

CHRIST IN THE TABERNACLE

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CHAPTER TWO

THE HIGH PRIEST AND HIS SONS

Christ Our Great High Priest and His Believer-Priests
Exodus 28:1-29:46; Leviticus 8:19:24

HAVING seen, in our opening lesson, a bird's eye view of the Jewish tabernacle, let us take a glimpse at the high priest and his sons; for we can understand the significance of the sanctuary and its furnishings only as we know something of the priesthood, chosen by the Lord, to minister before Him on behalf of His redeemed people. And nowhere do "*The Glories of Christ As Seen in the Jewish Tabernacle*" shine with more radiance than in His Great High Priestly work, foreshadowed in the high priest of Israel.

Aaron, the first high priest, was a remarkable type of Christ, our Great High Priest. And Aaron's sons foreshadowed the believer-priests who compose the church of the Lord Jesus. To show that this eternal truth is not mere fancy or speculation, but that it is plainly taught in the inspired Scriptures, is the purpose of our lesson today.

Many clear teachings of the Word of God leave us in no doubt concerning these things; we shall have to do chiefly with two chapters in Exodus, two in Leviticus, and the heart of the Epistle to the Hebrews. (See Exodus 28:1-29:46; Leviticus 8:19:24; Hebrews 5:1-10:22).

Perhaps some have wondered why the Holy Spirit in Exodus interrupts the description of the God-given pattern of the tabernacle with chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine, which tell of the priesthood.

It has been suggested that it was as though God had come out from His throne room to meet sinful man at the brazen altar, and to lead His redeemed back with Him into His very throne room. He could do this only by the Person and work of His beloved Son and our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, foreshadowed in the Leviticus priesthood that was established with Aaron and his sons.

Only because of the ministry of Christ, our Mediator, our Advocate with the Father, can we hold communion with our holy God. That would seem to be the reason why the Holy Spirit pauses just at Exodus 28, 29 to set forth in shadow and in type the glories of Him who was to come to minister in the heavenly sanctuary, "**which the Lord built, and not man.**"

And that is why we pause just at this point in our study to let the Holy Spirit teach us something of the priestly work of Christ that we may better understand the fullness of His love and grace, prefigured in the earthly sanctuary which God told Moses to build for His dwelling place among His chosen people, Israel.

In these two chapters before us, and in Leviticus 8, 9, we see minute details concerning the dress of the priests, their consecration to the sacred office, their food, and their ministry. To assist them in the service of the tabernacle, God gave to Aaron the Levites, whom he, in turn, gave back to God as an offering unto the Lord.

We shall have more to say about these later in this lesson; but first let us compare the person and work of Aaron with that of Christ, as presented to us by the Spirit of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Without this New Testament commentary on the Law of Moses, we should be in the dark about many rich and precious lessons concerning the person and ministry of Jesus, our Great High Priest, before the **“throne of grace.”**

CHRIST FULFILLED THE QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF A PRIEST IN ISRAEL

Hebrews 5:14 gives us both the qualifications and the functions of a Levitical priest:

- (1) he had to be a man, **“taken from among men”** — not an angel, for example, but a man;
- (2) he had to be **“called of God, as was Aaron.”**

These, in brief, were his qualifications.

His duties were threefold:

- (1) he had to **“offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins”**;
- (2) he had to **“have compassion on the ignorant”** and the erring, remembering that he himself was **“compassed with infirmity”**;
- (3) as we read throughout the Jewish Law, he had to pray for the people before the golden altar of incense.

Hebrews 5:10 explains in no uncertain terms that the Lord Jesus fulfilled the qualifications of the high priest: for He was a Man, **“taken from among men”**; and He **“glorified not himself to be made an high priest,”** but was **“called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”**

His humanity is graphically portrayed in verses 7 and 8, where we read of His agony in Gethsemane's Garden, when, “in the days of his flesh,” He **“offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears”**; when as the Son, **“obedient unto death,”** He **“learned obedience by the things which he suffered.”**

What a picture of the suffering Saviour! It brings before our mind's eye the “**cup of suffering**” which caused Him to “**sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**” So intense was His agony at the thought of becoming the Sin Bearer for a guilty world that “**there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.**” (See Luke 22:43, 44). His sinless soul shrank from becoming a curse for us! Yes, our Lord Jesus was a Man, “**in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin**” (Hebrews 4:15). God cannot die; and in order to die for our sins, He had to become a Man — He did not become an angel (Hebrews 2:16); He was “**taken from among men.**”

As the Man, Christ Jesus, He was “**called of God . . . a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.**” We shall come back to this wonderful truth a bit later; but just here let us note in passing that in these words the Holy Spirit was quoting a prophecy written by David a thousand years before Christ was born in Bethlehem, and recorded in Psalm 110:4. “**Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world**” (Acts 15:18).

That our Lord Jesus fulfilled the duties of the high priest in Israel — and is yet fulfilling them — is the message of the very heart of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Over and over again we read that He offered Himself “**once for all,**” as the perfect Sacrifice for sin; that He “**ever liveth to make intercession for them**” who “**come unto God by him**”; and that He is seated “**on the right hand of the Majesty on high**” to deal gently, patiently, with His blood-bought children. What a picture! What a Priest! And the whole body of New Testament teaching supports and verifies these eternal truths!

Not only so, but New Testament teaching bears out the truth that Aaron's sons were typical of Christians, in this church age, believer-priests in the household of faith. Of this, too, we shall have more to say later in this lesson.

Before we return to the Exodus description of the high priest and his sons, their dress, consecration, and ministry, let us pause longer just here to consider two fundamental and often neglected truths concerning the High Priestly Person and work of Christ.

- In His Person, or Being, He was “**called of God,**” “**a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.**”

- In His ministry in “**the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man,**” He is a Priest after the pattern of Aaron.

Melchisedec foreshadowed the eternal deity and glory of Jesus, our King-Priest; Aaron's service in the earthly sanctuary foreshadowed His ministry for His redeemed children.

CHRIST IS “BETTER THAN” AARON IN HIS PERSON “A PRIEST FOR EVER AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC”

This twofold truth concerning the Person and work of Christ, our Great High Priest, is set forth in the profound, majestic Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Christian Jews, to whom this letter was addressed, were being cruelly persecuted for their testimony, and were, therefore, in danger of returning to Judaism. The temple was still standing (Hebrews 10:11); unbelieving Jews were still observing the ritual of the Mosaic Law. The Hebrew Christians, who had separated themselves from the Christ-rejecting nation, needed instruction, warning, and encouragement.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit wrote this epistle to prove to them that Christianity was far “**better than**” Judaism, as seen in its Founder, Christ. Having shown conclusively that Christ is “**better than**” the prophets, angels, Moses, and Joshua, then He went on to prove, in the heart of the epistle, that Christ is “**better than**” Aaron, Israel's first high priest — the best that Judaism had to offer.

