

[T25]

## CHAPTER II ISRAELITES, LEVITES AND THE PRIESTHOOD

The Classes of Mankind Typified by Israelites, Levites and Priests—Anointing of the Priests—The Significance of the High Priest's "Garments of Glory and Beauty," Typically Considered—The Abrahamic Covenant, Law Covenant and New Covenant Foreshadowed.

IT IS important that we get a clear idea, not only of the structure of the Tabernacle, and of its furniture and the typical significance of these, but also that we should know something of the actors therein, and their significance as types.

*Israel* is used in many instances to typify the Christian Church. For instance, when they left Egyptian bondage, they were a type of God's children who hear his call to come out from the world and engage in his worship.

The wilderness journey represented the tedious pilgrimage through which many pass, seeking the promised Canaan rest—"Come unto me, and I will give you rest." As in the type, so in reality, the promised Canaan of rest is not far off, if God's children had faith enough to go up and at once enter in by faith. God has made abundant provision for them: yet they journey through the Wilderness of Sin, seeking rest and finding none, because they lack faith in God's promises. Some wander thus a long time; and some never enter the Canaan rest because of unbelief. But while Israel, according to the flesh, is thus and in other ways used to typify Spiritual Israel, yet as we are now examining it, in its relation to the Tabernacle, it is a totally different type. Here Israel unquestionably typified *the whole world of mankind*. The sin-offering, sacrifice, atonement, etc., made typical for them (and them only), were typical of the "better sacrifices" and atonement, made on behalf of the whole world; for thus we read, "He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." [1 John 2:2; Heb. 9:23](#)

In a word, *Israel*, as well as the Tabernacle, Priests, Levites and sacrifices, was a type. And what was there done in symbol with and for Israel is, since the first advent of Christ, being carried out on a higher plane, and on a larger scale, the latter being the reality, of which that was the type or shadow.

As Israel typified the world, so the tribe of Levites typified the "household of faith," or all believers in Jesus and his ransom. The Priesthood, one body under one chief or High Priest, was typical of the "little flock," which, with its "Head" or High Priest, is a royal priesthood, the members of which, after the present time of sacrificing, are to be *kings and priests* unto God, and to reign on the earth. ([Rev. 5:10](#)) Thus viewed, we see Jesus the High Priest, not a priest of the Aaronic order, which was but the type of a greater and grander profession or order, the Head of the real priesthood of which others were but figures. ([Heb. 3:1; 4:14](#)) The Aaronic priesthood typified chiefly the humiliation and sufferings of Christ, less his future glory—Melchisedec being the type of the Christ as a kingly or royal priesthood.

But before the under-priests, the members of the Body of Christ, the royal priesthood, will be united to their Head, and begin their reign, they must "*suffer with him*," sharing in the antitypical sacrifices, as we shall shortly see. [2 Tim. 2:12](#)

The Apostle Peter shows who were typified by the Aaronic priests, when, addressing those who were *sanctified*, he says: "Ye are...an holy priesthood to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God

by Jesus Christ." "Ye are...a royal priesthood." ([1 Pet. 2:5,9](#)) They are all ministers (*servants*) of the truth, though not all preachers and Doctors of Divinity: and each must do his share at self-sacrifice ere he will be accounted worthy to be a joint-heir with Christ. Only to those who suffer with him is there a promise to reign with him. [Rom. 8:17](#)

That the Head or Chief Priest of this priesthood, this "little flock," is our Lord Jesus, is repeatedly mentioned by the apostles. We give but one quotation: "*Holy brethren* ["the Royal Priesthood"], partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of *our profession* [our order of priests, to be], Christ Jesus." [Heb. 3:1](#)

As we now pass to the consideration of the inauguration of the typical priesthood, we notice that the tribe of the Levites (typical of all the *justified* believers) existed before the priesthood was instituted. So in the antitype the "*Royal Priesthood*" began with the anointing of Jesus, the High Priest (at baptism, [Luke 3:22](#); [Acts 10:38](#)); but believers, *justified* by faith in Christ, had lived long before that. For instance, Abraham believed God, and was *justified* by his faith. ([Rom. 4:2,3](#)) Though even the type had not yet come in his day, Abraham, as a justified believer, was a member of the "household of faith," typified by the Levites. But none of the "Royal Priesthood" were selected until after the Chief or High Priest of this order was first initiated and installed in office. Since then the initiation and installment of the under-priests has been the special work of this Christian dispensation or Gospel Age. Thus the priests, now consecrating, being installed and offering themselves as sacrifices, are being prepared as God's instruments for the royalty of the Kingdom, and thus for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

