

Exod 05-02-06b

We resume our study now of the book of Exodus. We need to turn to Exodus chapter 28. We've completed our survey through the design and construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings.

So, the place, the locus of worship has now been defined. The design has been given, the construction is executed. It only remains for the Levitical priests to go in there and operate.

So, looking at the end of chapter 27 of Exodus. Then in chapter 28. Now, God says to Moses, take Aaron your brother and his sons with him from among the children of Israel that he may minister to me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother for glory and for beauty. So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him that he may minister to me as priest. And these are the garments which they shall make.

A breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons that he may minister to me as priest. They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, and the fine linen, the white linen, and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine woven or white linen, artistically worked.

It shall have two shoulder straps joined at its two edges, and so it shall be joined together. And the intricately woven band of the ephod which is on it shall be of the same workmanship, made of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, and the fine woven or white linen. Then you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on one stone and six names on the other stone, in order of their birth.

With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall set them in settings of gold, and you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as a memorial.

You shall also make settings of gold, and you shall make two chains of pure gold like braided cords, and fasten the braided chains to the settings. It's going to go on from here to talk about the breastplate, but we can stop here and look at these first 14 verses. First of all, Moses is to take Aaron, his brother, and his sons with him from among the children of Israel.

You may remember way back 20-something chapters ago when we talked about the infancy of Moses, and the family of Moses, and the likelihood that Amram and Yoshebel were the actual parents. I suggested to you at that time a hypothesis, which I personally still maintain. You can take it or leave it as you see fit.

That Moses was the firstborn child of his parents. That Miriam and Aaron are cousins. There is an argument that the Catholics make about the Lord Jesus, that he was an only child, and that when Scripture talks about his brothers, Judas and James and the rest of them, that they were not the sons of Mary and Joseph.

They came from somewhere else. The Catholics make that argument, which is false, on the basis of a true piece of evidence, which is that in the ancient world the term brother was sometimes used for near kin. You can demonstrate this in the Scripture.

I don't have time to do it right now. But the fact that you adduce a true piece of evidence doesn't necessarily prove your argument, nor does your faulty argument render invalid your true piece of evidence. This is the whole science of logic, starting with valid premises and adducing good evidence, or using good sound reasoning and arriving at conclusions.

I say all of that to say this. When it says, take Aaron your brother, it does not necessarily mean that he is the fellow son of the same two parents. He could be a cousin.

They are all, Miriam, Aaron and Moses, from the same clan in the tribe of Levi, which is the clan of Amram. But we went through all of that way back, and I just refresh your mind on it. I don't want you to sort of forget and just take this without at least some consideration.

But Aaron your brother and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. We know from our other excursions in and around the history of Israel in the wilderness that not all of these sons are going to survive or produce offspring that are going to be able to function in this service because they are going to malfunction. Nadab and Abihu are going to disappear and you are going to wind up with essentially the clans or the sub-elements of the tribe of Levi and specifically the sons of Aaron are going to be divided into the sons of Eleazar and the sons of Ithamar.

You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother for glory and for beauty. This is an interesting statement, isn't it? All of these technical details, all of the precision, but the aesthetics of garments matter, don't they? We were trying to watch a tape of something last night and in trying to get the system cranked up, they had the Screen Actors Guild Awards on and we didn't need or want to watch that although I did see them give James Garner a lifetime achievement and I've enjoyed his work in the past. Julie Andrews was one of the presenters and Mel Gibson was the other and both of them had interesting things to say.

That part was not bad, but I don't recommend that type of entertainment necessarily, but this is my point. What struck me is in looking at the people who were attending the Screen Actors Guild Awards, in particular the ladies and the type of dresses that they were wearing, they all seem to have gotten the kind of dress that's missing significant portions in the front and not wearing anything underneath. It seems to be the trend this year that there's some sort of oval or teardrop shaped piece of cloth missing right in the middle of the top of your dress and lots

of them had this.

