

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

GOD's Marvelous Revelations Concerning Sin and Death
and
The Divinely Provided Way of Salvation

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CHAPTER ELEVEN -

THE PRIESTHOOD

(Exodus 28; 29:1-37; 39:1-31)

This subject, in its relationship to the children of Israel, should have its proper beginning with Genesis 14:18-20. Eight times in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in dealing with the meaning of the Aaronic priesthood, as typifying the High Priesthood of JESUS CHRIST, the Apostle mentions the ministry of Melchizedek, king of Salem, who, for the first time in sacred history, brought forth bread and wine, symbolizing all that the Sacred Communion means to spiritual Christians today. Thus Israel's priesthood is linked to that of Melchizedek, to whom Abraham gave tithes and, as is clearly indicated in Hebrews 7:10, so did those who were called to the priesthood and service of Jehovah, to minister in things Divine in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness and, on through many centuries, in the temple in Jerusalem.

As this subject, unfolded in connection with the worship conducted in the Tabernacle, is so voluminous, we can but indicate the scripture passages related thereto, urging our readers to take their Bibles and give diligent study to the Word. This will be found abundantly rewarding, especially to every minister of the Gospel. (Exodus 29:1-37; 40:12-15; Leviticus 8, 9.)

FIRST CLEANSING

When Aaron and his sons were inducted into the priesthood, in obedience to GOD's command Moses brought them to the door of the Tabernacle, probably to the Laver of cleansing, where Moses thoroughly bathed their bodies with water. Thus, the first requisite for the service of GOD, REGENERATION, or the New Birth, was symbolized. Moses did it, as they could not cleanse themselves. Only GOD can cleanse the souls of men by the washing of regeneration. After that, they must go constantly to the laver to wash their feet and hands soiled by service, as they handle earthly things.

CLOTHED WITH CLEAN GARMENTS

Moses, acting as GOD's representative, then placed clean garments upon Aaron. Symbolically the garments with which the High Priest and his sons were invested were GOD's providing. The vestments of this world are meaningless and useless for the service of GOD.

ANOINTED

(Exodus 29:20-25; Exodus 30:30-32)

The truth, presented by the two passages which we have cited, is profoundly significant. The blood of the ram to be sacrificed, in token of the taking away of the sins of Aaron and of his sons, was to be applied to the tip of their right ear, and to the thumb of their right hand, and to the great toe of their right foot. *They were to hear what GOD the Lord would speak.* (Psalm 85:6-8) Their hand was to be set apart and dedicated to GOD's service. Their walk in the sight of men, and their journeyings with messages and services for GOD were to be under the blood, and sacrificially rendered in His name and for His glory.

They were to be sanctified and set apart by the administering of oil, signifying the baptism with the HOLY SPIRIT. In the case of the High Priest, oil was poured over his head, and ran down upon his beard and over his garments, symbolizing complete anointing and consecration of his all, to the ministry and service of GOD. If these things were so profoundly significant and essential, so long ago, why are the realities which they signify, so completely neglected today?

It will be found singularly instructive and impressive for the reader to make a pains-taking study of the requirements imposed upon all of the priests of Israel. Should these requirements be any less rigid and far-reaching for those who are set apart for the service of GOD to minister in things Divine and Eternal, in our day?

THE HIGH PRIEST

While we study the scriptures relating to the Aaronic Priesthood, as found in Exodus and Leviticus, we shall find their inspired meaning and application for us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is shown that all that relates to the priesthood, especially to the high priesthood, typifies the ministry of OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST, JESUS CHRIST, who has, once for all, entered within the Holy of Holies of the Temple in the Heavens to make intercession for us before the throne of GOD.

THE HIGH-PRIESTLY HABILIMENTS

(Exodus 28:1-5)

The raiment of the High-Priest consisted of six garments, or parts of garments; a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle. We present them in the order of their consideration in the Word.

The Ephod: (Exodus 28:6-14) The ephod was the outer garment. It was cunningly wrought in the colors symbolizing the character and ministry of CHRIST, gold, purple, scarlet, and blue wrought on fine-twined, white linen. It was loosely fitted, dropping to the bulge of the thighs.

We are told that gold was beaten into thin plates, cut into fine wires, and worked into the linen with the three colors already mentioned.

