

EXODUS 28:15-30 (THE BREASTPLATE OF JUDGMENT)

There is a truth in the Bible that needs to be restated often, but which often goes unstated. God is Just. When sin is committed, and all sin, judgment must be rendered upon that sin. If the God we worship does not judge our sin, then He is not just, and we are worshipping the wrong God.

However, there is a truth which takes away the scary part for us. Judgment can be rendered in a substitute. If someone steps forward and pays my speeding fine (thank you very much!) then the demands of the law are met.

This same truth works in our relationship with God. He has allowed that Another can take our place in judgment. But, if that person has sin, then that judgment is not acceptable. This is why sacrificing babies doesn't atone for sin.

Sin travels from father to child. A baby descended from Adam with a human father inherits his father's sin. Slaying a baby for atonement doesn't atone for sin, it simply commits another sin. But Jesus came, born of a woman, and yet His Father is God. Thus no sin was transferred to Him.

As He was born under the law, He still had to be obedient to the law. The record of His life shows that He was. And so in His death, He could be, and He in fact is, a suitable Substitute for the sons of Adam - you and I. He took the judgment we deserve.

Text Verse: And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined,

these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Romans 8:28-30

Could it be that Paul's words are seen pictured in today's passage? The answer is yes. There is wonder and there is marvel in what we will look at today. Christ did the work, we receive the forgiveness. But even more, we are brought into sonship with our heavenly Father. We are counted as precious gems, reflecting His glory. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Breastplate of Judgment (verses 15-21)

¹⁵ **"You shall make the breastplate of judgment.**

The *khoshen*, or breastplate, was introduced into the Bible in verse 25:7, but no explanation of it was given then. Now, this most important part of the high priest's garments is described in minute, even exacting, details. Here a second word is used to describe it - *khoshen mishpat*; "Breastplate of judgment."

Charles Ellicott notes that, "It was called 'the ornament *of judgment*' on account of its containing the Urim and Thummim, whereby God's 'judgments' were made known to His people." However, we will see that more than just the stones within this breastplate point to judgment. Its very dimensions and other aspects of it point to this as well.

It will be used by the high priest when he is asked to seek the counsel of the Lord, when he is to render a particular judgment in a case, and when he sits as a judge when teaching the law. When controversies would arise, he could consult the breastplate. James Strong says that the word *khoshen*, translated here as

"breastplate," comes "From an unused root probably meaning to contain or sparkle; perhaps a pocket (as holding the Urim and Thummim), or rich (as containing gems)." It is used only of this item.

Though the word "breastplate" is not an exact translation, it describes the place where it is located and so it is an acceptable explanation for us. The Greek translation of the Old Testament calls it the *logeion*, meaning "oracle" because it is by this pouch that the Lord would give answer to inquires made of Him. A form of this word is used four times in the New Testament when speaking of the "oracles" of God, meaning Scripture. The word of God will transmit from the breastplate's contents when needed.

15 (con't) Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it:

The same words, *maaseh khoshev*, or "skillfully worked," that were used for both the artistic weaving of the cherubim on the veil of the tabernacle, and for the ephod are used here. Intricate care and fine detail is to be used in the weaving of this breastplate. It would have probably been woven with hand looms brought by the people when they departed Egypt.

15 (con't) of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, you shall make it.

The colors used here are the same as for that of the ephod. They follow the same meaning as they did before - divinity/royalty for the gold, the law for the blue; royalty for the purple - which is a combination of blue and red; war, blood, and judgment for the red; and finally righteousness for the woven linen.

¹⁶ It shall be doubled into a square:

The shape of this breastplate will be square, the same as the brazen altar and the same for the incense altar, which has not yet been described. The brazen altar signified judgment. The incense altar will signify Christ's intercessory work for us. Both of these roles are seen in the breastplate - judgment and intercession.

Being square, shows that these roles of judgment and intercession reach to the four corners of the earth without distinction or interruption. The scope of the significance of the breastplate is without limits.

Concerning this doubling over of the cloth, it's surprising how many scholars fail to see the reason for it. They say it is simply to strengthen the material to hold the weight of the stones which will be embroidered onto it. This has nothing to do with it. The reason is specifically stated in Leviticus 8:8 -

"Then he put the breastplate on him, and he put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate." Leviticus 8:8

The breastplate serves as a pouch for the enigmatic Urim and Thummim which are used by the high priest to discern God's will.

¹⁶ (con't) a span *shall be* its length, and a span *shall be* its width.

