

# A Friend in High Places

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 28. I'm preaching from Exodus 28 and Exodus 39, but because 39 is almost a word-for-word fulfillment and repetition of Exodus 28, I'm not going to read it at the beginning of the sermon.

I'll just read chapter 28, verses 1 to 43. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We can bring one over to you that you can use while you're here. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Amen. Heavenly Father, we don't want to lose sight of what a privilege it is that we get to approach your throne of grace, that we are in your presence now, that we will have eternal fellowship with you in the new heavens and the new earth, and that that is all because of your Son, Jesus Christ, our great high priest.

So exalt his name this morning. remind us powerfully of how he serves us, how he saves us.

Convey to your precious saints how precious they are to you this morning. Please, in Jesus' name we pray.

[ 1 : 4 7 ] Amen. If you would please stand, if you are able. And I'm going to read Exodus chapter 28. Then bring near to you Aaron, your brother, and his sons with him from among the people of Israel to serve me as priests, Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eliezer and Ethamar.

And you shall make holy garments for Aaron, your brother, for glory and for beauty. You shall speak to all the skillful whom I have filled with the spirit of skill that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood.

These are the garments that they shall make, a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checkerwork, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron, your brother, and his sons to serve me as priests.

They shall receive gold, blue and purple, and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and of fine twined linen, skillfully worked.

You shall have two shoulder pieces attached to its two edges so that it may be joined together. And the skillfully woven band on it shall be made like it and be of one piece with it, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen.

[ 3 : 1 2 ] You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone and the names of the remaining six on the other stone in the order of their birth.

As a jeweler engraves signet, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree, and you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel.

And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for remembrance. You shall make settings of gold filigree and two chains of pure gold twisted like cords, and you shall attach the corded chains to the settings.

You shall make a breast piece of judgment in skilled work. In the style of the ephod you shall make it, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen shall you make it.

It shall be square and doubled, a span its length and a span its breadth. You shall set in it four rows of stones, a row of sardius, topaz and carbuncle shall be the first row, and the second row an emerald, a sapphire and a diamond, and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst, and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx and a jasper.

[ 4 : 37 ] They shall be set in gold filigree. There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They shall be like cygnets, each engraved with its name for the twelve tribes.

You shall make for the breast piece twisted chains like cords of pure gold, and you shall make for the breast piece two rings of gold, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breast piece. And you shall put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breast piece.

The two ends of the two cords you shall attach to the two settings of filigree, and so attach it in front to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. You shall make two rings of gold and put them at the two ends of the breast piece on its inside edge next to the ephod.

And you shall make two rings of gold and attach them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod at its seam above the skillfully woven band of the ephod. And they shall bind the breast piece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue so that it may lie on the skillfully woven band of the ephod so that the breast piece shall not come loose from the ephod. So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breast piece of judgment on his heart when he goes into the holy place to bring them to regular remembrance before the Lord. And in the breast piece of judgment you shall put the urim and the thumim and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord.

Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the Lord regularly. You shall make the robe of the ephod all a blue. You shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it with a woven binding around the opening like the opening in a garment so that it may not tear.

[ 6 : 21 ] On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns around its hem with bells of gold between them. A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate around the hem of the robe. And it shall be on Aaron when he ministers and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord and when he comes out so that he does not die. You shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it like the engraving of a signet holy to the Lord. And you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron's forehead and Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts. It shall regularly be on his forehead that they may be accepted before the Lord.

You shall weave the coat in checker work of fine linen and you shall make a turban of fine linen and you shall make a sash embroidered with needlework. For Aaron's sons you shall make coats and sashes and caps. You shall make them for glory and beauty. And you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them that they may serve me as priests. You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh. They shall reach from the hips to the thighs and they shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they go into the tent of meeting or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place lest they bear guilt and die.

This shall be a statute forever for him and for his offspring after him. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated this time. Two years ago on December 23rd, 2020, when then President Donald Trump used his executive powers to pardon Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in-law, Roger, and as well as Roger Stone Jr., his longtime advisor and friend who was doing jail time for lying to Congress and tampering with witnesses, as well as Paul Manafort, the chairman of his 2016 presidential campaign, who was doing jail time for text fraud, bank fraud, and conspiracy all on the same day, I remember thinking to myself, it must be nice to have a friend in high places.

