

Exodus 28 “For Glory and for Beauty”
Psalm 132
Hebrews 4:14-5:10

July 9, 2017

Okay, some of this language sounds obscure to us today,
so let me give you the basic overview of what this looks like!

All the priests would wear linen undergarments –
with fine linen “coats” (which probably refers to a tunic),
along with a cap and a sash.

The high priest also wears a robe of blue.
Over the robe is the ephod (a piece of clothing that covers from shoulder to thigh) –
in this case, think of an elaborate vest).
The breastpiece is a very large pocket that is attached to the front of the ephod.

What is God doing with this?
God says that these priestly garments are for glory and for beauty.
In order to understand how the priestly garments function in scripture,
we will sing Psalm 132.

Psalm 132 speaks of how the priests are “clothed with righteousness” –
and “clothed with salvation.”

Psalm 132 is a song of the temple –
remembering how David longed to build a temple for the Mighty One of Jacob.
When God comes to dwell in the midst of his people –
when the LORD establishes a resting place in Zion –
Psalm 132 speaks of how God will clothe his priests with salvation.

And that is what Aaron is wearing.
Aaron is clothed with salvation.

Back in Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve sinned,
they had clothed themselves with fig leaves –
but fig leaves could not cover their sin –
and so God himself clothed them in animal skins
(showing us how being clothed with salvation
requires the shedding of blood).

So let us sing Psalm 132.

Psalm 132
Read Hebrews 4:14-5:10

What you wear says something about you.
When Joel Irvin walks into an Elkhart coffee shop wearing a clerical collar,
people recognize that he is some sort of clergy.

Everyone knows who the bride is – she’s the one in the white dress!

Whether it’s a suit, or a hoodie, or khakis –
your clothes communicate something.

That’s not a bad thing!

You should want people to know something about you by what you wear.
I wear a wedding ring to communicate to everyone that I am married.

People sometimes ask why I wear a black gown.

Well, it’s important for a pastor to wear *something* –
and each choice would communicate something different:
a business suit would connect me with the professional world;
plaid and skinny jeans would connect me with the hipster world;
the Geneva gown connects me with the Reformation –
and beyond that to the medieval church,
where the black gown was the preacher’s garb.

Roman Catholic priests generally wore *white* when conducting the mass –
but *black* for their preaching services.

Reformed pastors wanted to emphasize the priesthood of all believers,
and so generally shied away from white robes –
since they wanted to communicate that the pastor’s role is primarily as *preacher*
not as *priest*.

(I should add that things have changed since the 16th century!

I don’t have a problem with pastors wearing white robes.

When I have preached in churches that use white – I have worn white! –
and there are Reformed churches that use white robes.

That is actually part of the reason why I wear the white stole.

The stole is historically the sign of ordination –
with its roots all the way back in the sash that Aaron’s sons wore here in Ex 28)

And as we’ll see in our text today

there is a reason why clothing has meaning –
because clothing is made from created substances –
and all of creation is interconnected.

You can mix-and-match a little differently –
but you are limited to the range of options that exist in the world that God made.

So what does it mean when God says to Moses,

“make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty”?

Introduction: “For Glory and for Beauty” – How Clothes Make the Man (v1-5)

28 “Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ² And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. ³ You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. ⁴ These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a

coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. ⁵ *They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen.*

The holy garments are made of the same material as the curtains of the tabernacle:
fine twined linen, with gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns.

Yes, part of it is that it is *expensive* –
but it is also to be made with great skill.

Glory and beauty are mingled together.

Isaiah speaks of the restoration of Zion that will come when God restores his people from exile.

And in Isaiah 60:19, he says:

“No longer will you have the sun for light by day,
nor for brightness will the moon give you light;
But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,
and your God for your *beauty*”

God displays his beauty in the restoration of his people.

“and I will beautify my beautiful house” (v7).

God was teaching his people through Moses about glory and beauty.

