

5. The Priestly Garments of Grace (2Q 2011—Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible)

Biblical material: Exod. 32:1–6; Lev. 21:7–24; 22:1–8; Exodus 28; Rev. 21:12–14; Heb. 4:14, 15; 1 Peter 2:9.

Quotes

- While we are under the tyranny of Priests, it will ever be their interest, to invalidate the law of nature and reason, in order to establish systems incompatible therewith. *Ethan Allen*
- The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?” But... the good Samaritan reversed the question: “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?” *Martin Luther King*
- In every country and every age, the priest had been hostile to Liberty. *Thomas Jefferson*
- The search for truth is not a trade by which a man can support himself; for a priest it is a supreme peril. *Alfred Loisy*
- The priest is concerned with other people for the sake of God and with God for the sake of other people. *Robert Runcie*
- The genuine priest always feels something higher than compassion. *Friedrich von Schlegel*

Questions

How do we view the role of priests, and what is symbolized by their garments? Why did God establish the Old Testament priesthood? What are benefits/dangers of a priesthood? What do we mean by “the priesthood of all believers”? How does this study help us today? What is meant by a mediator? How is God represented?

Bible summary

In Exod. 32:1–6 we read the story of Aaron and the golden calf. What a terrible misrepresentation of the true God! Yet even after this Aaron was permitted to become the first high priest, the ancestor of all high priests that followed. What do we conclude from this? Lev. 21 and 22 spell out the rules and conditions for being a priest. Why did God make such rules? The instructions given in Exodus 28 for the priests’ clothes are extremely precise—why was this? How are we to understand what this was meant to signify? What of the role of the Urim and the Thummim—which we hear very little about later? The imagery of precious stones continues—see the description of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21:12-14. Today we have Jesus as our great high priest (Heb. 4:14, 15)—so what lessons are we to draw? In conclusion, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9 NIV)

Comment

Due to human weaknesses, priests have often been disparaged. However priests were ordained by God to be his representatives, to teach the people about him, and to be

the “ones between”—which is what the believers wanted. Note the words of Israel to Moses to be the one to speak to God—they feared that if they spoke directly to God that he would kill them. God in his mercy dealt with the people where they were and gave them what they wanted, even though there was no necessity to have a human mediator from God’s perspective. Jesus came to end that whole system, and to become our high priest. Not that he was between us and God—for he is also God himself!

The clothing worn by the priests of Israel no doubt had great meaning and significance to them, much of which is lost on us. However we do not need to go back, but forward, since by Jesus we have now gained such a great understanding of the truth about God, since if we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father.

The “breastplate of judgment” has been the subject of much discussion. It was intended to help in knowing the will of God—always the great concern of believers! Yet in subsequent history there is not much comment on this, or the Urim and Thummin which were set into this breastplate. It would seem that God is keen to have his believers come to wise decisions without giving them red and green lights...

Comment 2

...let’s go back to the beginning, and we come soon to Sinai. “And God came down to speak to His people that day.” They were terrified, because He couldn’t speak to them softly. They were so noisy and irreverent. They weren’t listening. So God shook the ground beneath their feet, you remember? There was thunder, and lightning, and a loud trumpet. In their terror, the people said to Moses, “Don’t let God speak to us, lest we die. You speak to God, Moses please, in our behalf. You seem to be His friend. You seem to be very close to the Lord, and you seem to survive when you talk to Him. So let God speak to you, and then you tell us what to do, and we’ll obey.” (Ex. 20:19, 20)

What were they asking for? A mediator! An intercessor! Someone in between. Why were they begging for someone between them and God? Because they were afraid. They weren’t friends yet. But Moses was God’s friend. You read that in Exodus 20:18-20, and you remember the other verses that we looked at. So Moses became the mediator, and God often talked to him, and he passed the word on to the people, because he was God’s friend. Then he needed help, and they set up all the priests to be the ones in between, and the high priests, and of course they all represented the ultimate High Priest, Jesus Christ, who came finally in fulfillment of all those types, and stunned the disciples by saying, “You know, I really don’t need to do this. I don’t need to pray the Father for you, for the Father loves you Himself.” A. Graham Maxwell, *Friends of God*, tape #5.

Ellen White Comments

Christ revealed himself to their souls... They had seen that which priests and rulers would not see,—humanity flooded with the light and glory of divinity. Those who would behold this glory would be drawn to love Jesus and to love the Father whom he represented. Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God ... When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890}

Prepared March 6, 2011 © Jonathan Gallagher 2011