### **The Priesthood**

It will be well to notice that in every ceremony relating to the ordination and work of the priesthood the chief priest was first: and so in the antitypical priesthood, Jesus was the *first*—the Leader, Captain, Forerunner—teaching clearly that none *preceded* him. Hence we see that none of the patriarchs or prophets are of the "little flock," the "royal priesthood," otherwise called "the Bride," "the Lamb's Wife." Though they will be greatly blessed as the Lord's servants, their service will not be so grandly high as that of the priests, nor their honor so great; nevertheless, as represented in the Levites, their future work and honor will evidently be great.

"The narrow way to life" (immortality) was not opened up until Jesus came. He was the first to walk in it. He "brought life and immortality *to light*." ([2 Tim. 1:10](#)) And though all faithful believers (Levites) will become possessors of everlasting life, and the world (represented in the "Camp of Israel") also, if they will accept it during the Millennial age, yet only the priesthood, who overcome and follow their Leader in the narrow way to life—sacrificing human interests—thus seeking glory, honor and immortality ([Rom. 2:7](#)), will ever become the possessors of that *unlimited* degree of life called immortality, originally possessed only by Jehovah God, and by our Lord Jesus Christ since his resurrection. See *The Plan of the Ages*, Chapters X and XI.

### **The Anointing**

Under the Law, the *anointing* was the ceremony by which the priests were installed in their service. They were anointed to their office with a peculiar ointment, called the "Holy Anointing Oil," used upon none but the priests, and unlawful for any one else to have or to make. ([Exod.](#)

[30:25-33,38](#)) This oil typifies the holy Spirit of adoption whereby we, the real "royal priesthood," are sealed as sons of God. Only the consecrated ones, the priests, are ever to be thus anointed.

Aaron, the typical High Priest, represented Jesus, the Head, and the Church as members of the Body—the great antitypical High Priest. Being but a sinful man, like others, Aaron had to be washed in order fitly to represent the purity of the antitype, Jesus, who knew no sin, and his Church, cleansed through his precious blood, and the washing of water by the Word. [Eph. 5:26](#)

After being washed, Aaron was clothed with the holy garments of "glory and beauty" ([Exod. 28](#)), and lastly the anointing oil was poured on his head. ([Exod. 29:7](#)) Each article of this glorious apparel was typical of qualities and powers of the Great Deliverer—Head and Body—as Jehovah discerned them, looking down into the future to the time for "the manifestation of the Sons of God," and the fulfilment in them of his promises.

### **The High Priest in Garments of Typical "Glory and Beauty"**

"And these are the garments—a breastplate and an ephod, and an upper robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre and a girdle." [Exod. 28:4](#)

The white linen "coat" represented the High Priest's purity, while its embroidery showed the outgrowth of that pure character in works of grace.

The "mitre," a strip of fine white linen (typical of righteousness), worn around the forehead, to which the golden plate, or "crown," was fastened with a blue lacer, showed that the crown was *righteously* his.

Upon the golden plate was inscribed "Holiness to the Lord," thus proclaiming: This High Priest is entirely devoted to the accomplishment of Jehovah's purposes. The golden crown also proclaimed his royalty: Christ is to be "a priest upon his throne"—"a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." [Zech. 6:13](#); [Psa. 110:4](#); [Heb. 7:17](#)

The "Linen Girdle" indicated a righteous servant: linen—righteousness, girdle—servitude.

The "Upper Robe," of *blue*, represented his faithfulness. The fringe of it was made of golden bells and pomegranates. The pomegranate, being a choice fruit, showed that the faithful performance of the Redeemer's work of sacrifice had borne rich fruit—the redemption of the forfeited life of the human race. The golden bells signified that when our High Priest appears in glory and beauty, the fruit of sacrificial work will be made manifest to all—*proclaimed* to all the world, as in the type the bells proclaimed it to all Israel. This is indicated by the close proximity: the bells drawing attention to the fruit.

The "Ephod" was made of cloth of purple, blue, scarlet, white and gold threads, skillfully and beautifully interwoven. It was of two parts, one hanging in front and the other over the back. These two parts were fastened together by two gold clasps which rested on the shoulders. The ephod typified the *two great covenants*—the Abrahamic Covenant represented by the front part, and the New Covenant represented by the back, both of which are thus shown to be *dependent* on our High Priest. Both of these covenants are laid on him: if he fails to support them, fails to carry out their terms and conditions, they fall to the ground—fail. But, thank God, these covenants are united and firmly clasped on him by the gold clasps (divine power), as well as bound to him by the "curious girdle"—a cord made of the same material as the ephod.