First the tabernacle, and then the temple,
were designed to show Israel the glory and beauty of God
a glory and beauty that is now found in the church –
because “we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence
and our boasting in our hope” (Heb 3:6)

We are the temple of the living God.

God’s purpose in giving Moses the tabernacle
was to teach Israel what it would mean
for the Word to become flesh and tabernacle among us.

In verse 3, the LORD says that Moses “shall speak to all the skillful,
whom I have filled with the spirit of skill.”

That could also be translated “the spirit of wisdom.”

It’s proper to translate it “skill” –

because in Hebrew you use the same word to describe one who is *skilled* in a craft –
and one who is *wise* in how he lives.

You might say that the *wise* man is one who is *skilled* in the art of living!

Or you could say that the skilled craftsman is *wise* in his craft.

And God says that he has given the *spirit* of wisdom – or the “spirit of skill” –

to certain craftsmen (we’ll hear later about Bezalel and Oholiab – the two chief craftsmen).

Some people have said, “Ah, see, this shows that being a craftsman can be a spiritual gift!”

Well, yes, that’s true – if you are building the tabernacle (or in Solomon’s day, the temple!).

If you are building a place for God's holy name to dwell,
then yes, your craft can be a spiritual gift!

Think of how Paul applies this in 1 Corinthians 3:10 –

“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled [or wise] master builder
I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it.
Let each one take care how he builds upon it.”

Paul uses the same language of the skilled (or wise) craftsman
who is engaged in building a spiritual house – a place for God's holy name to dwell.

But when you look at how Paul talks about the gifts of the Spirit –
the Spirit is given to edify – to build up the body of Christ.
Even in Moses' days, there was no “spiritual gift” of goldsmithing in general –
we'll see that in a few weeks, when we watch Aaron goldsmithing a golden calf! –
Rather, God gave a spiritual gift *for building the tabernacle*.

So as we go through the garments of the priests,
we need to see that God is beautifying his beautiful house –
he gives his people spiritual gifts for building up the body – for building one another up
into a holy temple – a holy dwelling place for his Spirit.

Because the holy garments of the high priest are made from the same material as the tabernacle.

1. How Israel Enters the Holy Place – the Ephod (v6-14)

⁶ “And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and of fine twined linen, skillfully worked. ⁷ It shall have two shoulder pieces attached to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. ⁸ And the skillfully woven band on it shall be made like it and be of one piece with it, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. ⁹ You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, ¹⁰ six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. ¹¹ As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree. ¹² And you shall set 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 the LORD on his two shoulders for remembrance. ¹³ You shall make settings of gold filigree, ¹⁴ and two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall attach the corded chains to the settings.

Did you notice that?

The priestly garments are made of the same material as the curtain of the tabernacle:
blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen.
The tabernacle and the priest fit together.
They match.

There is one thing about the ephod that goes beyond the material of the tabernacle:
the two onyx stones –
set in gold filigree.

We have been seeing all sorts of connections between the creation account and the tabernacle.
Here is another.

Because as Genesis 2 describes the river of Eden,
it tells us that there was gold and bdellium and onyx
along one of the rivers that flowed out from the Garden.

Now those onyx stones are brought into the ephod of the high priest,
as the high priest is the one who represents Israel as he walks past the cherubim.

After all, the cherubim are guarding the way back into the Garden –
into the Holy of Holies.

How can a descendent of Adam get past the cherubim?!

Only if he is wearing the ephod!

And that is why these two onyx stones on his shoulders matter so much.

They are engraved with the twelve names of the sons of Israel.

They are called “stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel” –
so that Aaron may bear their names before the LORD.

In Eden – in the Garden – Adam was the image of God in the Most Holy Place.

Since Adam’s fall, there is no image worthy of being placed in the Holy of Holies.

But now God has said “Israel is my son, my firstborn.”

God has called Israel into his presence – to *worship* him (to serve him).

In this way Israel is called as the second Adam

to come into God’s holy place in the person of the high priest.