Well, aside from issues of decency, it's aesthetically distracting. The aesthetics are intangible and they're sort of subjective and that's my point in even bringing this up. Some people probably think that that was just stunning and the latest greatest thing.

My point is one person's aesthetic beauty is another person's furrowed brow and grimace. It depends on who's looking. So when God says make these garments, holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty, how do you put that in a can, how do you put that in a set of instructions and say when you make these garments, they need to be for glory and they need to be for beauty.

It's really an aesthetic statement, isn't it? Aaron should not look like he slept in his clothes. Aaron should not look like he ran rapidly through somebody's tent and just got cloth on him. It needs to reflect glory and it needs to reflect beauty.

Now how do you accomplish this aesthetic value in the construction of clothes or in the arrangement of clothes? You can talk in general about principles of symmetry, about harmonious use of colors, about an arrangement that is pleasing to the eye in some sort of nebulous, subjective way. But the first thing God says before He gives any details is He says these are for glory and they are for beauty. And so however you execute the following instructions, the impression that is given when the high priest walks out in his garments should knock you out in the areas of glory and in the areas of beauty.

What is the criteria? Do you take a poll? He walks out and people give a numerical score, thumbs up, thumbs down. How is this accomplished? My second point here is that there are more or less objective standards of glory. There are objective standards of beauty.

There are certain things anybody can look at and say that is not beautiful. Nobody looks in the trash can and says let me take a picture of this and hang it on my wall. You don't open up your kitchen trash after you've had a big shrimp dinner with cocktail sauce and scraped a bunch of tails into the trash and remnants and leavings and say isn't that something? I just don't think anybody should not find trash beautiful.

There is an inherent sense. God has put something in us to recognize beauty when we see it. Most people would subscribe to the idea that certain individuals are beautiful or certain individuals are handsome or striking in their appearance in a positive way.

It's just sort of a built in. You can look at a cat or a dog and say that is a beautiful specimen of feline creation or of canine creation. You look at a mountain scenery, you look at a sunset, most people recognize beauty.

Most people recognize glory. They may not choose to acknowledge it. They may try to explain it away.

You look at the debate between evolution and creation. You look at the debate between morality and immorality. You look at the debate between defending freedom for countries and defending freedom for individuals.

Freedom of expression should include my right to throw a bomb or my right to interrupt the president in the middle of his address because we protect free speech. There are certain innate and inherent values. So what do we have here? Holy garments for Aaron for glory and for beauty.

When Aaron walks out in these freshly minted garments, people are going to be awed because they are a reflection of not Aaron's glory but God's glory and they are beautiful. A reflection not of Aaron's beauty but of God's beauty. What's the great verse? Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

What does that mean? Well, it takes some meditation to figure it out but holiness has a beauty to it. Purity has a beauty that is recognizable and discernible and that's what these garments are supposed to have. So, how do you get this done? We're still trying to answer the question what is the measure of beauty and holiness when it comes to garments? Well, go to the gifted artisans.

Go to people who know how to make clothes, who know how to make cloth, in whom dwells the spirit of wisdom that God has given them. This is interesting because the spirit of wisdom, wisdom is in the realm of spiritual truth, doctrinal truth. And yet these people are going to be able to express spiritual wisdom in clothing design.

I think this is a fascinating concept that you can do what you do in your area of giftedness in the mundane world, clothing design, home decor, the way you organize your office or your desktop, the way you arrange your own clothing, the appearance that you put out before the world in one area or another in your domain and that can be a reflection of the presence of the spirit of wisdom. That's how this is going to get done. God doesn't have to say, now let me show you what beauty is, let me show you what holiness is.

Here's my artist's concept. You've seen this when Princess Diana got married. I remember they were trying to get sketches of what her gown was going to look like and they had these things that looked like they came out of McCall's or something that were pastels and artist's renditions.

Here's what the gown is going to look like. God doesn't hand one of these to Moses and say, get somebody to make one of these and have Aaron put it on. He says, go to people in whom is the spirit of wisdom, the gifted artisans, they'll make it.