We were all once sinners under condemnation and we too needed a friend in high places.

We talked last week about the inaccessibility and the unapproachability of the tabernacle, how no man can draw near safely without first offering atoning sacrifice.

[ 9 : 16 ] But the Israelites could not even offer an acceptable sacrifice to God on their own. They could not even enter into the holy place. They needed someone who had access to God in the holy place and the most holy place where they themselves did not have access. They needed a mediator who would represent them and make the sacrifices they need for their sins. They needed a friend in high places. And this is precisely why God appoints Aaron and his sons as priests in this passage. Aaron would be a high priest, his sons, regular priests, to represent the Israelites to God.

God says in chapter 28, verse 1, bring near to you Aaron, your brother, and his sons with him from among the people of Israel to serve me as priests. This is the first explicit statement in the Bible when God appoints Aaron and his sons to be priests. In order to serve as priests within the tabernacle, they need to be holy, consecrated, which means to be set apart for a special purpose, just like the tabernacle is set apart, which is described as holy. So that's why in verses 2 to 5, God commands Israelites to make holy garments for Aaron and his sons. The garments are repeatedly called holy because they're supposed to wear it when they go into the holy place before the Lord.

In scripture, the word holy is the opposite of what is common. It refers to something that is uncommon, something that is special. So you can't go to, for example, a special party like a wedding with common clothes like t-shirts and blue jeans. You need special clothes that set that occasion apart.

Likewise, to minister in God's special place, the holy place, his sanctuary, the priests need holy garments. And special garments cannot be made by anyone of ordinary skill. It has to be made by skillful people. So God specifically commissions, quote, all the skillful whom God has filled with the spirit of skill to make the priestly garments. So these garments are not going to be made by clumsy hands in a janky way. You know, these are not going to have loose seams and uneven proportions. They are going to be made with skillful hands for glory and for beauty. That phrase occurs twice in this passage here in verse 2 and again in verse 40 to emphasize that the priest's garments are to be glorious and beautiful. But what does glory and beauty mean? Glory refers to all of it, it's really a summary of all of God's divine virtues and attributes. Some people say that it's deity on display, glory. When God's deity, his divine power, his attributes are displayed for people to see, we call that glory. So glory really is unique to God. Nothing and no one in this world has any glory in and of themselves. They possess glory only in so far as they display and point to who God is and what he is like. So when we say that the vast ocean and its crashing waves are glorious, we're saying that the ocean displays God's eternal vastness and his power. When we say that a mountain range is glorious, we're saying that it reflects God's immovable strength and constancy, that it is unchanging. When we say that a king in his splendor, his royal garb is glorious, we're saying that he in some way resembles God's royalty and his rule and authority. So to glorify God then is not to give him something that he doesn't already have. It's simply to acknowledge who he already is. God is not glorious because we glorify him. We glorify him because he is glorious. And throughout Exodus, we have repeatedly seen this phrase, glory of the Lord.

The Israelites witnessed the glory of the Lord in the wilderness in Exodus 16. And later when the tabernacle is completed in Exodus 40, it says that the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. You may have heard the phrase Shekinah glory before. You guys heard that phrase before? So that's Shekinah comes from the Hebrew word shakhan, which means to dwell. That's the word from which we get the word tabernacle, which literally means the dwelling place. So God's glory, the glory of the Lord is what you see. It's the visible manifestation of God in the place where God dwells. It's the glory that's connected to God's dwelling place. So then the fact that the priest's garment is specifically crafted for glory shows that they are to be associated with Yahweh's glory to minister in his dwelling place. The priest's garment is also designed for beauty. The Hebrew word translated beauty in this verse is also almost synonymous with the word glory, which sometimes is translated glory or honor. But more specifically, it's a word that is used to describe beautiful ornaments in Isaiah 3.18. And it's used to refer to beautiful jewels in Ezekiel 16 and Ezekiel 23 as well.

[ 14 : 56 ] Beauty is an attribute of something that is splendid and radiant and dazzling and glorious. Beauty awes people.

It turns onlookers into admirers, maybe even worshipers. So it is fitting that this is linked to glory, that these holy garments are made for glory and beauty. Do you think of God as beautiful?

