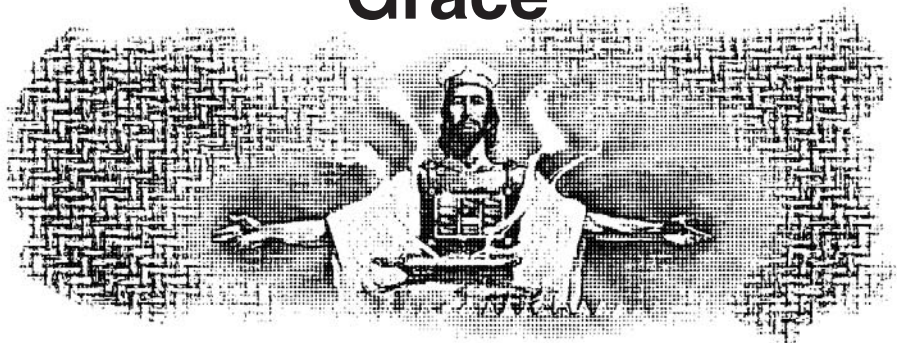


The Priestly¹ Garments (Robes) of Grace²



SABBATH—APRIL 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 32:1–6; Leviticus 21:7–24; Leviticus 22:1–8; Exodus 28; Revelation 21:12–14; Hebrews 4:14, 15.

MEMORY VERSE: “But God chose you to be his people. . . . You are a holy nation. You are people who belong to God. All of this is so that you can sing his praises. He brought you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, NlrV).

ONE GREAT THEME FROM THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION³ IS “THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS.” The idea came from the above verse which says that all Christian believers serve God as “priests.” Because all believers have Jesus, they do not need priests on earth to work between themselves and the Lord. “There is only one God. And there is only one go-between for God and human beings. He is the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5, NlrV).

Jesus lived on earth, died, and rose from the dead. Then Jesus went to heaven to work as our High Priest. The sanctuary service⁴ that God had started during the time of Moses was fulfilled in the life and death of Christ. This means that the priests of the Hebrew sanctuary are no longer needed. A new group of priests has taken their place. We all are part of this new group of the “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).

This week, we will study the garments (clothes) worn by the priests in the old system. We can learn a bit from this study about what it means to be “priests” under the new system.

1. priestly—like a priest or worn by a priest.

2. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness that is not deserved) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

3. Protestant Reformation—the sixteenth century religious movement started by Martin Luther that went against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and led to the start of the Protestant churches.

4. sanctuary service—the offering of animal blood as a payment for sin. The animal blood was offered in place of the sinner’s blood. This service represented (showed) Jesus’ dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, this service was not needed.

SUNDAY—APRIL 24**OLD COVENANT⁵ GRACE
(Exodus 32:1–6)**

Jesus said it very clearly: “ ‘Much will be required of everyone who has been given much. Even more will be asked of the person who is supposed to take care of much’ ” (Luke 12:48, NIV). It is a powerful principle (important rule). We as Seventh-day Adventists have been given so much. So, we would do well to follow this principle more seriously. Just compare the truths we have been given with the doctrines (beliefs) other churches have. For instance, many Christian churches believe in eternal torment in hell, that Sabbath was changed to Sunday, and that 144,000 Jewish virgins will preach the gospel (good news) when the church is secretly raptured⁶ during the reign (rule) of the antichrist.⁷ But Seventh-day Adventists believe differently. God has given us many beautiful truths from the Bible to share with a sin-sick and dying world.

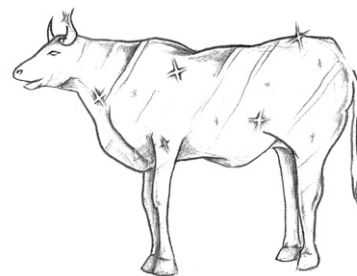
This principle we find in Luke 12:48 makes the sin of Aaron and the golden calf that much worse.

