

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

### Exodus 39: The Symbols of Christ

#### AARON'S NEW CLOTHES\*

*From the blue and purple and scarlet yarns they made finely woven garments, for ministering in the Holy Place. They made the holy garments for Aaron, as the Lord had commanded Moses.”* (Exod. 39:1)

To carry out his calling as the high priest of Israel, Aaron needed a new \_\_\_\_\_.  
There were four main items in Aaron's wardrobe:

1. The first thing the craftsmen made was the \_\_\_\_\_.

*<sup>2</sup> He made the ephod of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. <sup>3</sup> And they hammered out gold leaf, and he cut it into threads to work into the blue and purple and the scarlet yarns, and into the fine twined linen, in skilled design. <sup>4</sup> They made for the ephod attaching shoulder pieces, joined to it at its two edges. <sup>5</sup> And the skillfully woven band on it was of one piece with it and made like it, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen, as the Lord had commanded Moses. <sup>6</sup> They made the onyx stones, enclosed in settings of gold filigree, and engraved like the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the sons of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And he set them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod to be stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel, as the Lord had commanded Moses. (Exod. 39:2–7) Aaron wore the ephod to show that he was bringing God's people into God's presence.*

2. The high priest also wore a \_\_\_\_\_.

*<sup>8</sup> He made the breastpiece, in skilled work, in the style of the ephod, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. <sup>9</sup> It was square. They made the breastpiece doubled, a span its length and a span its breadth when doubled. <sup>10</sup> And they set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle was the first row; <sup>11</sup> and the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; <sup>12</sup> and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; <sup>13</sup> and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They were enclosed in settings of gold filigree. <sup>14</sup> There were twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They were like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. (Exod. 39:8–14) Like the ephod, the breastpiece was a visual representation of \_\_\_\_\_.*

The breastpiece was attached to the ephod: *<sup>15</sup> And they made on the breastpiece twisted chains like cords, of pure gold. <sup>16</sup> And they made two settings of gold filigree and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece. <sup>17</sup> And they put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece. <sup>18</sup> They attached the two ends of the two cords to the two settings of filigree. Thus they attached it in front to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. <sup>19</sup> Then they made two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod. <sup>20</sup> And they made two rings of gold, and attached them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, at its seam above the skillfully woven band of the ephod. <sup>21</sup> And they bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with*

a lace of blue, so that it should lie on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece should not come loose from the ephod, as the Lord had commanded Moses. (vv. 15–21) While the ephod showed that the high priest carried the people’s burdens on his shoulders, the breastpiece showed that he wore their \_\_\_\_\_ close to his \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Next came the high priest’s \_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>22</sup> He also made the robe of the ephod woven all of blue, <sup>23</sup> and the opening of the robe in it was like the opening in a garment, with a binding around the opening, so that it might not tear. <sup>24</sup> On the hem of the robe they made pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. <sup>25</sup> They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates all around the hem of the robe, between the pomegranates— <sup>26</sup> a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate around the hem of the robe for ministering, as the Lord had commanded Moses. (Exod. 39:22–26) The pomegranates were a sign of \_\_\_\_\_. The little golden bells were for \_\_\_\_\_.

4. To make his wardrobe complete, Aaron was given several accessories, topped off with a \_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>27</sup> They also made the coats, woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, <sup>28</sup> and the turban of fine linen, and the caps of fine linen, and the linen undergarments of fine twined linen, <sup>29</sup> and the sash of fine twined linen and of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, embroidered with needlework, as the Lord had commanded Moses. <sup>30</sup> They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription, like the engraving of a signet, “Holy to the Lord.” <sup>31</sup> And they tied to it a cord of blue to fasten it on the turban above, as the Lord had commanded Moses. (Exod. 39:27–31) The most important thing about this ornate outfit was that it showed the man wearing it was a man who was \_\_\_\_\_. These verses mention three things that Aaron’s wardrobe was supposed to convey: holiness, glory, and beauty.

## **A SUPERIOR PRIEST**

The high priest was subject to \_\_\_\_\_ like all the other people. The sign on his forehead said, “holy to the Lord,” but what was in his heart? Holy clothes do not make a man holy. The high priest needed to make atonement for his own sins as much as for the sins of anyone else. When we look at the high priest in Exodus, we see a picture of the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the superior High Priest in every way.

- Jesus ministers in a \_\_\_\_\_. The high priest served in the tabernacle, but Jesus serves in Heaven itself. (Heb. 8:1, 2; 9:24).
- Jesus ministers to us with \_\_\_\_\_. His righteousness is not external, like a holy set of clothes. His righteousness is intrinsic to his own holy person. (Heb. 7:26, 27-28).

- Jesus ministers to us with \_\_\_\_\_. The high priest carried the people close to his heart. But for all his sympathy, he could not understand exactly what they were going through. Only someone who had endured the same temptations and suffered the most severe hardships could really understand. (Heb. 4:15, 16).
- Jesus ministers to us with \_\_\_\_\_. The high priests of Israel are all dead. Jesus lives forever. Therefore, his priestly ministry continues forever. He is our eternal priest. (Heb. 7:23–25).
- Best of all, Jesus ministers to us with a \_\_\_\_\_. Here is a surprising and glorious twist. The high priests of Israel offered the blood of animals to atone for sin, but Jesus shed his own blood when he died on the cross (see Heb. 9:12). By his choice, Jesus became the *sacrifice* as well as the *sacrificing priest*. Since Jesus is the sinless Son of God, his sacrifice was perfect. It was sufficient to pay for all our sins. (Heb. 9:25, 26b).

