

Title:            **“CLOTHES OF SERVICE”**

Text:            Exodus 39:1-43

Subject:        *Aaron’s Priestly Garments*

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Tape:            Exodus #117

Readings:      *Larry Brown and Dave Burge*

Introduction:

As the Mosaic record of the Tabernacle’s construction ends, Moses was inspired of God to give us a description of “*the holy garments*” that were made for Aaron, those garments Aaron was required to wear whenever he went into the Tabernacle doing service before the Lord God as Israel’s high priest. They are called “*clothes of service.*” So I take that for the title of this message — **CLOTHES OF SERVICE.**” For the sake of brevity, let’s read just a portion of Exodus 39, for now, picking up just the highlights of our text. We will look at the chapter in more detail as we move along.

(Exodus 39:1) “And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as the LORD commanded Moses.”

(Exodus 39:30-32) “And they made the plate of the holy crown *of* pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, *like to* the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO

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THE LORD. <sup>31</sup> And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten *it* on high upon the mitre; as the LORD commanded Moses. <sup>32</sup> ¶ Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.”

(Exodus 39:42-43) “According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. <sup>43</sup> And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the LORD had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them.”

## TWO SETS OF GARMENTS

These “*clothes of service*” were very significant and highly symbolical. They are listed three times by Moses (Exodus 28, Exodus 39 and Leviticus 8). Aaron was not allowed to appear before the Lord God as Israel’s priest, to do service in the holy place without these “*holy garments*,” without these “*clothes of service*.” They were vital to his priestly work; and we are specifically told that they were “*garments of consecration*,” “*for glory and for beauty*.”

These garments were made specifically for Aaron, to show forth the glory and beauty of his work as Israel’s

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**high priest.** But they show more than that. **These garments were made for and put upon Aaron to show forth the glory and beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, of whom Aaron was but a type and picture.**

Actually, Aaron had two sets of priestly garments. This glorious apparel, which he wore before Israel and before the Lord in his common, daily functions in the tabernacle, and **those holy Linen garments** mentioned in verse 28 and more fully described in Leviticus 16:4, which he wore only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. **On that great Day of Atonement, when he went in with the blood of the paschal lamb before the Lord God in the holy of holies, Aaron was robed only in spotless white, portraying the infinitely meritorious obedience and personal righteousness and holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ,** by which he was worthy and able to undertake and accomplish the stupendous work of putting away the sins of his people by the sacrifice of his own blood.

**The garments described in our text** (Exodus 39) **were specifically ordained of God to show Aaron’s glory and beauty to the people he represented and served as a priest.** These garments are described in great detail for us, so that we might see and be assured of the glory and beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our great High Priest.

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Aaron wore seven specific, highly symbolic garments: — An Ephod — A Girdle — A Breastplate — A Robe — A Coat— A Miter, and — A Holy Crown. Let’s look at each just briefly. As we look at these seven priestly garments, I trust that God the Holy Spirit will give us eyes to behold the beauty and glory of our great High Priest, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Proposition:** If ever you see him as he is here set forth, you will believe him. — The clearer we see him as he is here portrayed the more fully we will trust him.

### **THE EPHOD**

*First, **Moses put the ephod on Aaron’s shoulders.***

(Exodus 39:2-4) “And he made the ephod *of* gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. <sup>3</sup> And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut *it into* wires, to work *it* in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, *with* cunning work. <sup>4</sup> They made shoulderpieces for it, to couple *it* together: by the two edges was it coupled together.”

The ephod was the outer apron that hung over Aaron’s robe. It was made of two parts, covering both his back and his chest. The two pieces of it were joined together at the

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shoulders by golden clasps. Those golden clasps were the setting for the onyx stones. Like Aaron’s robe, the ephod was made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen. The breastplate with the names of twelve tribes of Israel and the Urim and Thummim (Lights and Perfections) were worn on the ephod.

Try to get the picture. — Here is Aaron, wearing his gorgeous, costly robe, strapped over his shoulders, held by gold clasps is this gorgeous, costly apron, upon his heart and shoulders hangs the breastplate with the names of God’s chosen people, engraved in precious stones and somewhere in the ephod or in the breastplate are those mysterious emblems of light and perfection, called the Urim and Thummim. What does all that mean? I know I can only scratch the surface; but it certainly means that...

