

Exodus 28:4-7, 39:2-3

We're turning back again this evening to Exodus 28 for number 3 in our series on the garments of the high priest - I have called the series: **Gems from the Garments of Glory**.

Last week we spent some time looking at the breastplate of 12 precious stones, reminding us of his ability to love his own ... our hearts were warmed as we realised afresh that he cannot love us any more than he does right now and, thank God, he will not love us any less. We are 'loved with an everlasting love!'

One of the hymns we sang last Wednesday was penned by Thomas Kelly - it's been on my mind a lot over the last few days ... the opening stanza says it all:

The atoning work is done; The victim's blood is shed; And Jesus now is gone, His people's cause to plead. He stands in heaven, their great high priest, And bears their names upon his breast.

How exceedingly wonderful it is for you and me to rejoice in the won't go away fact that we are precious to him - we are loved by him - we are secure in him - we are supported by him - we are near and dear to him ... the big question is, Why is this the case? Simply because we are on his heart and our names are graven on the palm of his hand ...

This evening, we are considering together the ephod - one of the garments 'for glory and for beauty.' it's the second item mentioned in verse

'Gems from the Garments of Glory' (3)

4 ... we have specific instructions in relation to it in verses 6-7, then over a few pages in 39:2-3.

It is a multi-coloured outer garment ... one that you couldn't miss seeing no matter where you were. It was always to the fore - that means, if a Hebrew person was coming towards the high priest, he could clearly see him ... or, if he was walking behind him, he could still clearly see him - this was one of the telltale signs that Aaron and his successors were different ... it was a garment exclusive to them.

I sometimes think of a couple of women in the gospel story - both of them came to Jesus, but they came to him from different angles - there was Mary who was before him ... and then there was an anonymous woman who came behind him - ok, all that matters is that they came; and both knew it was Jesus!

The plan is for us to follow 4 lines of enquiry in our study - and they all begin with the letter E ...

An examination of the ephod

There's so much for you and I to see as we unpack the teaching on this garment of stunning attractiveness ... so, first of all:

Its composition

You will have noticed from the biblical text that the ephod is made up of 2 components - one, the material to be used is described as 'finely twisted linen' or 'fine woven linen.' And, two, the metal is 'gold.'

That's all fairly straightforward stuff, but there's more to it than meets the eye! We know from 39:3 that the gold was beaten down into thin sheets, then cut into threads of wire. Amazing, isn't it. So the gold wasn't just added on to the top of the various yarns, or stitched alongside them - no ... it was woven into the fabric, it was incorporated into the material.

Not a job for any Tom, Dick, or Harry - this was done by skilled craftsmen (28:6), men who were artisans of their profession - and the outcome was eye-catchingly beautiful.

Here's a walk down memory lane ... when the Old Bleach in Randalstown, Co Antrim, was on the go and fully operational, it was renowned around the world for its damask linen table cloths, etc.

I was told by one of their former directors, a superb gospel singer, James McIlroy, back in 09.1980, that they used to weave silver into their famed Irish Linen cloths - as you can imagine, those limited edition cloths came at a price, and graced many a table of the good and the great around the world! They even lined the first class tables on the Titanic ...!

Its colours

At least 24 times in the book of Exodus, these same colours of 'blue, purple, and scarlet' are spoken of in exactly the same order ... I'm not quite sure why that is the case, except to say that our God always has a reason for what he does! And that's enough for me.

Did you realise that the same colours are found in the Tabernacle? The inner covering, the veil between the holy place and the most holy place, the curtain of the door into the holy place, the ten curtains all around the sanctuary, and the entrance gate curtain ... all in the same colour! So the blue, purple, and scarlet were displayed throughout.

Its construction

It's worth pointing out that the breastplate was attached to the ephod ... it was held in place by chains of gold and ribbons of blue. Then there were two onyx stones - one on each shoulder - the back and front of the ephod was joined by these two stones. More about them next week. And, finally, in relation to the waistband - some translations call it 'the band of the ephod' or 'the curious girdle' ... it doesn't matter what name you give to it, it was wrapped around the ephod, just like you'd wrap a belt around your dressing gown.

The excellence of the ephod

I often think of the words of Dr Luke when he told of the two on the road to Emmaus. We read his insightful comment in 24:27 which says all that needs to be said about the Lord Jesus. 'And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.'

That's it, isn't it ... Christ in all the Scriptures! Well, right here in the ephod, we catch a glimpse of Christ in all the Shades ... but, first of all ...

In Psalm 8:1 we read of **the excellence of his name**, as David declares: 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth ...'

In 2 Corinthians 4:7, Paul reminds us there of **the excellence of his power**, when he tells us: 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.'

In Psalm 68:34 we are confronted with **the excellence of his rule**, when David affirms that 'Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds.'

In Philippians 3:8 the apostle shares his story of redeeming love and talks openly about his sole ambition in life, by focusing on **the excellence of his knowledge**: 'Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ...'

One last one from the pen of Peter when he writes in his second epistle, 1:17, on the theme of **the excellence of his glory**. He says: 'For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".'

So let's keep going and unpack a few more cameos when we consider the colours ...

There is the grandeur of the gold

Gold is that which speaks to us of something unchanging, everlasting - it's the same all of the time, it never loses its power, never tarnishes or deteriorates when exposed. And this is what

God takes to represent himself - his deity. So, in the gold, we see **Christ the Divine one**.

There is the loveliness of the linen

It comes from the flax - and flax comes from the earth ... so here we see **Christ the Human One**.

Ah, but, remember, the gold was *worked in* to the linen, both brought together - for he is the God-man ... so here is **Christ the Incarnate One**.

We see that powerfully illustrated in the gospel narrative ... in the boat on a stormy lake - he was asleep - but he also said 'peace be still' ... sitting wearied on a well - he was tired out - but he also said to the woman, 'go, call your husband' ... at the grave scene in John 11 - Jesus wept - but he also said in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'

It was made of 'fine woven linen' (39:2-3) ... read Revelation 19:7 where the bride, the church, makes herself ready; then we read on in verse 8 where we're told that 'fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear' - she is clothed by another! What is it? The writer leaves us in no doubt for he tells us that it is 'the righteous acts of the saints.' Speaks of purity, holiness - in the Song of Songs we hear these words: 'there is no spot in thee.' Where does it come from? Jehovah Tsidkenu - he is **Christ the Righteous One**.

There is the brilliance of the blue

Blue, as we all know, is the colour of the heavens - it conveys the idea of his heavenly origin; in a sense, it speaks of his authority. We see him here as **Christ the Spiritual One**. If you like, he is the heavenly man! We can tease it out and see

him as the Lord *from* heaven, he is the Lord *of* heaven, he's the Lord who went back *to* heaven, and today he's the Lord *in* heaven.

There is the preciousness of the purple

This is the colour of royalty ... compare Mark 15:17-18 where 'they put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.' It's the shade worn by kings, queens, and princes - our Lord is the Son of David.

He was born king - Matthew 2:2 - the 'King of the Jews.' Revelation 19:16 presents him as the 'King of kings.' Revelation 15:3 portrays him as the 'King of saints.' Daniel 8:25 sees him as the 'Prince of princes.' Here is **Christ the Sovereign One**.

There is the splendour of the scarlet

This is found in abundance in Judea - on the back of the leaves of the cactus trees you will find little worms - when these are crushed they look like blood. This was then used to dye the garment to a scarlet colour. It's called the cochineal, that is, the scarlet worm. Here is **Christ the Sacrificial One**.

So far as I can ascertain, there are 3 references to a worm in the Old Testament ... Job 25:5-6 when it speaks of an ordinary man ... Isaiah 41:14 when it speaks of a believing man ... Psalm 22:6 when it speaks of a divine, dying man.

There we are - Christ in all the Colours ...! Before we move on to the next main point, it's worth pointing out the distinctiveness of these colours - some folks are colour blind and that can be a

big challenge for them in navigating everyday life - sadly, some believers are spiritually colour blind when, for example, they confuse the gold of deity with the scarlet of the sacrifice, etc. Echoes of that in Mark 13:32.

We also see something of the combination of the colours - there is no clash between them for they blend beautifully together. The NT shows the Lord Jesus as one with whom there is a real balance, the ideal combination, for he is 'full of grace and truth' ... he is 'merciful and faithful' ... and there are others!

An explanation of the ephod

We have seen copious evidence that this all points us to the Lord Jesus. Let me take you to two NT chapters where we see it all worked out:

In John 1:1 and Hebrews 1:8a we see the gold - we read: 'and the Word was God' ... 'but about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God".'

In John 1:14 and Hebrews 1:9 we see the linen - we read: 'the Word became flesh' ... 'you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.'

In John 1:10 and Hebrews 1:10 we see the blue - we read: 'He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him' ... 'In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.'

In John 1:49 and Hebrews 1:8b we see the purple - we read: 'Nathanael declared, "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel"' ... 'But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God,

will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom.”

In John 1:29 and Hebrews 1:3b we see the scarlet - we read: ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ ... ‘After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.’

An evaluation of the ephod

On our final point in this study, there are two very important questions for us to ask and, I hope, answer to your satisfaction.

What did this mean to the Israelites?

When the Jewish person saw the high priest in and around the camp, he beheld these garments ‘for glory and beauty’ ... they were meant to convey to him two realities:

One, they were admired because of their attractiveness; two, they were assured because of his ability to act on their behalf.

What does it mean to you and me?

Well, in our Lord Jesus, we have our great high priest - we marvel at the virtues he possesses; again, like them, we admire him because of his attractiveness for he is ‘the altogether lovely one.’ And we are most assured because of his amazing ability ...

First, his ability as God for the question is asked, ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord’ - we recall the words in Daniel, ‘Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us ...’

Second, his ability as Man - because he suffered, he is the one who is able to succour us - he fully

understands us and undertakes for us. He knows what it’s like!

Third, his ability as King - according to Philippians 3 he is the one who is able to subdue all things. Because he rules and reigns on high, he is the Sovereign Lord who runs every show from start to finish ... and we gladly submit to his sovereign purposes and plans for he knows best.

Fourth, his ability as the Lord - we’re reminded so often that he is able to keep us from falling, he is able to keep us in the hour of trial and even in the hour of temptation ...

Fifth, his ability as the Lamb - here is one who has won our hearts, redeemed our souls, and is preparing us for life on the other side. To this day, he is strong and mighty to save ...

All these, and I’ve only skimmed the surface, are linked together in one glorious person. The poet said it so well when he noted that, *Ten thousand charms around thee shine; But, best of all, I know you’re mine.*

Next week, God willing, the torchlight will shine on the two onyx stones - one on either shoulder.