

Divine Dress Code Exodus 28:1-29:46

Introduction

Dwell: Moses is on the mountain and God is giving him blueprints for building the tabernacle (chs. 25-27) so that the people can enter God's presence again. That's why it is also called "the tent of meeting" (27:21), because it is the location that God has ordained for his people, at this point in salvation history to enter his presence. He was making a way to dwell in his people's midst.

- We were created to be united to God, in his presence, in his garden paradise. Our disobedience and sin have separated us from him. **How can we get back to the presence of God?**

The rituals and sacrifices of Israel are not religious formalities but a means for sinful humanity to approach a holy God and enter His presence.¹ So God provides access to his presence (**temporarily**, in "shadows" in the OT sacrificial system) and **permanently** in Christ (listen to last week's message from Pastor James).

- The temple would be destroyed and raised again in three days (Mk 13, Jn 2) because Jesus was the true temple to which the dwellings of the Old Covenant pointed.
- E.g., **Mosaic, Tapestry, Pictures vs. Presence.**
- Reading the OT after Christ is like watching the *6th Sense* the second time (Keller).

Tabernacles Need Priests: But the tabernacle ("fancy tent") as James called it, is no good on its own. God puts people in that Tabernacle to serve as priests.

- There's this beautiful thread through Scripture that starts with Eden (not just some Mesopotamian farmland) but actually described as a sanctuary, a temple-garden.² Adam is given the task "to work" and "to keep" the garden, the same task given to the priests elsewhere in the OT (cf. Num 3). In Ezekiel 28, the prophet describes Adam as adorned in the precious stones we soon will see adorn the garments of the High Priest.³ The lampstand in the temple likely harkened back to the tree of life (cf. James' sermon).

This beautiful tabernacle would be useless without priests to work and serve in it (e.g., what good is a Disney World with no cast members; don't get me started on self-checkout).

- In Exodus 28-29, God gives instructions about the garments and ordination of these priests (but it's not just a fashion lesson), but all of it makes this point: to enter the presence of God, to serve before the Lord, we need to be **covered by the righteousness of God.**

1. Garments of Glory (28:1-43)

¹ See Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus.*

² Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986).

³ Whether the figured in Ez 28 is Adam or Satan does not undercut the reality that the LXX understood it to be Adam and, therefore, demonstrated the basic understanding of the time that Adam was a priest in the garden temple

28:1 “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.

- Maybe something like this (picture).

Glory and Beauty: One of the repeated phrases we see in this passage is that these garments (like this tabernacle) are made for glory and for beauty. They are made skillfully and with beauty. They convey “dignity and honor.” We’ll return to this when we talk about the craftsmen of the Tabernacle in a few weeks but, briefly, let me remind you that God is worthy of excellence, of our best. We are called to bring beauty into an ugly world (Wilkin). Like the Grand Canyon points to the beauty of God, our work should point to the beauty of God.

- God has made us and “crowned [us] with glory and honor” (Ps 8:5, Heb 2:7). God has created you so that you can point others to him through the things you create, and the tasks you pursue. Cf. your vocation and pointing to the glory of God. Do people see the beauty and glory of God by the way you live your life and do your work? (and I’m not talking about everyone becoming a pastor).

A. Ephod to Bear (vv. 6-14)

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.

Mini Tabernacles: This applies across the chapter, but it is particularly evident here. Notice the similarities between the materials of the priest’s garments and the tabernacle. The tabernacle is also constructed of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet yarns (26:1). “The color and structure of his garments... corresponded closely to many elements in the likewise-revealed tabernacle design... Thus understood, Aaron is seen to be a mini tabernacle, a shorthand version of God’s dwelling place among his people” (Poythress).

- We are called a kingdom of priests in God’s kingdom. When people see us, do they see the dwelling place of God? Do they experience the presence of God?

Bear the People Before the Lord: On each should of the Ephod (vest-like garment) is an **onyx** stone. Engraved in the stones are the names of the tribes of Israel, representing the people of God.

- When the High Priest enters the presence of God he is bearing the people on his shoulders before the Lord. He is carrying them into the presence of God. Without him, they are separated from God.
- For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder (Is 9:6a). **The only way any of us enter the presence of God is if we are carried in on the righteousness of Christ.** You don't waltz into God's presence whenever you want. "When the flag is flying at Buckingham Palace, you know that the Queen is dwelling in your midst, but that doesn't mean you're invited for tea!" (Sach).
- **People who treat God flippantly haven't seen him clearly** (e.g., Rip Current).

B. Breastplate to Judge (vv. 15-30)

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 its length and a span its breadth. ¹⁷ You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, 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... 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.