What possible excuse could Aaron have had for taking part in the serious backsliding⁸ in Exodus 32:1–6?

The backsliding itself was bad enough. But Aaron went along with it! That makes it worse. Think about all

the honors and rights that Aaron had. Aaron was right there with Moses from the start (Exodus 4:27–30). Aaron was Moses’ spokesman before Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1). Aaron cast the rod that became a serpent (verse 10). Aaron smote (hit) the waters that turned to blood (verse 20). And Aaron was one of the few chosen to see the Lord in a very special way (Exodus 24:9, 10). In short, Aaron had been given rights that few in history ever had. But when a great test came, he failed!

But here is the real surprise! God forgave Aaron his sin and let him wear the holy garments as Israel’s first high priest. This position was to be a symbol of the high priestly ministry (work) of Jesus Himself (Hebrews 8:1). In other words, Aaron was guilty of a terrible sin himself. But he was also the receiver of God’s saving grace. God’s grace is so great that it both forgave Aaron and let him hold a holy office. This story also is all about God’s mercy and forgiveness. So, Aaron’s life is a special example of mercy and salvation available to all in Christ.



Even though Aaron made the golden calf, God forgave his sin and still let him wear the priestly robes.

5. old covenant—the law and promises God gave to His people through Moses.

6. secretly raptured—or secret rapture—a false belief that Christians will secretly be taken into heaven.

7. antichrist—the enemy of God who will pretend to be God and fake His coming.

8. backsliding—when a believer falls back into sin.

Have you ever failed, even terribly, to live up to what you have been given? How can Aaron's example give you hope that all is not lost, no matter what mistakes you have made?

MONDAY—APRIL 25

THE PRIESTHOOD (Exodus 28:1)

The Levitical⁹ priesthood was set up during the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel (read Genesis 14:18). The priesthood lasted more than fifteen hundred years. The concept (idea) of a priesthood to the Lord had already been in place for a long time. But the establishment (founding; creation) of the Levitical priesthood gave a clearer picture of its role.

As we learned yesterday, Aaron's sin was terrible. But the Lord chose him to become the first head of this new priesthood. This shows that the priests needed to understand the people in order to work as go-betweens for a holy God and His fallen people. Aaron, as a fallen human, easily could understand the fallen people whom he was to represent.

At the same time, the priesthood was a sacred (holy) honor. The priests were to represent holiness and purity. After all, they were the ones who were standing before the Lord in place of the people. They had to be "holy." If not, what was the point of a priesthood? The priests needed to be close to the people, but they must

show God's holiness to the people as well by living a holy life.

What did God require of the priests in Leviticus 21:7–24 and Leviticus 22:1–8? What do you think these things were to represent (stand for)?

Some of these concepts (ideas) are difficult for us today to understand. But the idea should be clear: the priesthood was to be something different, holy, special. Priests were symbols of Jesus. Their work was to symbolize (to stand for), by example, what Jesus would do for us.

Should we be different from the world around us? If so, why, and in what ways?



The work of the priests was to symbolize what Jesus would do for us.

9. Levitical—having to do with the Levites, the tribe from which priests were drawn.

TUESDAY—APRIL 26

PRIESTLY GARMENTS (CLOTHES) (Exodus 28:4)

As you study the earthly sanctuary model,¹⁰ it should be clear that nothing was left to guesswork. God gave the priests clear instructions on what they must do. This included the garments (clothes) that the priests had to wear. And everything was done exactly as God told Moses to do.

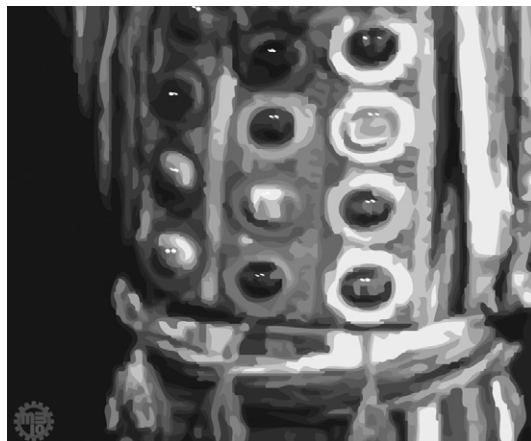
Read Exodus 28, the description of the clothing that was to be made for Aaron, the high priest, and for the priests in general. Without going into too much detail, what spiritual lessons can we learn from this chapter?