They will know. The spirit of wisdom will translate through their hands and through their craft and result in these garments. And there's an application there for us because if we work at having the spirit of wisdom, if we are diligent to show ourselves approved to God in that area,

the things that we do are going to reflect, or at least have the potential to reflect, glory and beauty.

That will be a result. Scripture says that the wise man will grow in favor with God and man. Why is that? What is the nature of that favor? It's the beauty of holiness.

It's the glory of holiness. There may be people who reject it. There may be people who spit at it.

But it's recognizable. It's tangible. It will express itself in tangible ways.

This is a tangible expression of glory and beauty. Go to the gifted artisans whom I fill with the spirit of wisdom that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him that he may minister to me as priest. The garment consecrates the priest.

This is not the only way that he is consecrated, but it is one of the ways that he is consecrated. He cannot function as a priest in a consecrated way without the consecration of his garments. Aaron may be consecrated as an individual.

He's going to get sprinkled with blood. He's going to be personally and individually commissioned. And that is a consecration separate and distinct from his clothing.

But, without his consecrated garments, he cannot function as a priest. This is one of several elements of consecration. God says, they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him that he may minister to me as priest.

No garment, incomplete consecration, cannot function as a priest. What is the picture that Jesus tells of the wedding feast? The wedding supper for the son of the father or the son of the king. The two different parables both have the same thing.

You have people showing up. Someone does not have the garment. He is disqualified from participating as a guest, as a friend of the groom at that festival.

Why? It doesn't say you didn't wash your hands. It doesn't say you didn't take a bath. It says you're not wearing the right clothes.

What is the primary characteristic given in Revelation of the saints around the throne of God? The saints who sing the songs and do the worshipping. What is their primary description? They are robed in white. Their garment is a major part of their consecration to be there and to do what they do.

Well, what's our garment? Our garment is the new man, isn't it? Doesn't Paul tell us to put off the old man with his lusts and his desires and put on the new man? You can go and get all of the details in the letters of Paul, but we are to put off concerning the former manner of life. Put off the self-centered desires, self-gratification, self-centeredness and all of its manifestations and put on righteousness by faith. That's what Aaron is going to do here.

These are the garments which they shall make. Now we have these six things. Breastplate, ephod, robe, tunic, turban and sash.

B-E-R-T-T-S if you want to try to remember these. Breastplate, ephod, robe, tunic, turban and sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons that he may minister to me as priest.

This reminds me a little bit of our question in Psalm 99 where God mentions Moses and Aaron, then mentions Samuel and then seems to say something that applies only to the first two. Here he says, make Aaron these garments, make them for Aaron and his sons, but it doesn't say that they may minister to me as priests. Make them for Aaron and his sons that he may minister.

If you press this to its logical conclusion, if the sons' garments don't happen, Aaron can't minister. It is a complete set. Any missing part and it doesn't work.

Aaron needs garments, his sons need garments. Aaron might have his garments, but if Eleazar and Ithamar don't have their garments, Aaron can't function as priest. That's how it is worded here.

It would have been so easy for God to say that they may minister to me as priests, but it says that he may minister because the high priestly ministry is ineffective if the priestly ministries are not happening properly. It's all part of the same worship system. You can't say, well, even though the priests are fouling up, our high priest is doing okay.

It doesn't work unless everyone is doing their job, unless everyone has their consecrated garments. Application. The Lord Jesus is our high priest, but his high priestly ministry is ineffective if we haven't got our garments on.

It doesn't mean that he's no longer the high priest, but in terms of benefit to us, he cannot minister on our behalf if we haven't got our clothes on. Again, Hebrews chapter 10. We point to it all the time, but it's key.

That's the point that the author of Hebrews, who I think was Paul, argues in nine and a half chapters, is come to God with a heart having been sprinkled from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water. Come boldly to the throne of grace by the new and living way. The high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ that he has been at pains to describe in Hebrews is ineffectual unless your approach happens, unless we do our priestly part.