And in all this profound treatise the Holy Spirit set forth, in words that glow and burn their way into our hearts, the beautiful message that Jesus, the Son of God, of whom the prophets wrote, whom the angels worship, in whom Moses and Joshua trusted for their salvation, of whom Aaron was but a type — that this eternal One is our ever-living, ever-loving Great High Priest and coming King.

As a Prophet, He had given to a sinning world His Father's message of divine and eternal and vicarious love.

As a Priest, He had died for His creatures' sins, and had entered into the holiest of all, even heaven itself, there to minister on behalf of His blood-bought, redeemed children.

Now Aaron was Israel's first high priest, and he was rightly held in honor and esteem by his people, Israel. But long before Aaron was born, another king-priest had met Aaron's ancestor, Abraham; for Levi was the great-grandfather of Aaron; Abraham was the great-grandfather of Levi. This king-priest who met Abraham, and who was greater than this father of the Hebrew nation, was none other than Melchisedec.

Only three portions of the Word of God tell us of Melchisedec: Genesis 14:17-20; Psalm 110:4; and the Epistle to the Hebrews (5:5-7:28). (Note the difference in the Hebrew and the Greek spelling of the name).

Melchisedec was “**king of Salem**” and “**priest of the most high God.**”

“**Salem**” was the ancient name for “**Jerusalem**,” and means “*peace*” — “**Jerusalem**” means “*City of peace*.” By interpretation, therefore, Melchisedec's name means “*King of righteousness*” and “*King of peace*.” And in these beautiful and significant names he becomes a type of the Lord Jesus, “**King of righteousness**,” indeed; and “**Prince of Peace.**”

Moreover, the Scriptures tell us nothing about the genealogy of Melchisedec, who “**met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him**” after the patriarch had delivered his nephew, Lot, from captivity.

Some Bible teachers hold that he was, indeed, a manifestation of God Himself to Abraham; but after careful study, we believe that he was a man, a king-priest, whose family descent was deliberately withheld by the Holy Spirit, in order that he might become a type of our King-Priest, even the Son of God, who is, in very truth, **“without . . . beginning of days, nor end of life”** (Hebrews 7:3). And the Epistle to the Hebrews reiterates the heart of the matter that thus he becomes a type of the eternity of Christ's priesthood; for He is **“a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”**

Aaron died; his sons died; their ministry lasted for only a brief time; then others succeeded them in the priestly office. But because there is no record of Melchisedec's parentage or birth or death, he is typical of Jesus, our Great High Priest, **“whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”** (Micah 5:2), who has neither beginning nor ending.

That Christ, our Great High Priest, is greater than Aaron, Israel's first high priest, is the central theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and the argument is very plain: Melchisedec was greater than Aaron, not only for the reasons already named; but also because he was greater than Aaron's forefather, Abraham. He was greater than Abraham because he blessed Abraham, and received tithes from the patriarch.

“And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better” (Hebrews 7:7); and one who receives tithes is greater than the one who gives them.

Again, Aaron came through the tribe of Levi, and was only a priest; Christ, from the kingly tribe of Judah, is both Priest and King. (See Hebrews 7:14).

Aaron and his sons were made priests without an oath. But to the Son of God the Father **“sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”** (Hebrews 7:21).

We have already observed that Aaron and his sons died, whereas Christ ever liveth. We quote Hebrews 7:23-25 just here for the Holy Spirit's own words about this truth:

“And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Aaron, because he was a sinner, had to offer daily sacrifices, **“first for his own sins, and then for the people's”** (Hebrews 7:27); but Christ, who was without sin, suffered for a sin-cursed world. He Himself was ever **“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens”** (Hebrews 7:26).

Having compared the Aaronic priesthood with the eternal, unchangeable priesthood of the Lord Jesus, in Hebrews 5:17-28; that is, having shown that Christ in His divine being, is far **“better than”** the very best that Judaism had to offer; the Holy Spirit concludes this part of the Epistle to the Hebrews by saying, in 8:1:

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum [chief point]: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”

Then He continues the comparison between the Levitical priesthood and that of Christ by showing the difference in the ministry of the two. Not only is our Great High Priest, in Himself, in His righteous and matchless person, far greater than any earthly priest could ever be; but in His service He is the only perfect Priest. The comparison that follows, in Hebrews 8:2-10:22 fairly glows with the radiance that beams from the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and from His risen majesty and glory!

A few selected passages from these chapters, as we scan the pages, will show us something of the wonder and beauty of our Heavenly Priest, and thus prepare our hearts for a fuller appreciation of His ministry for us even now before **“the throne of grace,”** in **“the true tabernacle”** on high.

CHRIST IS “BETTER THAN” AARON IN HIS MINISTRY

Without any attempt to outline this portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews, let us glance down the pages to note some of the striking points of contrast between the ministry of Aaron and that of Christ.

- Aaron served the Lord in an earthly sanctuary, made of perishable materials; whereas our Great High Priest ministers in **“the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man,”** eternal in the heavens.
- The Levitical priests served **“unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.”** **“But now hath he [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises”** (Hebrews 8:6).
- The first covenant, that is, the Law of Moses, was not faultless; and it was written on tables of stone. But the new covenant in Christ Jesus is faultless; and it is written in the hearts of men who love Him.

Under the old covenant of the Law there was a continual remembrance of sins, kept constantly before God's people by the centuries old sacrifices which pointed on to Jesus, **“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29). But under the new covenant, ushered in by Christ's death on the cross, God promised to remember our sins and iniquities no more forever. And now that the new covenant has been made, the old has fulfilled its purpose, and has vanished away. (See Hebrews 8:7-13). The new covenant is eternal!

In Hebrews 9:1-10 the Holy Spirit describes the **“earthly sanctuary,”** on which we tried to get a bird's eye view in our last lesson, and which we hope to study more fully in the lessons before us. With all the many details of Exodus the Hebrew Christians were very familiar. They needed only to be reminded here in this Epistle of the two rooms of that sanctuary, with their furniture, even the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies; with the veil that separated the two, and closed **“the way into the holiest of all”** (v. 8).

These things, God tells us plainly, were only **“a figure for the time then present”** (v. 9). In other words, they were figures, or shadows, or types of **“good things to come”** in our Lord Jesus. In His death on Calvary He opened the way into the Holy of Holies, even heaven itself — forever opened the only way to heaven and eternal life and His glorious Presence!