I think we more often think of him as glorious, but maybe we don't often think of him as beautiful. But scripture teaches us that God is beautiful. Psalm 96.46 uses the exact same Hebrew word to describe God in his dwelling place. His four great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. Splendor and majesty are before him. Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Psalm 27 uses the slightly different word, slightly different word, but gets the same idea. One thing have I asked of the Lord that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to do what? To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. The Lord our God is the beautiful one. Whenever you see something beautiful in nature, whenever you draw or create or build something that is beautiful, you are in a way pointing to our God who is beautiful, who is lovely, radiant, splendid. And this is why the holy garments of the priests who represent the people to God must be made for glory and beauty because they're associated with God himself.

The connection between the priests and the Lord is further reinforced by the material that the skilled craftsmen use to make the holy garments. Verse five says that they are to be made of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. Does that sound familiar to you? Right? You guys have seen these materials before. It's the exact same materials that are used to make the tabernacle, God's dwelling place. So they're kind of a set, the high priest and the tabernacle, right?

When you see, people wouldn't have normally seen the high priest walking around in his priestly garment because they only put it on when they go into the holy place to minister. But imagine you saw him walking around. Nobody's going to look at the priest and think, oh, I wonder what he does for work.

[ 17 : 34 ] It's very obvious. You take one look at him and one look at the tabernacle, like, oh, I know exactly what he does for work. That's, they're a set, they're associated with the dwelling place of God.

God, we wouldn't have been able to go into the most holy place. Only the high priest could. We wouldn't have been able to go in even to the holy place. Only the priests could. So they had to go.

They were the friends of the Israelites in high places, the high priest who would go where they cannot go to represent them before God. They can offer the sacrifices. They can mediate. They can represent us. And we're going to learn today about how that entire office of the priesthood ultimately points to Jesus as our great high priest and that God set apart Jesus as our great high priest so that he might serve as the mediator of his precious people, bearing our name, bearing our judgment, and bearing our guilt. Those are going to be my three points as we go through this. Let's first talk about how the high priest bears the names of God's people. We find the instructions for the ephod, first in chapter 20, verse 6. Ephod is just a Hebrew loan word. It's just a, and it's like an, it's an apron, apron-like garment you'd wear on the front and the back and over the linen undergarments that he mentions later. It covered the front and back and were joined together by the shoulder straps and the shoulder pieces, as it's called in verse 12. And it was made of gold and of blue and purple scarlet yarns and fine twine linen. And the most significant detail for the ephod is found in verses 9 to 12.

The two shoulder pieces of the ephod are decorated with these gold laces, gold settings. And then in that gold setting, you, they were to place two onyx stones, one on each shoulder piece. And this onyx stone, it's not exactly, we're not exactly sure what kind of stone it was, but if it's really an onyx, it would be this precious crystal of jet black color with these milky white bands surrounding, kind of alternating around. It's a beautiful stone. And you put those stones on the shoulder pieces. And on those stones, they are to engrave the names of the 12 sons of Jacob, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, meaning the entire people of God, six on each stone. So quite literally, the high priest is bearing their names when he goes into the presence of God. He's bearing their names as his burden on his shoulders as he goes into the presence of God. That's his function. And from the ephod hangs the breast piece connected by two chains of pure gold. And the breast piece, which sits on top, I think I have pictures, a picture to show you guys. So there's a turban on the top and then the golden medallion attached to it. And then you see the blue robe. And on top of that, the ephod. And on top of that, the breast piece with the precious jewels, the 12 jewels on it. It says there's three rows of jewels on each, verse 17 to 19. It gives the list of jewels that I read earlier. And just as the two onyx stones on the shoulder had six names of the tribes of Israel on each, each of those precious stones on the breast piece has the name of the tribe of Israel, of a son of Jacob. Before we talk about why the names are engraved on these stones, let's first talk about what the precious stones reveal about how God sees his people. God does not command the Israelites, Moses, to engrave the names of the tribes of Israel on ordinary rocks that they picked up off the street.

He commands them to engrave the names on precious stones, rare, costly jewels. The Israelites, of course, we see throughout the Old Testament were not perfect. Each tribe had its failings throughout their history.

[ 21 : 43 ] And yet, as the redeemed people of God, as God's chosen, special, set-apart people, they were precious to him. The precious stones are, therefore, a visible representation of what God said to the Israelites earlier in Exodus 19, verse 5. He said, You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, among all the nations, among all the peoples in the world. I chose you as my special, my treasured possession. That's what these jewels represent.

