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Exodus: Delivered By God, For God / Character; Christian; A High Priest / Exodus 28:31–35

This sermon explores the significance of the High Priest's robe in Exodus 28:31–35, emphasizing its typological connection to Christ. The robe, woven entirely of blue, adorned with pomegranates and bells, points forward to the righteousness, intercession, and atoning work of Jesus, our Great High Priest. The pomegranates symbolize the fruitfulness and blood of sacrifice; the bells, the ongoing sound of priestly mediation. Together, they portray the beauty and necessity of worship according to God's command. Believers are called to examine whether they are truly clothed in Christ's righteousness or still approaching God in garments of their own making.

Introduction

Well, this morning we are returning to the book of Exodus and before we dive back in let's take a moment to take a step back and just remind ourselves of what we have witnessed thus far in this epic historical account of the nation of Israel. Exodus begins where Genesis ends, with the nation of Israel abiding peacefully within the land of Egypt. As time passed the people of Israel grew in number and we are told in Exodus 1:8 "And a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph."

As this new pharaoh took power he also desired to subdue the people of Israel so that they would not Exodus 1:10 "... also join themselves to those who hate us and fight against us and go up from the land." Which led to the enslavement of the people of Israel to the people of Egypt. Exodus chapter 2 chronicled the birth and early life of Moses before he fled into the wilderness because he murdered an Egyptian. Chapter two ends with the death of the Pharaoh and the cries of God's people rising up to God.

At the appointed time, God appears to Moses in the bush that was burning yet was not consumed and calls him out to lead the people of Israel out of bondage in the land of Egypt and to the land that God had promised Abraham. What ensues in the following chapters is nothing short of a utter defeat of the pantheon of Egyptian gods as Yahweh demonstrates that He is God and there is no other.

After the utter decimation of their gods and the loss of their first born the people of Egypt watch as the One True God delivers His people without them ever lifting a sword. In fact scripture says in Exodus 12:36 that they “plundered the Egyptians”. From here the Israelites made their way across the wilderness, initially pursued by Pharaoh and his army which ended in their final and complete defeat, all the way to the foot of Mount Sinai. It was here that God gave them His law. Once the Law of God had been given to the people of God, He instructed them to hold a worship service in which the Mosaic covenant would be ratified.

At the completion of this event, God calls Moses back up on the mountain and proceeds to instruct him in the construction of the Tabernacle. God tells Moses in Exodus 25:8–9 ““And let them make a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. “According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall make it.”

At the completion of the instructions for all but one item in the tabernacle God begins to give Moses instructions regarding the priesthood that would minister to Him, Exodus 28:1 reads ““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.” followed in verse 2 - 43 of the same chapter with the details regarding the holy garments that the priests were to wear.

As you may recall the garments consisted of an ephod, the breastpiece with the Urim and Thummin, the robe, the turban or mitre, the tunic and finally the undergarments. Previously we have discussed the ephod, the breastpiece including the Urim and Thummin. This brings us to verses 31-35 and the next piece of the priestly garments the robe. It is interesting to note that this particular word does not appear in scripture until we are given the instructions regarding the robe of the high priest.

One final reminder before we dig into the text before us today. The commands given in the text as they relate specifically to the items of clothing are to a particular people at a particular time. This is not a command for us to take and emulate, we are not called by God to reinstate the priesthood that was ended by our Great High Priest. This does not mean, however, that the text has no use for us today. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable”. This places the

responsibility for understanding the text and its implications on us as believers, those who HAVE been commanded to “study to show thyself approved”. This morning as we come to this text we will look at the types and shadows we see, the ramifications for us here today, and how it shapes who we are as believers.

Take your bibles and turn with me to the book of Exodus chapter 28 where we will read from verses 31-35 -

Text

Please rise for the reading of God’s Holy, Inerrant, Infallible, Complete, Authoritative and Sufficient Word:

Exodus 28:31–35 LSB

“You shall make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue.

“There shall be an opening at its top in the middle of it; around the edge of its opening there shall be a binding of woven work, like the opening of a coat of mail, so that it will not be torn.

“You shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet *material*, all around on its hem, and bells of gold between them all around:

a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around on the hem of the robe.

“It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its sound shall be heard when he comes into the holy place before Yahweh and when he goes out, so that he will not die.

Gracious Heavenly Father, we bow before you who are Holy, Holy, Holy, we remain in awe of You, the Creator and Sustainer of all things. We enter into your presence this morning by Your permission alone for we know that we are not worthy of Your blessings and mercies based on our righteousness, but by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone. Father we pray that as we gather together around Your word, that we would submit to Your truth and be obedient to Your commands. We thank You for Your faithfulness, for the forgiveness of our sins, and for the sustaining power of Your grace.

Father we ask that your Spirit would guide us into all truth in the blessed name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, Amen.