1. The Lord Jesus Christ constantly has his people upon his heart.
2. He carries us upon his omnipotent shoulders.
3. He guides us according to the light and perfection of his purpose and grace.
4. We are the sparkling jewels of his glory and beauty!
5. We are totally safe, beyond the reach of any enemy.

## **THE GIRDLE**

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*Second, Moses was commanded of God to gird Aaron with a girdle.* — This was not just the ordinary girdle worn by the other priests, Aaron’s sons. This was “*the curious girdle of the ephod.*”

(Exodus 39:5) “And the curious girdle of his ephod, that *was* upon it, *was* of the same, according to the work thereof; *of* gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; as the LORD commanded Moses.”

We are told in verse 29 that this girdle was made of “*needlework.*”

The “*girdle*” speaks of our Savior’s readiness to serve the needs of his people for the glory of God (Psalm 40; Hebrews 10). **It is written, “Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins”** (Isaiah 11:5).

(Luke 12:37) “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”

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While he was in this world, our Lord Jesus “*took a towel and girded Himself, and then He washed the disciple’s feet*” (John 13). Today He stands in the midst of His churches, girt about the paps with a golden girdle (Revelation 1:13), ready to serve His people on earth.

**The Lord God commanded Moses, to make the just as he did the ephod.** — “*It shall be of the same, according to the work for thereof*” (Exodus 28:8). The girdle of the high priest was of the same materials and the same splendid colors as the ephod itself, **indicating in picture that our Savior’s present priestly work in heaven, as well as the work he performed on earth is according to the perfection of his character as the God-man, our Mediator.** Though glorified, Christ is Jehovah’s Righteous Servant still. He has gone into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24), having “*obtained eternal redemption for us*” (Hebrews 9:12), and there He “*ever liveth to make intercession for us*” (Hebrews 7:25).

(1 John 2:1-2) “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.*”

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**THE BREASTPLATE**

**Third, MOSES PUT THE BREASTPLATE ON AARON.**

(Exodus 39:8-21) **“And he made the breastplate of cunning work, like the work of the ephod; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.**

<sup>9</sup> **It was foursquare;** they made the breastplate double: a span *was* the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, *being* doubled. <sup>10</sup> **And they set in it**

**four rows of stones:** *the first row was* a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: *this was* the first row. <sup>11</sup> And

the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. <sup>12</sup> And the third row, a ligure, an agate, and

an amethyst. <sup>13</sup> And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: *they were* inclosed in ouches of gold in

their inclosings. <sup>14</sup> **And the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve,**

**according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, every one with his name, according to the**

**twelve tribes.** <sup>15</sup> And they made upon the breastplate chains at the ends, *of* wreathen work *of* pure gold. <sup>16</sup>

And they made two ouches *of* gold, and two gold rings; and put the two rings in the two ends of the breastplate. <sup>17</sup> And they put the two wreathen chains of

gold in the two rings on the ends of the breastplate. <sup>18</sup>



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And the two ends of the two wreathen chains they fastened in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulderpieces of the ephod, before it. <sup>19</sup> And they made two rings of gold, and put *them* on the two ends of the breastplate, upon the border of it, which *was* on the side of the ephod inward. <sup>20</sup> And they made two *other* golden rings, and put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart of it, over against the *other* coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. <sup>21</sup> **And they did bind the breastplate by his rings unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it might be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate might not be loosed from the ephod; as the LORD commanded Moses.”**

I cannot not say much more about this magnificent breastplate at this time, or I could not finish my message; but I do want you to see how this breastplate is described in Exodus 28:30.

(Exodus 28:30) And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually.

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Not only does this breastplate upon Aaron’s chest portray our Savior’s constant love for and care of us, it speaks of our constant, perfect, immutable acceptance with God in him.

The names of God’s elect are known to our great High Priest. They are engraved upon his heart, and cannot be erased! He says, *“I know them...I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish!”* For them he makes intercession (John 17)...

- **Continually.** – The Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, bears the judgment of his people before the Lord continually!
- **Personally.**
- **Collectively.**
- **Effectually!**

Can you see your Priest yonder in heaven, with your name upon his heart? Not only are you, my brother, my sister, beyond the reach of any enemy. In Christ we are beyond the influence of any foe or any evil!