And that's the case not only for the Old Testament saints, but also for us, the New Testament church. Revelation 21, 9 to 21, there John describes a vision, a prophetic vision that an angel shows him.

And he says this, that he saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. So this is referring to the church, which is the bride of Christ, that's described as the bride of Christ in many places.

Jesus describes the Lamb of God and the bride, the bridegroom in many places. And then he continues, he says, He showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

It had a great high wall with 12 gates, and at the gates, 12 angels. And on the gates, the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed. And the wall of the city had 12 foundations, and on them were the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb.

[ 23 : 20 ] So not only the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, but also names of the 12 apostles, meaning representing the New Testament church, the people of God. So John continues, The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second, sapphire, the third, agate, the fourth, emerald, the fifth, onyx, the sixth, carnelian, the seventh, crystallite, the eighth, beryl, the ninth, topaz, the tenth, chrysoprase, the eleventh, jacinth, the twelfth, amethyst.

Do you see the parallels? The list of jewels is almost identical to the list of jewels on the breastpiece of judgment. If you account for translation issues, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the New Testament was written in Greek, it may actually be the exact same list.

He may even be referring back to the breastpiece of judgment and the 12 jewels that are there. So like the breastpiece, the heavenly city of Jerusalem, upon which the 12 names of the apostles representing us, the people of God, are written, they're engraved on their bedecked with jewels.

Dear saints, God's people, do you know that you are precious to God? You're not a common possession, neglected, forgotten.

[ 24 : 49 ] You are His treasured possession. Do you know that in Ephesians 1.18, God describes us, His people, as the riches of His glorious inheritance.

We are God's inheritance, His riches. When you tour the Tower of London, which is a historic castle and palace of the British monarch in central London, they'll show you many things that are, you know, dazzling and splendid, connected to the British royalty, but they save the very best for last.

They take you into this room and at the end of the tour, they take you to see the crown jewels of the United Kingdom, which is a collection of royal ceremonial objects kept in the Tower of London, including the coronation regalia, the most impressive of which is Saint Edward's crown, made of gold and bedecked with numerous precious stones.

Dear brothers and sisters, that's what you are to God. The church of Christ might not look very impressive today.

Mocking the church and denigrating it seems to be fashionable nowadays in our society and culture, but whatever men might say about it, God sees the church of Christ as the crown jewel of all his possessions.

[ 26 : 22 ] the Lord says to you, the redeemed people of God in Isaiah 43, fear not, for I have redeemed you.

I have called you by name. You are mine because you are precious in my eyes and honored and I love you.

I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Whatever your life situations might be that might lead you to question how God sees you, learn from his word, listen to what he says to you here in this passage that you are precious to him, that you're his treasured possession.

So the precious stones on the high priest's garment is associated with the people of God, but what is the purpose of engraving the names of the sons of Israel on the breastpiece?

He says in verse 29, So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart when he goes into the holy place to bring them to regular remembrance before the Lord.

[ 27 : 35 ] So the ephod and the breastpiece share a same purpose. They both enable the high priest to bear the names of the sons of Israel. With the shoulder pieces, the priest is quite literally bearing their names on his shoulders and with the breastpiece of judgment, the high priest bears their names on his heart.

The goal of both is to bring the people of God to remembrance before the Lord. Now that's not saying that God is forgetful and needs reminders to remind, hey, these are your people, remember?

No, it's saying that one of the high priest's main function is to represent the people of God before the Lord. Like a lobbyist who constantly comes before the congressman and is in their ears all the time about the interests of the groups that they represent, the high priest represents the interests of the people of God and intercedes on their behalf.

He is their advocate, their mediator, and he quite literally bears their names on his shoulders and on his heart because the Israelites themselves could not enter the tent of meeting, but the high priest, he was their friend in high place and he would go meet with God, talk to God, represent them before God.

And this role is ultimately fulfilled by Jesus. It's pointing to Jesus. It's telling us about Jesus. As we read in our call to worship this morning from Hebrews 4, Jesus is our great high priest who has passed through the heavens and he is not unable to sympathize with our weaknesses so that we can approach the throne of grace with confidence because we have Jesus as our great high priest.

[ 29 : 23 ] Jesus knows our infirmities and weaknesses. He knows every single one of your failings and weaknesses. He knows intimately all our thoughts, all of our hearts are laid bare before him.

