

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 28:1-5

“Reminders of His Presence: The Calling of the Priests”

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(After the affirmation of the Covenant {See Exodus 24}, God set up a system of organized religion to help the Israelites remember the obligation of the Covenant to which they had agreed. This religion was centered in the Tabernacle and its furnishings. These items were to remind the people of God’s presence and of their obligation to listen to God and to obey him. The promise of God’s blessing was linked to listening to him and obeying him. In this chapter, God calls the first priests. The priests’ function will be more clearly defined later in our study. However, the priests performed two essential functions: 1. they stood between God and the people, essentially to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people so that the people could approach God; and 2. they administered the functioning of the religious system God had ordained.)

Exodus 28:1-5

Verse 1

“Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests.

- First, note that the action is initiated by God. The action does not begin with those who are called. Neither Aaron nor his sons sought this office. They were picked for it by God.
- Second, note that the men are not consulted. They are not asked **IF** they want the job or not. It is thrust upon them by God’s sovereign will. They are not asked if they would like to apply for the position.
- Third, note that the men are not given the right of refusal. This is an act of God’s sovereign will. As such, there is no human choice involved. God has spoken and so must be obeyed. All human plans must bend to the will of YHWH as sovereign Lord. Though God’s will may alter the course of life for these men, and even violate their own freedom to choose their own direction, blessing is found in

- obeying him. As priests, they must be the first to demonstrate this fact to the people.
- Specific names are mentioned in this verse. Aaron was Moses' older brother who was appointed by God to be Moses' assistant at the beginning of the book of Exodus (See Exodus 3 & 4). The other men named are the sons of Aaron, or Moses' nephews. Since Aaron is the oldest of the group and their father, it would be assumed that he was the leader of the group. Nadab, as Aaron's oldest son, would be his apparent successor and heir.
 - In Numbers 3:4 and Leviticus 10:1-3, Nadab and Abihu are disobedient to God's instructions. They offer sacrifices using "unauthorized fire" or "strange fire." The exact nature of their transgression is unclear as the meaning of the descriptive phrase is unclear. None-the-less, their violation is considered so serious that they are consumed by the fire and killed. The Bible clearly ascribes their death to YHWH and credits it as the consequence of their disobedience. Not all of those who are called perform according to the restriction their calling places upon them.

Verse 2-4a

Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor. Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash.

- Aaron is to wear garments that will set him aside and distinguish him from the people and even from the other priests. These garments and their function and meaning will be dealt with in future notes. However, the purpose of the attire is to mark Aaron as God's man, a man set aside by God for a special function.
- When Aaron is robed in these garments, he must remember his office and act with dignity. When the people see Aaron robed in these garments, they must honor him. The issues of dignity and honor do not relate to Aaron as a person, they relate to Aaron as the officer God has appointed.

Verse 4b-5

They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. Have them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.

- Aaron's sons are also to have special garments to distinguish them as priests. These garments are different from Aaron's, although similar, to mark Aaron as chief among them.
- The garments are to reflect the royal presence of YHWH as they are to be made of fine materials that indicate a royal presence.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Reminders of His Presence: The Calling of the Priests*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)