

Brad Jordan / General Adult

Exodus: Delivered By God, For God / Worship; Order; Priesthood; Saints of the Most High; Ephod; Type; Christ; A High Priest / Exodus 28:1–14

The ephod with its sash and onyx stones serve as a type of Christ. They remind us both of the role of Christ and the Holiness of the God we serve and represent in this world of darkness.

---

## Introduction

Last week we introduced a transition in the text as God moves us away from the Tabernacle for the moment and draws our attention to the priesthood that He implements. We spoke about how the priesthood itself ultimately points to the Great High Priest, Jesus. Just as with the Tabernacle, great care is given to the instructions regarding not just the formation and make up of the priesthood, but the clothing which they would wear and the ritual that was to be used to set them apart for service in the Tabernacle.

In 1905 Mark Twain wrote a short story that was published in the literary magazine, "The North American Review". The short story was entitled "The Czar's Soliloquy" in which Twain wrote the following:

"[One] realizes that without his clothes a man would be nothing at all; that the clothes do not merely make the man, the clothes are the man; that without them he is a cipher, a vacancy, a nobody, a nothing... There is no power without clothes."

From this quote Mark Twain was credited with a the well known saying "the clothes make the man". The reality, however, is that this proverb actually finds its origins in the ancient world and can be traced back as far as 7 or 8 BC. The idea behind the proverb, well captured by Twain's work, is carried on even today. In fact, one theologian, studying the priestly robes commented:

"Essentially a uniform draws attention to the office of function of a person, as opposed to his individual personality. It emphasizes his job

rather than his name... Furthermore, we can see that, in general, the more prestigious an office, the more splendid the uniform... In putting on these clothes [Aaron] took to himself all the honor and glory of the high-priesthood." (G. Wenham)

We see this around us in our daily lives as well, the more affluent an individual is, the better they dress, or at least this is our interpretation.

In the case of the priest that ministered in the dwelling place of the Most High, and especially the High Priest, the clothing that was designed by God was not to demonstrate the worldly value of an individual but the unsurpassed glory and beauty of God. Matthew Henry well captured this truth in his commentary on the priestly clothing when he said:

**Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume** Exodus 28:1–5

These glorious garments were appointed, (1.) That the priests themselves might be reminded of the dignity of their office, and might behave themselves with due decorum. (2.) That the people might thereby be possessed with a holy reverence of that God whose ministers appeared in such grandeur. (3.) That the priests might be types of Christ, who should offer himself without spot to God, and of all Christians, who have the beauty of holiness put upon them, in which they are consecrated to God.

This morning as we begin our study of the clothing worn by the priests in general, and specifically the high priest it is important to remind ourselves that:

1. The instructions given here, regarding the fabrication, and in other texts regarding the wearing of these specific items by the high priest were given for the priest's that would serve God and Israel. In fact, woven within the events surrounding Christ's death on the cross we see two specific examples that show us that this priesthood is no longer, the tearing of the veil which we have already discussed and the second is found in Matthew 26:64–65 "Jesus said to him, "You yourself said it; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his garments and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;" The tearing of the garments of the high priest was strictly forbidden in Leviticus 21:10 "'And the priest who is the highest among

his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been ordained to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;”

2. We are not ancient Israel, although the church is the true Israel, those chosen and called out by God, the difference is that we stand on this side of the completed works of Christ. This work abolished the necessity for the priesthood of the Old Testament as Jesus now serves, again as we have already discussed, as our Great High Priest and continually intercedes on our behalf before the father. This truth is supported by the fact that all believers are now priests: 1 Peter 2:5-9

**1 Peter 2:5–9 LSB**

you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For *this* is contained in Scripture:

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*,

AND HE WHO BELIEVES UPON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME.”

This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,

“THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,

THIS HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*,”

and,

“A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE.”

They stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *stumbling* they were also appointed.

But you are A CHOSEN FAMILY, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of

Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;  
and that we all have the liberty of direct access to the Father through the Son:

**Hebrews 10:19–22 LSB**

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,

by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God,

let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

3. That these articles of clothing, specifically designed by God, serve, just as the instructions regarding the construction of the tabernacle did, to point us forward to Christ, to show us that the throughout scripture God's plan of redemption was being pressed forward till it found its fulfillment in Christ and continues to press forward till we experience the reality of the truth found in Revelation 21:1-7

**Revelation 21:1–7 LSB**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

and He will WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain. The first things passed away."