Hebrews 9:11 continues the contrast further, showing that Christ ministers in a more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands; that He offered, not the blood of goats and calves, but His own precious blood; that His sacrifice was far more efficacious than even the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement, the best that Judaism could offer; His sacrifice obtained eternal redemption for us.

The animal sacrifices sanctified **“to the purifying of the flesh”**; His blood cleanses the guilty conscience. **“And with out shedding of blood is no remission”** of sin. (See Hebrews 9:11, 22).

- As a priest, Christ **“hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”**
- As a priest, He has entered into the Holy Place not made with hands, **“now to appear in the presence of God for us.”**
- As our coming King, He **“shall appear the second time”** not to die, but to usher in everlasting righteousness! (See Hebrews 9:24, 28).

My friend, do you **“love his appearing”**?

Do you know Him as your Saviour? Accept Him as your Great High Priest; or you will meet Him as your Judge and righteous King, who must judge sin because He is holy.

The Day of Atonement was in the mind of the writer to the Hebrews when he spoke of **“a remembrance again made of sins every year”** (10:3). That was the greatest day in the year to a godly Hebrew. The very best that man could do to show his faith in the promised Redeemer, was done on that day. It was a time of mourning for sin, a day of putting away sin for the whole nation. But God did not want the sacrifices and offerings of a people whose hearts were far from Him. They had sinned and had **“come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23). A spotless Lamb was required; therefore, the Son said to the Father: **“A body hast thou prepared for me”** — a human body that might be offered as the sinless Substitute for sinning man. **“Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God”** (Hebrews 10:57).

The unbelieving priests of the family of Aaron still continued to stand, **“daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices,”** which could never take away sins — even after Christ, the Passover Lamb, had offered Himself **“once for all”**!

At the brazen altar in the temple court the godless Jews of apostolic days still shed the blood of goats and calves and lambs and turtle doves and young pigeons. This they did, in their blindness and sin, until the Roman Caesar, Titus, in 70 A. D. destroyed their temple and scattered their nation. But not one drop of blood should have been shed for sin after the Lamb of God had offered Himself without spot to God! All that followed Calvary was but a hollow mockery, an empty ritual, which Christ rejecting Jews continued but for a time.

The Levitical priests were never through with their ministry; there was no chair in the tabernacle; they could never sit down, and rest in a finished work.

“But this man [Jesus], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12).

When He cried on Calvary, saying, **“It is finished,”** He triumphantly proclaimed a finished redemption. We can add nothing to the finished work of Christ. Our poor, paltry works cannot save us; they cannot help save us. Only the finished work of Christ, our Substitute, can avail to wash away our sins.

Only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, did the high priest dare enter into the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt in the pillar of cloud and fire. No other priest dared enter there, lest he die. And Aaron dared not enter without blood, which he sprinkled on and before the mercy seat.

In all this **“the Holy Ghost”** signified that **“the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing”** (Hebrews 9:8). But when Christ died, **“the veil of the temple was rent in twain.”** **“The way into the holiest”** was forever opened! We go directly into God's presence now through prayer; one day faith shall become sight!

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith . . .” (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Do you see, my Christian friend, why we must let the Holy Spirit teach us the deep and wonderful message of the Epistle to the Hebrews, if we would understand why God interrupted the description of the pattern for the Jewish tabernacle, in order to give His instructions concerning the Levitical priesthood?

The priesthood was a vital part of the Law of Moses. And the Law was **“a shadow of good things to come”** in Christ Jesus (Hebrews 10:1). Aaron and his sons typified Christ and His church, believer-priests. Yet Christ is far **“better than”** Aaron in His person; He is **“a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”** He is far **“better than”** Aaron and all his descendants in His ministry; for He ministers in a better tabernacle, as the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises than the Law of Moses could ever offer.

His is an enduring, unchangeable priesthood.

He offered a better sacrifice, with a better hope of a better resurrection. As our eternal Priest, His blood avails for all eternity. His prayers for us avail before His Father's throne. He deals gently with the ignorant and erring. How gently He deals with His own! And thank God! His work of redemption is forever done!

- No more does He have to suffer the bitterness and cruelty of the cross.
- No more does He have to endure the scoffing, the scourging, the mockings of the wicked men who nailed Him to the tree!

Once He wore a crown of thorns. But now He lives, forever “**crowned with glory and honour**,” one day to appear in glory “**crowned with many crowns**.” How can we help but love Him? Let us repeat for emphasis, that not one soul who reads this message may miss the meaning:

- As our Priest, Christ shed His blood for our sins.
- As our Priest, He ever lives to make intercession for us at the throne of grace.

When we sin, He is our Advocate with the Father, our Lawyer, our Mediator. He takes our part against Satan's accusations. He has never lost a case in the court of heaven! Nor will He — ever!

- As our Priest, He deals gently with us. He “**knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust**” (Psalm 103:14). He disciplines and chastens and trains us for service, bringing us to the place of confession of sin, forgiving, loving, and patiently leading us on toward His Presence and Home!

Satan desired to have Peter, that he might sift him as wheat; but the Lord said to Peter, “**I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not**” (Luke 22:31, 32).

If we would know what kind of prayer He is offering to the Father on our behalf, we need only turn to the seventeenth chapter of John, there to read some of the most sacred, soul-inspiring words that ever fell from the lips of the Son of God. It is His high priestly prayer, not only for Peter and James and John; not only for those who knew and loved Him when He was on earth; but for “**them also who**” should “**believe**” on Him “**through their word**” (John 17:20).

That includes us; it includes every child of God of all the Christian era.

AARON AND HIS SONS — A TYPE OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

Surely we have had overwhelming proof from Hebrews that Aaron, in his ministry, was a type of Christ, our Great High Priest. Now his sons represented Christ's church, believer-priests: Their names were closely associated with Aaron's; even so we bear the name of Christ, for we are called “**Christians**.”

They had the same calling; no one other than a son of Aaron or his descendants could dare enter into the priesthood. Likewise, our Lord says unto us, “**As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you**” (John 20:21). Christ entrusts His gospel message only to those who love Him.

Aaron and his sons were provided with the same pure linen coat; we are given the robe of Christ's righteousness, which fits us for His presence (Only Aaron wore the robes of glory and beauty, even as our blessed Lord shall shine forth throughout eternity as the light of heaven, the “altogether lovely” One!)

Aaron and his sons were anointed with the same blood, when they were consecrated to their priestly office. We are cleansed by Christ's own precious blood — cleansed that we may serve Him, and others for His name's sake.

He needed no cleansing, for He was without sin. When He said, “. . . **for their sakes I sanctify myself**” (John 17:19), He referred to His being consecrated, set apart, to His priestly work of redemption. As the sinless One, He could need no cleansing from sin!

