
THE NEW TESTAMENT PRIEST — GARMENTS OF HOLINESS

INTRODUCTION — The past few weeks we have been discussing our identity and calling as New Testament Priests, uncovering our glorious ministry to God. Today we will be looking at one of the main facets of the priestly ministry: *Holiness*. New Testament Priests cherish purity because it is the inward and outward expression of total satisfaction in the pleasures of God.

I. THE HOLINESS OF OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTS

- A. **CONSECRATION:** Before the Levitical priests could enter into the ministry they first had to be consecrated [set apart] for the service. Without the proper consecration, those that approached the presence of the Lord would be killed by His glory (Lev 10).
1. *Water* — The first step of the Levitical priests' consecration was being purified by water. This signified cleansing and purity, physical and spiritual (Lev 8:5-6).
 2. *Oil* — After washing the priests with water they were anointed with special oil. This oil would make anything it touched holy (Lev 8:12, 30).
 3. *Blood* — The final step in the priests' consecration was sprinkling them with the blood of a ram. This signified the essence of life in their mystery (Lev 8:22-24).
- B. **HOLINESS:** After the priests were consecrated, it was their responsibility to maintain the purity of their ministry by abstaining from things that are considered unclean. Yet, it was the Lord who made the priests holy, not their actions (Lev 21:15, 22:9).
1. *Theological Motivation* — One of the primary motivations for the Levitical priests' pursuit of holiness was because it was a command of God (Lev 20:22, 26).
 2. *Ministerial Motivation* — The second motivation for the priests' pursuit of holiness was due to their proximity to God's dwelling place (Lev 21:22-23).
- C. **GARMENTS:** One of the distinguishing aspects of the Levitical priests was the garments that they wore. Their clothing was an expression of their consecration and pursuit of holiness, showing that they were God's chosen ministers (Exod 28:2, 40).
1. *Glory* — One of the reasons God gave the priests these garments was for *glory* or honor/reputation, reflecting the honorable status of their ministry to the Lord.
 2. *Beauty* — God also adorned His ministers with these garments for *beauty* or splendor/radiance; the clothes they wore were colorful and vibrant!¹

¹ The first time that the word beauty (*Tipheret*) is used in the Bible is in regard to the holy attire of the priests. This displays God's passion to share the beauty of His holiness with those He has called unto Himself!

II. THE HOLINESS OF NEW TESTAMENT PRIESTS

A. **CONSECRATION:** Just as the Levitical priests were consecrated to minister to God, so also are we. The Old Testament priests were consecrated by physical elements; New Testament priests are consecrated by superior, spiritual elements.

1. Blood — The Levitical priests were consecrated by the blood of a ram; New Testament priests are consecrated by the blood of Christ ((Eph 1:7; Rev 1:5).
2. Water — The Levitical priests' 'baptism' was for washing off dirt; New Testament priests' baptism symbolizes union with Christ and a clean conscience (Rom 6).
3. Oil — The Levitical priests' anointing oil was made of various ingredients; New Testament priests are anointed with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:21-22; 1 Jn 2:27).

B. **HOLINESS:** The Levitical priests valued holiness because it was a requirement for their service; New Testament priests value holiness because we have found superior pleasures in relationship with God than in the world.

1. Theological Motivation — The same command to be holy that was given to the Levitical priests is given to New Testament Priests by the Apostle Peter.

But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pt 1:15-16).

2. Ministerial Motivations — As New Testament priests it is our duty to bless God and bless people, and holiness maintains the integrity of that ministry.

If anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house (2 Tim 2:21).

C. **GARMENTS:** The Levitical priests had physical garments for glory and beauty; New Testament priests 'wear' the spiritual garments of a new life in Christ. A transformed life is the clothing of the New Testament priest, for glory and beauty.

1. Glory — Jesus said that the glory that the Father had given Him was given to the believers (Jn 17:22)! We have been exalted with Christ and we must live like it!
2. Beauty — The beautiful life to God is not based upon the clothes we wear but the life we live, walking as Jesus did. God is looking for beauty in the inward parts.

Put on then...compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony (Col 3:12-14).