“The pattern of the priestly robes was made known to Moses in the mount. Every article the high priest was to wear, and the way it should be made, were listed. These garments were made holy for a most serious purpose. Each part of the garments represented the character of Jesus Christ.¹¹ Each covered the priest with glory and beauty, and made his office honorable. When clothed with them, the priest presented himself as a representative of Israel. By his garments, the priest showed the glory that Israel should reveal [show] to the world as the chosen people of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White,

The Youth’s Instructor, June 7, 1900.

A great deal has been written over the centuries about the supposed symbol and meaning of each color and cloth and stone and chain. Whatever their individual meanings, together they represented (stood for) the perfection and holiness and beauty and honor of Jesus our true High Priest, who works in the sanctuary in heaven (Hebrews 8:1, 2).

Notice, too, in the verses the idea of the priests carrying different things (Exodus 28:12, 29, 30, 38, 42). This is an important theme in the whole plan of salvation. All these things presented the idea of Jesus, our Substitute (stand-in), carrying in Himself our sins and accepting upon Himself the punishment for them. All of this was symbolized through the sanctuary service and the clothing of the priests. The sanctuary service was filled with symbols that represented the character and work of Jesus for us.



The priestly robes represented the perfection, holiness, and beauty of Jesus.

10. sanctuary model—the offering of the blood of animals that represented (stood for) Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, this law was not needed.

11. character of Jesus Christ—who Jesus is; having and understanding the character of Jesus is the same as being kind, loving, gentle, honest, patient, and so on. God’s law (Ten Commandments) shows us Jesus’ character.

WEDNESDAY—APRIL 27**BREASTPLATE¹² OF JUDGMENT
(Exodus 28:15–30)**

Of all the garments worn by the priests, the breastplate of judgment (Exodus 28:15) to be worn by the high priest was the most carefully planned and detailed. The other garments were more like a background for this holy part of the priestly robe. About one-third of this chapter (Exodus 28:15–30) is dedicated to describing this holy garment. That alone should show how important it was to the ministry of the priests in the sanctuary.

What is the meaning of the different stones in Exodus 28:15–30? What does it mean that the priest would “carry the names of the sons of Israel over his heart”? (verse 29, NlrV; read also Revelation 21:12–14).

Here, in a special way, we find again the theme of the priest, a symbol of Jesus, bearing (carrying) His people. The Hebrew word for “bear” is a common word in the Old Testament for the bearing (carrying) of sin. The priests would do this as part of their ministry (Leviticus 10:17; Exodus 28:38; Numbers 18:1, 22). In this case, it is used to mean the priest “bearing” the names of Israel. The real meaning is somewhat different, but the

idea is still there: God’s people must be completely dependent upon the Lord. He forgives them. He supports them. And He offers them the power to live the holy lives that He expects from His people (Philippians 4:13).

Notice, too, where the priest bears the names of the people: over his heart. The heart was a symbol in the Bible for the love and tender care that the Lord has for His children.

Another important point is that each tribe had a different gem (stone; jewel). Each stone has a special quality (feature) that symbolizes the special character of each tribe (read Genesis 49). Bible thinkers believe these gems show the different traits¹³ found in the twelve tribes, the twelve apostles (Revelation 21:14), and the church too. Peter says that there are different “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5, NlrV) in the church. We all may be different in personality, character,¹⁴ and gifts. But we are still to be united in purpose under the grace and Lordship of our great High Priest, Jesus.



The high priest bears the names of the people over his heart on the breastplate of judgment.

12. breastplate—a vestment (piece of cloth) worn by priests in service.