He's seen all that we have done. Jesus empathizes with us, sympathizes with us and Jesus went where we could not ourselves go. Jesus passed through the heavens to the right hand of God and he is right now making intercession for us.

We speak often of Jesus' death and resurrection but maybe not as often of Jesus' ascension and session which is referring to how Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

It is there right now that Jesus is presently interceding for us. It says in Romans 8, 33 to 34, who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies who is to condemn. Christ Jesus is the one who died. more than that who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

[ 30 : 33 ] Jesus accomplished our atonement by his death and resurrection and he applies that finished atoning work to us presently, constantly, daily through his intercession.

he is bringing right now, bringing our names, your name to remembrance before God, advocating for us, reminding God that we belong to him.

I paid for his sin. She belongs to me, purchased by my blood, forgiven of their sins.

that's why we are heirs of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly place. Just as the high priest bore the names of Israelites on his shoulders and on his heart, Jesus, our great high priest, always is bearing our names on his shoulders and on his heart.

That means you can be assured that you will always be known, you will always be remembered. there's some, sometimes, right, I mean, we have to admit, you know, people share a need that's in their life and you say, I'll pray for you.

[ 31 : 51 ] Sometimes you write it down and you go home and pray. Sometimes you forget. Jesus never forgets. Your name is on his heart and he's at the right hand of the Father interceding for you.

This is way better than having your name engraved on the, on a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Who will remember those people? Jesus remembers you in the heavenly court.

As we were singing earlier, before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love.

Whoever lives and pleads for me my name is graven on his hands. My name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart.

No tongue can bid me thence depart. Depart. the breast piece still serves another purpose.

[ 33 : 09 ] You may have noticed that this passage repeatedly refers to the breast piece as the breast piece of judgment. But what does that mean? Verse 30 tells us, it says, And in the breast piece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord.

Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the Lord regularly. This doesn't mean that Aaron is constantly bringing down God's judgment upon the Israelites.

We can understand these verses better by looking at what the function of the Urim and the Thummim are. God never commands Moses to make the Urim and the Thummim and he simply assumes their existence and tells Moses to put it in the breast piece of the high priest.

So that suggests that Urim and Thummim likely already existed and were in use. So that's why we're never given in any place in the Bible sufficient information to know exactly what they looked like or what they were or how they were used.

But we aren't completely clueless. So in 1 Samuel 14, King Saul and the Israelites consult the Lord to see if they should attack the Philistines. However, the Lord doesn't answer them.

[ 34 : 23 ] And so disturbed by the silence of the Lord, Saul consults the Urim and Thummim in verses 41 to 42. It says this, Therefore Saul said, O Lord God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day?

If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O Lord God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim. And Jonathan and Saul were taken.

But the people escaped. Then Paul said, Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan. And Jonathan was taken. So this was because Jonathan had violated the oath that Saul had placed all of the Israelites under.

So we can see from this passage that Urim and Thummim can function kind of like casting of lot to decide a doubtful case. However, we also know that Urim and Thummim were not simply a lot, like sticks of different sizes or stones.

The longer one means yes, the shorter one means no, or two stones of different colors, the black one means yes, the white one means no, or good or bad or chosen or rejected. It was not something that just gave a simple binary answer like a lot.

[ 35 : 34 ] The reason why we know that is because it says in 1 Samuel 28 5, that when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.

Because God had rejected Saul as king because of his sins, because of his unfaithfulness, God's not answering him and he doesn't answer him even by the Urim.



If it's just a lot, there would always be an answer. So clearly it's something that God uses. It's not something that always gives an answer. This is why Saul is so frustrated he's not hearing anything from God goes to the medium at Endor to seek a cultic medium out of his desperation.

I spent probably too many hours trying to think and figure out what the Urim and Thummim are. I couldn't come to a decision. I was wishing that I had the Urim and Thummim to consult.

But that brought me to the realization that I'm actually quite glad that nobody knows, has a clue about what the Urim and Thummim actually looked like. Can you imagine how obsessed people would be if they could reproduce the Urim and the Thummim?

[ 36 : 50 ] I don't even want to think about it. How much access there would be? How dependent people would be on them? People would abuse them like a crystal ball. Saul. In the same way that Saul who had turned away from God turned to the medium at Endor.