Aaron and his sons were anointed with the same holy oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It is significant that Aaron was anointed with oil before the bloody sacrifices were offered; his sons, afterwards; for our Lord Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism, before He went to the cross; His disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius, after His death and resurrection.

Moreover, Aaron was given a greater unction of the holy oil than were his sons; it was poured on his head, and it ran down upon his beard, even to the skirts of his garments. Our Lord Jesus had the fulness of the Holy Spirit as no sinner saved by grace could ever have. The Father gave not the Spirit “**by measure unto him**” (John 3:34).

Again, this holy oil was not to be put upon stranger. Even so, the Christ-rejecting sinner cannot understand the things of the Spirit; they are “**foolishness unto him.**” (See I Corinthians 2:14).

The hands of Aaron and his sons were filled with the same offering. They were filled for the Lord. They ate the same food.

Jesus, the Man, lived by faith, and so must we live by faith. The priests fed upon the bread of consecration. Our Lord had “**meat to eat**” that men knew not of; He came to do the will of His Father in heaven. And He sends us forth into the whitened harvest field to do His will, offering to heart-hungry millions the Bread of Life! (See John 4:32-38).

These are some of the analogies we may well draw from Aaron and his sons, as a type of Christ and his church.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit has given us some clear statements of Scripture to show us that, as believer-priests, we are to tell the story of Christ's one sacrifice forever, to pray one for another, to be “**a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,**” showing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9). Ours is “**the high calling of God in Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 3:14).

As we think of our privileges and blessings as Christians, our hearts sing the doxology of John, who, on the Isle of Patmos, said,

“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5, 6).

THE GARMENTS OF THE PRIESTS

Before we enter upon a detailed study of the beautiful garments of the high priest, which speak to us of the glory and beauty of our Lord, let us note that Aaron and his sons were all given a linen coat, evidently with sleeves, which reached down to the feet.

The fine linen, of which this coat was made, speaks to us of Christ's righteousness. He was, in Himself, altogether righteous. And by faith in Him, we have received the gift of His righteousness, which alone enables us to stand before Him unashamed and unafraid.

The sons of Aaron wore turbans, called “**bonnets . . . for glory and for beauty.**” These were made of the same fine linen, wrapped around the head.

Besides these garments, the priests were given girdles and linen breeches (See Exodus 28:39-43).

The girdle was wound twice around the body, over the linen coat, and tied in front, the ends hanging down to the feet. Over these garments Aaron wore the beautiful garments which typify, in a remarkable way, the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

AARON'S GARMENTS FOR GLORY AND BEAUTY A TYPE OF CHRIST — “ALTOGETHER LOVELY”

There were five garments, very costly and very beautiful, which were worn only by the high priest. These were the breastplate; the ephod; the blue robe; the mitre, with its golden crown; and the girdle of the ephod.

Since Aaron was a sinner needing a Saviour, he did not possess, within himself, the glory and beauty required of one who was a type of Christ; therefore, these costly, beautiful garments had to be put upon him by Moses. Not so with our blessed Lord. He is, in Himself, all glorious, “**the fairest among ten thousand,**” the One “**altogether lovely.**”

As we consider each of these beautiful garments which God told Moses to put upon Aaron, we shall see in them symbols of the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest.

1. The Embroidered Linen Coat.

We have seen that Aaron, as well as his sons, wore a fine linen coat, the symbol of the righteousness which Christ is in Himself, and which He imparts to His believing children. Exodus 28:4 tells us that Aaron's coat was “**broidered.**”

The whole Word of God tells us in a thousand ways that the Lord Jesus was altogether righteous. Before He was born of the Virgin Mary, the angel of the Lord told Joseph that Jesus was “**conceived . . . of the Holy Ghost**” (Matthew 1:20).

Indeed, the Angel Gabriel had appeared to Mary, saying:

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the 'Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

When He was baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, even as the Father's voice spoke from heaven those words which bore witness to Jesus' sinlessness, **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”** (Matthew 3:17).

And again the Father uttered the same words, upon the mount of transfiguration. (See Matthew 17:5).

Men, angels, and demons bore witness to Christ's holy life. Angels at His birth and after His resurrection declared that He was ever the Son of God, Christ Jesus the Lord. Demons cried out, hailing Him as **“the Holy One of God.”** And rulers, officers, the centurion, the thief on the cross, apostles, and many who loved Him bore testimony to His absolute holiness.

Our Lord Himself said that He always did those things that pleased His Father in heaven. He declared over and over again that He was eternal God, one with the Father, sent down from heaven, the great **“I AM.”** It would be blasphemy to say that He did not speak the truth! His miracles evidenced the fact that He was God; for none other than the eternal God could have done His mighty works. None other than the all-wise God could have spoken His words of **“grace and truth.”**

We who love Him know that He always was and always will be the sinless, mighty, eternal God — pure and righteous in His very Being. And of this holiness the embroidered linen robe of Aaron spoke. We dare not say that Aaron, in his ministry, was not a type of Christ — not after reading the Epistle to the Hebrews! Then why should Aaron's garments not suggest the glories of the Greater than Aaron, our living High Priest?

2. The Girdle.

The **“girdle of needlework”** was a symbol of service and a symbol of strength for service. (See Luke 17:8; Isaiah 22:21). It was put upon Aaron; Christ was, in Himself, the Strong One who came, **“not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”** (Mark 10:45).

Seven hundred years before Christ was born in Bethlehem, Isaiah had foretold the coming into the world of the faithful servant of the Lord (Isaiah 42:1).

Then **“when the fulness of the time was come,”** He was born into the world, **“born of a woman,”** born to do His Father's will. Although, from all eternity, He had been **“in the form of God,”** yet He **“made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”** (Philippians 2:6-8).

In the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed that His Father's will be done, fulfilling yet another marvelous prophecy which we have read earlier in this lesson, found in Psalm 40:68 and quoted in Hebrews 10:5-8. Then He died in obedience to His Father's will, bearing the penalty of sin for His guilty creatures.

Before He died, did He not “**gird himself**” and wash His disciples' feet, teaching them that “**the servant is not greater than his Lord**”?

- Did He not, in this act, also leave us an example, that we should serve one another for His sake, confessing our wrongs, forgiving and restoring one another? (See John 13:2-17).
- Did He not teach us in this beautiful lesson the need for the daily, constant cleansing from the defilement of sin by the “**washing of water by the word**” (Ephesians 5:26)?
- Is He not even now the girded One, serving us without ceasing before the “**throne of grace**,” forgiving, interceding, presenting our prayers to the Father? Yea; He “**ever liveth to make intercession**” for His own (Hebrews 7:25).