**What a consolation this is to this poor sinner. The Lord God almighty always sees me, and only sees me in his Son, as a sparkling jewel, shining in him gloriously! —**

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In his eyes, I shine with all the brilliance of Christ himself! — Is he precious? We are precious in him! — Is he accepted? We are accepted in him! — Does he live? We live in him!

**But there, in heaven’s glory, before the dazzling brilliance, brightness and purity of the white light of God’s holiness, things are seen clearly, as they really are.** That, my tempted, tried, tempest tossed, heavy hearted, sinning, falling, weeping brother, — That, my tempted, tried, tempest tossed, heavy hearted, sinning, falling, weeping sister, is the very thing that ought comfort our hearts! — We are jewels in Christ, with Christ, upon his heart, in his heart in heaven. — The more brilliantly the light shines upon a diamond, the more it sparkles with radiant beauty! — He has set us as a seal upon his heart (Song 8:7). — Oh, what grace!

- What Joy!
- What Peace!
- What a cause for whole hearted devotion and consecration to God our Savior.
- We are, in Christ, made to be partakers of his beauty and his glory!

**Now, watch this.** — Did you notice that the Lord God made special arrangements to attach the breastplate to the ephod in such a way that the breastplate could not be

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loosed from the ephod, hanging on the broad shoulders of his priest? — **This breastplate of judgment speaks loudly and beautifully of our everlasting salvation and absolute security in Christ Jesus!**

(Romans 8:33-39) **“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.** <sup>34</sup> **Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,** yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. <sup>35</sup> **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?** <sup>36</sup> As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. <sup>37</sup> Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**THE ROBE**

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The *fourth* garment Aaron wore was a robe. — **Moses clothed Aaron with the priestly robe, as God commanded.** This was the robe of the ephod (the outer apron), worn under the ephod and had a hem of golden bells and pomegranates (Exodus 39:22-26).

“And he made the robe of the ephod *of* woven work, all *of* blue. <sup>23</sup> And *there was* an hole in the midst of the robe, as the hole of an habergeon (**pronounced “hab-er-gin” – a sleeveless coat of mail**), *with* a band round about the hole, that it should not rend. <sup>24</sup> And they made upon the hems of the robe pomegranates *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, *and* twined *linen*. <sup>25</sup> And they made bells *of* pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the hem of the robe, round about between the pomegranates; <sup>26</sup> A bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, round about the hem of the robe to minister *in*; as the LORD commanded Moses.” (Exodus 39:22-26)

A. **It was a robe that was blue in color; but was woven of gold, blue, purple and scarlet, and was made of fine linen.**

- Gold – Divinity
- Blue – Heaven
- Purple – Royalty

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- Scarlet – Blood
- Fine Linen – Purity.

This robe represents the righteousness of Christ. It is that with which Christ himself is clothed and with which we are clothed in him. It is a robe covering the whole man, from head to foot.

*“Bring hither the best robe!”* — This was a robe prepared according to the law of God.

**B. The golden bells portray the perfection and sweetness of Christ’s intercession for us.**

As Aaron moved about inside the holy place of the tabernacle, the ringing bells told the people, “All is well. Aaron is alive. God accepts your priest.” – They speak of our living, exalted High Priest and the sweet savor of his intercession in heaven for us.

**C. The pomegranates speak of the fruitfulness of Christ’s priesthood.** — If you slit a pomegranate open, you would find it full of seeds in a red fluid!

If you will look at Exodus 28:35, you will see that Aaron was required to wear these bells and pomegranates on the hem of his robe — *“that he die not.”*

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(Exodus 28:31-35) “And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all *of* blue. <sup>32</sup> And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent. <sup>33</sup> And *beneath* upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates *of* blue, and *of* purple, and *of* scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: <sup>34</sup> A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. <sup>35</sup> And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy *place* before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not.”

**No man can come before God, none can approach the holy Lord God, without the robe of God’s priest, arrayed in the clothes of service God requires, the holy garments God provides in his darling Son; and all who come to God by Christ Jesus, walking before him in the joy of faith, have the bells and pomegranates of perfect acceptance ringing about them.**

**THE COAT**

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*Fifth, **Moses was commanded to put a coat upon Aaron.***

— This was not a coat as we think of it, but an inner garment. It is described in Exodus 28:4 and 39, and in Exodus 39:27 as “*an embroidered coat of fine linen of woven work.*” — This special brodered coat of fine linen, along with the linen breeches (britches, trousers), were Aaron’s undergarments. They were not commonly seen by the people. I rather doubt that Moses actually put these on Aaron in public, but rather gave them to him publicly and Aaron put them on in private. But they were here held before all the congregation because their typical significance was important.