The Robe

If you will recall from our previous discussion of the tents and curtains of the tabernacle and the ephod we looked at the colors that were used throughout and what each of those colors represented. As a reminder, we had the fine linen of pure white a foreshadow for us of the purity of Christ, there was the celestial or heavenly blue that speaks of Christ's heavenly character, the royal purple pointed towards the fact that He is King of kings and Lord of Lords, and finally the scarlet or crimson that stands as a testimony to the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross. We see these colors used repeatedly throughout the Tabernacle and the robe itself is no different. The text tells us that the robe itself was entirely made of blue and would go on the high priest after the linen tunic but before the ephod and would come down to at least the knees. There was a hole in the center of the robe for the head with a collar woven around it for added strength so that the robe itself would not tear. At the bottom of the robe hung, in alternating fashion pomegranates and bells. The pomegranates were variegated, like the veil and curtains of the Tabernacle and the ephod.

This robe was designed for and worn by the high priest only. Even from a distance the high priest would have stood out in a crowd of priests simply by the addition of this robe. Not only did the heavenly blue define the office of the wearer as that of high priest, it also added dignity and priestly character to Aaron and the high priests who would follow.

One last description of the robe before we begin to unpack these verses more fully, the robe of the high priest was fashioned from one piece of cloth. While this may not seem significant at the moment, I would ask that you consider the words of John in John 19:23 "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, a part to each soldier and also His tunic; now that tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top." the word translated tunic here can also be translated robe. The robe to be worn only by the high priest, fashioned from only one piece of cloth, like the robe that Christ was wearing as the soldiers stripped him in preparation for His flogging and crucifixion.

Typology

To properly understand and apply these texts of scripture to the lives of believers today it is important we move from the description of the articles of clothing that we have before us to looking at the types and forms they are of the things to come. It is in the typology that we begin to see the full beauty of the text and of course, although we are dealing with one article of clothing and five short verses there is much to see. We begin, not with the robe proper, we will return to that in a moment, but to the lower hem of the garment, where we find the bells and pomegranates.

The fruit described here is exactly what it says it is, pomegranates. Unlike other mentions of fruit in scripture where we are not necessarily clear as to what is being referred to because the fruit may not be specifically identified, such as the fruit of the tree of the knowledge, the pomegranate of ancient Israel are just like the pomegranates of today. If you are unfamiliar with pomegranates, let me describe one for you. A pomegranate is a round reddish color fruit with a semi hard shell. As you crack open the exterior, you will find hundreds of seeds inside, each in their own little capsule, if you will, filled with a crimson liquid.

There are some who would say that the pomegranate is only there for decoration, that it serves no purpose, and there are others who say that it represents fertility, as it was used in the cultures around Israel in that manner, and it was simply appropriated by God for the same purpose, to speak of the fertility and abundance of the promised land to which they were being led. I issue with this because to assume that the pomegranate was appropriated from other cultures by God is, in my humble opinion, feeding into the low view of God that we already have as humanity. It gives ownership of the idea to the other religion or culture versus acknowledging God's sovereignty in all of creation.

Rather, I believe that God, as He has been doing since the beginning of the instructions surrounding the tabernacle is pushing us to look forward to the truth of Christ. In this case the type could be spoken of in two ways, one that stands alone and one that stands together with the bells. The type that stands alone deals with what you find when you pierce the skin of the pomegranate, the crimson liquid that will flow as a result, reminding the people of Israel of the blood that had to be spilled for the atonement of

their sins and of course, pointing us forward in redemptive history towards the blood that would flow from the wounds of Christ as He hung on the cross and took the full punishment for our sins.

Before we talk about the second type we see in the pomegranate, it is necessary that we look at the bells and then bring the two of them together since scripture repeats the order in which they were to be placed around the hem of the robe. It is likely that the immediate practical purpose of the bells was so that the people could mark the movement of the high priest within the tabernacle since he would not be seen from the outside.

Matthew Henry offers this explanation in his commentary on this passage:

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume Exodus 28:31–39

the sound of the bells gave notice to the people in the outer court when he went into the holy place to burn incense, that they might then apply themselves to their devotions at the same time (Lu. 1:10), in token of their concurrence with him in his offering, and their hopes of the ascent of their prayers to God in virtue of the incense he offered.

However, as we discussed previously, the old priesthood has been forever changed as Christ has become the Great High Priest who has entered behind the veil and ministers in the presence of God the Father continually on behalf of His people, which leaves us with the question of what purpose do the bells serve us here and now. Of what do they point, what should be called to mind when we hear of them in scripture. AW Pink states that the bells tell of musical speech and ties that to intercession of Christ as He stands before the Father. Here again, much like the pomegranates, I believe that we can see more than one type, more than one truth being recalled to mind.

