

The High Priest's Holy Garments



By divine direction the tribe of Levi was set apart for the service of the sanctuary. In accordance with their office, a special dress was appointed for the priests. "Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty," was the divine direction to Moses. The robe of the common priest was of white linen, and woven in one piece. It extended nearly to the feet and was confined about the waist by a white linen girdle embroidered in blue, purple, and red. A linen turban, or miter, completed his outer costume.

The garments of the high priest were of costly material and beautiful workmanship, befitting his exalted station. In addition to the linen dress of the common priest, he wore a robe of blue, also woven in one piece. Around the skirt it was ornamented with golden bells, and pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet. Outside of this was the ephod, a shorter garment of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and white. It was confined by a girdle of the same colors, beautifully wrought. The ephod was sleeveless, and on its gold-embroidered shoulder pieces were set two onyx stones, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Over the ephod was the breastplate, the most sacred of the priestly vestments. It was in the form of a square, measuring a span, and was suspended from the shoulders by a cord of blue from golden rings. Within the border were twelve stones set in gold, arranged in rows of four, and, like those in the shoulder pieces, engraved with the names of the tribes. The Lord's direction was, "Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." Exodus 28:29. So Christ, the great High Priest, pleading His blood before the Father in the sinner's behalf, bears upon His heart the name of every repentant, believing soul. Says the psalmist, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." Psalm 40:17.

At the right and left of the breastplate were two large stones of great brilliancy. These were known as the Urim and Thummim. By them the will of God was made known through the high priest. When questions were brought for decision before the Lord, a halo of light encircling the precious stone at the right was a token of the divine consent or approval, while a cloud shadowing the stone at the left was an evidence of denial or disapprobation.

The miter of the high priest consisted of the white linen turban, having attached to it by a lace of blue, a gold plate bearing the inscription, "Holiness to Jehovah." Everything connected with the apparel and deportment of the priests was to be such as to impress the beholder with a sense of the holiness of God, the sacredness of His worship, and the purity required of those who came into His presence.

Not only the sanctuary itself, but the ministration of the priests, was to "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." Hebrews 8:5. Thus it was of great importance; and the Lord, through Moses, gave the most definite and explicit instruction concerning every point of this typical service. The ministration of the sanctuary consisted of two divisions, a daily and a yearly service. The daily service was performed at the altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle and in the holy place; while the yearly service was in the most

holy.

No mortal eye but that of the high priest was to look upon the inner apartment of the sanctuary. Only once a year could the priest enter there, and that after the most careful and solemn preparation. With trembling he went in before God, and the people in reverent silence awaited his return, their hearts uplifted in earnest prayer for the divine blessing. Before the mercy seat the high priest made the atonement for Israel; and in the cloud of glory, God met with him. His stay here beyond the accustomed time filled them with fear, lest because of their sins or his own he had been slain by the glory of the Lord.³⁷

What was the purpose of the High Priest's clothing?

Exodus 28:2, 3

This was to impress the people with the “glory of God” and the “beauty of holiness.” (1 Cor. 10:31, Ps. 29:2)

What were the different parts called?

Exodus 28:4

The Ephod was similar to what we might call a vest. What colors were in the Ephod?

Exodus 28:6

Gold has been the most valuable metal for most of history. What might this gold represent; what is the most valuable characteristic that God looks for in His people?

1 Corinthians 13:13

As this gold was embroidered into the other colors of the Ephod, God's love is woven into everything He does for us. Jesus came to this earth and demonstrated love in everything He did. Our love for Him and other people should be a part of everything we do.

What does the blue represent?

Numbers 15:38-40

What did Jesus say about how He lived His life?

John 8:29 “ . . . *I do* _____ *those things that* _____ *Him.*

Jesus was always obedient to all of God's laws. The blue was symbolically of His obedient life.

What did the purple represent?

Judges 8:26; Mark 15:17, 18; John 19:2, 3

Purple is the color of royalty. Jesus was and is King of Kings. Revelation 19:16

What does the scarlet represent?

Exodus 24:8; Leviticus 17:11

Jesus, our Sacrifice, has shed His blood for our Atonement so that we might not die but live forever with Him. Scarlet is the color of blood and represents Jesus great sacrifice for us.

It is interesting to take notice of the literal meaning of the Hebrew word for Ephod. The root word means “to redeem” or “redemption.” We could think of the Ephod as “the Ephod of Redemption.”

What colors were in the Girdle of the Ephod, or what we might call a belt or sash?
Exodus 28:8

What was on the shoulders of the Ephod?
Exodus 28:9-12

This represents how Jesus, our High Priest, carries His people on His shoulders. He takes care of us and provides for us.

What was placed over the Ephod?
Exodus 28:15

We will deal more with the Breastplate in a future lesson.

What color was the Robe that was under the Ephod?
Exodus 28:31

Pomegranates were placed on the bottom of the blue Robe (Exodus 28:33, 34) These were tassels made of blue, purple, and scarlet twine in the shape of this fruit. Pomegranates were a fragrant fruit, considered a delicacy. (see Song of Solomon 4:13; 6:11; 7:12) These symbolize, in Jesus, the fruit of keeping the Law (blue), of being Royalty from Heaven (purple), and of being an unselfish Sacrifice (scarlet).

You shall know them by their fruits. Matthew 7:16

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-8

There were also bells on the bottom of the blue Robe. (Exodus 28:33, 34) These were made of gold and were for the purpose of making a sound that would indicate that the High Priest was alive when he was ministering in the Holy Place since he was hidden from the view of everyone outside by the beautiful vail at the entrance. This is a symbol of the fact that, though Jesus is hidden from our view in His Continual mediation on our behalf, we have evidence of His activity through His Word and the ministry of His Spirit and the Angels.

The inner layer of clothing was called the Coat. It was of fine, white linen. What does this white robe represent?
Revelation 19:8

Jesus is pure and clean, no sin marred His life on earth, therefore this robe represents His pure life.

What was placed on the High Priest's head?
Exodus 29:5-6

This might be better known as a turban. We will consider it more in another lesson.

The items of clothing that Aaron and the other High Priests after him wore are a wonderful symbol of various characteristics of Jesus, our great Heavenly High Priest, and the different aspects of His ministry on our behalf.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. Hebrews 4:14