

## Tassels with a Blue Thread

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In Numbers 15:37-41, God commanded the Israelites to make tassels on the corners of their garments and to put a blue thread in these tassels. This command followed the execution of an Israelite who broke the Sabbath command (cf. Num. 15:30-36). Because God did not want anyone else to die as a result of breaking His commands, these tassels were to act as a constant reminder of the consequences associated with committing sinful acts.

In the same chapter of the book of Numbers, God reaffirmed the animal sacrificial system in a summary form (Num. 15:1-12). This was a reaffirmation because it was originally introduced following Adam and Eve's sin (Gen. 3:21; 4:4). Now it was being applied to an entire nation in order to remind them that a price has to be paid for their sinful acts. It was also the means for physical purification from sin (Heb. 9:13). The death of an animal was a temporary substitute for the death of the human being who should have died for the sin, or sins, they committed (Rom. 6:23). However, the death of an animal would not be the means through which sinners could inherit everlasting life. The sacrificial system pointed to the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ whose shed blood would atone for (cover) all the sins ever committed, following repentance (Heb. 9:23-28). Even after Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, repentance and obedience are still required for anyone seeking to inherit everlasting life (Ac. 2:38; Mt. 7:21-23; 19:17).

So both the tassels with blue thread and the animal sacrificial system were reminders of the requirement to obey God and the consequences of sin. Neither of these commanded ordinances would justify a sinner or provide the means through which they could inherit everlasting life (Isa. 53:11; Lk. 16:15; Rom. 3:30).

Even though the nation of Israel wore these tassels with blue thread, it did not change their attitude toward God and His commands. They persisted in rebelling against God's word at every opportunity until they were finally removed from the land of their inheritance. It is no different today because there are still people teaching that God's law and commandments are to be obeyed, but very few take heed and act on it. Although some Jewish people still wear tassels with blue thread today, they still break God's commands routinely as their forefathers did (Mt. 23:1-7; Rom. 9:30-33; Num. 10:10; New Moon observance based upon the conjunction; cf. 1Sam. 20:5, 18; see study: New Moon).

Unless wearing tassels with blue threads produces a willingness to obey every word of God (Mt. 4:4), it is only an outward sign of obedience and becomes an exercise in self-righteousness. Christ addressed this issue with the religious leaders during his earthly ministry,

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of violent greed and lack self-control. <sup>26</sup> Blind Pharisee; first clean

the inside of the cup (inner motives), so that the outside of it may also become clean. <sup>27</sup> Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you are like white-washed tombs which outside indeed appear beautiful, but inside are full of the bones of dead men and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> Likewise, **you indeed also appear righteous on the outside to all men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness** (Mt. 23:25-28; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The animal sacrificial system, circumcision, and the Levitical priesthood were instituted as temporary measures until Christ came to provide the permanent means through which sinners could be justified before Almighty God. Participation in the physical acts associated with the animal sacrificial system, in and by themselves, could not forgive or justify sinful acts,

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, **having now been justified by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God (Almighty) through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his (Christ's) life (through his resurrection from the dead) (Rom. 5:9-10; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

If the nation of Israel during the Old Testament period fulfilled the entire first covenant, including the physical ordinances associated with the animal sacrificial system and the wearing of tassels, they still would not have qualified to inherit everlasting life as a result,

And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat?' <sup>8</sup> But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink?' <sup>9</sup> Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. <sup>10</sup> So likewise you, **when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'** (Lk. 17:7-10; emphasis added).

As the apostle Paul pointed out, the animal sacrifices, circumcision, and the various ordinances associated with them could not reconcile the sinful nation of Israel to God,

For the law (of animal sacrifice), having a shadow of the good things to come (starting with Christ's fulfillment of the sacrificial system; cf. Mt. 5:17), and not the very image of the things, **can never with these same sacrifices, which they (Levitical priests) offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.** <sup>2</sup> For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purged (cleansed), would have had no more consciousness of sins. <sup>3</sup> But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year (i.e. during the Day of Atonement). <sup>4</sup> **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins** (Heb. 10:1-4; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The animal sacrifices were meant to be a tutor, or schoolmaster, teaching the nation of Israel that they needed to be reconciled through the sacrifice of the Seed (cf. Gal. 3:16) that was promised since the sin of Adam and Eve,

And I (God) will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman (both the church in the wilderness and the church of the new covenant), and between your seed (Jn. 8:44) and her Seed (Christ who would be born through the lineage of one of the tribes of Israel). He (Christ) shall

bruise your head (Satan's schemes) and you (Satan) shall bruise his (Christ's) heel (Gen. 3:15; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Christ's sacrifice was a prerequisite to God's Holy Spirit being made available to mankind en masse. Prior to the death and resurrection of Christ, it was available to those who were called to serve as teachers, prophets, and kings (i.e. David; cf. Ps. 51:11). Now the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people, whether they are Gentiles or descendants of Israel, so that they have a deep desire to obey Almighty God and His word. Unlike ancient Israel who did not have God's Holy Spirit en masse, those called to repentance today do not need a physical reminder, like tassels with a blue cord, to remind them of the consequences for disobeying God's word,

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (cf. Ac. 2:1-4) – <sup>32</sup> not according to the covenant (that included animal sacrifices) that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them out of the land of Egypt, **My covenant which they broke**, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But **this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people** (Jer. 31:31-33; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Although ancient Israel had tassels on their garments as a reminder of God's law, and the consequences for breaking it, they did not have an inner desire to obey them. If people today, who claim to be Christian, had these tassels attached to their garments, they would also likely reject the teaching that obedience to God's law and commandments is an essential aspect of worshiping God. So there is little difference between those in ancient Israel and this world's Christianity. It is those who are led by God's Holy Spirit that have a deep desire to obey God's word, including His law and commandments. The tassels with a blue cord were part of the system of worship that included animal sacrifices, circumcision, and the Levitical priesthood, and these ended with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,

If then indeed achievement (of the promise of reconciliation; see SGD 5050) was through the Levitical priesthood [for by them the people were given the law (of sacrifice)], what need is there still with regard to the order of Melchizedek for another priest (Christ) to arise, yet not called through the order of Aaron? <sup>12</sup> For the priesthood being transferred (from Levitical to that of Melchizedek), from necessity the law becomes transferred (i.e. from physical circumcision to that of one's heart, and from animal sacrifices to Christ's sacrifice) (Heb. 7:11-12; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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