And so the high priest bears the names of the twelve tribes when he enters the Holy of Holies.

And not only does he bear their names –

he also bears their judgment (which we see in the breastpiece).

2. How Aaron Bears the Judgment of the People – the Breastpiece (v15-30)

¹⁵ “You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, in skilled work. In the style of the ephod you shall make it—of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen shall you make it. ¹⁶ It shall be square and doubled, a span^[a] its length and a span its breadth. ¹⁷ You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, ^[b] topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; ¹⁸ and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; ¹⁹ and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; ²⁰ and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold filigree. ²¹ There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. ²² You shall make for the breastpiece twisted chains like cords, of pure gold. ²³ And you shall make for the breastpiece two rings of gold, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece. ²⁴ And you shall put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece. ²⁵ The two ends of the two cords you shall attach to the two settings of filigree, and so attach it in front to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. ²⁶ You shall make two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod. ²⁷ And you shall make two rings of gold, and attach them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, at its seam above the skillfully woven band of the ephod. ²⁸ And they shall bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, so that it may lie on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, so that the breastpiece shall not come loose from the ephod.

The breastpiece is attached to the ephod – so that in all future references
the two garments are always referred to as one.

It is made of the same material as the ephod –
but it has four rows of three precious stones –
twelve stones in all – “according to the names of the sons of Israel” –
each stone with a name engraved upon it.

In the Bible precious stones are often used to describe the dwelling place of God.

Just a few weeks ago, we heard in Exodus 24 that the elders of Israel saw God –
with a pavement like sapphire, as clear as the body of the heavens.
That blue dome above us is the largest sapphire ever!
And in the morning and in the evening
there are rubies and amethysts glowing in the heavens!
At night you see the diamonds sparkling in the sky.

“Both Josephus and Philo understood the jewels of the priestly breast-piece
to be symbolic of the twelve constellations” – Beale 47.
Philo, for instance, said that the high priest is a microcosm –
a small picture of the whole world.

And for that matter, the sign of the Noahic Covenant – the rainbow –
takes all the colors of precious stones and brings them together
(or perhaps I should rather say that precious stones reflect all the colors of the rainbow!).

And now that I’ve got the physicists thinking about it,
think about how light and glory and beauty all fit together!
God’s heavenly dwelling is the archetype and pattern for all creation –
and especially for his sanctuary – his earthly dwelling.

And this is not merely speaking of the *tabernacle* or the *temple*
but also of the *priest* –
because as we have seen,
the difference between Israel’s holy place and the temples of the nations
is that there is no *image* in the Holy of Holies.
Or, to put it more accurately –
the *image* only enters the Holy of Holies once a year,
wearing the whole of God’s people – and indeed, the whole of creation –
on his breast.

But remember, God’s promise to Abraham was that *all nations* would be blessed through his seed.
The high priest only has the 12 tribes of Israel on his breastpiece!
Only a small part of humanity – one tiny nation – is included on Aaron’s breast!

What about the rest of us?

I'd like you to turn over to Ezekiel 28 for a moment.

Because Ezekiel 28 uses the imagery of the breastpiece and the cherubim
to begin talking about the inclusion of the Gentiles –
and the *failure* of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the OT!

In Ezekiel 28:11-19, the LORD calls Ezekiel to take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre.

In order to understand this,

it is important to remember that Hiram, the king of Tyre,
was David's greatest ally and friend.

Hiram had helped David gather all the materials for the temple,
and then had assisted Solomon with the building of the temple.

If ever there was a time in OT history when a Gentile nation became converted
it was Tyre – under the rule of Hiram.

So listen first to Ezekiel 28:11-14 (read).

¹¹ *Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me:* ¹² *“Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD:*

*“You were the signet of perfection,^[a]
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
sardius, topaz, and diamond,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire,^[b] emerald, and carbuncle;
and crafted in gold were your settings
and your engravings.^[c]*

*On the day that you were created
they were prepared.*

¹⁴ *You were an anointed guardian cherub.
I placed you;^[d] you were on the holy mountain of God;
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.*

Some people have said, “Oh this has to refer to *Satan* – since it talks about Eden!”

But verse 12 makes it clear that this is a lamentation over the king of *Tyre*.

And if you think about it, if *David* was the son of God – the anointed king –
then Hiram was the guardian cherub –

the one who protected the holy places (the one who protected the holy city).

Hiram, king of Tyre, was the first Gentile king

to be a protector and fellow-builder of God's holy dwelling place!

But after the days of Hiram, the subsequent kings of Tyre fell from their cherubic status.

In the very next verses, Ezekiel 28:15-19, the LORD says:

¹⁵ *You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created,
till unrighteousness was found in you.*

¹⁶ *In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and I destroyed you,^[e] O guardian cherub,
from the midst of the stones of fire.*

¹⁷ *Your heart was proud because of your beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I exposed you before kings,
to feast their eyes on you.*

¹⁸ *By the multitude of your iniquities,
in the unrighteousness of your trade
you profaned your sanctuaries;
so I brought fire out from your midst;
it consumed you,
and I turned you to ashes on the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.*

¹⁹ *All who know you among the peoples
are appalled at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more forever.”*

The guardian cherub is destroyed because he was filled with violence –
he used his economic power to harm others –
and so God says that he is bringing Tyre to a dreadful end.

That’s not the story of Satan – that’s the story of Tyre!

So Ezekiel 28 shows us how the *beginning* of the ingrafting of the Gentiles in Hiram of Tyre
falls short – and turns out to be something of a replay of the Garden of Eden –
where Adam sinned and was cast out of the Garden.

But there is one more place where scripture uses all these precious stones.
Revelation 21:19 says that there are twelve foundations of the wall of the heavenly city.
And the twelve foundations of the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem
match the twelve stones on the breastpiece of the high priest.

Think about it:
the high priest can only bring these twelve stones into the holy of holies
once a year.
But the city of God – the New Jerusalem –
has *foundations* of these stones!

The glory and the beauty of God and of the Lamb is now brought to its fruition!

How?

Well, remember what the breastpiece is called?

²⁹ *So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD.* ³⁰ *And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly.*

Verses 15 and 29 particularly refer to this as a “breastpiece of judgment.”

And verse 30 explains what this means:

“Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel
on his heart before the LORD regularly.”

The high priest bears the judgment of the people.

There were some practical ways this worked.

For instance, in a case of manslaughter,

the manslayer had to stay in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest.

In that way, the high priest “bore” at least *some* sins of the people.

Of course, as we heard in Hebrews over the last couple weeks,

the problem is that the high priest had to make atonement for his own sins as well!

An imperfect high priest will bear the judgment of Israel imperfectly.

But God is showing us the need for a high priest who will bear sin perfectly –
one who bears our judgment on his heart before the LORD forever.

At the beginning of the book of Revelation – in chapters 4-5,

the heavenly worship began with the Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.

(Yes, that’s a strange statement!

Ordinarily, those who have been slain are no longer standing!

But this is the high priest who has borne the judgment of his people.

And this is the sacrifice who has been offered –

and yet is now raised from the dead!)

Jesus has borne the judgment of his people – once for all!

The high priests of Israel kept dying –

and so long as they kept dying, there would be no end of sin and misery.

But Jesus has been raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father –

therefore he has put away sin by the one sacrifice of himself.

The problem of the death of the high priest is highlighted in verses 31-35 of Exodus 28.

3. For Whom the Bell Tolls – the Robe of the Ephod (v31-35)

³¹ *“You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue.* ³² *It shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a garment,^[c] so that it may not tear.* ³³ *On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, around its hem, with bells of gold between them,* ³⁴ *a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, around the hem of the robe.* ³⁵ *And it shall be on Aaron when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the Holy Place before the LORD, and when he comes out, so that he does not die.*

This is the description of the *robe* of the ephod.