In this new covenant age, God has given us his word and he has indwelt his church with his spirit to guide us. And seeking the will of God through means other than that which God himself has appointed is an act of rebellion.

It's no different from what Saul did by going to that medium. It's like saying, I want to know what I should do without hearing from your word, without talking to you in prayer, without having a relationship with you, without keeping in step with your spirit.

I don't have the time to bother with that stuff. Just give me the Urim and the Thummim so I can know what to do. So I'm glad that no one actually has any idea what the Urim and Thummim look like.

So the Urim and Thummim were used in the Old Testament times to render God's judgment and this helps us with making sense of verse 30. The breast piece contains the means of rendering God's judgment.

[ 38 : 06 ] That's why it's called the breast piece of judgment. And the high priest bore the means of God's judgment of the people of Israel on his heart, representing God's rule over them, his authority over them.

So in this way, the breast piece of judgment also points to Jesus. John 5, 22, 24, says that God the Father has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life, Jesus says. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.

Jesus now is the one by whom the Father judges the world. Jesus is the one who divides humanity with God or without him.

He is the fulfillment of the Urim and Thummim. John 3, 18-19 says, whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed the name of the only Son of God.

[ 39 : 10 ] And this is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. will face many judgments in this life.

You could face the judgment of the courts. You could face judgment at your school. But the most important, most pressing judgment that you face is the judgment before God and God appointed Jesus to be that judgment.

Jesus is the line that divides the light from the darkness. So what do you say about Jesus? that has every implication.

That has eternal consequences. How you answer that question. Who do you say that Jesus is? So the high priest bears our names and he bears our judgment.

And there's a third thing that this passage tells us that he does and that's to bear our guilt. Throughout verses 31 to 43 we see this there's a mortal threat that is in the backdrop of many of these instructions regarding the priestly garments.

[ 40 : 20 ] For example in the instructions for the blue robe which accompanied the ephod and was worn underneath it he says in verses 33 35 on its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and around its hem with bells of gold between them a golden bell and a pomegranate a golden bell and pomegranate around the hem of the robe and he shall be on Aaron when he ministers and his sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord and when he comes out so that he does not die.

It's fascinating. The bottom of the robe alternating decoration of pomegranates which is a symbol of the fertility of God's promised land as given in Numbers 13 23 and the golden bell.

What's the bell for? It's kind of similar to how some of you guys' dogs have bells so you know when the dog's coming going? It's not because God needs a heads up.

I mean he knows everything. He sees everything. Rather it's the high priest's way of asking God's permission to enter and asking leave of him. Much like the way you knock on someone's door as a courtesy before entering.

It's a manner of courtesy and respect toward God. God because you cannot just barge in there even if you're the high priest like it's your own living room or bedroom.

[ 41 : 47 ] No one not even the high priest may enter into God's presence unannounced and if he did not show proper deference to God then he would be struck dead.

I guess the people would know that he's dead because the bells wouldn't be ringing anymore. The same thread is mentioned again in verses 40 to 43 where God gives instructions for the simpler priestly garments of Aaron's sons.

The high priest had the more ornate garment that I showed you earlier. The sons had simpler garments, the linen undergarments. They were all to wear these undergarments made of fine linen that reached from hips to the thigh to cover their naked flesh so that when they go into the tent of meeting or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, lest they bear guilt and die.

Again, a mortal threat. Not wearing the proper undergarments could lead to indecent exposure within the tent of meeting which would be an act of gross disrespect toward the king, toward the divine king.

So once again, there's a thread of death. All these threats of death are reminders to us that God is holy, he is not someone to be treated lightly, and he takes offenses against his glory and holiness very seriously.

[ 43 : 06 ] There's still yet another reminder of this fact in a detail that is conspicuously omitted from this passage. The priest's footwear. There are no instructions for manufacturing priestly shoes.

And this is not an oversight. God told Moses in Exodus 3, 5, Do not come near. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

When you draw near to God, when you want to stand on holy ground, you must remove the sandals off your feet as a gesture of respect and worship. Not only that, after removing their sandals, Aaron and his sons were required to wash their hands and their feet with water at the bronze basin in the courtyard, before they go into the tent of meeting, so that, it says in Exodus 30, that they may not die.

Another mortal threat. All of these details show just what special care that the priest and the high priest had to take when ministering in the tabernacle.

