


SERMON XI.



ON THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH PRIEST, AND PRIESTS, AS COMMANDED BY THE LORD, AND INSTITUTED BY HIS AUTHORITY IN THE JEWISH CHURCH; WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE PONTIFICAL DRESS OF THE HIGH PRIEST; AND ALSO OF HIM, AS A FIGURE AND REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST CHRIST JESUS.



EXODUS xxviii. 1.

“ And take thou unto thee Aaron, thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office, even Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.”

MOSES, whilst he was in the mount with God forty days and forty nights, was admitted into peculiar fellowship with the Three in Jehovah, and their covenant of grace. And he re-

ceived those commands concerning the tabernacle, ark, mercy seat, and cherubims of glory, the golden candlestick, shew-bread, table, golden altar of incense, vails, curtains for the tabernacle, and hangings for the court which surrounded it, with the brazen altar, and brazen laver, which are recorded in the 25th, 26th, and 27th chapters of this book.

These sacred utensils were all and each of them emblematical and figurative of Christ, in his person as God-man; and in a variety of ways they were very expressive of his work, offices, salvation, and grace. You may see the whole of them elucidated, and read a spiritual exposition of them in the epistle to the Hebrews.

In this chapter we have the Lord's command concerning the persons who were to officiate in his house, the church, with his command for separating Aaron and his sons to the office of priesthood. Aaron was to be the high priest, the others were priests. I shall, as the Lord may be pleased to assist me, speak of their call and appointment to their office of high priest, and priesthood, with their holy garments; after which I will shew how they were figures of Christ, and represented him, his work, and offices, with the blessings and benefits thereof; in which we shall see the glory of God shining forth in the face or person of Jesus Christ; and how Aaron and the priesthood were figurative of him.

To the intent that this subject may the better be understood, and the whole more clearly appear, I will propose what I have to say under the following distinct heads.

First, I will view and set before you the command concerning the call and separation of Aaron and his sons to be set apart for the priesthood; and that holy garments were appointed for them, and what they were.

Secondly, I will particularly set forth the peculiar dress and pontifical attire of Aaron, the high priest.

Thirdly, What was signified thereby, and how he was the figure and representative of our great high priest, Christ Jesus.

I am, in the first place, to view and set before you, the command concerning the call and separation of Aaron and his sons to be set apart for the office and work of the priesthood; and that holy garments were appointed for them, and what they were.

The chapter before us begins with an account of it. The Lord spake unto Moses, and said, verse first, "And take thou unto thee Aaron, thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, Aaron's sons." Aaron himself, and then the eldest sons in Aaron's family, were to be high priests in suc-

cession; and the rest of his sons, and their posterity, were to be priests, provided they had no blemish in their bodies. The high priest was the greatest person, and his office the highest and most dignified in the old testament, or jewish church; according to his office, he was, in an especial manner, to minister in the service of God, in offering the sacrifices, confessing the sins of the people over the head of the scape goat, carrying the blood of the sacrifices into the holiest of all, sprinkling the blood before the mercy-seat, and fuming the incense between the cherubims of glory, putting some of the blood of atonement on the horns of the incense altar, and pronouncing the blessing prescribed in Numb. vi. 23, &c. on the day of atonement. He was also the overseer over the whole worship of God; it belonged to him, and was a part and branch of his office to oversee all the public worship, and to act as judge in all civil as well as religious matters. In the whole of which, he was a type of Christ, as shall be hereafter shewn and declared, under the third general head. The office and work of the common priests were, to offer sacrifices, to burn the daily incense in the holy place, to trim the lamps, and supply them with oil, to pronounce the benediction, and to instruct the people.

When all the tribe and family of Levi were taken into the service of the Lord, and were

classed according to their families, under their three distinct heads of Roathites, Gershonites, and Merarites, the Lord appointed them their respective offices and services. And though all the priests were Levites, yet all the Levites were not priests.

