

Lesson 20 – “Holiness to the Lord” Exodus 28:1-4 and 36-39

In Chapters 21 through 23, God meets with Moses and pours into him all the laws for the Israelites. In Chapter 24, Moses tells the people everything that the Lord had spelled out to him and how these were the laws by which they'd be governed. The people all listened and agreed. Moses then had them bring a sacrifice, and he took blood from that sacrifice and sprinkled it on the all the people. This put them under a blood covenant with the Lord. Just as their houses had been “passed over” by the angel of death because of the blood over their doors before they left Egypt, now they, themselves, were covered under the blood of the Lord. This reminds us of our own access to God that was made possible because of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the cross. When we accept Him into our hearts, Jesus becomes our blood covering.

“For this is the blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”
Matthew 26:28

Vv. 28:1-4. In today's lesson, the Lord gives Moses very specific instructions as to who shall serve as priests who will minister to Him. They were to be Aaron, Moses' brother, and Aaron's sons. He goes into great detail regarding the garments that Aaron and his sons are to wear as they minister. They were to be arrayed in these beautifully crafted garments, designed by the Lord, Himself, and they would serve to distinguish them as priests of the Lord and as symbols of the righteousness of God. When we study the Tabernacle next month, we will see a direct correlation to the materials used for these holy garments and The Tabernacle. The garments were to be made *“for glory and for beauty.”* As such, they were to be made of the finest materials and fashioned by *“gifted artisans.”* Notice how He describes them as being *“filled with the spirit of wisdom,”* which serves to remind us that whatever talents man acquires are there because God put them there. God wanted only the best for His tabernacle and for the garments worn by the priests who would minister there. This all speaks to us of God as being a God of order, a God who desires to be worshipped as “holy”. 1 Samuel 2:2 says, *“No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God.”* His holiness is a reflection of His eternal nature and His divinity. So we can understand why everything that represented Him had to be holy and perfect. And yet, at the same time, He is also a God who loves us *“with an everlasting love”* as it says in Jeremiah 31:3 and who desires to be involved in every small aspect of our lives.

Aaron and his sons, as priests, were to be mediators between the people and God. As such, God was holding them to high standards of purity. All of Chapters 21 & 22 in the book of Leviticus is devoted to the conduct that the Lord expected of His priests. They were to perform ceremonial rites, like offering sacrifices and burnt offerings, which was to be done exactly as the Lord instructed. There was also the regular burning of incense and the care of the Tabernacle, all while keeping themselves clean and pure. As priests, they were to be anointed, consecrated and sanctified by the Lord. This, too, was no small matter as we can see in Chapter 29 of Exodus. Again, God goes into great detail about how this was to be done. Much is told about the animals brought for sacrifice as part of the consecration, and what was to be done with every part of them. The consecration took seven days. In Exodus 29:44-46, God tells Moses, *“So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests. I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.”*

Vv. 36-30. The priestly garments. These were to be a breastplate, ephod, robe, tunic, turban and sash.

- Breastplate. This was a piece of fabric folded in half to create a square pouch. It had gemstones on which were written all the names of the 12 tribes. There were to be four rows of three precious,

- beautiful gems, and each stone to be used was according to the design of the Lord. Also inside the pouch of the breastplate were placed two special stones called the Urim and the Thummin, which,
- translated into Hebrew, mean lights and perfection. While we're not told where they came from, these stones were special in that they represented divine guidance from God to the high priest. These were placed in the pouch in such a way that they would be right over the heart of Aaron, symbolic of Aaron carrying the people of Israel over his heart continually when he met with the Lord.
 - Ephod. The ephod was like an apron and was to be made in colors of gold, blue and purple, with scarlet thread.
 - Robe. The robe was to be worn under the breastplate. It was to be blue in color, and it would have golden bells which would sound when the priests went into the holy place, as they ministered and when they came out.
 - Tunic. The tunic was a long shift-like garment made of fine linen and was to be worn under the robe.
 - Turban. This is probably the most significant item worn by Aaron. The turban was also to be made of fine white linen and on the front of it was to be a plate of pure gold engraved with the words: *"Holiness to the Lord"*. It was to be fastened to the turban with a blue cord or sash, and it was to be worn by Aaron, so that the words would always be on his forehead. This phrase was to be a reminder that everything the priests did and all of the things associated with the tabernacle were set apart as holy and solely for the Lord; dedicated exclusively to Him. The scripture also says Aaron was to *"bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts."* In other words, the Israelites had to present their sacrifices through Aaron as God's high priest, as he wore this turban, or their gifts would not be accepted. Again, we have a picture here of our own high priest and Savior Jesus Christ, who bore all of our iniquities when He went to the cross. *"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to our sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed."* 1 Peter 2:24

The picture of these garments and the level of detail God took in designing exactly what they were to look like is a reflection of the righteousness and sovereignty of God. He wanted the people to know Him in His perfect holiness and to be able to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Israelites, having lived so long in bondage, had to learn how to do this. They had to see God as not just an all powerful being Who faithfully saved them from destruction, but also as a holy God who loved them enough to set before them a High Priest (Aaron) through whom they could meet with Him. 1 Chronicles 16:29 expresses it this way, *"Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples, give to the Lord glory and strength. Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."*

Today, we have a High Priest in the person of Jesus Christ, but we don't need an "Aaron" to meet with Him or to be accepted by Him. That access was granted to us by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the fact that the veil separating the holy of holies (where only the priests were allowed to enter) from the rest of the temple was torn in two at the time of His death, an event that was seen as a sign that we now had direct access to God ... no more sacrifices were needed; Jesus was that perfect sacrifice, and He paid it all for us once and forever. Consider what Hebrews 7:26-27 says about Jesus as our High Priest: *"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."*

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:14-16

To come boldly to the throne of grace does not mean that we approach with any sense of entitlement or expecting something because we're such holy believers. Rather, it means that we come with the confidence of knowing who God is and knowing that He loves us and desires a personal relationship with us. We may come

boldly, but we must never lose that sense of awe and reverence for Who God is and that He is deserving of all our worship and praise. We serve a most holy God!