3. The Blue Robe of the Ephod.

The description of the beautiful blue robe of the ephod is found in Exodus 28:31-35. It was called “**the robe of the ephod**” because it was worn just under the ephod, and was held in place by the same girdle, called “**the curious [i.e., 'skillfully made'] girdle of the ephod**” (Exodus 28:8).

This robe was made of one piece, with a “**hole in the top thereof**,” through which the head was passed, and with “**a binding of woven work round about the hole of it . . . that it be not rent**.” It was “**all of blue**,” the heavenly color, which reminds us of the heavenly character of our Lord.

The robe is a symbol of Christ's position, office, and character, as our perfect Great High Priest; and it speaks to us of His “**robe of righteousness**” — His by right of His own divine Being; imparted to all who accept by faith His free gift of righteousness, through His shed blood.

The Prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul wrote of this blessed truth when they said:

“**I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels**” (Isaiah 61:10).

“**The righteousness of God . . . is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe . . .**” (Romans 3:22).

This gift of God's righteousness, as a garment, is unto all. “**Whosoever will**” may accept it, and be clothed, made fit for heaven and God's holy Presence for all the endless ages. But this gift is “**upon all them that believe**,” and upon them alone.

God does not force us to accept His free gift of salvation. We must appropriate it by faith.

It is as though a coat were on display in a shop window; it is **“unto all.”** But that coat is **“upon”** only the man who takes it and wears it. Our Lord Himself has paid the price of the robe which He offers **“unto all.”** It is for us only to receive it, as the gift of His grace. Could anything be more wonderful? More simple? Even a little child may understand.

The beautiful blue robe of the ephod, which Aaron wore, was ornamented with golden bells and pomegranates, the latter embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet.

Let us read the God-given description as found in Exodus 28:33-35:

“And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe around about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not.”

- The golden bells speak to us of the perfect speech, the wonderful words, of our Lord;
- The pomegranates, of the fruitfulness of His ministry on our behalf.

The Jews of Jesus' day tried in vain **“to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him”** (Luke 11:54). But the people **“all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth”** (Luke 4:22). And even the officers whom the Jews sent to take Him were compelled to admit, **“Never man spake like this man”** (John 7:46).

The children of Israel could not see Aaron as he ministered for them in the Holy Place, trimming the lamps of the golden candlestick, offering incense as he prayed for them, feeding upon the shewbread; but as they stood before the brazen altar, they could hear the tinkle of the golden bells; then they knew that their high priest was serving them. They could not hear this reassuring sound without, in the camp; possibly they could hear it but faintly, if at all, outside the court. But at the brazen altar they could hear, and know that their priest was ever ministering to their spiritual needs.

My Christian friend, we cannot see with our physical eyes the Lord Jesus in the Most Holy Place, even heaven itself; but we hear His gracious Word, and we know that He is ministering for us before **“the throne of grace.”**

We cannot hear His Word unless we stand at the brazen altar, as it were, at the foot of His cross; but there we see His perfect sacrifice, His own shed blood, poured out for our sins. At the cross we learn that He made a full atonement for our sins, arose from the dead, and **“ever liveth to make intercession”** for us. And the sweet incense of His prayers avails!

- The golden bells tell us that He has made a full atonement for sin. They tell us of the fragrance of prayer and praise.
- The pomegranates, embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet, speak to us of the fruitfulness of Christ's ministry for us.

Here, as in everything connected with the Jewish tabernacle:

- The blue speaks to us of our Lord's deity, for blue is the heavenly color;
- The purple, of His royalty;
- The scarlet, of His sacrifice.

He was the One sent down from heaven to die for the lost; then to be exalted far above all principalities and powers; one day to be honored by men, angels, and demons as King of kings, and Lord of lords!

As Aaron walked, the pomegranates were about his feet. As our Lord walked among men, He went everywhere doing good, healing the sick, casting out demons, forgiving sins, binding up the wounded and the broken hearted. *As deeds prove the sincerity of words so do the pomegranates gave proof that His Words were verified by His gracious deeds.* How lovely was His walk! How filled with the fruits of love!

Israel rejoiced in Aaron, her high priest, knowing that he was ministering for her, and would bless her. Do we rejoice in Jesus, our Great High Priest, in the golden bells of His gracious words, and in the fruitfulness of His love? We do love Him, if we are saved. But are we more occupied with His gifts than with His own loveliness and beauty and holiness?

- For our heart-hunger He gives us the Bread of Life.
- For our thirsty souls He offers the Living Water.
- For our weary, sin-sick lives He gives rest of heart and forgiveness of all our sins.

He now appears **“in the presence of God for us”** (Hebrews 9:24).

The aged John saw Him in His resurrection glory, dressed as our Great High Priest, **“clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle”** (Revelation 1:13).

John saw Him **“in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,”** or lampstands, which symbolized His church. He is the Man Christ Jesus, representing His blood-bought bride before the Father in the Most Holy Place. John saw Him glorified. We see Him now by faith. And one day we shall look upon Him, whose nail prints bear witness to His priestly work that shall abide for all eternity.

4. The Ephod.

The breastplate was securely fastened to the ephod, and should be considered with this garment, which was **“for glory and for beauty.”**

The two were never to be separated. They were made of the same materials. First the ephod is described in Exodus 28: 6-14; then the breastplate is described in minute detail, including the instructions for securing it to the ephod.

The ephod was an outer garment, a long, sleeveless tunic, reaching below the waist, possibly a little below the knees. It was formed of a front and a back, fastened by two precious onyx stones on the shoulders. It was made of gold and of fine white linen, embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet, **“with cunning work.”**

It was held in place by the **“curious girdle”**; that is, the **“skilfully made girdle,”** fashioned of the same beautiful materials as those which went into the making of the ephod. The breastplate, also of the same gold, fine linen, and blue, purple, and scarlet, ornamented with twelve precious stones, was fastened to the ephod by golden chains. No wonder this twofold garment, the ephod and the breastplate, with the girdle, was **“for glory and for beauty”**! And how eloquently did it speak forth the glories and the beauties of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Once again, the blue, purple, and scarlet remind us of our Lord's heavenly character, His royalty, and His sacrifice. We hardly need dwell longer on this point just here, all-important though it is; for we have already discussed this truth more than once. But let us note particularly that gold also went into the making of the ephod, the breastplate, and the girdle of the ephod. Exodus 39:3 explains how the gold was literally woven into the cloth:

“And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, with cunning work.”

From this it is clear that the gold was actually woven into the cloth, yet as a separate thread. As the light fell upon this beautiful material, the gold must have glistened in all its glory; the fine white linen, embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet having another glory all its own!