The office of the Levites was to wait on the priests, and assist them in killing the sacrifices, flaying them, washing and cutting them up, bringing their parts, and laying them on the altar, and in other servile employments; they did the lower and meaner services of the sanctuary. They were taken into the service of God instead of all the first-born of Israel, and were sanctified to their office by sprinkling water of purification on them, washing their garments, by the people's laying their hands on them, and by several sacrifices, viz. burnt-offerings and sin-offerings; see Numb. viii. 6 to 16. All the servants of the Lord had a peculiar dress: the high priest's garments are stiled holy garments, because he ministered in them before the Lord, and they were for glory and for beauty, to distinguish him in his office beyond his brethren. The common priests had four priestly garments, viz. first, linen breeches, or trowsers; second, fine linen coats; third, embroidered girdles of fine linen, wrought with blue, purple, and scarlet, like the high priest's; fourth, they had bonnets, or turbans of fine linen, like the high

priest; and their garments served to be an example and shadow of heavenly things. Their fine linen coats, figured the immaculate purity of Christ and his church made white in his blood. Hence when our Lord was seen in a vision by John, he had on his priestly garment, which reached down to the foot, and he was girded about the paps with a golden girdle; and his head was as white as wool, as white as snow. Rev. 1. The fine linen girdle served to bind the coat tight to the body, to help the priest to be expeditious in his work: and Christ was all alacrity in the discharge of his priestly office. The bonnets, or turbans round the head of the priests, were much like the high priest's mitre, and may serve to remind us, that all believers, who are made kings and priests unto God, have on their heads, for an helmet, the hope of salvation. The linen breeches, shew how the Lord requires the utmost decency in his service. Holiness becometh the house and worship, people and ministers for ever. The common Levites also had a linen ephod, or garment, in which they performed their services; but at present I have only to do with the priests and high priest.

Aaron was the principal person, and in the highest office, and for him, in a particular manner, holy garments were appointed. Aaron, the saint of the Lord, his name signifies a teacher, was, in an especial manner, called of God, and

appointed to his office. His priestly garments were to add dignity to him; he was never to draw near the Lord, in the services which were to be performed by him, without being clothed with them. These garments, with the ornaments belonging to them, were eight in number, as follows. First, a pair of linen breeches, or trowsers. Second, a coat of fine linen, which he wore next the body, as we do a shirt. Third, there was the girdle of fine linen, embroidered with blue, and purple, and scarlet; with this girdle, or belt, the coat was girded and confined close to the body. Fourth, he had a robe of all blue, with seventy-two bells of gold, and as many pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, upon the skirts thereof; this robe was put over the fine linen coat and girdle. Fifth, an ephod, or short coat, made of gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, finely and gloriously sculptured with cherubs, like the curtains and veils of the tabernacle; on the shoulder pieces of it were two beryl stones, on which were engraven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel: this ephod was put over the robe, and girded thereto with a curious girdle, made of the same materials with the ephod. Then, as the sixth ornamental garment, or part of the pontifical attire, was the breast plate, which was curiously wrought of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. The breast-plate

was a span square, it was fastened by gold chains and rings upon the ephod: on it were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, on twelve precious stones. The seventh garment, was a mitre of fine linen, wrapped about the head like a high crowned cap. The eighth, was the plate of pure gold, or holy crown, whereon was engraven these words, "Holiness to the Lord." These were the garments in which the high priest ministered.

There were also four extraordinary garments which the high priest, according to the learned Ainsworth, wore on the annual day of expiation: as first, the holy linen breeches; second, a holy linen coat; third, a linen girdle, which confined the coat firm to the body; fourth, a linen mitre. These he put on when he made reconciliation for the people, in the most holy place, once a year; and having finished the service, he put off these, and left them there, and never wore them more. Levit. xvi. 4, 23.

Thus Aaron, the type and representative of our Christ, was immediately called of God, and adorned by him with the priestly garments, which were of his own ordaining. The apostle, speaking of the office of high priest, and priesthood, says, "No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." His call was immediately from the Lord; it was unquestionable. Moses was ordered to separate

him and his sons. Aaron was the first high priest of the Jews, and from him the rest descended, who were lawful ones. The Lord qualified him for his office: he was fitted for the discharge of it, as he was clothed with these holy garments; these priestly robes were for glory and for beauty. Hereby our true high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, was shadowed forth. The holy and pure administration of his office, as the apostle and high priest of our profession, was signified by Aaron's priestly vestments; and his separation to the exercise and discharge of his office of mediation, was clearly shewn, in the call and separation of him and his sons to the work and office of the priesthood. I proceed,

Secondly, to shew and set forth the peculiar dress and pontifical attire of the high priest.

To view Aaron in his costly robes and golden garments, let us remember that the ephod, or outside coat, was like a cloth of gold, and it was girded unto him with a curious girdle, made of the same with the ephod, and which was woven with it. In the front of the ephod was placed the breast-plate, with the twelve jewels, on which were inscribed the names of the children of Israel. This breast-plate was fastened to the ephod with chains of gold, to the two onyx stones on the shoulders of it, and beneath with two blue

laces. The robe, which was next to the ephod, was all of blue, and at the skirts of it were golden bells and pomegranates. Under this was the brodered coat; this was next the body, and hung down to the feet. On his head he wore a mitre of linen, to which a plate of gold was fastened, on which was engraven, "Holiness to the Lord." In these garments Aaron was arrayed when he ministered; and being thus adorned, it was evidenced that he was in office advanced to the highest dignity in the Jewish church, and his appearance in them was glorious and honourable.

It was death for the high priest or priests to minister without their garments: they are, in the sacred page, called holy garments, and in times following were laid up in holy chambers; and the priests might not wear them among the people to sanctify them with their garments, see Ezek. xliv. 19.

Having given an account of the number of the high priest's garments, I will endeavour to explain them more fully.

The fine linen coat, worn next the body, was expressive of the consummate purity and righteousness which would be found in Jesus, the great high priest of our profession. It was woven with round hollow places, like eyes, and the girdle which belonged to it was of the same linen, wrought with blue, and purple, and scarlet, ex-

pressive of the blood-shedding, dolours, pains, and griefs of Jesus Christ. This girdle tied or bound the linen coat fast to the body, and was expressive of the firmness of Christ's heart, and his readiness to accomplish the work of salvation. The robe of blue, which was a long garment put on this, was made of threads twelve times double, and the hole of it was woven at the beginning of the weaving; it had no sleeves, but was divided into two skirts; the neck of it was bound about with a collar that it might not be rent; on the skirts of it were bells and pomegranates. The bells were of gold, to signify the purity and preciousness of the words of Christ; the pomegranates were symbolical of the comforts, blessings, and graces which are in Christ, and which he makes his church and people partakers of. The pomegranates were in number four-and-twenty, placed between the bells, so that there were a golden bell and a pomegranate alternately upon the hem of the robe round about. The pomegranates were made of blue, and purple, and scarlet, expressive that all the fruits of Christ's priesthood, would be the effect of his most precious blood-shedding. The pomegranates were very significant of saints, as receiving all their spiritual life, vigour, and grace from Christ. The care to weave and bind the robe of blue, that it might not rend, was expressive of the unity of the doctrine of Christ, and that his

people should be careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The high priest making a sound with his bells, when he ministered before the Lord, was expressive of Christ's being heard and accepted of the Father in his mediation in heaven, and of the evidence his church hath of it on earth. The everlasting gospel is a joyful sound; as one expresses it, 'tis music to the ear, honey in the mouth, melody in the heart.' It is owing to Christ's intercession that it is continued on earth; and when accompanied by the energy of the Holy Ghost, it produces fruit unto life eternal. Pomegranates were produced in the land of Canaan, there they grew very large; they are very fruitful trees; the fruit they bear is full of a delightful juice, and also of grains, or kernels. So those on the robe of the high priest, might be expressive of the fruit of Christ's death, of the life which would flow from it to his people, of their numbers being countless by man, and of their flourishing, as being one with him.

The ephod, which was the outermost of these holy garments, was made of gold thread, wrought with the three bloody colours, blue, purple, and scarlet, on fine twined or twisted linen: it was a short jacket, without sleeves; it had shoulder pieces, which were sewed to it; on them were placed, in bosses of gold, two onyx stones, on which were inscribed, the names of the children of Israel, six on one stone and six on

the other, so equally divided for letters, that there were twenty-five letters on either stone; and the stone on which Reuben was written, was on the right shoulder; and the stone on which Simeon was written, was on the left. The two onyx stones, set in the two shoulder pieces of the ephod served as buttons, to fasten the ephod, and keep it firm on the shoulders of the high priest. These stones were set in gold inclosures, and they were to be for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel; hence it is expressly said, "And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial." The ephod had also a girdle which belouged to it, which was called the curious girdle of the ephod; it was made of the same materials with it, even of gold, of blue, of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined lined: this served to bind the ephod tight to the body. This ephod figured out Christ in the exercise of his faithfulness: he, for the sake of his church, "Put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation on his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak." Isa. lix. 17. He appeared to John clothed like a priest, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle, Rev. i. declaring himself thereby our high priest; and the reference is to this curious girdle of the ephod. The ephod, or short coat without sleeves, covered the

shoulders and breast. It shewed how the heart and power of Christ were deeply engaged, and truly interested in the salvation of his people. He loves them with a perpetual love: he bears them up, with all their concerns, by his invincible power. The stones on the shoulder pieces being precious, pointed out that the church is precious in Christ, and to him. The engraving the names of the children of Israel, like the engraving of a signet, on these stones, shewed the love and esteem Christ hath for his church; how firmly they are borne up by him; how he sustains them by his Almighty power; and keeps them up in everlasting remembrance before God. They shew also that Aaron was a figure of Christ, that the children of Israel represented all saints. The two onyx stones, square, and of equal size, pointed out the like dignity, and precious faith that all the elect have before God in Christ; also the power Christ hath over the whole church, with the presentation he makes of his people, as pure and holy, through his divine mediation, was hereby shewed forth: that they are in everlasting remembrance before God, was in this figurative manner most freely declared.

The breast-plate, so called, because it hung over the breast of the high priest, was a double piece of linen, of a span square, woven with blue, and purple, and scarlet colours; in it were placed ouches, or inclosures of gold, in which

were fixed twelve precious jewels, in four rows: these stones were set in these ouches of gold just as a diamond is set in a ring. They were a sardine, a topaz, and a carbuncle; this was the first row. An emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond, was the second row. A ligure, an agate, and an amethyst, was the third row. A beryl, an onyx, and a jasper, was the fourth row. The breast-plate had four rings of gold at the ends of it, and chains of wreathen gold were fastened to them; and the breast-plate was tied with a lace of blue to the rings of the shoulders of the ephod, and to the curious girdle of it, so as that it might remain over the breast of the high priest firm and steady. This sacred ornament was always to be on Aaron's heart in his ministration before the Lord. And thus as he bore their names on two stones of equal worth on his shoulders, so he bore them also on the breast-plate, to shew they were near his heart, deeply sculptured there, on twelve precious jewels, for a memorial before the Lord continually.

The mitre of linen on the head of the high priest, which is sometimes stiled a bonnet, when the other mitres of the priests are mentioned, was a wrap of linen like a high pole cap, on which was fixed a plate of gold, which reached from ear to ear, on which was written, "Holiness to the Lord," and was worn by him in his minis-

trations. This was always to be on his forehead. The Lord's command concerning it runs thus: "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts: and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." *Exod. xxviii. 38.* It was symbolical of our great high priest, who is the Holy One of Jehovah, the Holy One of God, who being Jehovah incarnate, took away the sins of his people, by bearing them in his own body on the tree; and who presents their persons, with their sacrifices and services of prayer and praise, in his own person and mediation, before the Lord without all sin. The high priest wearing the golden plate on the mitre, was a visible token to the people of God's gracious acceptance of him in the discharge of his office on their behalf. The golden plate was tied to the mitre with a lace of blue, which being, as was also the robe, to which was fixed the bells and pomegranates, of a sky colour, might be expressive of Christ, as to his divine original, who is the Lord from heaven, and whose office, qualifications, fitness, and work of Mediator, is by the divine appointment of the Father. The high priest wore this plate as a crown, and our high priest is crowned in heaven.

I proceed to my third head, under which I am to shew what was signified by these garments and ornaments; and how the high priest in the Jewish church was a figure and representative of our great high priest, Christ Jesus.

It has been already observed, that these garments were mystical and symbolical: they were sacred types of Christ's immaculate purity, of the dignity of his person, of his glorious majesty and honour, of his transcendent holiness, of his fitness and qualifications for his mediatorial office, of his all perfect righteousness, of his will and alacrity in the discharge of his work and office, as the high priest of his church and people; they shadowed forth the glorious representation which Christ makes of his whole church in his own person and mediation before the majesty of Jehovah the Father, who hath accepted his people in the beloved, and loves them in him with an everlasting love, and beholds them in him all-glorious, a perfection of beauty, holy, righteous, and spotless, in the person, holiness, obedience, and atonement of Jesus. The high priest was the figure and representative of our great high priest, Christ Jesus.

Aaron is stiled, "The saint of the Lord," Psalm cvi. 16. He was Jehovah's anointed and separated one; so was Christ, his antitype, and received his name Messiah, or anointed, from the Holy Ghost's anointing him as Mediator, the

true Prophet, Priest, and King of his church and people. Aaron was called of God immediately to the office and work of priesthood; so was Christ. All the sacrifices on the day of annual atonement were offered by the high priest, and these services were performed by him with his golden garments. He stood at the brazen altar in his pure linen coat, over which was the robe all of blue, on the skirts of which were the golden bells and pomegranates, and above it he had on the ephod, on the shoulders of which, and also on the breast-plate, were the names of all the twelve tribes: he represented them; he made atonement for them; and this he did as the holy one of Jehovah, which was signified by the golden plate on his mitre. He made an end of their sins yearly, made reconciliation for iniquity, and appeared at the golden altar with the blood of atonement, which he put on the horns of it, burnt incense, trimmed the lamps, and went out; afterwards he entered in his plain linen garments in the holiest of all, and carried thither sacrificial blood, and a censer of burning coals, with his hands full of sweet perfume, and sprinkled the blood, and fumed the incense before the mercy-seat, and between the cherubims of glory, and came out, and pronounced the blessing. The high priest on this day made so complete an atonement for the sins of the people, in a typical way and manner, that it is expressly said, " On

that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord." See Levit. xvi. 30. So Christ, his antitype, by bearing, as our great high priest, all our sins, the iniquities of all his church and people in his own body on the tree, hath removed them from us as far as the east is from the west. His blood cleanseth us from all sin. The high priest represented all the people in his own person, wore their names on his heart, and bore them on the shoulders of his power, and entered into the holiest of all with blood and incense, and was interested in the good of the people in all his priestly performances; it was for their benefit, and on their behalf, that he performed these services. So Jesus wore all the names of his people on his heart: he represented them, acted for them, suffered for them, and having, by his own blood, obtained eternal redemption, he entered into the holiest of all, to appear in the presence of God for us.

Aaron, the high priest, was a mortal man, he was inherently sinful, he was encompassed with infirmity; this served to give him to feel for those he represented: his office required this of him, to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. Our Christ, the essential Word and Son of God, took our nature, with all its sinless infirmities, into personal union, and is most graciously disposed to exercise all ways

of pity, mercy, tenderness and compassion on his church and people, as their various cases and necessities may require. The apostle sets Aaron and Christ in comparison with each other, and shews how Christ infinitely exceeds him, and gives us a beautiful account of this in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews.

Aaron must appear very glorious when adorned with all his priestly vestments; the golden crown, the sparkling gems, the lustre and splendor which must reflect from his breast-plate, could not but affect the minds of beholders. The old testament church saw herein the glories of Christ's person and righteousness, and breaks out thus: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." Isai. lxi. 10. As the high priest had all the names of the people on his breast-plate, so the church, understanding the mystery of it, prays Christ to set her as a seal upon his heart and arm. Caut. viii. 6. As the high priest bore the names of the people also on his shoulders, so the prophet Isaiah refers to it when speaking of our Jesus: he says, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed

them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." Isai. lxiii. 9.

Aaron had in his breast-plate of judgment, the urim and the thummim. These words signify lights and perfections. Some learned persons think the urim and thummim were the precious stones in the breast-plate, which being prepared and properly fitted, Moses himself fixed them in it. Doubtless, the light and effulgency of glory which were reflected from the precious jewels, must have been very great; and they might be designed to point out the eternal and personal, native and inherent glories and perfections of the God-man, Christ Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our profession; in his person dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead; in him, as Mediator, it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; and in him, as the head of his body, the church, is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The breast-plate was called the breast-plate of judgment, because by it the high priest enquired of the Lord on behalf of the people, and received answers. Christ is our high priest, with him is the urim and thummim, and by him we enquire the mind and will of God, and he is the interpreter of the whole mind and will of his Father to us; and all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit come from him. The high priest was a public person, and he

entered as such into the holy and most holy place, representing all the people. Our Jesus lived, acted, bore sin, suffered, died, rose from the dead, ascended and entered into heaven, as the public head and representative of all the chosen and elect people of God. As the high priest shone forth most gloriously in all his golden robes to an eye of sense, so our Jesus shines forth in his person, office, qualification, and glory far beyond him to the eye of faith; and his church, in him, shines also with rays of refulgent brightness, far exceeding, and everlastingly transcending the jewels on Aaron's breast and shoulders; she is on his heart, deeply engraven there; she is on his arm, and he bears her up as his beloved, and will present her before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. In him the Father beholds her complete: he views his people in Christ with inconceivable joy.

Believers in Jesus, look on him your high priest, view yourselves in him, consider how he represents you in himself, immutably holy, righteous, and sinless; see your names engraven on his heart, your persons accepted in him; behold yourselves in him complete, and may your minds be perfectly satisfied therewith; he is in heaven your intercessor; he offers up the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar before the throne, and they come up with acceptance, being pre-

sented by him, and perfumed with the odour of his mediation.

May the Lord the Spirit bless these brief hints and observations unto you, and make Christ thereby increasingly glorious and precious to your souls. Grant this, holy Father, for the honour of thy co-equal Son, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be co-equal and co-eternal praise, now and ever. Amen.