites were \_\_\_\_\_ and Christ was not. Not only did Christ not have to offer a sacrifice for himself because he is free from sin, but by the sacrifice of his own life he brings the actual forgiveness of sins:

*<sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. 9:13-14).*

So, then, we can rejoice knowing that by Christ's sacrifice on the cross, our sins accuse us no more. The slate which was filled with the record of our wrongs has been wiped clean; as far as the east is from the west, so God has removed our sins from us.

At the same time, we should realize that Christ does not merely wipe the slate clean and then tell us to fill it with our own righteousness. On the contrary, Christ not only wipes the slate clean, forgiving us from our sin, but he also \_\_\_\_\_ us his perfect righteousness – the slate, if you will, is filled with the perfect, holy and righteous obedience of Jesus Christ. The accrediting or \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ's obedience to his people is attested in numerous places throughout the Scriptures.

*<sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. (Isa. 53:11).*

*<sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:19).*

*<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:21).*

When we place our faith in Christ, trusting in his life, death and resurrection, we not only receive the forgiveness of sins but also the imputation of Christ's righteousness. When God the Father then looks upon us, he not only sees us negatively, that we are without sin, but positively, that we are righteous in his sight.

\_\_\_\_\_ and imputed \_\_\_\_\_ were symbolically represented in the clothing of the high priest. Recall that God told Moses that the priest's garments were holy, 'for glory and for beauty' (Exod. 28:2). Moreover, the priests were not supposed to enter the presence of God with their nakedness exposed – that is, their sinfulness, guilt and shame. They were to have their sinfulness covered by their holy garments. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Scriptures liken the righteousness that we receive in salvation to being clothed in garments.

*3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" 3 Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. 4 And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." 5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by. (Zech. 3:1-5).*

*10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isa. 61:10).*

*7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. (Rev. 19:7-8).*

**In Christ, we, too, are clothed in righteousness ...**

**One final consideration ...** the breastpiece that Aaron wore:

Recall that Aaron was wearing a replica of the tabernacle. \_\_\_\_\_ itself is foreshadowed in Aaron's breastpiece. Note that when the New Jerusalem descends out of the heavens in the book of Revelation, which is the church, it has the same features as Aaron's breastpiece:

*9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. (Rev. 21:9-11).*

The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are inscribed upon its twelve gates (Rev. 21:12). There are twelve foundations, with the names of the twelve apostles of Christ (Rev. 21:14). The city 'lies foursquare; its length the same as its width' (Rev. 21:16), just like the perfectly square breastpiece. And the foundation of the wall that surrounds the city is adorned with precious stones: jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth and amethyst (Rev. 21:19-20).

These are the same precious stones that adorned Aaron's breastpiece.

### **Conclusion**

Aaron wore a miniature replica of the heavenly temple upon his chest and what we see hinted at in shadows will be fully revealed on the final day with the descent of the New Jerusalem, the holy temple, the church – radiant and resplendent with the righteousness of Christ!

Rejoice that we no longer need to fear the presence of the Lord. We no longer need to sacrifice bulls and goats and worry whether we have the garments properly donned to avoid God's judgement. Instead, we have Jesus Christ the perfect, holy and righteous high priest who has offered himself as a sacrifice, bringing us the forgiveness of sins and giving us his own righteousness.

In G. Campbell Morgan's memorable words (speaking of the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ),

*'He was the first Man to enter into the perfect light of heaven in the right of his own holiness. Heaven had never before received such a Man ... On that Ascension Day there came into heaven a Man Who asked no mercy. Pure, spotless, victorious, He came into the light of heaven, and caused no shadow there.'*

# THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

## EXODUS 28

The ritual, description, and precision of the priestly garments much like the tabernacle, were intended to illustrate, symbolize and teach truth about who God is to the people of Israel.

God is holy. He is set apart. He is worthy of honor and a high place.