And I think that's reflected here. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons that he may minister to me as priest. The manufacture of the garments has to take place.

The priests all have to get their garments and wear them so that Aaron, who also has his garment manufactured and is wearing it, can minister as priest. Then we come to the ephod in verse 5. They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine linen, and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine woven linen, artistically

worked. It shall have two shoulder straps joined at the edges, joined together.

Intricately woven band of the ephod which is on it shall be of the same workmanship, gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine woven linen. How many times are those colors mentioned here? Verse 5, you've got it once. Verse 6, you've got it once.

Verse 8, you've got it again, along with gold. Three times these colors are emphasized. Are these colors important? If God hammers them home three times, I would say they're important.

Where have we seen these colors before? They are the tabernacle colors. They are the colors of the tabernacle proper. The actual covering over the holy place and the most holy place is the tabernacle and it is constructed of these identical colors.

There are blue, purple, scarlet, and the fine linen which is white, also gold. Now, when we talk about beauty and we talk about glory, these are the colors. If you've ever seen things that mix these colors, blue and purple and scarlet and white, this is not pomegranate and peice.

This isn't hot pink and chartreuse. These colors complement each other. They look well together.

We've got several of them in the flag of our country and I think it's the greatest looking flag in the world. I think other countries who have used elements from our flag recognize that beauty. It's not just patriotism, it's just an inherent recognition of beauty.

They're great colors for a banner. They're great colors for symbolism. And many, many countries, if you look at the flags of the nations, how many of them are a takeoff on the stars and stripes? They're great looking colors.

And when the high priest walks out with his high priestly garb on, he is immediately identified with the tabernacle. The tabernacle has these colors in proportions and with embroidery and highlighted and accented with gold. Here's the high priest, identical same colors, highlighted and accented with gold.

He cannot be looked at. Nobody can look at the high priest and not think of the tabernacle. That's the point.

His clothing, it's like walking around with one of these shirts that's got a blue field with white stars and some red stripes on it. My mother has one that she wears a lot of times on the Fourth of July. You see some elements of the flag and what do you think of? Well, that's patriotic, that's America.

It identifies, it ties together. The high priest is not going to walk out and some stranger sees him and says, well, I wonder what he does for a living. He is a walking distillation of the symbolic values of the tabernacle.

You can't see him without thinking of the tabernacle. That's the point. So, this is one of the

elements of priesthood, isn't it? What does the tabernacle represent? What is its function? Dwelling place of God.

Revelation of the character of God. The high priest embodies in his clothing as he walks about those elements. What is the Lord Jesus Christ? He is the fullness of deity in bodily form.

His life, his character, his words and witness in the Gospels, that's his high priestly garment. That's his reflection of the higher and greater tabernacle in heaven. He walks around and is the embodiment of those things.

By extension, our life ought to reflect the beauty of holiness. It ought to reflect the glory of God. We are to be imitators of Christ.

Our priesthood ought to look like his priesthood. Our dedication to the revelation of God, both in us and to us, and outward to the world, shining his light in the dark place, being salt, being those who reflect a hope that causes people to ask questions, that's a function of our similarity to Christ. He is in turn an embodiment and a reflection of heavenly truths.

This ephod is constructed of these. What exactly is an ephod? We know two things right away. It's not a robe and it's not a tunic, because those are mentioned separately.

It's not a hat and it's not a breastplate, so it's something else. In most artist representations, it's not unlike a Mexican serapi. It's a thing that goes over your robe and tunic.

It is a badge of office that is worn over these other garments and to which are attached these items that are about to be described. Lots of people can have robes. Lots of people can have tunics.

They might even incorporate some of these colors, but they don't have the ephod. The ephod is unique. It is a special garment, ornamental garment, symbolic garment, reflecting uniquely the identity of the high priest.

It's going to be great to get the chance to see exactly what these look like rather than artist representations. It has these shoulder straps joined at the edges. It is joined together.