This "Curious Girdle" seems to say, This is a *servant*, and as this is the girdle of the Ephod it tells us that this one is "The Messenger [servant] of the Covenant whom ye delight in." [Mal. 3:1](#)

One part of the Ephod which represents the New Covenant was guaranteed at Calvary: for was not our Lord's death "the blood of the New Covenant" in which his members share? [Matt. 26:28](#); [1 Cor. 10:16](#)

The other part is incomplete as yet except as the heavenly Father sees its fulfilment in the future: for the Abrahamic Covenant promised the development of the Seed of Abraham, through whom the New Covenant will bless all the people, and this Seed is not yet complete. True, our Lord Jesus is *the* Seed, yet God foresaw and has foretold the larger seed, spiritual, which will include the Body, the Church with the Head. ([Gal. 3:16,29](#)) And the Apostle points out that an earthly seed of Abraham will also share the work of blessing the world, yet spiritual Israel is the true Seed: as it is written, "The son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." [Gal. 4:22-31](#)

Concerning the natural seed of Abraham, and as proving that they will not be members of the Priest who will do the blessing, the Apostle says: "As concerning the Gospel [the spiritual part of the Covenant] they [the literal seed] are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election they are [still] beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and callings of God are not things he will repent of. For this is *my Covenant* TO THEM—There shall come out of Zion [the spiritual Church] the Deliverer [this great High Priest, the Servant of the Covenant—Jesus, the Head, and the "little flock," his Body], and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." They are to be *first* blessed by the spiritual or true Seed and may later become associate laborers. [Rom. 11:26-29](#)

So, then, after the Body of Christ completes the spiritual "Seed," that additional promise to Abraham respecting an earthly seed must have a fulfilment: the fleshly seed must become great "as the sand by the sea shore," the heavenly Seed being likened to "the stars of heaven." ([Gen. 22:17](#)) They must first be turned to righteousness and truth; they will then become an agency through which the spiritual Seed will operate in the promised blessing of all mankind with truth and grace.

The scarlet, blue, purple, etc., which composed the ephod, indicated the conditions of the two covenants. The *scarlet* shows how God provides redemption from the Adamic curse through the blood of the ransom. The *white linen* indicates the restoration of man to his original purity. The *blue* vouchsafes to him the aid, the ability, faithfully to maintain his righteous character. The *purple* proclaims the royal power of the Kingdom cooperating. All of these blessings woven together are made sure by the divine power of the anointed Priest, represented in the interwoven thread of *gold*. Thus Jehovah has laid both of these covenants, as they relate to men, upon one who is both mighty and willing to execute these glorious covenanted blessings—"in due time."

"The Breastplate of Judgment"—was placed on the front of the ephod. It was suspended by a gold chain from the clasps on the shoulder, and was fastened to the ephod by the lacer, through golden rings—this fastening being so concealed underneath that to the casual observer it might appear to be a part of the ephod. ([Exod. 28:26-28](#)) This breastplate beautifully represented *the Law*: It was not a part of the Abrahamic Covenant (ephod) but "it was added" to it. ([Gal. 3:19](#)) As the Israelite regarded them (not seeing the hidden connection), the Covenant to Abraham and "the law, which was 430 years after," were all one. But Paul shows us that there are two seeds that

God had in mind, the spiritual and the natural, and that the Covenant and the Law were distinct, "to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of *the Law*, but to that *also* which is of *the Faith*." [Rom. 4:16](#)

This Law emblem (the breastplate) was one of the most beautiful of the High Priest's garments. It was made of the same materials as the ephod. It had in it, set in gold, twelve precious jewels, in which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes. It was bound on his heart, indicating that it was precious to him. As a "breastplate of righteousness" it covered his heart. That which condemned all imperfections was his pleasure—"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy *Law* is within my heart." [Psa. 40:8](#)

This breastplate was two spans long and one span wide, folded in the middle, i.e., a span long and a span wide when *doubled*. The size, a span, indicated that the law of God is the full measure of a *perfect man's ability*. The man Christ Jesus, being perfect, was the only one who ever kept the perfect Law of God inviolate, while those who compose the "little flock," his Body, have his righteousness imputed to them, and hence may truly say, "The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us."

