

Text: Exod. 28:31-35; 39:22-26

Title: "Jesus's Robe"

Time: 8/13/2023 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I mentioned last week that we recently had a nice visit from my mother-in-law who came to meet her great-grandson for the first time. She brought with her a wonderful gift, which the great-grandson's mother really loved. It was a hand-knit winter cap and pullover sweater. The sweater matched the cap, and both were seamless in their construction.

That feature of Cason's new sweater reminds us of a unique account of the casting of lots for the garments of Christ, which we find in the Gospel of John (19:23-24). All of the Gospels mention the casting of lots for the garment of the Crucified One in fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecy (Ps. 22:18, Matt. 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:34). But the account in John mentions a detail the others do not:

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: *now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout*. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."

Unlike the other Gospels, John tells us why the soldiers cast lots for Jesus's robe, and the reason he gives is that it was "without seam, woven from the top throughout," kind of like Cason's new sweater.

Interestingly, that detail is also important to God's design for the robe of the high priest of Israel. It is a detail that can be difficult to see given the way most English translations translate the last phrase of verse 31, "all of blue" (KJV, ESV). The robe was, of course, made of all the blue wool, which was only one of the four ephod materials, but I do not believe that the original text reads that way exactly.

I believe that the *New Living Translation* captures the idea of the Hebrew better: "all of blue" = "a single piece of blue cloth." The idea is not just that the robe of the passage is blue in its entirety, but also that it is woven as a seamless single piece. The Jewish historian of the first century, Josephus, describes the robe of the high priest this way: "Now this vesture was not composed of two pieces, nor was it sewed together upon the shoulders and the sides, but it was one long vestment so woven as to have an aperture for the neck" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 3.7.4).

So, John wants us to know that the robe of Jesus was just like the robe of the high priest in this important detail of God's design for that robe. Suffice it to say simply, that when God gave Moses instructions for the crafting of this robe, He did so to tell us more about the person and work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I have titled our study this morning, "Jesus's Robe," and I want us to see three things about it from our passage this morning.

I. Jesus's robe is the robe of the One Mediator between God and man (i.e., between God and you and me) (28:31).

Illustration: The Marine Corps dress uniform is unique in a couple of ways. First, it has been in service the longest of any of the uniform designs of the branches of the military, remaining basically unchanged since its origin in the 19th

century. Second, it is the only dress uniform that incorporates all of the colors of the US flag. Its colors are symbolical.

Application: We have seen that the symbolical use of color is very important to the symbolism of the garments of the high priest. Our passage describes the blue robe that goes under the apron-like ephod, and it is specifically called not “the robe of the high priest,” but “the robe of the ephod.”

So, the ephod in some way gives meaning and importance to this robe. In other words, we are to interpret the robe’s meaning with the help of the ephod. You may remember that the ephod was woven with four key materials – gold, blue, purple, and scarlet threads, and that these colors depict the work that Jesus Christ has done as God’s anointed Messiah to bring God to man and man to God as the One Mediator between God and man. The gold symbolizes His divinity; the blue is His prophetic ministry revealing God’s Word from heaven; the purple is His royal ministry, His destiny to reign as King, and the scarlet is His priestly ministry, as both priest and sacrifice, atoning for our sins.

The blue of the robe is the blue of the ephod, which undergirds everything else that the ephod represents. It is the prophetic word from heaven that has allowed us to know that Jesus is the One Mediator between God and man, including the fact that He is the Prophet. How can we be sure that He is the One? We must believe His word from heaven. We must believe Him to be whom He claimed to be.

You may remember the time Jesus took His disciples to pagan Caesarea Philippi, where He asked them the question, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter spoke up on that occasion and affirmed that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” When Peter said that, he confessed that Jesus is the One whom the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet of the

ephod represent. Jesus told Peter that he had nailed the correct answer, and He told him why: "Blessed are thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:13-17). Heaven's revelation undergirded Peter's faith to know who Jesus really is, and it must do so for us as well.

As the robe of the ephod, Jesus's robe is the robe of the One Mediator between God and man, the Christ, the Son of the living God. How can we know that? The One from heaven has told us, and we must believe Him. Do you believe His claims about who He is? You will never know unless you do.

II. Jesus's robe is a robe of rejoicing (28:32).

Illustration: In my New Testament reading last week, I read again Matthew's account of the trial of Jesus before Caiaphas the high priest. Using the same words as Peter's confession, but to a very different end, Caiaphas angrily demands of the silent Jesus: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus broke His silence: "Thou has said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Do you remember what Caiaphas did next? He tore his clothes and accused Jesus of blasphemy (Matt. 26:63-65).

Application: The garment of the high priest was constructed in such a way that it could not be torn in anger, mourning, and anguish like that. Likely, Caiaphas was wearing something else the night of Jesus's trial.

The reason for this feature of the robe's construction must be that the ultimate high priest, Jesus Christ, would never have to tear his garment in anguish, mourning, anger, and defeat the way Caiaphas had to that night. Jesus's robe is only the

robe of victorious rejoicing, and this was true even as he faced the angry, rent, outbursts of His murderers.

The author of Hebrews tells us to look to Jesus for the victory and joy we need to run the race that is set before us: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (12:1-3).

The joy that was set before Jesus refers to the ultimate victory He achieved through His suffering on the cross. His victory can be our victory. We can face our suffering with the confidence that He has promised us a better resurrection and ultimate victory in the end. There is a reward for those who patiently and faithfully suffer for Him.

Illustration: As a basketball coach, I often have to call a timeout because my team has fallen seemingly hopelessly behind its opponent. It is my job to motivate them somehow not to give up, so what I have done over the years is point out to them how the dire straights we find ourselves in have set us up for one of the most glorious come-from-behind victories ever seen in the game of basketball. And you know what? It has happened that way at times. That kind of win is far more rewarding than blowing out the other team. But even when we do not win, seeing my players not give up is a more important win all by itself.

Sometimes the Lord asks us to get way behind where we want to be in the game of life. His path for us can involve

suffering, just like the path our sin required Him to walk. Jesus walked that path as our High Priest, never tearing His robe. Instead, He suffered with His eyes fastened on the ultimate joy that this come-from-behind victory was going to secure, not only for Himself, but much more so for you and for me. Brothers and Sisters, consider Him so that we not become discouraged and weary. Even our path of suffering is a path of ultimate victory. It is Caiaphas and his overlords who must rend their clothes in anguish and final defeat.

III. Jesus's robe is a robe of fruitfulness (28:33-34).

Illustration: Do you have a favorite fruit? I would have to say that mine is probably blue berries. I love eating blue berries this time of year especially because they are in season.

Application: Have you ever wondered if the Lord has a favorite fruit? Our Bible speaks of the fruitfulness of a land in terms of its production of certain plants, like vines, fig trees, olive trees, and pomegranates. I believe that the pomegranate would be a great educated guess were the Lord ever to ask us, "What do you think is My favorite fruit?"

The bottom hem of the robe of the high priest was to have pomegranates made of the ephod's colors, minus the gold threads, interspersed with golden bells all around it. These two words, *pomegranate* and *bell*, kind of rhyme in Hebrew: *rimmōn* (*pomegranates*) and *pa'amōn* (*bells*), so there is a lyrical beauty as well as a visual beauty at work in this design.

Chapter 39 tells us that the bells were pure gold (v. 25), so here again we see deity without humanity, and what is depicted likely refers to the soundings of the Holy Spirit, through whose power the witness of the Mediator goes forth that others might hear His message (Acts 1:8). The pomegranates, lacking the gold threads but still representing

mediation, are us human witnesses who rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to sound forth their witness.

The pomegranates have reminded many of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in this ministry – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. But have you ever noticed what makes the pomegranate a unique fruit? It is chocked full of seeds, so much so that pomegranates are difficult to eat. The seeds of a banana are barely noticeable, but for the pomegranate, the seeds are about the only thing you do notice.

And so when we think of this fruit's representation of the fruitfulness of the ministry of Jesus, our great High Priest, we must think of His seed – the power of His ministry to reproduce. Isaiah remembers the seed of the suffering Messiah: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (53:10).

Jesus's robe is a robe of fruitfulness. His mediatorial ministry, along with its brutal cross-work and mighty resurrection, brings many sons to glory: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10). Is Jesus the Captain of your salvation? Has He brought you to glory? Are you His witness in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Conclusion: One final thing we must say about the robe of high priest – it was Aaron's robe (v. 35). In other words, Jesus's robe is also the robe of His minister. His is a mediatorial ministry of intercession bringing many sons to glory; ours, as his ministers, is the ministry of reconciliation by which we are to be His witnesses to bring sinners to Him.

Like His ministry, ours must be done with the power of the soundings of the Holy Spirit, like bells, for the fruit of reproduction, like pomegranates chocked full of seeds, in the joy of rejoicing, and representing the Mediator – the Divine Prophet, Priest, and King. Our charge is a solemn one. Like it was for Aaron, our calling as Jesus’s priesthood is a matter of life and death. Lacking the soundings of the Holy Spirit, our ministry dies. Without a focus on reproduction, we have forgotten why the Lord has left us here. In addition, the New Testament speaks of the death of the Lord’s unfaithful ministers in a literal sense as well (cp. 1 Cor. 11:30).

We have been left here to sound forth the bells and plant the seeds, that new pomegranates with new seeds might grow to healthy maturity, and so that many more sons might be brought to glory. Let’s live to bring many others to see the glory of Jesus’s robe, that of our Mediator, a robe of rejoicing, and a robe of reproductive fruitfulness.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*