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."  
And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Then He said to me, "They are done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

"He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I WILL BE HIS GOD AND HE WILL BE MY SON.

This brings us to our text for this morning, may the Holy Spirit guide us into all understanding as we work through Exodus 28:1-14 this morning.

## Text

Please stand for the reading of God's holy, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, complete and sufficient Word:

### **Exodus 28:1–14 LSB**

"Now as for you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priests to Me— Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.

"You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.

"You shall speak to all those wise at heart whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to set him apart as holy, in order for him to minister as priest to Me.

"These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, in order for him to minister as priest to Me.

"They shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet *material* and the fine linen.

"They shall also make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple *and* scarlet

*material* and fine twisted linen, the work of the skillful designer.

"It shall have two shoulder pieces joined to its two ends, that it may be joined.

"The skillfully woven band, which is on it, shall be like its workmanship, of the same material: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen.

"You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel,

six of their names on the one stone and the names of the remaining six on the second stone, according to their birth.

"As a jeweler engraves a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; you shall set them all around in filigree *settings* of gold.

"You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, *as* stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before Yahweh on his two shoulders for remembrance.

"You shall make filigree *settings* of gold,

and two chains of pure gold; you shall make them a twisted work of cords, and you shall put the chains of cords on the filigree *settings*.

Father, our heart is drawn out in thankfulness to You. We are thankful for your grace, that You came to us in Christ. We are thankful for the influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit and for the intercession of Christ. We are reminded of your grace and mercy in the sweetness of our Christian service, as we contemplate eternity in your presence, your continued provision in our life and for the simple fact that You and You alone have raised us from death to new life. Father we do not seek the favor of men for it is fleeting where Yours is eternal. Lord we desire to serve you, in whatever way that you require of us, regardless of the trials, tribulations or persecutions that we may face. May we never cease to find Your grace sufficient for our lives and may we never confine ourselves to seek you on occasion but to

acknowledge you in all things, to glorify you in all things, to make Your way ours. To this end, Lord, establish us in Christ, settle us, give us assurance and certainty that we are His and He is ours that our hearts will be filled with joy and peace. Father we ask all of this in the blessed name of Jesus, Amen.

## The Lineage of the Priesthood

As we mentioned last week this introduction of Aaron and his sons, which began in verse 21 of chapter 27, serves to officially announce the creation of the priesthood. We see not only the formation of the priesthood in general, but we also see the naming of the one who would be the high priest. The inclusion of the names of the sons of Aaron in verse one exists so that, as we mentioned last week, we understand that while there were many priests who served there was but one united priesthood, but it also served to set the lineage and the pattern of succession to be followed. By providing this detail to the people of Israel it helped to ensure for them that the priesthood, which was vital to their right standing before God would not cease but would be carried from generation to generation. It should also serve us as a reminder of the perpetual nature of the intercession that is occurring even now on our behalf by the Son as He sits at the right hand of the Father.

A great truth that exists here, that we should be mindful of even today, is that these individuals were divinely appointed to this role by God and no other. Later in the life of Israel there are instances of individuals desiring to set themselves up as priests. In 2 Chronicles 13:9-10 we read

### **2 Chronicles 13:9–10 LSB**

“Have you not driven out the priests of Yahweh, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of *other* lands? Whoever comes to ordain himself with a bull from the herd and seven rams, even he may become a priest of *what are* no gods.

“But as for us, Yahweh is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to Yahweh as priests, and the Levites are in their work.

and a little later in 2 Chronicles 26:16-21

## **2 Chronicles 26:16–21 LSB**

But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to Yahweh his God. And he entered the temple of Yahweh to burn incense on the altar of incense.

Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of Yahweh, men of valor.

And they stood against Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to Yahweh, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are set apart as holy to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from Yahweh God."

But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of Yahweh, beside the altar of incense.

And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he *was* leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because Yahweh had smitten him.

