

The Priesthood: Clothed in Grace

Exodus 28:1-43

As we read Exodus chapter twenty-eight, we move from the architecture of the Tabernacle to the men who would serve within it. God has given the blueprints for His dwelling place, but now He establishes the priesthood.

It's important to see the heart of God here. He chooses Aaron and his sons—men who were far from perfect—to minister to Him. This reminds us that ministry is never about our own merit; it is always about God's calling and His provision.

The Garments of Glory and Beauty

In verse two, the Lord instructs Moses to make "holy garments" for Aaron "for glory and for beauty." These weren't just fancy clothes; they were functional theology. Every thread and every stone told a story of how God relates to His people.

The High Priest wore an ephod—a vest-like garment—woven with gold, blue, purple, and scarlet. On the shoulders of this ephod were two onyx stones. Engraved on these stones were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Exodus 28:12: "And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial."

Think about that. When the priest stood before God, he carried the weight of the people on his shoulders. He was their representative. But it goes deeper. In verse fifteen, we see the breastplate of judgment. It held twelve different precious stones—sardius, topaz, diamond, jasper, and others—each engraved with a tribe's name.

Exodus 28:29: "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually."

What a beautiful picture! The priest carried the people on his **shoulders** (the place of strength) and over his **heart** (the place of affection). This points us directly to our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. He doesn't just tolerate you; He carries you on His shoulders of strength and keeps you forever against His heart of love.

Guidance and the Will of God

Inside this breastplate were the Urim and the Thummim. These words essentially mean "lights" and "perfections." While scholars debate exactly what they were—perhaps stones used to determine a "yes" or "no" from the Lord—their purpose was clear: seeking God's direction.

Today, we often want a "Urim and Thummim." We want a "magic" sign to tell us which job to take or which house to buy. But God has called us to a walk of faith. In the New Testament, we see the disciples casting lots one last time before the Holy Spirit was poured out. After Pentecost, we see them led by the Spirit and the Word.

If you want to know God's will, don't look for a "black stone" or a "white stone." Look to Proverbs 3:6: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." If you commit your day to Him, He is faithful to guide your steps through the circumstances and the peace of the Holy Spirit.

Holiness and Service

Finally, the priest wore a golden plate on his turban engraved with the words: HOLINESS TO THE LORD. This was a constant reminder that approaching God is a serious matter. In those days, the bells on the hem of the robe were a matter of life and death. If the priest didn't follow God's way, the bells would go silent.

Interestingly, their garments were made of linen, not wool. Why? Because wool makes you sweat. God didn't want His priests "perspiring" in their own effort to reach Him. He wanted inspired service, not perspired service. When we try to serve God in our own fleshly energy, we just end up sweaty and exhausted. When we serve in the power of the Spirit, there is a rest in the labor.

Practical Application

1. Rest in His Strength: Stop trying to carry yourself. You are engraved on the heart of Jesus. He is the one holding you up today.
2. Acknowledge Him: Before you make that decision tomorrow, stop and pray. Don't assume you know the way; ask the Lord to direct your path.
3. Serve from Love, Not Effort: Check your "sweat level." Are you serving God because you feel you *have* to, or is it an inspired overflow of what He has done for you?

A Challenge for the Believer

Are you living "Holy to the Lord" in the secret places of your life? We are called a "royal priesthood." That means your life is the "garment" the world sees. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you today. Don't settle for a mundane walk; seek the "glory and beauty" that comes from a life fully surrendered to Him.

An Invitation to the Unbeliever

Perhaps you feel the weight of your own "iniquity," as the text mentions. The Old Testament priests had to offer sacrifices year after year, but they could never fully take away sin.

But I have good news for you. Jesus Christ came as the final High Priest. He didn't offer the blood of bulls or goats; He shed His own blood on the cross to pay the price for your sins. He died in your place, was buried, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

He is alive today, and He wants to carry *your* name on His heart. If you are tired of carrying your own guilt and trying to find your own way, give your life to Him right now. Simply confess that you are a sinner, believe that He died and rose for you, and ask Him to be your Lord.