The pomegranates reminding us of Christ work on the cross and the bells reminding us of His work at the Throne should give us great peace and comfort, even in the darkest, most difficult times. This is the type that we turn to when life happens, but there is another type here within the pomegranates and the bells and that is one of sweet aroma to mask the foul stench of our sins and the sound of the gospel that calls us to repentance and faith by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed. When we tie in the robe itself, the garment of Christ we see the full picture on display for us. John Calvin writes:

Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony Exodus, Chapter 28

This robe was above the oblong coat between that and the ephod; and from its lower edge hung the bells and pomegranates alternately. Although there was no smell in the pomegranates, yet the type suggested this to the eyes; as if God required in that garment a sweet smell as well as a sound; and surely we who stink through the foulness of our sins, are only a sweet smell unto God as being covered with the garment of Christ. But God would have the bells give a sound; because the garment of Christ does not procure favour for us, except by the sound of the Gospel, which diffuses the sweet savour of the Head amongst all the members. In this allegory there is nothing too subtle or far-fetched; for the similitude of the smell and the sound naturally leads us to the honouring of grace, and to the preaching of the Gospel. By the pomegranates, therefore, which were attached to the hem of the garment, God testified that whatever was in the priest smelt sweetly, and was acceptable to Him, provided the sound accompanied it; the necessity of which is declared, when God denounces death against the priest if he should enter the sanctuary without the sound.

The entirety of the picture of grace portrayed for us in this robe with its pomegranates and bells. A final word before we move on to the impact that this has in our lives, notice here in the final clause of verse 5 the warning regarding the wearing of the robe as Aaron ministers, that it be worn so that he will not die, is a warning and reminder to Moses, Aaron and the Israelites that right worship of God, done according to and by His command, is the only acceptable practice of worship. This continues to stand as a reminder to us, this is not something that has passed from view. The command of God to the Israelites, regarding the actual clothing, the tabernacle and all of its implements have passed away because the Aaronical and Levitical priesthood has been eliminated, replaced by the priesthood of Christ. This is important because in the here and now there are many who want to ask why we should continue to hold fast to this command of right worship but can say that we no longer need to hold fast to the tabernacle or the priestly clothing.

It is here that it is necessary to have a true understanding of the moral law of God, the foundationally true law that does not change. The first four commandments: Exodus 20:1-11

Exodus 20:1–11 LSB

Then God spoke all these words, saying,

"I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

"You shall have no other gods before Me.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

"You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yahweh your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female slave or your cattle or your sojourner who is within your gates.

"For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

deal with the right worship of God and the moral law, which is rooted and grounded in the very nature of God, can not, does not, and will not change. This is why we can stand on the truth that we are called to worship God rightly, in accordance with His word and not according to our desires.

The Character of the Christian

The final type that we need to look at this morning lies in the robe itself. As you may have noticed in the quote by Calvin, the robe is considered to be the garment of Christ and the heavenly or celestial blue certainly speaks to that reality, but here, we need to press in a little deeper so that we understand the implications of this truth. Notice that Calvin stated that we were covered with the garment of Christ. This is the righteousness of Christ that has been given to us and in doing so it changes the very fabric of who we are.

My favorite description of who we were is found in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus where he writes in Ephesians 2:1–3 “And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” Which is quickly followed by the drastic change we see in verse 4 of God making us alive in Christ. Paul goes on to describe a change in us as believers, but this is a change that we can see right here in Exodus if we take a moment to consider the effects of the robe of Christ, the imputation of His righteousness, in our lives.

AW Pink is very helpful here as he writes:

Gleanings in Exodus Chapter 48: Aaron's Garments

This is most important, for it defines the essential nature of Christianity as contra-distinguished from Judaism. The whole system takes its character from the Priest. Because Christ is a heavenly Priest, His people are partakers of a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), their inheritance is there (1 Pet. 1). Being worn beneath the ephod itself, this “robe” announces that the official character of Christ is sustained by what He is personally as the Heavenly One (1 Cor. 15:47).

Let us take a moment to briefly flesh these out.

First in Hebrews 3:1 we read “Therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession— Jesus,”. Here we see that we are partakers of a “heavenly calling” but what exactly does that mean, what is this heavenly calling of which we are taking part. The context of this verse in Hebrews is an effort by the writer to remind the Jewish converts of the truth that Christ is a greater Moses. In

our context as a whole it is not just considering that Christ is greater than Moses, or Abraham, or the angels, but that He is better than the world, than our jobs, than our families, than our past, than our future. It is a call to us to remember that Christ is sufficient for all of our needs. In everything that we do, say, and are we should consider Christ. To consider something means that we think carefully about something in order to make a decision. It is not just that we think about Christ, but that there is action behind the thought. Calling Christ to mind, considering the heavenly calling of our Great High Priest is when think about Christ and then those thoughts guide how we live our daily life. We must take great care, what we will our minds with is what we will truly consider when we are making decisions, Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God."