The *zereth*, or span, is introduced into the Bible. It is a rare word which will be seen just seven times. It comes from *zarah* which means "to scatter." Thus it is the distance between the tip of the little finger to the end of the outstretched thumb, as if the fingers are scattered.

If you take your hand in that fashion and place it on your arm at the tip of your middle finger, and then do the same where your hand ended, you will see that it will end at your elbow. In other words, a span is one half a cubit.

¹⁷ And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones:

There will be four rows of stones, three to a row, or twelve individual stones. The word for "row," which is *tur*, is introduced into the Bible here. It comes from an unused root meaning to arrange in a regular manner. Thus the idea of a row is the result.

These stones will be put into settings in a manner similar to those on the shoulders of the ephod. These settings were probably of filigree work. Each stone had its own beautifully made setting to hold it in its place.

The number four here is the preferred number for the arrangement. Four is the number of God's creative works. Bullinger defines it as, "...the number of *material completeness*. Hence it is the *world number*, and especially the 'city' number."

Whereas the four rows speak of creation, the three stones per row indicate, that "...which is *solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire*." It speaks of Divine completeness, or perfection. The stones are not to be arbitrary, and none of them will be the same makeup. Each will be unique.

¹⁷ (con't) *The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row;*

The first row of stones in Hebrew are *odem pitdah u-bareqeth*. The identity of almost all of the twelve stones named here cannot be precisely determined.

Many of them are introduced into the Bible here in this passage, and some of them are only used a minimal number of times in Scripture.

The color of the stones can often be determined by the root of the word used. For example, the first stone in Hebrew is *odem*. This is the same as the word *adam* which was first used in Exodus 25:5 concerning the "ram skins dyed red."

It is a red stone, but exactly which is unknown. Some say "carnelian," some "sadius," some "red quartz," some "ruby," etc. We know that it is not a ruby for the same reason as with the next stone, the *pitdah*, which the NKJV translates as "topaz." These are stones which can be eliminated based on their hardness.

In other words, it was not possible at this time in history to engrave on a topaz. Therefore, both the KJV, the NKJV, and any other which say "topaz" should get a demerit for their translation of the second stone. The same is true with "ruby" for the previous stone.

The final stone, the *bareqeth*, comes from the word *baraq*, which means "flashing" or "lightening." This tells us pretty much nothing of value in determining what the stone is.

As you can see one must look at what is logical and possible concerning these individual stones. In the end, the colors can usually be known. At times, good guesses can be made, but because even the finest scholars of both antiquity and even in modern times cannot agree, it is unwise to be dogmatic on what they really are; only what they are not.

18 the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

v'hatur ha'sheni nophek sappir v'yahalom. The second word, *sappir*, is the same name as that which was used to describe the pavement under the feet of the Lord when Moses and the leaders of Israel had their meal on Mount Sinai after the ratification of the covenant.

There it probably meant "sapphire." The same word is used again here, but it is not the same stone. It is probably one that is similar to it though. The third stone, *yahalom*, comes from the word *halam*, which means to hammer or to strike down. Thus it is a stone noted for its hardness, but it is not a diamond.

It is recognized that neither the sapphire nor the diamond could be engraved at this time in history. The KJV and the NKJV get at least two demerits.

19 the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

v'hatur ha'shelishi leshem shebo v'akhlamah. The second stone, here called an agate, comes from an unused root meaning "flame." So it is a gem known for its sparkle. However, as flames divide into flashes, it could be a stone with lines running through it. All translations agree on "agate" though. The third stone, *akhlamah*, comes from the word *kalam*, which means to dream. Thus it is a dream stone. All translations say "amethyst."

20 and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper.

v'hatur ha'revii tarshish v'shoham v'yashepheh. The first stone, *tarshish*, is the same as the name of a son of Javan noted in Genesis 10:4. It is also the name of a Benjamite and a Persian noble. And, it is the name of a port on the Mediterranean Sea; the place to which Jonah intended to flee in his exciting adventure.

The stone can only be best-guessed as to what it is. The second stone is the *shoham*. It was first seen in Genesis 2:12 and is the same stone used for the shoulder stones on the ephod. The third stone is *yashepheh*. It comes from an unused root meaning "to polish." Some suppose it to be the Jasper because of the same general sounding name - *yashepheh/jasper*.

²⁰ (con't) **They shall be set in gold settings.**

As I noted above, these were probably settings very similar to those on the ephod for the shoulder pieces. They would most likely be of gold filigree.