Value: This breastplate (חֹשֶׁן, *hoshen*) is a square approximately 9" x 9".

- The tribes are now written individually on 12 different precious stones (highlighting their **unique value**), arranged in four rows of three. These stones are placed near the heart of the priest. The people are near to the **heart** of their mediator.
 - You are close to the heart of God. He loves you. He delights in you. He sings over you. He chooses you.

Judgment: The image continues of the priest carrying the people before the Lord, this time for judgment. This is not just a breastplate but a **breastplate of judgment** (a *hoshen* of *mishpat*; חֹשֶׁן מִשְׁפָּט). The word can mean decision but is often used to describe God's judgment or justice.

- Because God is just, we are called "do justice" (Mic 6:8). God is *actually* completely fair. He punishes us according to our sins. His judgment is always according to the merits of the case, not partiality.

- God *must* judge our sin. All sin must be paid for (without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin). Either you pay for your sin, or you place your faith in Jesus and he pays for it. **There is no other way.**

Urim and Thummim: Inside this breastplate are these, in a pouch or somehow attached are these items (gemstones?) described as Urim (אֲוִרִים) and Thummim (תְּמִימִים). The translation of these words is unclear. Some argue they mean “lights” and “perfection” but there is a lot of evidence they imply “guilty” or “innocent.” A sort of binary way of asking God to make a decision (yes/no). It’s probably no accident that these words start with the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Whatever they were, they were used in seeking the Lord’s will.

- Everyone wants to know the will of God, to receive the revelation of God (LDS love some Urim and Thummim; they love some magic decoder spectacles so *they* can have privileged, unfalsifiable access to God; who can argue with “God told me so”).
- But, we know that after the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring the HS, there are no more casting lots. Urim and Thummim are long gone. We have Jesus, the wisdom of God, the Alpha and Omega, unveiled to us. God himself took on flesh and revealed his will to us. The hidden plan of God has been shown to us in Christ.
- **Spend less time worrying about what God hasn’t told you and more time obeying what he has!**

C. Robe to Remind (vv. 31-35)

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, 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.

Pomegranates: I would be speculating if I told you the reason these pomegranates alternated around the hem of this robe. Does the red skin and white flesh point us to blood and purity? **Or is it simply to symbolize fruitfulness?**

Bells: The bells, on the other hand, are obviously to make noise. You can hear the High Priest coming.

- It’s like putting a bell on a cow, or a toddler (don’t act like those squeaky and light up shoes aren’t just cowbells for kids). And I’m not getting all high-and-mighty, I was a leash kid.

No one but the High Priest could enter the holy of holies. When you heard the bells, it was a reminder that your priest was interceding before the Lord on your behalf. If the bell stopped making noise, that means the High Priest didn’t make it. God is holy. God is not safe. As we have seen and will see in Scripture, approaching God carelessly can lead to death.

- These bells weren't just for the once-a-year moment of entering the Holy Place. They weren't detachable. They were **permanent reminders**. Everywhere the priest went you heard the bells. The noise must have pervaded the temple. Every day you hear the ringing, a reminder that before a holy God, you deserve death, so you need a sacrifice.
- Is your life a daily reminder of the holiness of God?

D. Turban to Set Apart (vv. 36-39)

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.

Stamped: On the forehead of the priest is this golden plaque describing that the priest (and the people) belong to the Lord and are holy, set apart to the Lord.

- Those who belong to the Lord are described in Revelation 14 as having the Father's name written on their foreheads (Toy Story, Andy written on foot).

E. Undergarments to Cover (vv. 40-43)

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.

Covered: Since the garden, since sin entered the world, humanity has been naked and ashamed (Gen 2-3). Our sin means we must be covered before a holy God (cf. the altar in Gen 20). So these priest must cover their nakedness as a sign that their sin must be covered before a holy God.

- To approach a holy God with your sin uncovered demands your death. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23).
- Interesting, the only part of the body not mentioned to be covered are **feet** (cf. Moses taking off Sandals, Ex 3). The priest would be simultaneously uncovered (feet) and covered (clothes). Like us: we are laid bare before the Lord while being covered by the righteousness of Christ.

Great Exchange: But our High Priest, Jesus Christ, does not need to be covered. He is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens (Heb 7:26).

- But on the cross, our true priest and king, was stripped naked, publicly ridiculed. He took the punishment we deserved, he bore our guilt and, ultimately, took our death.
- He substituted his life for ours. He died so we can live. "The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, but the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man" (Stott).

