

## **If the Suit Fits . . .**

Exodus 39:1-31  
December 16, 2007  
FBC Waynesboro

Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane. He was in agony. As the eternal Son of God, He knew the fullness of the force of pain and death that was in front of Him. He understood the pain of rejection and rebuke. He knew that there would be brutal blows upon His back and flesh tearing thorns upon his brow. But none of this would have been the source of His agony. None of this would have caused the kind of intensity that caused His sweat to be bloody in its appearance as it fell from His body and His brow. Only this one reality could have created that kind of intensity to produce the pain of that kind of agony: Jesus knew that He would face for those He came to save the full force of the wrath of God upon Him. He knew that He would receive from His holy Father the pain of the punishment that those for whom he was dying deserved, and the worst of it was that the pouring out of the wrath of God upon Him would mean the turning of the face of God from Him. And it caused Him to cry out in such agony that it showed itself physically. Jonathan Edwards raised in his day a most important question: if when facing the wrath of God the Holy Son of God recoiled in horror even when He knew it was but for a moment and beyond the tragic day of death was the triumphant day of resurrection, why is it that we are brought face to face with the deserved wrath of God and we treat it as if it is nothing. How could that happen? It could be that we think that we understand God better in our day than Jesus did in His day so that we understand that God is loving and caring and not just and wrathful. It could be that we have evolved to the place where we are just producing a better human product than in the past so that we no longer need to speak of the wrath of God. Or it could be that we have so cheapened the cost of commitment to God that we cannot really comprehend the price that was paid to purchase our redemption from sin. And it is this last sentence that makes this last passage about the tabernacle and its construction so very important.

We must see where this passage comes. Everything is in place. The Holy of Holies with the Ark of the Covenant hidden behind the veil, The Holy Place with the table for the bread, the golden lampstand, and the altar of incense has been made ready. Passing through the veil that separates The Holy Place from the courtyard, we descend the steps to see the bronze wash basin and the altar of sacrifice and the seven foot high curtains surrounding the courtyard. Everything is in place but nothing can take place until the priests are rightly robed because it is only through them that the people have access to God. They cannot come on their own. They cannot walk in as they will and when they want. They can only come in the way that God has prescribed and that way is communicated in the clothing of

the priests. This is what I want us to do this morning: I want us to look briefly at the clothing of the high priest here, and then look closely at the one who fulfills for us all that is found here and then I want us to close with a look at what the high priesthood of Jesus means for believers who are called out by our sovereign God, saved by the grace of Jesus, and sealed and filled with the Holy Spirit to be the priests of God in the world.

We are reminded at the very beginning of this chapter of the place, the purpose and the person of the high priest. The fabric that is used for the garments of the high priest are the same ones that are used in the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. There is a joining of the place where God meets His people with the person who is the meeting place for God with His people. What is represented in the place is realized in the person of the High Priest and what is found in the High Priest is the focus of the place: bringing God to His people and His people to God. What the ancient priesthood did temporarily, the Lord Jesus does permanently. He is Himself and only in Himself the meeting place for the people of God. That is the purpose of the place; they are clothed to minister in the sanctuary, to bring God to His people and His people to God. And look at who is named: Aaron. The one who had failed God the most miserably is the one who is chosen by God to manifest the presence, power, and purpose of God to the people of God.

The last phrase in this first verse is found seven times throughout this passage and dominates this chapter. It is a clear communication of what God wants above and beyond everything else from His people: His deepest desire is for us to do what He says so that we can become all that He wants to make us to be. And who we are to be we begin to see in this suit of clothes that are set apart for the high priest.

Ten items that are here and each of them bears witness to who God is to us and who we are to Him. The EPHOD (2-5) is made of gold, blue, purple and scarlet—three times this is repeated in verses 2-6 to remind us that the one who wears the ephod represents the sovereign God who rules the world and who by His grace has redeemed for Himself a people for His praise and purpose of whom this priest is a chief representative. The ONYX STONES (6-7) are called memorial stones and they represent the twelve tribe of Israel who under the Old Covenant were the chosen to God to whom He committed Himself and His Word as His representatives in the world. The BREASTPIECE (8-21) which is worn closest to the heart and thus receives the most attention reminds us that just as God keeps us close to His heart so those who represent God are to bear His people upon our hearts. The ROBE (22-26) is made of blue to remind us of who we are as children of God: we are royalty living in this world as His representatives. The TUNIC,

THE TURBAN, THE UNDERGARMENTS, THE HEADBANDS AND THE SASH are all made of the finest material to remind us that our God is rich toward those who are His and we have no reason to cower in fear but to be courageous in faith as children of the Heavenly King. Then there is the PLATE AND THE BLUE CORD (30-31) that announce to the world who we are: we are holy to the Lord. We are saved by His grace. We are set apart for His glory. We will one day be glorified in heaven but until then we are being sanctified as priests of God as He uses us to fulfill His purpose in the world.

