

Message #57

Exodus 28:1-43

We are living in a day in which more and more ministers are moving away from formality in what they call their worship services. Some ministers no longer wear a suit and tie; in fact, many are wearing shorts and T-shirts.

My brother-in-law is a corporate executive for the largest investment corporation in the United States. He often interviews people for high paying salaried positions. He said one time a man came to him to interview in Florida for a top position and he showed up wearing a sport jacket with sleeves rolled up and he had an open collared shirt with the big lapels dangling over the sport jacket and he had that scruff look on his face because he had not shaved. This guy was interviewing for a very high paying position in a major corporation. Greg said I knew the moment I met him I would not hire him. I decided to give him 10 minutes of my time. When his time was up he said I said to him, may I make a suggestion? The next time you go for an interview of this caliber, don't try to look like Don Johnson of Miami Vice, put on a suit and tie.

I recently read an article written by a man who traveled across the United States to attend various churches to see what people wore when they went to church. He said that the majority of churches and ministers were promoting a philosophy that said, "Come as you are. God doesn't care what you wear." He said he observed that churches west of the Mississippi seemed to feature ministers who went to church wearing anything. He said what bothered him was that there seemed to be a lack of respect and reverence in these churches that all featured a "dress down" mindset.

Is it true that God doesn't care what you wear to church? Is there such a thing as appropriate attire? Should there be some "dress code" for the clergy?

Now I am no legalist and I am no Pharisee. I am far from it. When it comes to people who come to church, I don't really care what people wear to church as long as it is modest because that is a Biblical standard given to the N.T. church (I Tim. 2:9).

But I must say I do expect that a minister will dress in a way that respects God and respects the people of God and the ministry of God. Dress for a minister is not about what is comfortable for the minister; it is about what reflects a respect and reverence for God.

Now I know we are not under the O.T. Law, but when you look at worship under the O.T. Law, one thing is very clear; those ministers who led Israel in worship could not do it wearing street clothes.

GOD DEMANDED THAT THE PRIESTS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN LEADING WORSHIP WERE TO WEAR SACRED AND BEAUTIFUL CLOTHING THAT WAS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP.

In **verse 1**, God instructed Moses to get his brother Aaron and his four sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, and he was to set them aside as ministers for Him. These men were chosen by God to “minister as priest.”

Now the Hebrew word “priest” (kahan) is a word that primarily refers to a man, who is supposed to be somewhat of an intercessor in matters between God and man (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 385).

The word “minister” (shaw rath) is one that carries with it the idea of ministering as a servant (*Ibid.*, p. 851). **So the responsibility of these priests was to be a servant of God who ministered in representative matters between God and man.**

Now before we move on we must observe that only God could make one a priest. No one became a priest by popular election or by human choice. God was the one who determined who would be His chosen leader.

I think there is a N.T. principle here and that is God is the One who gives different gifts to His people. For example, in ministry God gives the gift of pastor/teacher. It is a gift of God given to the church of God. He is the One who determines to whom He gives that gift (Eph. 4:8, 11-12). He determines who gets these gifts just as He determined who these priests would be.

Now in order for these priests to minister for God, they needed to be properly dressed.

God did not leave their clothing up for personal choice; He designed it and demanded they wear it. Certainly if one is to minister for God, he needs to be properly dressed, spiritually speaking; but this is speaking of actual physical clothing.

In **verse 2** God informs Moses that a special holy garment was to be designed for Aaron. This garment was to be designed in such a way that it brought glory to God and was beautiful. This garment was not your typical garment that one would wear going to a grocery store. This was to be a very special garment.

According to **verse 3**, this garment was to be made by very skillful people whom God has “endowed with the spirit of wisdom.” So God actually gave certain individuals the skill to be able to make clothing. This is not a skill He gave to everyone. **We clearly see here that God gives different skills to different people so that He may carry out His will and work.**

Now I want you to observe from **verse 3** the reason for this priestly garment—so that **Aaron could be set apart and consecrated to minister as a priest to God**. So this dress code was not so much designed for the people as it was for God. If Aaron were to be a servant minister for God, he needed to be dressed in a way that God deemed acceptable.

Now according to **verses 4-5** there were to be seven parts to this priestly garment, which was to be a “holy garment.” He lists the parts here and then he will develop each one later in the chapter:

- 1) This garment was to have a breastplate. **28:4a**
- 2) This garment was to have an ephod. **28:4b**
- 3) This garment was to have a robe. **28:4c**
- 4) This garment was to have a tunic. **28:4d**
- 5) This garment was to have a turban. **28:4e**
- 6) This garment was to have a sash. **28:4f**
- 7) This garment was to have special material. **28:5**

Now there are five specific items mentioned in this chapter:

ITEM #1 – The priests’ garment was to contain an ephod. **28:6-14**

An ephod is a sleeveless vest worn close to the body, which probably extended down just below the hips. The material that this was made from is very expensive and beautiful—gold, blue, purple and scarlet colored material and fine twisted linen (**v. 6**). **This was the same material as that which comprised the inner curtains.**

This ephod had two shoulder pieces joined together (**v. 7**). Either they were joined together by loops or straps or cords. We cannot tell whether this was a rectangle with a neck hole in the middle put over the head or whether it was two pieces tied together. According to **verse 8**, there must be some type of waist band that could cinch down the ephod on the priest.

Carefully woven into this ephod were golden ornamental pieces which contained two onyx stones that contained the names of six sons of Israel on one side of the shoulder and six sons of Israel on the other side of the shoulder (**28:9-10**). These names were to be engraved by a jeweler (**28:11**). These two stones were to be mounted on the shoulder area of this ephod and would be a constant reminder that whenever this priest ministered, he not only was carrying out ministry for himself but for all of God’s people. All of Israel was special to God.

ITEM #2 – The priest’s garment was to contain a breastplate. **28:15-30**

Now the Hebrew word for breastplate means “ornament” so this breastplate was to be a very distinct item that would stand out from the rest of the priest’s attire.

The item was to be made from the same material as the Ephod (**28:15**). He was to make this item to be a perfect square folded over double (**28:16**). This would make it strong enough to hold the stones.

On this breastplate were to be four settings of very expensive stones (**28:17-20**). There were to be twelve stones each bearing the name of a tribe of Israel (**28:21**).

This breastplate was to contain chains made of pure gold which were to be fastened to the breastplate by rings (28:22-28). A blue ribbon was to pass through the lower rings and connect it to the waistband of the ephod, so that it was securely attached (28:28-29).

Now carefully observe from **verse 29**, that Aaron was to carry the names of the sons of Israel over his heart. **This shows us how important Israel is to God.** Aaron is not carrying on his heart the name of Muslims or Mormons, but the twelve sons of Israel.

Now according to **verse 30** on this breastplate was to be two stones called the Urim and Thummim that were to be used to determine the will of God in certain situations. The situations are not described here, but the stones are. The actual Hebrew word “Urim” means “lights.” The actual Hebrew word “Thummim” means perfection.

So we may conclude that these two stones were designed to give light to the perfect will of God in certain situations.

Both the stones represented the twelve tribes of Israel and these two stones were to be worn on this breastplate over the heart of Aaron. So on the heart of Aaron is stones that represent the people of God and stones that represent a desire to know the will of God.

These two stones were sometimes used by God to show His priest, His will.

ITEM #3 – The priests garment was to contain a robe worn under the ephod. **28:31-35**

This robe was to be made all in blue (28:31). The blue color would correspond perfectly with the other colors and would add to the beauty of the garment. It also would remind the priest that this is a heavenly ministry because blue is the color of heaven.

It appears to have been a large rectangular garment about 8 feet long with a hole in the middle for the head of the priest. There was to be a woven collar on it so that it could not tear (28:32).

The robe would hang on the priest covering the front and back, probably down to his ankles. Throughout this robe were pomegranate shaped tassels that were interspersed with gold bells (28:33-35). These bells would enable people to hear when the priest was ministering.

ITEM #4 – The priests garment was to contain a holy hat. **28:36-39**

There was to be a plate made of pure gold on the turban and on it was to be an engraving that read “Holy to the Lord.” It was to be fastened on the hat with a blue cord and it was to be attached on the front of the turban or hat (28:36-37).

Now according to **verse 38**, one of the purposes of this plate on this turban was because there was always to be a focus on the fact that in a relationship with God things must be consecrated and holy because of iniquity.

Iniquity cannot exist with holiness and God wanted His priests thinking about that.

According to **verse 39**, this weaving of the tunic and the turban was to be done by a skilled weaver.

ITEM #5 – All priests were to have special garments for ministry. **28:40-43**

These garments were so important that God says they must be worn when one ministers for me and if they are not wearing these garments they will incur guilt and they will die (**28:43**).

One thing is very clear; when these priests were getting ready to go to worship they did not say who cares what we wear? They did not go into the presence of God wearing shorts and a T-shirt.

What leaps out at us from this text is that apparently God does carefully monitor how His people look when they come to worship Him.

He certainly is interested in whether or not we look clean inside. He does not want His people dirty. He does not want them coming into His presence unless they are prepared to deal with their iniquity.