

## The Garments of Our Priesthood

Last week I taught about how we all as NT believers are to function as a holy priesthood (1 P. 2:5 and 9), by offering up spiritual sacrifices, like praise and thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15), obedience, righteousness, and joy. In fact, we are to offer up our bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1) so that every aspect of our lives is given over to God's service. This is part of what it means to love God with all our heart, soul and might (the "first commandment"). Now we will look at the garments of our priesthood.

OT high priests had special clothing, "holy garments", described in Ex. 28:

- Breeches – linen from loins to thighs (like long boxer shorts?)
- Embroidered coat – linen
- Robe – blue linen; with alternating golden bells and blue/purple/scarlet pomegranates on bottom hem
- Ephod – fine linen; gold, blue, purple, scarlet; front and back, connected at shoulders
- Breastplate of judgment - fine linen; gold, blue, purple, scarlet; attached to chest of ephod. Folded double to be able to contain "Urim and Thummim". Contained 12 gems engraved for the 12 tribes.
- Girdle (belt) - fine linen; gold, blue, purple, scarlet
- Mitre (turban) with a gold plate engraved "HOLINESS TO THE LORD"

"Normal" priests also had special clothing, though less elaborate: breeches, coats, girdles, and "bonnets".

We will not go into more detail on the priestly garments and the symbolic significance attached to them. The point is that a priest needed to be sanctified and wearing special clothing when ministering before the Lord in the Tabernacle.

OT priests needed to wash their bodies in water before service (Ex. 40:12), then clothe themselves, and be anointed. After that they needed to make sacrifices for their own sins before they ministered on behalf of others.

**We also are priests, but the clothing we wear is not physically specified – we have spiritual garments.**

### Spiritual clothing

Job 29:14 – "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem."

Ps. 132:16 – "I will clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy."

Isa. 52:1 – "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion: put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."

Isa. 61:3 – "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

Isa. 61:10 – "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Notice that it is God that so clothes us. This was prefigured clear back in Eden when God clothed Adam and Eve with skins.

Rev. 3:5 – "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

Rev. 3:17-18 – "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

Rev. 19:7-8 – "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the linen is the righteousness of saints."

Eph. 6 also describes spiritual clothing, but it is compared to military armor, not priestly garments. The imagery is different, speaking of spiritual warfare, not priestly service (although the two should go together).

### **How do we get these beautiful garments?**

Certainly not by our own efforts at reform or self-improvement, but only through yielding to Christ. We have a double washing:

First there is our washing in the blood of the Lamb, a spiritual cleansing from the defilement of sin.

Isa. 1:16-18 – “Wash you, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson. they shall be as wool.”

1 Jn. 1:7-9 – “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. ... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Rev. 1:5-6 – “... Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

And there is the washing of our bodies with the pure water of the Word (typified by the OT priests washing bodies in water before service).

Heb. 10:19, 22-23 – “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ... Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised:)”

### **Conclusion**

In 1 Tim. 2:8 it says “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” This is one of our Christian responsibilities, and I think we will better understand the verse if we see prayer in the light of our priesthood. Prayer is not just a habit or a religious duty, but the service we perform as NT priests – not some kind of clergy, but the living stones and royal priesthood spoken of in 1 Peter. Each one of us can and should function as a priest, now, in this life:

1. We do not offer sacrifices for atonement and forgiveness, that is for Christ alone, as our great High Priest.
2. But we do offer the spiritual sacrifices of righteousness, praise, thanksgiving, and joy.
3. As the OT priests were to be sanctified, or set apart to their holy service, so we are to walk in sanctification and holiness. We make our spiritual sacrifices by prayer, with lives characterized by obedience, righteousness, genuine brokenness and contrition, and holiness.
4. We do not wear special clothing like in the OT, but are instead to be clothed with the beautiful garments of salvation and praise, and robes of righteousness.
5. If our lives are as described above, there will be no problems of our prayers being hindered by wrath or doubting (or any other sinful barrier).
6. We do such service with our mouths, with the lifting up of our hands, or even the bowing of our knees.

Furthermore, if we will minister now in garments of salvation and robes of righteousness, then we will later quite literally be clothed in “fine linen, white and clean”, gathered before the heavenly throne, singing “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever”. Then we shall reign as kings and priests upon the earth.

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