So King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of Yahweh. And Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

both demonstrated that this priesthood could ONLY be made up of those chosen by God not by human choice. This bears out in the lives of individuals today as we are reminded that:

1. We are a royal priesthood, made up of those chosen by God before the foundation of the world
2. Although the role of elder or pastor is NOT the same as priest, and we should take great care to remember this truth, there is a commonality in which the role of elder or pastor, carries with it specific qualifications given by God that we cannot arbitrarily change just because we feel a certain way, His word stands as truth, a truth that should not be interpreted in light of culture, rather culture should be shaped by this



truth

Since this role is one that is divinely appointed, and these individuals will minister in the tabernacle, God determines also the manner in which they should approach. Recall from our introduction the words of Matthew Henry as he helps to remind us that the priestly garments served as a reminder to the priest of the high calling of his work and reminded the people of the holiness of Yahweh, whom these priest served.

## The Ephod and Sash

An ephod is a garment that we see in multiple places throughout scripture. For example we see David dancing before the Ark and the Lord in an ephod,

### **2 Samuel 6:14–22 LSB**

And David was dancing before Yahweh with all *his* strength, and David was girded with a linen ephod.

So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of Yahweh with shouting and the sound of the trumpet.

Then it happened *as* the ark of Yahweh came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before Yahweh; and she despised him in her heart.

And they brought in the ark of Yahweh and placed it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh.

Then David completed offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings. And he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of hosts.

And he apportioned to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one. Then all the people went each to his house.

But David returned to bless his household, and Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel has glorified

himself today! He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servants' maids as one of the worthless ones shamelessly uncovers himself!"

So David said to Michal, "*It was* before Yahweh, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of Yahweh, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before Yahweh.

"And I will be esteemed even more lightly than this and will be humble in my own eyes, but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be glorified."

The ephod we see described here, however, is a much different garment. This ephod was a vest like garment that went over the linen underclothing described in verses 42-43. The magnificent breastplate of the high priest was attached to it and, other than a few places, the description of the ephod included the breastplate as if they were one item. Obviously there was great care to be taken in the fabrication of this garment, as with all of the items of the tabernacle and all of the vestments of the priests, this is drawn out clearly for us in verse 3.

The ephod itself was likely a two piece garment, although this cannot be certain, that was joined over the shoulders in some fashion, also had a sash attached to it similar to that of a belt of a robe, securing the ephod around the waist. The colors, as with the colors of the curtains of the tabernacle and the gate of the courtyard, aligned the priest with service in the dwelling place of God on behalf of the people of God. It would stand as a reminder of the necessity of an atonement being made before God so that the people would be deemed righteous in the eyes of God.

There is also a reminder of the perpetual nature of the necessity of that sacrifice for those people. For us, however, the colors again point us towards Christ. Here we see that, along with the blue, purple, scarlet/crimson, and pure white, we also have gold. There are those who believe, based on what they read in scripture, that the gold was woven throughout the entirety of the ephod in a wire mesh type manner. This is unclear but what is certainly not unclear is the use of gold. As you may recall the closer one would be to the presence of God the more refined and pure we see the metals involved and none would come as close as the high priest. Again, it served to remind them of the holiness of God, but it also serves us in the

same way, to remind us both of the holiness of God and the requirement of purity to enter that holy presence.

The garment as a whole serves as a type alluding to Christ our Great High Priest. In Revelation 1:13, as Jesus appears to John He is seen in this manner "and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash." The golden sash refers back to the ephod of the high priest, which because of the gold which may have been woven into it, but certainly adorned it, was referred to as the golden ephod. Matthew Henry is again helpful as he writes:

**Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume Exodus 28:6-14**

Righteousness is the girdle of his loins (Isa. 11:5), and should be of ours, Eph. 6:14. He is girt with strength for the work of our salvation, and is ready for it.

The fastening of the ephod across the shoulders, the place of strength, should recall for us passages such as Isaiah 9:6

**Isaiah 9:6 LSB**

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

And the government will rest on His shoulders;

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

On those shoulders Christ supports His bride and presents her before God Ephesians 5:27 "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless."

## The Onyx Stones and the Filigree

The stones described for us beginning in verse 9 are given more attention in this section and as such become a focal point of the ephod. These stones were engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel. They were set in a magnificent gold setting and connected by a chain to the ephod itself.

Whether these stones were set and stayed on the shoulders or whether they hang from the chains is not specified in the text, the importance here is in what they represented for the Israelites and what they say to us, the church today. Scripture does tell us that the names were listed in order of birth of the sons of Israel. While we cannot be sure of that exact order, we know that Moses and the people were. While many scholars dismiss this statement as being just a common formality of the day and a listing in a logical order that did not draw any attention to a specific tribe, in other words the order was not in a preferential order, I believe that there is a message here for us, and it has nothing to do with the names or order in which the names were listed.