And that begs the question, if even the high priest, with his holy garment, he could not enter the presence of God without his holy garment, made for glory, and beauty, if even the high priest could not meet with God without golden bells to announce his coming, or without the linen undergarments that covered all of his nakedness, or without removing his shoes and washing his hands and feet, lest he die, then how could ordinary Israelites ever hope to meet with God with all their sin, with all their commonness.

[ 44 : 57 ] That's precisely why God appointed the high priest, that he might serve as the mediator of his precious people, bearing our names, our judgment, and our guilt.

Look with me at verses 36 to 38 of chapter 28. Aaron is to fasten the gold medallion, the plate, to his turban, so that it sits on his forehead.

The Hebrew word that is translated plate literally means flower or rosette, so it's possibly tasseled at the golden plate had the shape of a rose or flower. And this plate had an engraving on it which said, holy to the Lord.

It's only when Aaron is properly dressed, wearing his golden plate on his forehead as he ministers in the temple, that they, it says, the people of Israel and their holy gifts may be accepted before the Lord.

The plural, the reference to them, Israelites, and their gifts suggests that the inscription holy to the Lord doesn't merely refer to Aaron, the high priest, but actually to the people of God.

[ 46 : 28 ] God had promised, next verse 19, 6, to make Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. So they are holy to the Lord, and this serves as a reminder to God of the covenant promises that he had made to the Israelites.

So when Aaron offers the gifts and offerings that the Israelites are bringing to God within the tabernacle, he bears any guilt that comes from that, himself.

And because of Aaron, God forbears with them and accepts the Israelites in spite of the fact that their offerings are inadequate and imperfect. It's notable that even the holy things that the Israelites consecrate as their holy gifts to God incur guilt.

Isn't that amazing? This is the sacrifice that they're making because of their sin, and that very sacrifice incurs guilt because of how sinful they are, even in the manner that they bring it.

Isn't that so true of us? As we read in our confession of sin today, though Christ has imputed his righteousness on us and has clothed us with a bridegroom's robe and decked us with jewels of holiness, he said our best prayers are stained with sin.

[ 47 : 49 ] We need to repent of our repentance. We need our tears to be washed. We have no robes to bring to cover our sins, no loom to weave our own righteousness. We're always standing clothed in filthy garments, and by grace are always you are receiving change of raiment, for you do always justify the ungodly.

Even our obedience is tinged with pride and pretensions. Even our prayers are stained with selfishness and self-righteousness.

Even our service is tainted with self-promotion. Isaiah 64, 6 says, all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

This is why there is no way in heaven and on earth that any of us can save ourselves. What are you going to do to save yourself when that very act of trying to save yourself itself is unworthy of God?

When your righteousness itself is filthy rags, how are you going to save yourself? This is why again and again the Bible says we need a righteousness that is from God.

[ 49 : 12 ] We need a righteousness that is of Christ, that is not our own but of another. That's why the New Testament repeatedly speaks of how we need to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3 27, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. When we put our faith in Jesus, our great high priest, we remove our filthy garments and we put on Christ, become part of him, in him, wear his priestly robe of righteousness so that we ourselves become kingdom of priests.

It's only through Jesus' ultimate sacrifice, that we can offer any sacrifice to him, offer our life as a living sacrifice to him, that is acceptable.

Only because of Jesus' intercession at the right hand of the Father that our prayers are acceptable, that it's a pleasing aroma to God. So friends, I think there are some of you here who feel the grime and the stink of your polluted garment, your guilt, your shame.

You don't know what to do with it. You can take off your garment and put on the garment of righteousness that Jesus alone offers you.

[ 50 : 47 ] Jesus stands in the gap between us and God as the mediator. He has gone into the heavenly tabernacle where we could not go ourselves as our friend in high places, as our great high priest, bearing our names on his heart, bearing our judgment, and bearing our guilt so that we too can meet with God and live with him forever.

forever. Let's pray. Oh Lord Jesus, we love you.

thank you for going to places we could not go.

Thank you for going to the cross as the unblemished lamb of God where we could never go because of our blemishes. Thanks for being raised from the dead and ascending to the right hand of the Father where we could never go because of our rebellion and sin.

Thank you for your atonement, for bearing our guilt. Thank you for your constant intercession for us. You are truly glorious and beautiful.

[ 52 : 25 ] we adore you. We worship you. We bow before you. And it's in your precious name Jesus we pray.

Amen.