Why do we need to know this? Because of what's coming up in verse 9. Intricately woven band of the ephod is of the same workmanship, gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, fine woven linen. In addition to its basic structure, it has this band, so it's got two different expressions of these colors. Its inherent fabric has all of these colors and then there is a band that also reflects these colors.

So there are two different reflections of these combinations of colors in the garment. You have the field and then you have the band. They are different and yet they are integral to each other.

You don't have the band without the rest of the ephod. You don't have an ephod if you don't have the band. Gold, blue, purple, and scarlet.

We've talked about the value of each of these colors and the representative value of gold. In terms of reflection of the glory of God. Reflecting light and so on.

Now, verse 9. Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel. You put six names on one stone and six names on the other. They are in order of birth.

So this is going to be Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and on down the line. In order of birth. It doesn't say one stone for Rachel and one stone for Leah.

It doesn't have four stones for Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah. God says, I don't care how you came into being. This is when you came into being.

And you're in order of chronology. You're in order of birth. Most senior to most junior.

That's the order. And the circumstances of how it arose is immaterial. So the first six, I would assume, are on the right shoulder.

The second six are on the left shoulder. It's not necessarily a statement of value. It doesn't tell us which shoulder has which six.

Hebrews read from right to left. So we would think, well, most important, as we look at it, would be on the left. And least important on the right.

When we have an American flag up on a platform, the American flag always hangs to its own right. That way, when we look up there and we read left to right, we say, here's the most important flag. There's the less important flag.

Right? Well, it might be just the reverse in the Hebrew mind, because they read from right to left, the ones who could read. And so they might put the most important thing on their right hand. Whatever's at my right hand is the most important thing.

I start with what's important, and I move to what's least important. Sit thou at my right hand. An English-speaking person, without any kind of biblical precedent, might say, sit at my left hand, because I read left to right, and you're first.

So, you take these two stones, he says, engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six names on one stone, six names on the other, in order of their birth. What color is onyx? Black. Black, black, black.

He doesn't say take a beautiful jade. He doesn't say take a great corundum or any other brilliant stone. It's black.

It's a black rock. He could just as easily have said, take a lump of coal, and write on it one name and another. Onyx stones are black.

Engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, with the work of an engraver in stone, like the

engravings of a signet. Now, this is key. What is the work of an engraver when he puts engravings in a signet? How does a signet work? The signet is a reverse image, isn't it? If you've ever seen these bowls that they find, these scarabs or different things, when they are designed to be used for impression, if it's going to put an impression in a wax seal or a clay seal, it's a negative.

And when you mash it into clay or mash it into wax, it creates a positive. They're quite interesting. They have cylinder seals that have a little design rolled around.

You look at it and you say, I can't figure out what this is. But if you roll it through a piece of clay, it makes a continuous little scene. Maybe animals cavorting in front of a mountain horizon, or gazelles in a field or something like that.

But the cylinder seals are really something because you roll them and it just makes a, it would be like one of these pieces of border wallpaper you look at in the store that is a repeating pattern. So these are designed to look like a signet. And they're a negative.

It's carved in. They don't protrude upward. So we know that these are made by removing a part of the stone, carving into it, engraving these names of the sons of Israel.

Set them in settings of gold. One of the reasons I have the class ring that I have is I think a black stone in a gold setting looks great. And I also think a black stone is great to remind one of his fallen nature.

I think the onyx or the black sapphire, it's a reminder of the blackness and the darkness of sin. And what I like about a black star sapphire is when you look at it in normal light, it's kind of dull and unimpressive. But when you take it out and let the sun shine on it, suddenly this six-fold star glory appears in it.

It has no glory of its own. It looks hopeless on its own. But when the light shines on it, suddenly it has a glory that is not of its own.

It is a reflected glory. It's a refractive type of glory. It's a great thing that all depends on the sun changing the appearance of that stone.

Well, in the same way, these stones are to be set in settings of gold and the two stones are put on the shoulders of the ephod. Now we know something more about the ephod. It goes over the shoulders.