The fact that it was double and that the parts were of the same size represented the *letter* and the *spirit* of the Law. The front part contained the jewels, and was hung by the gold chain to the gold clasps of the ephod. The underpart was fastened to the ephod. This under half, tied to the ephod (Covenant), seems to represent the Law in letter, as presented to fleshly Israel. The front part seems to illustrate the spirit of the Law *fulfilled in us*, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." ([Rom. 8:4](#)) The two are really *one* when rightly seen, yet the front part, only, bears the precious jewels.

Pure gold being a symbol of *divine* things, the dependence of this part of the Law by a gold chain, from the gold clasps, seems to teach that the Law is *divine*; and we know, also, that it is by Divine aid that we are enabled to walk—not after the flesh but after the spirit. It is this phase of the Law which bears the "jewels," set in gold, representative of the true Israel, the Lord's "little flock." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." ([Mal. 3:17](#)) Thus embedded in gold (the divine nature) and upheld by the golden chain of Divine promises, what wonder that "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us!" [Rom. 8:1,4](#)

As Aaron stood there clothed in those beautiful robes so typically significant, and was anointed with the holy oil, his head represented Jesus, the Head of the Priesthood, while his body represented the Church, complete in Christ. How impressive and significant a type of the world's High Priest, undefiled, and clothed with power and authority to fulfil Jehovah's covenants!

### **The Under-Priests—"The Body"**

We see the *Body*, or members of the High Priest, again individually typified by the under-priests, who each wore a "bonnet," covering his head, to indicate that he was not the head of the Priesthood, but merely a member of the Body. God gave Jesus "to be the *Head* over all things to the Church, which is his Body." ([Eph. 1:22,23](#)) It is for this reason that Paul insists that a woman's head should be covered as indicating that she is not the head; the husband and wife being typical of Jesus and his Bride—the Church of the First-born.

The under-priests were robed in linen garments and wore girdles. Their robes represented the *righteousness* of Jesus, imputed to them, and their girdles represent them as *servants* of

righteousness. The High Priest wore very similar garments during the time of sacrificing (the Day of Atonement) and put on the glorious garments after making atonement.

### **The Anointing of the Priest**

As Aaron had the holy oil poured upon his head, so our Head, the Lord Jesus, was anointed with the antitypical oil—the holy Spirit—when he was thirty years of age, on the banks of Jordan, at the time of his consecration. There he was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows"—as *Head* over all his joint-heirs. A *measure* of the spirit is given to every member who thus consecrates; but Jehovah gave "not the Spirit by measure unto him." ([John 3:34](#)) John saw and bore record that our High Priest was thus anointed, and Peter adds his testimony, "How God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and with power." [John 1:32](#); [Luke 4:1](#); [Acts 10:38](#)

The anointing oil was poured *only* upon the *head*. The under-priests were not anointed individually.\* They were recognized as members of the High Priest's body, and received their anointing only in him as their head. Hence also the antitypical priests are merely partakers of the spirit of Christ, and only those who are *in* Christ Jesus are partakers of the anointing which seals all those who will be recognized as the heirs of God's promises, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord. [Eph. 1:13,14; 4:30](#)

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\* [Exodus 30:30](#) refers to the anointing of Aaron and *his sons*. The thought is that each of Aaron's sons who succeeded to the High Priest's office was to be anointed in his turn, as Aaron himself was anointed at the beginning.

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The oil "ran down...to the skirts of his [the High Priest's] garments" ([Psa. 133:2](#)), thus representing how all the members of Christ's Body are to be partakers of the [T38] same anointing *after* their Head. "The anointing which we have *received of him* abideth in you." ([1 John 2:27](#)) This oil began to reach *the Body* on the day of Pentecost, and flowed on down through this Gospel age, anointing all who are truly baptized *into Christ*, constituting them, with their Head, kings and priests unto God, to reign a thousand years. [Rev. 20:6](#)

We thus see that Aaron, robed and anointed, represented the entire Christ—the complete Seed of Abraham, in which God is about to bless all the families of the earth. But let us not forget that we have been viewing the Great Deliverer from God's standpoint, and with him looking down to the time of his manifestation—the dawn of the Millennial Day—when all the members shall have come into the Body, and when the "holy oil" shall have run down "to the skirts of his garments," anointing every member. ([Lev. 10:7](#)) Then he will begin the work of blessing mankind. For the glorious reign of this Kingly Priest we constantly pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth."