**Threads of Hope Sewing Devotion 21**

So far in our studies of fabrics in the Scripture, we have looked at the materials that went into the construction of the Tabernacle in the Old Testament and then, a few months ago, we looked at the Veil that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, both in the Tabernacle and later, in the Temple.

Today, we are going to look at the fabrics and clothing put on by the priests and the High Priest. Just as in the case of the Tabernacle, everything about the garments worn by both the priests and the High Priest were specified in detail. These details were given by God to Moses and we can find them written down in the book of Exodus.

If you remember, God selected Aaron to be the first High Priest and his sons to serve as the first priests. Aaron had four sons but two of them died when they tried to re-light the altar fire with burning coals from another place. They were drunk and had let the fire on the altar go out then tried to cover it up. So, the remaining two sons of Aaron and their descendants served as priests. All priests that served had to come from the line of Levi with documented lineage from Aaron (Exodus 28:1). All priests were Levites but not all Levites served as priests. Priests who served were between 30 and 50 years old (Numbers 4:3).

The laws that God gave Moses regarding priests were very specific. A man who served as a priest had to be free of any physical deformity, meaning he couldn’t be blind, lame or disfigured in any way with a skin disease or broken limb. Priests had to live a lifestyle holy to God since they were the representatives to God for the people of Israel. They were to be clean before God and needed to demonstrate that cleanliness by careful washing of their hands and feet before serving. They also were to refrain from alcohol and cutting their hair. Priests could marry but only to Israelite women who had never been married before. They were not allowed to do funerals or even to be near dead bodies.

At the Tabernacle, priests had serious requirements and important duties. Some of those duties included receiving the people’s sacrifices and offerings and burning them on the Altar of Burnt Offerings, burning the incense on the Golden Altar morning and evening, cleaning and trimming the lamps, putting out the Bread of the Presence on the Sabbath, blowing the silver trumpets on feast days, inspecting unclean people, especially lepers, instructing people in the law and acting as judges, and addressing troops going into war.

Aaron was the first High Priest. In addition to all the duties of a regular priest, the High Priest had to present the sacrifice and sin offering for the people once a year before the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. The High Priest had to prepare himself properly and present the offering precisely or he could die. The High Priest was also responsible for consulting the Lord in important matters and letting the people know God’s will. He also acted as the supervisor to all the other priests.

The book of Exodus tells us about the clothing of the priests who ministered at the Tabernacle. All priests wore the same basic uniform consisting of four main pieces. First was the Breeches or undergarment (Exodus 28:42). This garment was made from linen and was basically a short trouser that extended from waist to knees to cover the thighs.

Next came the Coat or Tunic. The Scripture says that the Coat was to be long, with sleeves and be made of linen as well. (Exodus 39:27) The Coat was to be woven in one piece without a seam to indicate blamelessness and righteousness. It was worn for sign that the one wearing it belonged to the Kingdom of God.

Over the Coat, the priest wore the Sash. The Sash was made of fine twisted linen in the same colors as were in the Veil. Do you remember what they were? Blue, purple and scarlet. (Exodus 39:29) The Sash was a priestly sign of service and also a prophetic sign. Jesus Himself took a towel and wrapped it around Himself to wash the disciples’ feet in an act of loving service.

Last came the headpiece. We call it the Cap or the Turban. It was also made of linen. The Scripture says that the priests must wear these pieces of clothing while ministering at the Tabernacle. If they did not, they would incur guilt and die (Exodus 28:43).

In addition to the regular garments of a priest, the High Priest wore a special set of clothing. On top of his tunic, the High Priest wore a special double robe called the Ephod. While we don’t know exactly what the Ephod looked like, the book of Exodus does tell us some details. The top robe of the Ephod was woven of blue, purple and scarlet. It covered the front and back of the body without sleeves and with a slit opening for the head. On each shoulder of the ephod was an onyx stone engraved with the names of 6 of the tribes of Israel, six on each shoulder. The under robe of the Ephod was blue and was a little longer reaching a little past the knees. The hem of this portion had a trimming of pomegranates with a gold bell between each pomegranate. Pomegranates were one of the fruits that the spies brought back from the Promised Land and even today, they are one of the national fruits of Israel. The tinkling of the bells of the hem could be heard all day as the High Priest did his work. When the High Priest was in the Holy of Holies, the sound of the bells let other priests know he was still alive.

Over the double-robed Ephod was a sash or girdle worn to hold it closely to the body. On his head, the High Priest also wore a cap or turban. Over his turban, he wore a special gold plate or crown with the words “Holy to the Lord”. This designated him acceptable to make the sin offering to God.

One more piece of clothing remained for the High Priest to put on—the Breastplate. The Breastplate was a piece of folded material that was attached to the Ephod by cords and chains. On the front of the Breastplate were 12 precious stones set in rows—four rows of 3 stones each. Each precious stone represented one of the 12 tribes of Israel so that the High Priest wore over his heart at all times a representation of the people. The folded part of the Breastplate formed a pocket and contained the Urim and the Thummim. We don’t know exactly what these items were—possibly two more precious stones. They were used by the High Priest in some way to inquire of the Lord and to make decisions, possibly similar to casting lots.

Look at the clothing worn by the priests and the High Priest. Some of the material, like linen, was worn by the common people. Some of the materials—blue, purple and scarlet yarns, gold, precious stones—were only worn by the High Priest. Can you see how this is a picture of Jesus—fully man and fully God? The rules God gave to Moses regarding the garments the priests wore to serve at the Tabernacle had to be followed precisely. Each item, each direction was a representation of Christ.

Hebrews 4:14 calls Jesus our High Priest and the Scripture makes it clear that, as believers, we have direct access to God through His death on the cross. And I Peter 2:5 lets us know our part as believers when it says, “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” We are being built into a priesthood to follow Jesus, our High Priest.

So, what should we be putting on? The Scripture gives us the perfect uniform. Romans 13:14 tells us, “clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” and Galatians 3:27 says, “for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Our priestly uniform is Christ. We need to look like Jesus. God says, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (I Peter 1:16)

This month as you sew, think about the priests working at the Tabernacle. Think about them putting on the special garments, especially the High Priest with all the extra special clothing he put on to minister there. Every item of clothing made according to God’s instructions and worn precisely as God said. Everything with a meaning, all pointing to a future Savior. Think about that Savior, Jesus Christ, our High Priest, whose death on the cross gives us direct access to God the Father if we only accept his free gift of salvation. Ponder how God is making us into his priesthood. Are you putting on your “uniform”, clothing yourself with the image of Jesus? Your service in using your talents to sew dresses and shorts that go with the Gospel message to boys and girls around the world is part of that uniform. Thank God for that opportunity to “clothe yourself” in this way.