### OUR CALLING AS GOD’S PRIESTS

“The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God [will] cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, *so that we may serve the living God!*” (Heb. 9:14). The goal of Christ’s priestly ministry is to enable us—as unrighteous as we are—to serve the holy God. Jesus has become our priest so that we can become God’s priests (1 Pet. 2:4, 9; Rev. 1:5b, 6a). Every Christian is a priest of the Most High God.

If we are God’s priests, then what sacrifice do we bring? Jesus made the supreme sacrifice when he died on the cross and atoned for our sins once and for all. No other sacrifice needs to be made. But, the Bible says that there are some sacrifices we *can* bring. One is the living sacrifice of \_\_\_\_\_ for God’s service (Rom. 12:1). Another is “a sacrifice of \_\_\_\_\_” (Heb. 13:15).

In order for us to fulfill our priestly duties—and this is the main lesson to draw from Exodus 39—we need to be \_\_\_\_\_. Like the high priest of Israel, we have been set apart for the holy service of God. (1 Pet. 1:15). God accepts our service when we are clothed with Jesus Christ, who is the wardrobe of our holiness.

### THE TYPOLOGY OF THE TABERNACLE

Once Israel’s artisans were finished making the various parts of the tabernacle, their work had to be \_\_\_\_\_. The people brought everything needed for the tabernacle and presented it to \_\_\_\_\_.

The tabernacle taught the Israelites about \_\_\_\_\_, who is the true tabernacle—God’s dwelling place with humanity. When the Israelites brought the tabernacle to Moses, even if they didn’t fully understand it, they were laying out \_\_\_\_\_.

The Old Testament gives us divinely ordained symbols that reveal the basic truths of salvation in Christ. Not everything in the Old Testament is symbolic. In the case of the tabernacle, nearly everything *was* symbolic. Consider eight important lessons we can draw from the symbolism of the tabernacle (from Vern Poythress's book on the law of Moses):

1. First, the tabernacle reminded the Israelites that God was the \_\_\_\_\_. Likewise, we should now recognize that God our Father and Christ our Redeemer is the heavenly Lord, the Lord of all.
2. Second, the tabernacle depicted for the Israelites the way in which God's \_\_\_\_\_ was demonstrated in their \_\_\_\_\_. Likewise, we today should see our circumstances and our daily blessings as the provision of God.
3. Third, the tabernacle as a unique structure reminded Israel that they had unique \_\_\_\_\_. Likewise, in New Testament times God dwells in a unique way in the church and in individual Christians.
4. Fourth, the tabernacle symbolized \_\_\_\_\_, and thereby reminded the Israelites of their sinful, lost, separated condition as descendants of \_\_\_\_\_. The tabernacle spoke both of being lost and also of the promise of overcoming sin through a representative man, ultimately through Jesus Christ our final high priest.
5. Fifth, the tabernacle symbolized the people of God \_\_\_\_\_. Israel as a collective body was called upon to imitate the beauty, order, holiness, and purity of the tabernacle itself. Likewise, the church in our day is to be holy.
6. Sixth, the tabernacle symbolized the people of God \_\_\_\_\_. The Israelites were commanded to keep their bodies pure...pure first of all from sin but also from ceremonial defilements that symbolized sin. In the New Testament, the bodies of Christians are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are "to purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Cor. 7:1).
7. Seventh, the tabernacle pointed forward to the \_\_\_\_\_, the final dwelling of God with human beings.
8. Eighth, the tabernacle symbolized \_\_\_\_\_. We now know, in the light of fuller revelation, that the God of Israel is our trinitarian God.

### **WITH FLYING COLORS**

In order to reveal the character of God and the way of salvation in Christ, the tabernacle had to be made \_\_\_\_\_ the way God said. Even before hearing Moses' verdict, we know that the tabernacle will pass inspection with flying colors. After describing all the things they made, the Bible summarizes by saying, "<sup>32</sup> Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was

finished, and the people of Israel did according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses; so they did." (Exod. 39:32).

It didn't take Moses long to reach his verdict. Exodus 39 brings construction to a close by saying, "Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the Lord had commanded. So Moses blessed them" (v. 43). This is a powerful example of full \_\_\_\_\_ to God, and of the \_\_\_\_\_ that comes to anyone who does his will. When God's work is done in God's way, it always has God's blessing. When God's work is not done in God's way, it does *not* have God's blessing. The Israelites wanted to please the God of their salvation, and as a result, their work enjoyed the smile of his blessing.

### **DOING THINGS GOD'S WAY**

\_\_\_\_\_ did God's work in God's way, and so should we. What is God calling you to do? Whatever it is, there are two ways to do it: His way or the wrong way.

We work for God knowing that one day there will be a \_\_\_\_\_, what theologians call "the Last Judgment." On that great and terrible day, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). For those who have done his work in his way, there will be blessing upon blessing. (Eph. 6:8; cf. Matt. 16:27).

But our good works will not be the basis for our \_\_\_\_\_. Although we will be rewarded for them, we will not be saved by them. Thankfully, before inspecting us there is something else that God will inspect first. He will inspect the finished work of Jesus Christ, the tabernacle of our salvation. And when he looks at Jesus, he will see the perfect righteousness of the only man who ever did everything just as God commanded. Then God will pronounce his blessing—not simply on Jesus, but also on everyone who trusts in Jesus.

\*This outline was adapted from Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005)