The High Priest of Israel was for the people of Israel a visual reminder that access to God was defined and determined by God, and by God alone. They could come into the courtyard but it did not get them access to God. They could come up with a system of sacrifice and execute it to perfection but it did not get them to God. They could create a moral code and seek to keep it but it did not get them to God. The only way of access to God was through what the High Priest did in bringing God to the people and the people to God. At least part of God's intention in the establishment of the high priesthood was to put in place in the form of a shadow what would come to full sunlight in the coming of His Son fulfill for His people perfectly and completely all the requirements of the Priesthood. No book makes this truth more plain than the Book of Hebrews.

This marvelous book through over half of its chapters communicates the truth about Jesus as our Great High priest. He is set before us the SUPERIOR HIGH PRIEST (4:14; 7:16). None is greater than He. None before Him who can supercede Him and none after Him. He is the one who all alone was from before the beginning and will be after all has ended. He is the SYMPATHETIC HIGH PRIEST (4:15-16). There is nothing that we will face that He has not faced. No trial. No testing. No temptation. No storm. No struggle. No despair. No defeat. No nothing. He is the SELECTED HIGH PRIEST (5:1-6). He was appointed by God and anointed by God for this mercy of manifesting upon the earth the fullness of the person of God and purpose of God. If we want to know who God is we look at Jesus; if we want to know what God wants, we follow Jesus. He is the SUFFERING HIGH PRIEST (5:7-8). God ordained His suffering because even the eternal and everlastingly pure and perfect Son of God could only learn to obey God through suffering. Suffering is sent to us by God in part to show us clearly who we are and where we are in relationship to God. And in the midst of it we all will either run toward God or run away from God. Jesus is the SAVING HIGH PRIEST (5:9-10). He suffered the shame and sin of calvary so as to save us from shame and sin. He endured the hell of agony for you and me so that we do not have to endure it. No person goes to hell that does not pass right through the blood of Jesus. No person is hell is there who is there unjustly for there is no greater

injustice in the universe than to reject the One who suffered supreme injustice for you and for me. He is the SINGULAR HIGH PRIEST (7:23-28). There is no other. Read all you want in the Old Testament about the way of access to God and you will discover that it is through the way that God designed and declared. And then God brought that to focus and fulfillment in one person and only in one person. Oh, pity the soul that says that Christianity is too narrow and too intolerant in setting forth one way; if we but understood the majesty of our God and the misery of our sin we would see that God's offer of any way at all for us to be saved is an expression of magnificently undeserved grace. And Jesus is the SEATED HIGH PRIEST (8:1-2, 9:28, 10:11-14). He is seated for a season. One day He will stand up as instructed by the Father and the Father will send Him to get His children and to bring them home. He knows who they are. He knows who they are before they know who they are. He has ordained it from before the beginning. And not one who belongs to Him will be left out. All who are called out by God and call out to God will be brought with Jesus before the throne of God in heaven. Will you be among them? How will you know? You can know by looking at your clothes! Because every person who will be there is a priest. None will be there who aren't.

Look with me at 1 Peter 2. Every child of God is a priest of God and God makes plain here what are the chief characteristics of His priests. First, we are POSSESSED OF GOD, 1:9, we are a people belonging to God. R. C. Sproul says that we are not saved by a profession of faith but by the possession of faith and he argues that the primary problem in our day is that we have far too many to profess to know Him but are not possessed by Him. What happens when something possesses you? It consumes your life. It gives focus to everything you are and do. Whatever that thing or person or purpose is, you cannot escape it. So it is with the child of God: we are possessed by Him. We belong to Him. Second, WE PROCLAIM HIS GLORY. We live to tell the good news not only of what He has done for us but of who He is to us. One of the real dilemmas of our day is that we have far too many who declare to know God who are living in despair and defeat. Listen to what God says about you if you in fact belong to Him: once you had no identity and now you are a child of God, once you were under condemnation but now you are forgiven, 10. Once you had were nobody and no reason for living but now you are somebody and have every reason for living. Do not lose sight of the tremendous truth is this triumphant little sentence: I am a sinner saved by the grace of God. Thirdly, we live our lives to bring PLEASURE TO HIM, 11-12. We are strangers in this world, aliens from another land whose chief aim and sole purpose is to bring pleasure to Him. Is this your life? Is this your reason for being? It is for the child of God because we know we are: we are the priests of God who have come into this relationship and responsibility through the calling

and commission our great High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ. He who at birth was swaddled in linen strips and hung upon the cross shamefully exposed except for a little linen cloth has wrapped those who are His in the robes of royalty and called us to live in this world as representatives of the King of Heaven. Is that who you are and is that how you live?