I believe that the truth that should speak to us from this is that of order, in and of itself. If we look across all that we have gone through regarding the tabernacle, the instructions and specifically the warnings to obey the instructions carefully, and we take into consideration the words we see in verse 3 of this passage, we should be left with an overwhelming sense that our God is a God of order and not of chaos. That in every detail reflected there is order. In fact, if we were to survey scripture we would see that there is a continual pressing in of this order, this way in which God would have His people come into His presence. This is a truth which the church today would do well to take note of, a truth we have mentioned several times in our study through Exodus and one which will certainly be mentioned again.

The very nature of God is immutability, the fact that He cannot change. If God requires order in worship from Israel, what makes us think He no longer requires order in worship from us? There is nothing in the atoning work of Christ, His teaching, either in person or through the Apostles by the work of the Holy Spirit, that says or demonstrates that there is no longer to be order in worship. So, where do we get this notion? For some it comes from the unhitching and teaching that speaks of the unimportance of the Old Testament, others will cite David dancing before the Lord from the text we read earlier. To these we should resoundingly respond in this manner:

1. The Old Testament is as much the word of God as the New Testament, the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. The New Testament simply fulfills what the Old Testament predicts and helps us to interpret the passages of the Old Testament that speak of the

Messiah.

2. The actions of David are not normative to the life of an Israelite or a believer, what this means is that this is not the normal behavior we see demonstrated before us in Scripture regarding the worship practices of Israel. This one example, taken out of context, and applied broadly to all of worship demonstrates a severe lack of Biblical knowledge and understanding.

While the order mentioned speaks to all of these things, the reality that the names are listed speaks to a different truth. If we look at verse Exodus 28:12 ""You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before Yahweh on his two shoulders for remembrance." we see that these names serve as a remembrance, reminding Aaron, that he stands before God representing, not just his family or his tribe, but all of Israel.

It is this truth, that speaks forward to Christ, our Great High Priest, standing before God on behalf of His people, the church, continually that gives us great comfort. The strength upholds all things, upholds us, the church, whose names are etched or deeply engraved in the book of life, in the presence of almighty God. One final thought on the stones before we close, Aaron stood before God on behalf of the people, but he also stood before the people on behalf of God, as His representative, both to the people of Israel, but also to those who were not of the people, so too do we stand as representatives of the Father and the Son in the sight of not just the other believers within the church, but also within the world... in the words of Christ we are Matthew 5:14–16 ""...the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

## Conclusion

In closing, let us reflect on the divine design of the ephod, sash and stones of onyx and the eternal truths they unveil. Just as every thread, stone, and golden detail in Aaron's vestments spoke of a sacred order and a holiness beyond human measure, we are reminded that our lives too are called to

mirror this divine intentionality. These garments were not symbols of human vanity but powerful, visible reminders of God's perfect design—a design that pointed forward to Christ, our Great High Priest, whose work on the cross established a new way, in fact the only way, for us to stand before God.

The meticulous instructions for the high priest's attire remind us that God's call is one of precision and purity. Each element—the ephod, the sash, the onyx stones—was designed to signify not only a functional role in ancient worship but also to prefigure the eternal order and redemption found in Christ. In Him, we find our identity as a royal priesthood, called to live lives that honor the unchanging glory of our Creator. Our daily walk is to be an outworking of that order—a living testimony that the beauty of God's redemptive plan is present in every act of obedience, every moment of sincere worship, and every gesture of service.

I leave you with this question: In a world that often celebrates chaos and fleeting trends, how will you allow the sacred order of God's design to transform your everyday choices, relationships, and acts of worship? Will you rise to the call of living a life marked by holiness and intentional purpose?

Let this be a clarion call to action: Renew your commitment to embodying divine order in every aspect of your life. Embrace the discipline of prayer, the integrity of worship, and the humility of service. Let your life be a living tapestry—a testimony that, just as Aaron bore the names of Israel upon his shoulders, you too are entrusted with representing the redeemed in a world longing for God's touch.

Go forth empowered by the Holy Spirit, determined to reflect the beauty, order, and eternal truth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. May every action, word, and decision proclaim the excellence of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.