

March 13

Scriptures: Read Exodus 28

Key Verse: “So Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as a memorial.” (Exodus 28:12b)

Overview

It was God’s intention that all Israel be His priests (Ex. 19:6), but here we see that He appointed and set apart Aaron and his sons to this holy office so that there might be an orderly and effective form of worship. To show clearly that they were consecrated and sanctified for God’s special service, He gave Moses detailed instructions concerning their beautiful and costly garments which would express the glory and beauty (radiance) of God (28:2). Those with God-given talents, whom He had also filled with the spirit of wisdom, were to make the artistic garments. The most beautiful was for the high priest. It is wonderful to see that many believers today wisely use their talents to glorify the Lord.

The names of the twelve tribes upon the shoulder straps of the ephod and the breastplate represent all the children of Israel. This indicates that the high priest was their mediator who brought their names before the Lord. The names upon the shoulders signify that the priest bore the burdens of all Israel as he represented them before God. As well as being on this place of strength, they were also on his heart, so that he might plead their cause before God with compassion and wisdom. Although the Israelites were not permitted to enter the holy places, they were still brought there by their representatives, the high priest. The New Testament declares that Jesus is our High Priest, not according to the imperfect order of Aaron, but rather according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:11). With strength and compassion He upholds each individual believer before the Father so that we have the right to enter into the holiest, and by faith “sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). What an honor God has bestowed on the believers, His spiritual priests.

The individual names inscribed upon the various precious stones signified that each person is unique and important to God. When the Light (Jesus), shines upon these gems (the children of God), they shine for all to see. Even though the stones represent weak and imperfect people, they become radiant and acceptable because of the Mediator that bears them before God. What a comforting thought to know we are seen by God through the light of Jesus who always shines brightly before Him to represent us.

The robe of the ephod was entirely blue representing heavenly glory. On the bottom of this robe were alternating pomegranates and bells. They may represent fruit bearing and testimony. The believers, God’s “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9), are to walk before God with the evidence of bearing fruit, bringing others into the Kingdom of Him. The plate of pure gold upon the priest’s forehead clearly stated that he was consecrated to God and served as a constant reminder of his acceptance and responsibility before Him. It should remind believers that in their life of service to God they too are meant to be “holiness to the Lord”. We do not wear a sign such as this, yet our whole life should be holy and attest to our consecration to God, along with wearing the garments of salvation, righteousness (Isaiah 61:10 and praise.

The Lord must be shown the greatest respect and reverence; one way the priests were to show this was in their modesty; while serving Him the priests were to wear linen undergarments (28:42; cf. 20:26). The priests were warned to obey God and always be properly attired when ministering in the tabernacle; if they were disobedient the penalty was death (28:43). The complete and perfect priestly attire glorified God, thus representing Jesus Christ’s perfection, radiance and glory.

The “Urim and Thummim” (Hebrew – ‘lights and perfections’), placed in the center of the breastplate are a mystery. However, we do know they were given by God to be used as a means of revealing His will. They were consulted when a major decision or judgment was to be made (cf. Ezra 2:63; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8-10; 1 Sam. 28:6). This indicates the priests’ importance: they brought God’s answers and divine solutions to the people. Jesus is our Light to whom we may go to when faced with decisions. We can have faith that He will illuminate us concerning the will of God.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You that the symbolism of the Old has become the reality of the New. We bear upon shoulders of intercession the names of our loved ones before You. May Your holiness adorn the inner person.