

The Tabernacle, Priestly Garments, Consecration, and Sacrifices

1. Lesson Overview and Purpose

This Bible study session explores the biblical instructions for the Tabernacle, the priestly garments, the consecration of priests, and the sacrificial system as described in Exodus, Leviticus, and related passages. The purpose is to understand the spiritual, symbolic, and practical significance of these Old Testament practices, how they reflect God's holiness, order, and provision, and their fulfillment and application for New Testament believers. The lesson aims to foster deeper reverence for God's meticulous design and to encourage personal holiness and service.

2. Key Scriptures with References

- **Leviticus 8–9:** The consecration of Aaron and his sons, priestly garments, and offerings
- **Exodus 29:** Parallel account of priestly consecration and instructions
- **Exodus 35–37:** Construction and symbolism of the Tabernacle (homework focus)
- **Psalms 19:1–4:** “The heavens declare the glory of God...”
- **Psalms 51:** “Create in me a clean heart, O God...”
- **Revelation 21:23–27:** The glory of God in the New Jerusalem

3. Major Themes and Doctrinal Points

- **God's Holiness and Order:** God's instructions for worship, garments, and sacrifices display His holiness, meticulousness, and desire for order in approaching Him.
- **Symbolism of Garments and Sacrifices:** Every detail of the priestly garments and offerings points to spiritual realities about righteousness, atonement, and the character of God.
- **Consecration and Service:** Priests were set apart (consecrated) for service, representing a transfer of authority and responsibility to serve God and the people.

- **Shadow and Fulfillment:** Old Testament practices foreshadowed Christ's completed work as High Priest and the call for believers to live holy lives.
- **God's Provision and Inclusion:** The sacrificial system made atonement accessible to all, regardless of means.
- **Practical Holiness:** The external rituals pointed to inward transformation and ongoing surrender to God.

4. Step-by-Step Teaching Flow (As Presented in the Session)

1. **Class Opening:** Audio file and transcript reference; review of previous homework and participation.
2. **Discussion of What Stood Out:** Participants reflect on lessons about the garments, colors, symbolism, and God's meticulous design.
3. **Recap of Previous Week:**
4. Garments and colors of the high priest (ephod, breastplate, Urim and Thummim)
5. Work and offerings of priests
6. Melchizedek as a type of Christ
7. God's creative brilliance and attention to detail
8. Practical implications: "Our bodies as temples," righteousness as clothing, lifestyle vs. appearance
9. **Introduction to Consecration:**
10. Definition: To set apart as sacred, transfer of authority ("to fill the hands" in Hebrew)
11. Explanation of the process (washing, clothing, anointing, sacrifices)
12. **Scripture Reading and Exposition:**
13. Leviticus 8:5–13 – Washing, clothing, and anointing of Aaron and sons
14. Leviticus 8:14–36 – Sin offering, burnt offering, ordination offering, anointing with blood and oil, seven-day process

15. Leviticus 9:22–24 – Aftermath: blessing, appearance of God’s glory, fire from the Lord

16. Discussion of Symbolism and Numbers:

17. Gold plate on the turban: “Holiness to the Lord”

18. Significance of the number seven (completion, fullness, maturity)

19. Meaning of the right side (authority, strength, obedience)

20. Detailed Study of Sacrifices:

21. Burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering, trespass offering

22. Voluntary vs. mandatory sacrifices; atonement for unintentional and intentional sin

23. Exploration of the Tabernacle and Tent of Meeting:

24. Historical background (temporary tent, then tabernacle)

25. God’s desire to dwell among His people

26. Discussion of God’s Glory:

27. Biblical and personal definitions of God’s glory and attributes

28. Scripture readings: Psalm 19, Revelation 21, Psalm 51

29. Class Discussion and Application:

30. Questions about symbolism, modern parallels, and the purpose of rituals

31. Personal reflections and connections to New Testament truths

32. Homework Assignments and Closing Prayer

5. Symbolism and Meaning

A. Table: Priestly Garments and Their Symbolism

Garment/Item	Description	Symbolic Meaning
Linen Tunic	Base garment, closest to the body	Righteousness, purity
Sash	Worn around the waist	Service, readiness
Robe	Blue robe over the tunic	Heavenly calling, authority

Ephod	Decorative vestment with stones	Representation of the tribes before God
Breastplate	Worn on the chest, with 12 stones	God's people on the priest's heart
Urim and Thummim	Objects for discerning God's will	Divine guidance, decision-making
Gold Plate on Turban	Inscribed "Holiness to the Lord"	Dedication, consecration
Undergarments (Linen)	Worn beneath outer garments	Hidden righteousness, inward purity

B. Table: Types of Sacrifices

Sacrifice	Elements/Instructions	Purpose	Who Offered	Symbolism
Burnt Offering	Bull, ram, or bird without blemish; completely burned	Voluntary worship, atonement for unintentional sin	Any Israelite	Complete devotion, substitution
Grain Offering	Cake or bread of fine flour, oil, salt; drink offering	Thanksgiving, recognition of God's provision	Any Israelite	Gratitude, God's sustenance
Peace Offering	Unblemished animal, grains or breads	Thanksgiving, fellowship, shared meal	Any Israelite	Peace, communion with God
Sin Offering	Bull, goat, dove, pigeon, or fine flour (based on status/means)	Atonement for sin and cleansing from defilement	All (provision for poor and rich)	Forgiveness, inclusivity
Trespass/Guilt Offering	Ram; restitution required	Atonement for sins requiring restitution	Any Israelite	Restoration, justice

C. Table: Consecration Steps for Priests

Step	Description	Spiritual Meaning
1. Washing	Aaron and sons washed with water	Purification, cleansing from sin
2. Clothing	Dressed in priestly garments	Clothed with righteousness, readiness for service
3. Anointing with Oil	Tabernacle, altar, and priests anointed	Sanctification, Holy Spirit's empowerment

4. Sacrifices	Sin, burnt, and ordination offerings made	Atonement, dedication
5. Application of Blood	Blood on right ear, thumb, and big toe	Obedience (ear), service (hand), walk (foot)
6. Wave Offering	Offering waved before the Lord	Presentation of life and service to God
7. Seven-Day Ordination	Priests remained at tent entrance for seven days	Completion, fullness, preparation for ministry

D. Table: Symbolism of Numbers (Seven)

Context	Symbolism	Scriptural Reference
Sprinkling of Oil (Leviticus 8)	Completion, consecration, spiritual fullness	Leviticus 8:11
Seven-Day Consecration	Full preparation, God's perfect work	Leviticus 8:33–35
Creation Week	God's completed creation	Genesis 1–2
Other uses in worship	Spiritual maturity, rest, fulfillment	Throughout Scripture

6. Questions Asked and Discussion Insights

- What did the colors and placements on the garments mean?
- Who gave the instructions for the garments—Moses or God?
- What was inscribed on the gold plate of the turban? (“Holiness to the Lord”)
- What does the number seven represent in Scripture? (Completion, fullness, maturity)
- Why was blood applied to the right ear, thumb, and big toe? (Obedience, service, walk)
- What does burning the rest of the meat and bread symbolize? (Sufficiency for the day, trust in God's provision)
- What is the glory of God? (Manifested presence, attributes, character—righteousness, faithfulness, love, patience, etc.)
- How do Old Testament rituals relate to New Testament believers? (Call to ongoing holiness, priesthood of all believers, fulfillment in Christ)

Discussion Insights:

- Participants reflected on the difference between outward appearance and inward holiness.
- Modern parallels: “Our bodies as temples,” need for a clean heart, ongoing renewal.
- Priestly work was continual and demanding—no “days off” in representing God.
- God’s provision for all, regardless of means, through accessible sacrifices.
- Historical traditions (e.g., pastor receiving the bread at meals) may echo biblical precedent.

7. Application

- **Holiness in Daily Life:** Just as priests were consecrated and clothed in righteousness, believers are called to live set apart, reflecting God’s character in conduct, speech, and attitude.
- **Intentional Obedience:** The application of blood to the ear, hand, and foot reminds us to listen to God, serve with our hands, and walk in His ways.
- **Trust in God’s Provision:** Like the daily manna and offerings, we are to trust God for our daily needs and not worry about tomorrow.
- **Confession and Cleansing:** Regular self-examination and repentance (“Create in me a clean heart...”) keep believers in right relationship with God.
- **Priesthood of All Believers:** Every Christian is called to represent God, intercede for others, and serve sacrificially.
- **Worship in Spirit and Truth:** True worship involves both outward acts and inward devotion.
- **Remembering Christ’s Fulfillment:** Jesus is our High Priest, and through Him, we have direct access to God—no more need for animal sacrifices or ritual intermediaries.

8. Homework Assignments Mentioned

1. **For Next Week:**
2. Read Exodus 35, 36, and 37. Focus especially on chapters 36 and 37.
3. Be prepared to discuss the construction and symbolism of the Tabernacle—how each element points to spiritual truths.
4. **Outstanding Assignment:**
5. Research the priestly garments and the symbolic meaning of each item (especially as used for apostles and elders in the assembly).
6. Be ready to share what each garment represents and its scriptural foundation.
7. **Class Preparation:**
8. Come prepared to discuss practical applications and insights from the readings.
9. Review notes on sacrifices, consecration, and the meaning of numbers as discussed in class.

Appendix: Additional Tables and Lists for Quick Reference

Priestly Garments vs. Spiritual Realities

Priestly Garment	Believer's Application
Linen (Righteousness)	Clothed in Christ's righteousness (Eph. 4:24)
Breastplate	Carrying others in prayer, compassion
Gold Plate ("Holiness")	Dedication to God's glory and purpose

Summary Table: Sacrificial System and New Testament Parallels

OT Sacrifice	NT Fulfillment
Burnt Offering (Total Surrender)	Romans 12:1 – Present your bodies as a living sacrifice
Sin Offering	Christ's atonement on the cross (Hebrews 9)
Wave Offering	Offering our lives and service to God

9. Closing Thoughts

The study of the Tabernacle, priestly garments, consecration, and sacrifices is more than historical curiosity—it is a call to deeper worship, personal holiness, and grateful remembrance of Christ's finished work. As we continue through Exodus and Leviticus,

let us seek not only to understand, but to embody the spiritual realities these symbols point to.