13. traits—qualities that make one person or thing different from another.

14. character—the way someone thinks, feels, and behaves; someone’s personality.

How have you personally experienced the love of God? How has He shown you that He has you near His heart? Why is it important to always remember those experiences, and how you can draw (receive) strength from them, especially in trouble?

THURSDAY—APRIL 28

JESUS, OUR HIGH PRIEST (Hebrews 4:14, 15)

What hope and promise do you find in Hebrews 4:14, 15? How can you use this hope in your life and in your struggle with temptation?

Christ lives today as our Priest in the sanctuary in heaven.¹⁵ For this reason He “wears” the breastplate on His heart too. Jesus “always lives to speak to God” (Hebrews 7:25, CEV) for us. We should find comfort in the knowledge that our High Priest is touched with the feelings of our problems, pains, and temptations. Like Aaron, Jesus had been a human being who knew the troubles, sufferings, and temptations of all people. But there is one special difference. Unlike Aaron, Jesus was “without sin.” And out of Jesus’ sinlessness we can claim two wonderful promises: (1) The robe of His righteousness (holy life) can be ours by faith. So we know that we stand perfect before God. (2) We can have the power to overcome

temptation just as Jesus did.

Read Hebrews 8:10–13. What promises are there for us in Hebrews 8:10–13? And how should these promises be available in our lives?

Here we find both parts of what it means to have salvation in Christ and to be covered in His righteousness. How wonderful is the promise that the Lord will “forgive [our] evil ways,” the promise that He “will not remember [our] sins anymore” (verse 12, NlrV). God is talking about those who through faith have surrendered to Jesus and have claimed His new-covenant promises.¹⁶ They also are those who have His law written in their hearts and obey it. They obey the law not to achieve (gain) salvation but because they already have salvation. Clothed in the covering of His righteousness, they now live out that righteousness in their own lives. That is the basic message of the New Covenant.

FRIDAY—APRIL 29

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle [House of God] and Its Services,” pages 347, 348, in *Patriarchs [Forefathers] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*; “The Lord’s Vineyard,” page 288, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*; “Destroyed for Lack of Knowledge,” page 293, in *Prophets*

15. sanctuary in heaven—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our High Priest before the throne of God.

16. new-covenant promises—what God agreed to do for us after Jesus died on the cross in order to save us from sin; the wonderful blessings God will give to those who love and serve and obey Him. God promises to heal and save His people and take them to heaven one day.

and Kings; “The Sanctuary,” pages 250–253, in *Early Writings*; “What Is the Sanctuary?” page 416, “God’s People Delivered,” page 646, in *The Great Controversy [War]*.

“Christ is the Minister [High Priest] of the true tabernacle in heaven. He is the High Priest of all who believe in Him as a personal Savior. No one can replace Him as High Priest in heaven. And He is the High Priest of the church too. . . .”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, page 74.

“We should daily exercise [use] faith; and that faith should daily grow as it is used. In our faith we need to also understand that Jesus saved us, loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and the Father.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, page 287.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Read Revelation 1:5, 6. Here Jesus tells us about His job description and then gives us a beautiful promise. Discuss what it means in verse 6 when He says that He has

made us to be “kings and priests” to serve Him forever.

❷ Think about the other garments worn by the priests in Exodus 28. What spiritual lessons and truths can we find there too?

❸ We have been warned about the danger of pretending to wear the garments of righteousness while not really living a righteous (holy) life. Talk about ways in which we can test our own reasons and actions. Are we really wearing His robe of righteousness? Or are we just fooling ourselves? How do we know? How do we know if we are covered or if we are really walking around in the shame of our nakedness?

❹ Discuss more the idea from Sunday’s study about the grace and forgiveness given to Aaron. God gave Aaron a very great responsibility, but he failed to live up to that responsibility. As a result, bad things happened. But later, Aaron was given an even greater responsibility. Can we learn anything from this story, when we see someone with great responsibility in church who also fails to live up to the responsibility? Discuss.