- “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). He was betrayed, abandoned, accused, and punished for us, so that we could have forgiveness, righteousness, and new life in him.
- “The heart of the gospel proclamation is the good news that the transfer of guilt was made on the cross of Jesus the Christ. The Bridegroom gave himself up for the bride, the Head for the body, the King for his people, the Shepherd for his sheep, the Master for his disciples and friends, our Lord for us” (Blocher).
- “We dare assure ourselves that eternal life, of which Jesus is the heir, is ours and can no more be taken from us than from him; we cannot be condemned for our sins, because he has pardoned us, since he took them on himself as his own. What an exchange!?! By taking our mortality, he has given his immortality; taking our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; taking our iniquity on himself, he has clothed us with his righteousness” (Calvin).
- ¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest we can with confidence approach the throne of grace (Heb 4:14, 16).

2. Set Apart to Serve (29:1-46)

A. Wash, Clothe, Anoint (vv. 1-9)

- There is a deliberate and intentional process to demonstrate the preparation, purity, and holiness of the priest. They are chosen, prepared, and set apart for service for the Lord.

B. Sacrifice, Sacrifice, Sacrifice (vv. 10-28)

- Bull (vv. 10-14)
 - Sin-offering, outside the camp. Its blood was put on the horns of the altar and poured at the base.
 - Sacrifices (atonement); 29:20, 33, 36 “Without atonement, no sinner may approach a holy God” (Sach).
- Ram 1 (vv. 15-18)
 - Throw against sides of the altar (cf. Ex 24). The blood on the people and the blood on God is a reminder that **we** need a **sacrifice** and **God** needs **satisfaction**.
 - When the debt is satisfied, it is a pleasing aroma to God. The sacrifice to God is pleasant to him, a fragrant aroma. The reason the smell is pleasant is because of what it represents (e.g., sticky buns on Christmas).
- Ram 2 (vv. 19-21)
 - On the right ear, right thumb, right big toe (toe thumb). Along with oil, this symbolizes the complete possession, payment, and filling of God for the priest. The priest is **covered** and **filled** for the work God has for him.
 - From head to toe, the totality of their being, the only thing that qualifies them for the work is the blood of sacrifice.
 - The only thing that qualifies any of us for the work to which God has called us, is the blood of the sacrifice of Jesus. And the only thing that

empowers us for the work to which God has called us is the Spirit living in us. **We are covered and filled.**

C. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat (vv. 35-37)

- The process of ordination takes 7 days (new creation?).
- Daily sacrifices and offerings were made throughout this period.

3. Neverending Sacrifice (38-46)

³⁸ “Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly. ³⁹ One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. ⁴⁰ And with the first lamb a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering. ⁴¹ The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD. ⁴² It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. ⁴³ There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. ⁴⁴ I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.

Messy: Now, day after day, these priests will be the ones who sacrifice. Multiple lambs a day, every day. These beautiful garments will be soaked in blood and the smell of death will pervade (Muslim “Feast of Sacrifice,” *Eid Al Adha*, Wolof, W. Africa, *Tabaski*; Abraham and “Ishmael,” cf. Isaac, Muslim fan fic; gutters filled with blood; meat hanging in the market; flies everywhere).

- The inescapable sound and smell of death, bells, incense, etc.
- I put on an apron when I bake cookies. These beautiful garments would be soaked with blood.

Day After Day: Day after day, year after year, it’s a never-ending sacrifice. Temporary respite only to be repeated again. Whatever satisfaction is short-lived. Because the Tabernacle and the sacrifices and the priests were not an end in themselves, they pointed to someone greater.

- It’s a never-ending sacrifice. Day-after-day, year-after-year.
- What God deserves is not a pretty garment and a valuable sacrifice, as nice as we can make them. He deserves the righteousness of Christ, which none of us can give.
- But on the cross, our perfect, pure, undefiled High Priest was covered in his own blood as the sacrifice for our sins.

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification

of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God... ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb 9: 11-14, 24-26). ¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God (Heb 10:11-12).

- Christ, our great High Priest, carries us before the throne of God and offers the perfect, permanent sacrifice of his very life for our sins.
- Apart from Christ, you are still in your sin. You are still under condemnation. Your destiny is death and eternal separation from God.
- In Christ, it is finished. Your debt is paid. Your sins are atoned. Your future is bright.
 - Come to Christ. Place your faith in him. Receive his forgiveness. Receive his righteousness.

Priests: Once you come to Christ, you can live a life of beauty and glory.

- Christ, the Son of God, adopts us into his family, making us children of the living God.
- Christ, the true and better tabernacle, makes us fit to be temples of the living God.
- Christ, the true and better priest, makes us a kingdom of priests to worship and serve the living God, now able to present our bodies as living sacrifice[s], holy and acceptable to God.