Secondly, in Philippians 3:20 Paul writes "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,". Just as our heavenly calling changes our thought process so too does our view of our citizenship. Obviously citizenship is a massive topic in the United States at this moment, but this is but a temporary issue. Deport or don't deport, eventually this country will pass away. Paul wrote this to a group of people to whom citizenship meant a great deal. The citizens of the Roman empire during this day were afforded more liberties and benefits than non-citizens. Citizenship also deals with allegiance. As citizens of the United States growing up we were expected to pledge allegiance to the flag of this country, as one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. For us, however, as believers, there is a greater citizenship that must be considered. So we are reminded as we look at the garment of Christ, the robe of the Great High Priest, that our eternal citizenship is with God, in His kingdom, and when we consider that we are subject to the rules that govern His kingdom and we are reminded that we are subject to the rules that govern His kingdom we will live our lives in accordance with those rules.

Finally, we are told in 1 Peter 1:3-5 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, having been kept in heaven for you, who are protected by the

power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." The inheritance of the saints is in eternity with God. It is an inheritance that is promised and secured by Christ according to the mercy of God. As we live in consideration of Christ, in light of our true citizenship and our eternal inheritance, reminded of all of these by the unfading garment of Christ we are given full assurance of His future reality.

Conclusion

As we step back from the details of the robe of the High Priest, let us not lose sight of the larger picture God has painted for us here in Exodus. What we have before us is not merely a description of fabric and ornamentation—it is the gracious revelation of God concerning the only acceptable way in which sinful man can approach a holy God. The robe, in all its color, design, and order, preached a message to Israel then, and it continues to preach to us now. It pointed forward—to Christ, to His priesthood, to His righteousness, and to the way of worship that is pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

We have seen the robe woven entirely of blue, heavenly in its appearance, reminding us that the High Priest who wore it was not just appointed by men but set apart by God to represent the people before Him. We have seen the seamless nature of the robe, calling to mind the very garment Christ wore—unseamed, undivided—as He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. We have seen the pomegranates, bursting with fruit and flowing with crimson, reminding us of the blood that must be shed for atonement. And we have heard the bells, ringing out in regularity, marking the presence and intercession of the priest before God on behalf of His people.

Each detail—intentional. Each element—rich with purpose. Not a stitch was arbitrary, not a thread wasted. And in every piece, Christ is preached.

The pomegranates declare His blood. The bells declare His voice. The blue fabric declares His origin. And the robe as a whole declares His sufficiency.

But beloved, if the robe points us to Christ—then it also confronts us with the question: **Are you clothed in Him?**

Because just as Aaron could not enter the holy place without the robe—so too no man can stand before God apart from the righteousness of Christ.

The bells had to sound as he moved. The pomegranates had to hang as testimony of life and sacrifice. The robe had to be worn “so that he will not die.” The warning was clear: worship must be offered according to God’s command or not at all.

And so, let us not assume that we can approach God on our own terms. Let us not presume that sincerity alone is sufficient. Let us not dare to draw near with a garment of our own making. For unless we are clothed in the robe of Christ—unless His righteousness is our covering—we are as Aaron would have been without the robe: exposed, unacceptable, and doomed.

But if we *are* clothed in Christ—if His robe wraps around us—then we have confidence to enter, not just into an earthly tabernacle, but into the true Holy of Holies. We walk not in fear of death, but in assurance of life. And we carry with us the sound of His gospel and the fruit of His Spirit, just as the hem of that robe carried the bells and pomegranates.

This is the Christian’s confidence—not in ourselves, but in the finished work of our Great High Priest. His robe covers us. His voice intercedes for us. His blood spilt for our sins.

So here is the question I leave you with this morning—one that demands not only reflection, but a response:

Do you bear the sound and the fruit of one who is clothed in the robe of Christ, or are you still standing in garments of your own making, hoping that sincerity will be enough?

The bells and the pomegranates speak still. They call us to examine. They call us to worship rightly. And they call us to come—covered in Christ alone.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Our voices are lifted in praise, our hearts are grounded in truth, and our souls rejoice in Your grace. We are thankful for Your word. Word that contains truth in every jot and tittle, word that is absolutely authoritative and utterly sufficient for our lives. Father we pray this morning that as we have considered the truth that has been set before us demonstrating that

even as you set forth the priesthood of Israel you were pointing the way forward to the truth of Christ. We pray that as we consider the garment of Christ that we would also consider how this reality affects our lives. That we understand what it means to live in consideration of our heavenly calling, our true citizenship and our inheritance in our daily lives. Father grant us the strength to abide richly in your word, to live in obedience in all things, and to worship you rightly, according to your word alone. We ask these things in the blessed name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.