It's got shoulder straps and the stones sit on top like epaulets. Why? Why are they not like the five smooth stones that David took out of the creek and a bag on his waist? You could have 12 stones in there, one for each. God could have said it any different way.

He says, put them up on the shoulders. Why? Well, think about it. Who's going to be looking at the high priest? What is he there for? He's there to represent the nation before God.

God is going to look down on the high priest and in a colloquialism, he would say, what are you doing here, boy? What are you doing coming before me? Well, right on his shoulders, as soon as God looks at him, what's the first thing God sees? Well, the first thing he sees is the hat. We're going to get to the hat in a minute, the turban, the miter. And that says, holy to the Lord, don't kill me, basically.

I belong to you, don't zap me. The next thing is, I'm here representing these 12 tribes. Here they are engraved on the stones.

Aaron bears them before the Lord. And the word for bear here is the word that's used for bearing a burden. It's a weight.

It's a responsibility. I've got the weight of the world on my shoulders. Well, the high priest has got the weight of the nation of Israel literally on his shoulders.

These big black rocks. How big do you think these onyx have to be to be able to inscribe six names on each one? They're not the size of the stone in my ring. They're big.

They're epaulet size. And he's got these things up on his shoulders. And so when he puts on the high priestly robe, he says, you know, this is heavier than my normal clothing.

I've got rocks on my shoulders. And they're set in gold. If the rock is big, how big is the setting? How heavy is the gold? I have got a weight on my shoulders, but I am bearing it.

I am raising it up before the Lord God. That's what the ephod does with these stones. What does God say here in verse 12? Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as what? As a memorial.

It is a presentation to God. You go to Gettysburg. You go to any place where they've got memorial stones set up.

Why are they there? It is a presentation. You go to Gettysburg, and you don't have to have read a book. You can walk up and read the monument, and it will tell you what happened there.

This is why this piece of ground is important. Here are these rocks, and they are a memorial before the Lord. It reminds God.

He says, oh, that's right. I had you put these up here. These are the tribes that are holy to me.

These are my people. Here are their names. You shall also make settings of gold, and you shall make two chains of pure gold like braided cords, and fasten the braided chains to the settings.

Why? If you've already got the stones and gold settings fastened to the shoulder straps, to the epaulets, now you've got chains. What does a chain represent? What does a chain symbolize? I've got a tie tack here, and it's got a chain. What does that do? It secures it.

I can't lose my tie. I can't lose the tie tack. It's got a chain on it.

Talking about rings, there's a crest, the class crest, that you get at the Naval Academy and maybe other places. You give one of those to somebody important. I gave mine to my mother.

If you have a girlfriend or a sweetheart or a fiancée or whatever, you can give her the class crest. Those class crests, it's the first time I had ever seen it. It's a pretty heavy piece of gold.

It's basically the side of one of these big class rings. And it's got a keeper that puts it on your lapel or your clothing or whatever. But then it's got a little chain and another keeper because heaven forbid the thing should fall off and you lose it.

So it has a chain for security. What does the chain represent on these epaulets, on these stones with the names? Security. Security.

They're not only fastened in place, they are chained. They cannot be lost. They cannot go missing.

Two chains of pure gold. Why pure gold? Why not an iron chain? Iron chains are stronger than gold chains. Did you know that? They don't make anchor chains out of gold.

About the first time you tried to pull up a heavy anchor, that thing would go soft, stretch, and you'd be done. Why gold? Why gold anywhere in the tabernacle? It is reflective of the Godhead, of deity, of God's glory. And this is the security of God surrounding and securing the names of the tribes of Israel.

Well, there is fascinating truth in every aspect of the high priestly garb and the high priestly function. And we haven't even begun to delve into it. But we'll pause here at the end of verse 14 and pick up looking at the breastplate next time.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the clear way it expresses Your desires regarding how we should live and what we should focus on, what our calling and our purpose is in this life. We ask that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.