****

**Session 14**

***God of Freedom,* Week 8a**

**Exodus 28:1-43**

**8-9 January 2024**

**The Human Element –** We have spent a few weeks considering the Tabernacle proper and all the articles of furniture and other items or equipment inside it. Now we want to look closely at the human element, i.e. the *people* involved in the construction and/or maintenance of the Tabernacle.

**Clothing for Glory and for Beauty –** It is clear that the priestly garments were meant to *inspire awe* in everyone who saw them, and they were to *be beautiful*. This is a neat concept to consider as we approach our own places and times of worship. The Tabernacle and everything in it and everyone involved in its rites of worship were meant to remind people of a heavenly reality. When we see the beauty and glory of all these created things, it should make us long for the new creation. Note that all the garments of the high priest are to be made from the same costly materials as the Tabernacle was. We are meant to see the connection between the office of the priesthood and the building itself.

**The Ephod –** The fact that the names of the tribes are engraved on costly gems set in gold filigree is meant to represent the preciousness of these names to God. The two onyx stones were to be set in place on the shoulder straps of the ephod, so that Aaron (and all subsequent high priests) would bear these precious names before God. They were “stones of remembrance” for him: he was not to approach the Lord just thinking about himself and his own personal needs, but was to remember the needs of the entire nation. Isaiah 9:6a is a reminder of how Christ would fulfill this visual picture: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be *upon His shoulder*.”

**The Breastpiece –** Not only were the twelve names to be carried on Aaron’s shoulders, but they were also to be on the breastpiece, engraved on twelve gems. Something called the “Urim and Thummin” was also to be on the breastpiece. We don’t know much about these two items, other than that they were used somehow in decision making or judging. (Note that judgment isn’t always a negative thing: the twelve tribes were judged or designated to be set apart by God for His own special service.)

**The Significance of the Heart –** Aaron was to wear this breastpiece over his *heart*, which was considered to be the *seat of the will*. The heart is the decision-maker, the thing that chooses either good or evil. So Aaron bears the people on his shoulders, as a *responsibility*, and also on his heart, so that everything he might will and do would be *on their behalf*, and so that everything that they might will and do would be right in the sight of the Lord.

**The Robe –** The blue robe had bells all around the bottom, so people would hear these bells wherever he went and know that he was about the business of the Tabernacle. What about us who are members of the “royal priesthood” today? When we walk into a room, do people immediately sense that there is something different about us, in a holy way? What if we served the Lord “with bells on”? What if we were

clothed in righteousness in such a way that there was an immediate sense of righteousness being present when we entered?

**Pomegranates –** But there weren’t just bells around the bottom of the priest’s robe: between each pair of bells was a pomegranate. Why? The pomegranate is a many-seeded, blood-filled fruit, symbolic of the work of the Kingdom. It is by the blood of Christ that many are brought to salvation. What other fruit could capture these two images so well?

**The Turban –** The way the high priest was dressed has greatly influenced religious ceremonies down through the ages. The Pope wears a turban (miter) and rich robes very reminiscent of the high priest’s garments. When we see a new Pope being installed, the ceremony seems more like a coronation than a religious ceremony. There is a great connotation of royalty in the ceremony, which is another reminder of our *royal* priesthood.

**Linen Undergarments –** There were also to be special garments for Aaron’s sons “for glory and for beauty”…and for modesty. The garments for all the priests included special undergarments that would keep them modestly covered at all times and in all situations. This was yet another direct contrast between God’s way of worship and what they had seen demonstrated in pagan rituals of worship back in Egypt—and would later encounter in Canaan—which could contain sex acts. God was saying, “It shall not be so among you!” Perhaps the provision of undergarments was also another way of restoring dignity to the descendants of Adam and Eve. Just as He had provided garments of skins to cover their nakedness, now He provides for special undergarments to ensure the dignity of the priests who were leading the worship of all His people. The priests didn’t get just one or two garments, but layer upon layer of righteousness as it were.

***Parallels to 1 Peter***

*You may have noticed that there were two references to verses from 1 Peter in the questions for Day 3 of Week 8:*

*#14🡒 Jen noted that the priest’s garments were royal in nature, in that they were made of beautiful, costly materials. These garments foreshadow the* ***“royal priesthood”*** *of all believers today, mentioned in 1 Peter 2:9.*

*#16🡒 Just as the high priest symbolically bore the sins of the people in the garments that he wore, so Christ our great High Priest literally “bore our sins in His body on the tree.” 1 Peter 2:24*