And what a picture of our Lord Jesus in His eternal deity and in His spotless humanity!

- The blue tells us that the eternal God came down from heaven itself;
- The purple, that He is King of kings;
- The scarlet, that He died, shed His precious blood, for His sinning creatures.
- The fine white linen tells to all that this God-Man was holy, absolutely and forever holy!

The gold and the beautifully embroidered linen formed the one ephod, the one breastplate, the one girdle — all composing this garment **“for glory and for beauty”**; yet the gold and the linen were separate and distinct. Even so our Lord's two natures — deity and humanity — are both beautiful as only they can ever be, and both are seen in His **“altogether lovely”** Being.

- He was born a helpless Baby; yet He flung the planets into space.
- He lay in a manger; yet **“the cattle on a thousand hills”** are His own.
- He was tempted, tested, and tried; yet He could not sin because He was God.
- He worked in a carpenter's shop, and lived among humble folk; yet He could turn the water into wine, and feed the multitudes by His mighty power.
- He **“grew in stature and in favour with God and man”**; yet He is **“the Ancient of Days,”** **“whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”**
- He lay in the bottom of the boat, asleep on a pillow; yet He arose to still the tempest.

- He was the “**Man of sorrows**,” weeping with others, shedding tears of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane; yet He turned heartaches into rejoicings when He raised the dead, and gave them back to their loved ones.
- He died, and was buried — a lifeless corpse; yet He arose in triumph by the power of His own Holy Spirit!

Prophets for four thousand years before He was born had foretold His coming to be “**Immanuel, God with us**.” Yes; the gold and the fine linen were separate and distinct; yet they were woven into the one piece! “**God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself**” (II Corinthians 5:19).

- The gold could not be separated from the linen without ruining the cloth;
- The linen could not be separated from the gold without twisting the fine wires — ruining both.
- Nor can we separate our Lord's two natures.

If He was not God, then the Bible is untrue, and Christ bore false witness to His deity — blasphemous thought! Skeptics may seek to rob Him of His deity, but only to their own shame and eternal doom; they cannot alter the truth of God. If Jesus was not God, then His miracles were a stupendous fraud — another blasphemous thought! If He was not God, then His death was less noble than that of the courageous martyrs of all the centuries — yet another blasphemous thought! Jesus of Nazareth was “**God . . . manifest in the flesh**” (I Timothy 3:16).

The two precious onyx stones upon the shoulders of the ephod were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel: six names on each shoulder, “**according to their birth**” (Exodus 28:10). The names engraved upon the breastplate, which Aaron wore upon his heart, were “**according to the twelve tribes**,” as they were encamped around the tabernacle, and as they journeyed on the march. The shoulder is the place of strength; the heart, the seat of affections. Aaron literally carried his people upon his shoulders and bore them upon his heart, ministering for them as their representative before the Lord God.

This is a beautiful picture of how the Lord Jesus carries us and all our burdens, as it were, upon His omnipotent shoulders; and of how He loves us with an everlasting love. (See Isaiah 40:11; 63:9; Psalm 55:22; I Peter 5:7). If we could but take Him at His Word, “**casting all**” our “**care upon him**,” knowing that He careth for us!

5. *The Breastplate.*

The breastplate, which was the crowning glory to the ephod, was “**foursquare . . . being doubled**,” a span in length and a span in breadth. Some think it was a kind of bag or pouch, into which were placed the “**Urim and the Thummim**” (Exodus 28:30). Others hold that the “**Urim and the Thummim**” are a “*collective name for the stones of the breastplate.*” Of this we shall have more to say a bit later. In any case, this costly breastplate was securely fastened to the shoulder pieces of the ephod by golden chains, and to the ephod also just “**above the curious girdle of the ephod**,” by a lace of blue passed through rings of gold, “**that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod.**”

Can you imagine, my friend, the costly price and the brilliant radiance of this most costly of all the garments “for glory and for beauty”? Each precious stone was large enough for the name of a tribe to be engraved upon it — four rows of stones, with three jewels in each row! They were the sardius, the topaz, and the carbuncle in the first row; an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond in the second row; a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst in the third row; a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper in the fourth row. All these were set in gold. Nothing else in all the tabernacle was so costly. These were Aaron's treasures!

God tells us that we are His “**jewels**” (Malachi 3:17). We are very precious to Him, so precious that He paid a very costly price for our redemption, the price of the blood of His beloved Son!

Every beam of light that fell upon Aaron fell also upon the names of his people; and the Father's smile upon His beloved Son, the heavenly Bridegroom, falls also upon His bride; for we have been “**accepted in the beloved.**” He sees us identified with Christ, crucified with Him, risen with Him, and seated with Him in heavenly places! (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:14; Ephesians 1:3).

The onyx stones upon Aaron's shoulders were alike; but the costly stones upon his heart differed one from another in their glory. We have seen that the names worn upon the shoulders were engraved “**according to their birth**”; those upon the heart, “**according to the twelve tribes.**” Even so all the redeemed of God are His by virtue of the new birth in Christ Jesus; but all are not learning in equal measure the fulness of His love.

Some, like John, lean upon His breast; others, like Peter before the crucifixion, follow Him “**afar off.**” May God help us to walk in close and sweet fellowship with Him, that we may know ever increasingly something of His heart of love. And, whether we do or not, it is reassuring to know that we are His, “**bought with a price,**” the most costly of all jewels known to man. We are all upon His shoulders, and we are all upon His heart! His mighty strength and His fathomless love are forever ours!

The names, “**Urim and Thummim,**” mean “*lights and perfections.*” Whether they were “a collective name for the stones of the breastplate,” or whether they were added to the breast plate, they represent the lights and perfections of the Lord Jesus, the Great High Priest, of whom Aaron was but a type. By these God made known His will to His priest in the days of old. There are comparatively few references to the Urim and the Thummim in the Word of God (See Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8; I Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:63).

A paragraph quoted from the “*Christian Workers' Commentary,*” by the late Reverend James M. Gray, D.D., is suggestive of the significance of these “lights and perfections,” whatever outward form they may have taken in Aaron's breast plate:

“They represent the light and the right that are in the high priest for the enlightenment and reconciliation of those who come unto God by him. He exercises the functions of teaching and sacrificing in their behalf, as the type of the Great High Priest.”

In this connection we need to remember that the high priest in Israel not only represented his people before a holy God; but he also gave to them oracular answers from God. By these God spoke to His people.

It seems hardly necessary to add just here that, in Christ, God has spoken “**once for all**” to a sinning world (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Why not? He is our Great High Priest!