The robe of the ephod was all of blue.

In other words, the high priest wears the heavens as his garment –
with a breastpiece of precious stones –
the stars shining in the firmament –
with blue and purple and scarlet yarns –
the colors of the sunset.

And all around on the hem of his robe, there are pomegranates and golden bells.
Pomegranates – like the fruit trees in the Garden of Eden –
and golden bells.

And while the gold has a clear function for beauty –
there is also a very practical reason for them!

After all, what would happen if Aaron should die while in the Most Holy Place?
Later, the priests will decide to tie a rope to his ankle –
so that if he dies, they can pull him out without having to go in!

But the focus here is on *preventing* his death.

After all, Aaron is entering *God's* dwelling place.
And when you are entering someone's house,
it is only polite to knock – to ring the doorbell.
The high priest wears these bells so that God can hear him coming!

It's not that God doesn't know –
it's that we should not treat God as though he's not there!

We do this all the time.

When you go to God in prayer – and you completely ignore *who he is* –
you are treating him as though he is not really God.
Jesus taught us to pray,
“Our Father, who art in heaven” –
Jesus taught us to acknowledge who God is!
When you pray, remember who you are talking to!
When you pray, take the time to “ring the bell” first –
to approach him as a child to your heavenly Father –
as a priest entering into the Holy of Holies through the blood of Jesus.

Because in Jesus *you* are now Holy to the LORD.

4. How Aaron Bears Guilt – the Golden Plate for the Turban (v36-38)

³⁶ “*You shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to the LORD.’*”³⁷ *And you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban.*

³⁸ *It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts. It shall regularly be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.*

You are now that little golden plate on the turban of Aaron,
inscribed with the words, “Holy to the LORD.”
In the same way that God doesn’t need bells to tell him that the high priest is coming,
so also God doesn’t need to read the words, “Holy to the LORD” on Aaron’s forehead!

But when we have fallen short – and our lives do not reflect the holiness of God –
we need a priest who bears our guilt on his forehead.

5. The Coat and the Turban (v39)

³⁹ *“You shall weave the coat in checker work of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash embroidered with needlework.*

Conclusion: “For Glory and for Beauty” – What Are You Wearing? (v40-43)

⁴⁰ *“For Aaron’s sons you shall make coats and sashes and caps. You shall make them for glory and beauty. ⁴¹ And you shall put them on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. ⁴² You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh. They shall reach from the hips to the thighs; ⁴³ and they shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they go into the tent of meeting or when they come near the altar to minister in the Holy Place, lest they bear guilt and die. This shall be a statute forever for him and for his offspring after him.*

Okay, now that you have heard all this,

I want you to listen to what Paul says in Colossians 2-3:

In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul says

“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink,
or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

These are a shadow of the things to come,
but the substance [the body that casts the shadow] belongs to Christ.”

So Paul is already thinking about how the OT rites and ceremonies were shadows of Jesus.

Then a few verses later Paul says in 3:1,

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above,
where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ who is your life appears,
then you also will appear with him in glory.”

So Paul is calling us to be heavenly minded – to set our minds and hearts on things above.

And in verses 5-11, Paul explains how we *have* put off the old self and have put on the new self.

And then Paul describes in 3:12 *our* heavenly garments:

“Put on then [this is the language of putting on clothes] –

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,
compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another,
forgiving each other;
as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
And above all these put on love, which binds everything in perfect harmony.”

What are you wearing?

Ultimately, it's *not* really a question about your outer garments –
but about your character!

Are you wearing compassion? Kindness? Humility? Meekness?

Are you wearing forgiveness? –

and is your priestly sash the sash of love – which binds everything in perfect harmony?

Indeed, when you think about it,

this was the whole point of Aaron's priestly garments in the first place!

The outward must correspond to the inward!

Which all should correspond to Christ himself –

the firstborn of creation and the firstborn from the dead –

the one who unites all things together in himself.

Let us pray.

End with PHSS 163