The “*fine linen*” represented purity and righteousness.

(Revelation 19:8) “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

The word “*righteousness*” in Revelation 19:8 is really in the plural — righteousnesses. Many vainly imagine that it refers to the righteous works the saints of God perform on the earth. You and I know better. We have no ability to perform righteousness. But we do have a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. We have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us in free



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justification and the righteousness of Christ imparted to us in sanctification (regeneration).

These undergarments spoke of the personal righteousness of Christ, (**Linen is a man made material.**) over which all His other perfections and glories were displayed in the outer garments of the priest. — This embroidered linen coat was a seamless garment, like that worn by our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 19:23). It was worn next to Aaron’s body as he went about his priestly functions. I see three things here.

1. **Our Need**: — If we are to come to God and be accepted of him, we must have a complete clothing of righteousness, the righteousness of Christ.
2. **God’s Supply**: — Christ is our Righteousness!
3. **Our Covering**: — Those linen britches were specifically to cover the priests’ nakedness (Exodus 28:42); and it is the blood and righteousness of Christ that covers our nakedness as we walk before our God!

## **THE MITER**

*Sixth*, **Moses was commanded of God to put the miter of fine linen upon Aaron’s head** (Exodus 39:28). — The miter (turban) was made of fine white linen. **It was a symbol both of honor and humility.** It was worn, as it still is today among many Arabs, both by kings and by servants.

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When Zechariah saw the vision of Joshua the high priest standing before the Lord (Zechariah 3:1-5), the first thing the Lord commanded, after he put away his filthy garments was this — he put a holy miter upon his head.

(Zechariah 3:1-5) “And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. (2) And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: *is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* (3) Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. (4) And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. (5) And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.”

The Lord God has given us his own dear Son to be for us the helmet of salvation. This miter, made of white linen, like Aaron’s robe, portrays that perfect righteousness which is ours in Christ (Revelation 19:8).

**THE CROWN**

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*Seventh, Moses put the holy crown on Aaron’s head.*

(Exodus 39:30-32) “And they made the plate of the holy crown *of* pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, *like to* the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. <sup>31</sup> And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten *it* on high upon the mitre; as the LORD commanded Moses. <sup>32</sup> ¶ Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.”

Moses (the law) put the crown upon Aaron’s head. — When the Lord Jesus finished the work of our redemption portrayed in the Tabernacle, the very law and justice of God has crowned Christ, our great High Priest Lord and King forever! — Here is a blessed, weighty revelation, given for the comfort of our souls. This golden plate, the holy crown, emblazoned on Aaron’s forehead pictured the perfect holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **It is this holiness that made it possible for our Lord Jesus Christ to bear our iniquities.** – He not only put away our sins, he has washed away forever the iniquity of our “*holy things*” (Exodus 28:38), our best deeds of righteousness, faith, and worship.
- This holy crown is always upon our Savior’s head!

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- The Lord Jesus wears this crown, emblazoned before the holy Lord God (“*HOLINESS TO THE LORD*”), that we “*may be accepted before the LORD.*”

What rest there is here for our weary hearts. Amid all our failings, in spite of all our sin, though we may be often harassed by hell with doubts and fears, though our hearts are as cold as ice, as hard as steel and as empty as a broken cistern, our acceptance with God is as unvarying, perfect, and sure as Christ’s!

(Ecclesiastes 9:7-8) “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. <sup>8</sup> Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.”

I have been talking to you about Christ’s glory and beauty. That is what all these garments represent. Do you see how beautiful, how glorious a Savior the Lord Jesus is? – Hear me, now. God help you to hear me...

1. **His glory and beauty are ours** (Ezekiel 16:8-14).

(Ezekiel 16:8-14) “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a

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covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. (9) Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. (10) I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. (11) I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. (12) And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. (13) Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment *was of* fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and **thou wast exceeding beautiful**, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. (14) **And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.**”

2. **Believe him now, and his glory and beauty shall be yours!** — “*He shall beautify the meek with salvation*” (Psalm 149:4; Isaiah 61:1-3).

(Isaiah 61:1-3) “The spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up

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the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; (2) To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; (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; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”

Amen.