

“The Holy Priesthood”
Exodus 28-29; 30:22-33; 39

Introduction: It was God’s desire that the nation of Israel be a kingdom of priests in the world, revealing His glory and sharing His blessings with the unbelieving nations around them. But in order to magnify a holy God, Israel had to be a holy people, and that’s where the Aaronic priesthood came in.

➤ Exodus 19:6- *“And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”*

Body: It was the task of the priests (Aaron’s family) and the Levites (the families of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari) to serve in the tabernacle and represent the people before God. The priests were also to represent God to the people by teaching them the Law and helping them to obey it.

- I. Priests are Chosen to Serve God Ex. 28:1, 3, 41; 29:1, 44
 - A. The Lord’s words “minister unto Me” are found five times in these two chapters.
 - B. To be sure, the priests ministered to the people, but their first obligation was to minister to the Lord and please Him. If they forgot their obligation to the Lord, they would soon begin to minimize their responsibilities to the people, and the nation would decay spiritually.

- II. Priests are Chosen to Serve the People Ex. 28:6-30; 39:2-21
 - A. Introduction: In serving God and the people, the high priest wore seven pieces of clothing: undergarments; a white inner robe; a blue robe over that, with bells and pomegranates on the hem; the ephod, a sleeveless garment of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, held together by a jeweled clasp on each shoulder; a girdle at the waist; a jeweled breastplate, held in place on the ephod by golden chains attached to the shoulder clasps; and a white linen miter with a golden plate on it that said Holy to the Lord.
 1. A part of pleasing the Lord was wearing the priestly garments.
 2. The high priest, the priests, and the Levites couldn’t dress as they pleased when they ministered at the tabernacle; they had to wear the garments God designed for them.
 - B. The Ephod and the Girdle
 1. The high priest’s ephod and girdle were made of white linen beautifully embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet threads. The ephod was of two pieces, front and back, held together on each shoulder by a jeweled golden clasp and at the waist by the beautiful girdle.
 2. The significant thing about this ephod was not the fabric or the colors. It was that the names of six tribes of Israel were engraved on each onyx stone on the shoulder clasps, according to their birth order. Whenever the high priest wore his special robes, he carried the people on his shoulders before the Lord.
 3. These two onyx stones reminded him of two important facts: the tribes of Israel were precious in the sight of God; he wasn’t in the tabernacle to display his

beautiful robes or to exalt his special position, but to represent the people before the Lord and carry them on his shoulders.

C. The Breastplate

1. The breastplate was a piece of beautifully embroidered fabric, nine inches square when folded double. It hung on the high priest's chest, supported by two golden chains attached to the shoulder clasps. On the breastplate were twelve beautiful jewels, arranged in four rows, each stone representing one of the tribes of Israel.
2. Within the folded breastplate were kept "the Urim and Thummim" which the high priest used to determine the will of God for the nation.

III. Priests must Serve in the Fear of God Ex. 28:31-43; 39:22-31

A. Introduction: Moses mentioned some additional articles of clothing.

B. The Blue Robe

C. The Miter Exodus 28:36-37

- The first step toward happiness is holiness.
- The whole purpose of the levitical system was to make men and women holy and therefore pleasing to the Lord.

IV. Priests must be Consecrated to God Ex. 29:1-37; 30:22-33

A. The Priests were Washed

1. Sin is pictured by many images in the Bible, such as disease, darkness, drowning, and even death, but frequently it's pictured as dirt and defilement.
2. When Aaron and his sons were washed all over, it was symbolic of complete cleansing from the Lord.

B. The Priests were Clothed

C. The Priests were Anointed

1. There was a special oil that was used only to anoint the priests and the tabernacle and its furnishings.
2. In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed; it was a symbol that God had granted them the Holy Spirit for power and service.

D. The Priests were Forgiven

E. The Priests were Completely Dedicated to God

F. The Priests were Marked by the Blood

G. The Priests were Fed

V. Priests must Minister Daily Ex. 29:38-46

A. No time for a day off or a vacation! In their work, they had to follow a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly schedule, all of which was outlined in the Law that God gave Moses on Mt. Sinai.

B. Each day would begin with the priests sacrificing a lamb as a burnt offering, signifying the total dedication of the people to God, and the day ended with the offering of a second lamb as a burnt offering.

Conclusion: Today, God wants His church to minister in this world as a "holy priesthood" and a "royal priesthood" (I Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10). As we study the Old Testament

priesthood, you will see significant parallels between the work of the Jewish priests in the past and the ministry of “the holy priesthood” in the church today.

1. Priests are Chosen to Serve God
 - a. God’s people today must remember that our first obligation is to please the Lord and serve Him.
 - b. When Jesus restored Peter to discipleship, He didn’t ask “Do you love the ministry?” or even “Do you love people?” His repeated question was, “Do you love Me?” (John 21:17).
2. Priests are Chosen to Serve the People
 - a. If the church is to be faithful as a holy priesthood, believers must serve Christ by serving one another. (Ephod)
 - b. Philippians 2:4- *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”*
3. Priests must Serve in the Fear of God Psalm 2:11- *“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”*
4. Priests must be Consecrated to God
 - a. Numbers 11:29- *“And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!”*
 - b. Those who trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord have received an anointing of the Spirit of God.
5. Priests must Minister Daily
 - a. Exodus 29:38-39, 42
 - b. Acts 12:5, Romans 1:9, Colossians 1:9, I Thessalonians 3:10, II Timothy 1:3