Israel lost this precious treasure because of her sins. Let us be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit if we want to know the will of God for our daily lives. No; He will never leave us, if we are truly born again; but our sins will separate us . . . from that perfect fellowship which God wants to hold with His own, making plain to them His “**good, and acceptable, and perfect will**” (Romans 12:2).

6. The Mitre and the “Holy Crown.”

The word, “**mitre**,” comes from a Hebrew word meaning “*to wrap*,” or “*to roll around*.” The high priest's headdress was a kind of turban wrapped around the head. It was made of white linen, the emblem of purity. Upon the “**forefront of the mitre . . . upon Aaron's forehead**” was “**the holy crown**,” “**a plate of pure gold**” upon “**a lace of blue**.”

Engraved upon this plate of gold were the words, “**HOLINESS TO THE LORD**.” (See Exodus 28:36-38; 29:6; Leviticus 8:9).

This golden crown bore witness that Aaron was the representative of God, even as the ephod and the breastplate showed that he was the representative of Israel. It hardly need be added here that it prefigured the kingly glory of Him whose name is Holy! The Lord Jesus is the righteous King, as well as the faithful Priest! And as this beautiful headdress was worn by Aaron, even so our Lord will come one day, crowned with “**many crowns**” (Revelation 19:12).

Aaron's robes were “**for glory and for beauty**.” They must have been wonderfully beautiful! Yet they could never, never compare with the beauty of our Lord, whom we shall see one day in all His uncreated glory. That alone will make heaven heaven! But, wonder of wonders, we shall share His glory; as believer-priests, His bride, we shall reign with Him and be like Him for all the unending ages! “What a wonderful Saviour!”

THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS

In our lesson today we have tried to show that Aaron, as the high priest in Israel, represented the Lord Jesus Christ; and that Aaron and his sons represented Christ and His church.

Nowhere is the union of our Great High Priest and His believer-priests more clearly set forth than in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priestly office. They were brought to the door of the tabernacle, God's dwelling place among His people; and there they were separated, set apart, for their sacred duties.

Likewise, our Lord, the separated One, has chosen us in Him to a spiritual priesthood that is glorious. Before He went to the cross, He said to His eleven disciples who loved Him, **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit . . . I have chosen you out of the world”** (John 15:16, 19).

First of all, Moses washed Aaron and his sons with water; and water in the Scriptures is a symbol of the Word of God.

Their being washed together speaks to us of the union of Christ and the church in sanctification — separation unto God.

Christ Himself said to His Father, in His Great High Priestly prayer for His own:

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:17-19).

Again, the Holy Spirit, writing to the Hebrew Christians concerning the risen Lord, said in Hebrews 2:11,

“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one [i. e., God]: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Now it is beyond controversy that our Lord knew no sin, and that His own sanctification implied His being set apart, consecrated to His Great High Priestly work, which began with His death. And it is equally beyond controversy that we, believer-priests, ever need to remember that **“Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”** (Ephesians 5:25, 26).

We were washed **“once for all”** by the blood of His cross for cleansing from the penalty of sin; but we need daily, hourly, washing by the Word of God for deliverance from the defilement of sin in our pilgrim walk. **“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”** the Psalmist asked many centuries ago; and the Holy Spirit's answer came back, **“By taking heed thereto according to thy word”** (Psalm 119:9). And again we are reminded of Christ's prayer, which we have just quoted, **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”** (John 17:17).

After Moses had washed Aaron and his sons at the door of the tabernacle, Aaron was first clothed in the costly garments **“for glory and for beauty,”** which spoke eloquently of the glories of Christ.

As we have already seen, Aaron's sons were also clothed in white linen garments, foreshadowing the **“robe of righteousness”** which Christ imparts to His redeemed. Aaron, clothed in his beautiful garments, was the first to be anointed with the holy oil — before the blood of the sacrifices was shed. This, we have observed, suggests the truth that Christ was baptized by the Holy Spirit before He shed His blood on Calvary.

Then the sacrifices were offered; the blood was sprinkled; and Aaron and his sons were sanctified together — by the blood of the sacrifice and by the anointing oil.

Even so we who love the Lord have been crucified and buried with Him. God sees us risen with Him, ascended with Him, identified with Him now and for all eternity.

Moses put the blood of the sacrifice on the tip of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot. Then he did the same for Aaron's sons.

The lesson is plain:

- The consecrated ear is open to hear the Word of God;
- The consecrated hand is ready to serve the Lord;
- The consecrated foot is guided by His Spirit into “**paths of righteousness for His name's sake.**”

Our Lord's ear was ever open to hear and obey His Father's voice. His hands were ceaselessly busy, ministering to the sick, the poor, and weary. His feet always walked in the paths of holiness and righteous ness.

May we let Him have our willing ears and hands and feet to do His will! We shall, only as we let His cleansing blood and the power of His indwelling Spirit take us and use us for His own glory.

This anointing oil, a symbol of the Spirit of God, was holy.

- It was claimed by the Lord (Exodus 30:31).
- It was used to consecrate Aaron and his sons, and to sanctify the sacred vessels of the tabernacle.
- It was not to be poured upon man's flesh (Exodus 30:32); for “**the flesh**” cannot be used by the Holy Spirit to glorify God.

“**The flesh**”, i.e., our old, sinful nature, must be crucified, and the Holy Spirit must be given the control of our lives, if we would know victory over sin and fruitfulness in His service.

Again, the holy, anointing oil was not to be put upon a stranger, or compounded for any other use (Exodus 30:32, 33).

Even so “**the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know of them, because they are spiritually discerned**” (I Corinthians 2:14).

Nor can any false creed, denying the Person and work of the Triune God, produce “**the fruit of the Spirit.**” “**No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost . . . Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his**” (I Corinthians 12:3; Romans 8:9).

A very beautiful lesson is found in Aaron's feasting with his sons in the Holy Place of the tabernacle for seven days after their consecration to the priesthood.

They were not to leave the Holy Place; but, together, they were to rest and feast upon the food of the priests, even the sacrifice. One day the church, believer-priests, will be translated, caught up to be forever with the Lord. Our Great High Priest will take us into the Most Holy Place, even heaven itself, there to rest with Him and to feast our souls upon Him who is the Bread of Life. At least seven more years will pass after that (while the Antichrist rules on earth) before our Lord returns in glory with His church, to be revealed as the righteous King over all the world.

On the eighth day Aaron and his sons went out of the Holy Place, and the Lord appeared **“unto all the people”** (Leviticus 9:14, 23, 24). **“And Moses and Aaron . . . blessed the people.”**

What a picture of that yet future day when our Great High Priest will come out of the Most Holy Place, to appear in glory to all the world!