The ephod had two broad shoulder straps, one for each shoulder, with some sort of band crossing over, both front and back, joining them. On each shoulder was an onyx stone, attached to the ephod. Each stone was engraved with the names of six tribes of Israel, six names on one shoulder and the remaining six names on the other shoulder, arranged in the order of the birth of the 12 sons of Jacob (Israel). We shall treat this subject more fully in a subsequent chapter.

These onyx stones were mounted in gold, and were designed to symbolize the fact that when the High Priest appeared in The Tabernacle, and especially in the Holy of Holies, he bore in remembrance before the Lord all the children of Israel. There were two more golden settings, like rosettes, which ornamented the shoulder-pieces, and golden cords depending (hanging) from them. The breastplate and girdle were worn with the ephod.

The Girdle: (Exodus 28:8) The girdle served the purpose of a belt. It was a very skillfully woven band, of the same material as the ephod, and of the same colors, having the same symbolism. Our great High Priest, as seen in Revelation 1:12-13, was girt with a golden girdle.

The Breastplate: (Exodus 28:15-28) The breastplate contained or constituted the Urim and Thummin by which the high priest received the pronouncements or decisions and judgments of GOD, as relating to His people. Its materials, colors and workmanship were the same as those of the ephod. Its symbolism was the same. It was 9 inches wide and 18 inches long. When folded it formed a pouch 9 inches square. On the front it was set with stones in gold-mountings. There were 12 stones, set in 4 rows with 3 stones in each row. It is evident that these stones were engraved with the names of the 12 sons of Israel, in the order of their birth, from the oldest to the youngest. These stones in order were, in the first row, sardius, topaz, carbuncle; second row, emerald, sapphire, diamond; third row, jacinth (ligure), agate, amethyst; fourth row, beryl, onyx, jasper.

The breast plate was held in place by golden cords attached to rings pendant from the golden rosettes on the shoulders as already mentioned. Other rings at the girdle held cords so interlaced that the breastplate was held firmly in place, resting on the ephod. Thus as the High Priest came into the presence of GOD in the Holy of Holies, he bore the names of the children of Israel engraved on stones resting on his shoulders and upon the ephod over his heart.

The Robe of the Ephod: (Exodus 28:31-35) The robe of the ephod was all of blue. It was woven in one piece. It had an opening for the head, and hung to the floor from the shoulders. On the lower hem was a row of pendant bells, fashioned in the form of pomegranates, interspersed with balls of purple, scarlet, and blue. The High Priest was forbidden to enter the Holy Place without this garment on. It was essential that these bells be heard on entering and leaving the Holy of Holies, otherwise he would die.

The Mitre: (Exodus 28:36-39) This was a holy crown. Engraved upon it were the words "**HOLINESS TO THE LORD.**" It was mounted upon blue lace, and was borne across the front of Aaron's forehead, perhaps wound around the head, with the golden, engraved plate in front.

The Embroidered Coat: (Exodus 28:39-43) This, doubtless, was an undergarment. It was of fine linen, woven in checkerwork. It was put on first, next to the body. It may have been fashioned as an undershirt, possibly with a rather deep skirt. Added to this was a garment much like our modern "shorts." The description of these garments indicates this to be correct. The wearing of this garment was obligatory. Disobedience merited death.

The Dress of the Priests: (Exodus 28:40-43) The official dress of the sons of Aaron consisted of four garments. A coat of fine linen, held in place by a girdle. They were woven in the four essential colors which we have noticed so often: purple, scarlet, blue and white. Each priest was required to wear a head-dress, similar to that of the high-priest, but far simpler. Under all were worn "concealers", or breeches, as already stated. Every priest must wear these specified garments. Moses was expressly commanded to see that these garments were worn, and also that before any priest began his duties, he must be anointed with the holy oil, consecrated and sanctified, or set apart wholly to the service and ministry of GOD.

The instructions and commandments, relating to all these detailed preparations for the priesthood, should have a sobering effect and would add dignity and solemnity to the service and ministry of every servant of GOD, if these scriptures were to become a part of the teaching and training of every person aspiring to "Holy Orders" in our churches today. May GOD grant to use these chapters to this end.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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