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4).

The door of heaven will open; the King-Priest will descend; and with Him His believer-priests will come to reign with Him over a purified earth. Then this war-weary, sin-sick world will know the fulness of blessing. Then swords shall be beaten into plowshares, and spears into pruning-hooks. **“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”** (Isaiah 2:4).

Of that coming day God has said:

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

THE LEVITES A GIFT TO AARON — DEDICATED TO GOD

The study of the priesthood in the Jewish tabernacle would be incomplete without some consideration of the Levites and their ministry in this early sanctuary: for they were given to Aaron for service; and Aaron, in turn, gave them back to God as an offering unto the Lord. (See Numbers 8:19, 21).

This foreshadowed a significant and beautiful truth: we, as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, His servants in the world, are the Father's “love gift” to our Lord; and He, in turn, consecrates us and our service to His Father. His intercessory prayer makes this very plain:

“I pray for them . . . which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them . . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:9, 10, 15).

As the name, “**Levites**,” signifies, these servants of the Lord came from the tribe of Levi; so also did Aaron and his sons. The Genesis record tells us that Levi was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. His three sons were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, from whom the three families of the Levites took their names — Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites.

According to the God-given instructions, the Levites pitched their tents on three sides of the tabernacle, between the tents of the other tribes and the sanctuary itself. The tents of Moses, Aaron, and the families of the priests were on the east; there the door of the court was placed. The Gershonites were on the west; the Kohathites, on the south; the Merarites, on the north. (See Numbers 3:23, 29, 35). Thus the priests and the Levites were nearest to the tabernacle, to minister there for all the people.

When the Shekinah Glory, in the pillar of cloud and fire, moved on before Israel, during the forty years of wandering, it was the duty of the Levites to take down the tabernacle and see that it was safely carried on the journey. When the Shekinah Glory rested, God was telling His people to rest; and the Levites pitched “**the tent of the congregation**” in the midst of the camp.

- The Gershonites had charge of the coverings and curtains, the hangings and cords.
- The Merarites took care of the sockets and pillars, the boards and bars.
- The Kohathites were given the sacred vessels and pieces of furniture for their service.

All this ministry was done under the supervision of Aaron, in singleness of purpose. Likewise, all the ministry in and through the church should be carried out under the direction and guidance of Jesus, our Great High Priest, and with but one purpose in view, the honor and glory of Him who died for us!

By nature Levi was unspeakably cruel, as the record of his and Simeon's wicked crime, recorded in Genesis 34:1-31, gives evidence; but by the grace of God he and his descendants were called to the most sacred offices, as priests and Levites.

In this ministry they took the place of the firstborn in Israel, who belonged to God (Numbers 3:12, 13; 8:18). If man had written the Genesis record, doubtless he would have omitted the story of the black sin of Levi and Simeon; but God tells the whole truth. He shows “**the exceeding sinfulness of sin**,” and our need of a Saviour; “**for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3:23). We, too, were once “**dead in trespasses and sins . . . children of disobedience . . . having no hope, and without God in the world**” (Ephesians 2:1, 2, 12).

“**But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ**” (Ephesians 2:13). We have been called to serve the Lord as “**an habitation of God through the Spirit**” (Ephesians 2:22). Such is the wonder of His grace!

The Levites were washed in the presence of the whole congregation, a picture of our “**washing of regeneration**” “**once for all**.” Then they shaved their flesh and washed their clothes, symbolic of their separation from the godless, even as believers in Jesus are to “**come out from among**” unbelievers, and to be a separate people (I Corinthians 6:14-18).

When Joshua, under the guidance of God, divided the land of promise among the twelve tribes, no inheritance was given to the tribe of Levi; for the Lord Himself was their portion, and they partook of His offerings (Deuteronomy 18:1, 2).

They were given forty-eight cities, scattered throughout the land, six of which were the cities of refuge. Scattered thus in Israel, their duties and privileges were to minister to the spiritual needs of God's people. The Lord God saw to it that they lacked no good thing (Numbers 35:1-8).

The time came when the Jewish tabernacle was done away. David was old, and he appointed Solomon king over Israel. The story is recorded in the twenty-third chapter of I Chronicles: **“And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites”** (v. 2).

All three families of the Levites were there to hear their aged king, the **“man after God's own heart,”** tell them of their new duties. The wilderness wanderings had long been over. Solomon was to build a beautiful temple to replace the tabernacle. No longer would the Levites need to care for the tabernacle, in which Israel had worshipped for many years.

“For David said, The Lord God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever: and also unto the Levites; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor vessels of it for the service thereof” (vs. 25, 26).

The new duties of the Levites are outlined in the closing verses of the chapter. They were to **“wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord.”**

It is a picture of that glorious rest which awaits the people of God in the New Jerusalem. When the pilgrimage of the wanderings of this life are past, the servants of God shall serve Him in the glory.

The aged John tells us something of the wonders of that coming day:

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:3, 4).

THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD ONLY “A SHADOW OF GOOD THINGS TO COME”

After all that we have read from the Epistle to the Hebrews in this lesson today, it seems hardly necessary to add that, when **“the veil of the temple was rent in twain,”** the Levitical priesthood was done away — forever set aside by God Himself.

It had fulfilled its purpose; the Great High Priest had offered one perfect Sacrifice forever; there was no further need for the prophetic shadows and types which foretold His coming!

Yet because many are deceived by a false system which establishes a man-made priesthood in the name of Christianity, even today, we add this word of exhortation and instruction. Any manmade priesthood in existence since Calvary is contrary to the express teaching of the Word of God. Moreover, it is inconsistent to allow men to be priests who do not belong to the family of Aaron; and the Jews, as a nation, have been set aside in this church age!

According to the false system which allows human priests, any man, from any family, is eligible to the office. And such as these overlook our Lord's plain command, **“Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven”** (Matthew 23:9).

Dear Christian friend, let no man deceive you. Christ is our Priest. And if we trust His atoning work on Calvary, we are His believer-priests, called to serve Him with the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise and fruitfulness in His soul winning.

Today we have sought to look upon His glory as foreshadowed in the work of Aaron and his sons. We have tried to see something of His ministry on our behalf as the perfect Sacrifice, the perfect Intercessor, the perfect Mediator between God and man. As we think upon these wonderful things; and as we realize something of our own exalted position and privileges in Him, as His believer-priests; our hearts echo the song that came from the heart of Charles Wesley many years ago:

“Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?

“I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face,
Would not hearken to His calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.

“There for me the Saviour stands,
Shows His wounds and spreads His hands;
God is love: I know, I feel;
Jesus lives and loves me still!”

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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