²¹ **And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, *like* the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.**

The same terms are used here as in verse 28:11. The *pittuakh*, or "engravings" is a noun which indicates what an engraver makes. It comes from the verb *pathakh*, which means "to appear," and so you get the idea of the work of the engraver's hands having "appeared" as engravings. The other word, *khotham*, indicates a signet. The work here is to be exceptionally fine and detailed. Each name of the sons of Israel is to be clearly and precisely engraved on one of these twelve stones according to their name and according to their tribe. Thus, the stone will stand as representative of the tribe on the breastplate before the Lord.

Beautiful stones, lustrous and bright

Each unique and worthy of a place of respect

Carefully sculpted and polished; fitted just right

In them no mar can the greatest lapidary detect

*Each engraved like a signet, bearing a name
One of the sons of Israel
A spot upon the honored plate, each can claim
A sign of the redeemed each stone does tell*

*And like the stones, those redeemed by the Lord
Are precious in His sight, no flaw in them is shown
This is how the redeemed are noted in the word
Yes, this is what the Bible to us makes known*

II. The Judgment of the Children of Israel (verses 22-30)

²² “You shall make chains for the breastplate at the end, like braided cords of pure gold.

The unscholarly scholars at Cambridge state, "The 'chains like cords' are those mentioned in v. 14, so that the verse is really superfluous." Nothing is superfluous in Scripture. They receive a peanut-head award for their comment. These chains appear to be the same chains mentioned before, but now we are seeing *what* they are used for.

They are to be fastened to the shoulder settings on the ephod which are separately made from the breastplate. However, though the ephod and the breastplate are actually two implements, we see now that they are incomplete without one another.

²³ And you shall make two rings of gold for the breastplate, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate.

The word "ring" here is the same word used to describe the rings used for inserting poles into the Ark and the Table of Showbread, *tabbaath*. This comes from the verb *taba* which means "to sink." This then gives the idea of a signet ring which is sunk into clay or wax in order to make a seal. From this comes the idea of any ring.

These rings are to be placed on the two upper corners of the breastplate. The chains would then be passed through the rings and secured to the settings of the shoulder pieces. Unlike the chains, it should be noted that these rings are just like the rings for the ark and the table, the adjective *tahor*, or pure, is not used for them.

²⁴ Then you shall put the two braided *chains* of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate;

This verse shows us that only two chains were made. These then correspond to the chains which were mentioned in verse 14. This is further understood from the details of the actual completion of the work in Exodus 39. Just two chains are made, having been mentioned two separate times for emphasis and to ensure the details are exactly followed. One end of them is to be attached to the two rings which are then attached to the breastplate.

²⁵ and the *other* two ends of the two braided *chains* you shall fasten to the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in the front.

What is being said is that the breastplate will be attached to the two settings on the shoulder piece so that it will hang down from them. In essence, they are being

combined into a single unit. Everything is being tied together into one. Again, neither the settings nor the rings are described by the adjective "pure." Only the chains are.

²⁶ "You shall make two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on the edge of it, which is on the inner side of the ephod.

Two more rings are to be made of gold. These are to be on the two lower corners of the ephod. However, they will be on the inner side which is the side turned towards the ephod. The word translated as "edge" is *saphah*. It means "lip." The material for the breastplate had been folded in half. These rings are attached to the inside half, or lip. Hence they will be out of sight.

²⁷ And two *other* rings of gold you shall make, and put them on the two shoulder straps, underneath the ephod toward its front, right at the seam above the intricately woven band of the ephod.

The translation here says "on the two shoulder straps" because the same word, *katheph*, is used here as was used in verses 7 & 12. However, the word in this case means "side" and is speaking of the front half of the ephod, not the shoulder piece.

Several translations got this right. There will be two gold rings woven into the front half of the ephod on the inside of it, one on the left side of the breastplate, and one on the right. Here is how Webster's translation says it -

"And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, towards the forepart of it, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod." Webster

The reason for this is explained in the next verse...

28 They shall bind the breastplate by means of its rings to the rings of the ephod, using a blue cord, so that it is above the intricately woven band of the ephod, and so that the breastplate does not come loose from the ephod.

A blue *pathil*, or cord, will tie the rings of the breastplate to the rings of the front half of the ephod. As none of the four rings are visible, it implies that the blue cord is also not visible. And yet, the details are so specific and precise. A picture is obviously being made for us to think on and contemplate. This word *pathil* comes from the verb *pathal*, which means "to twist." It is used in the context of wrestling or being astute. It is this cord which binds the ephod and the breastplate, keeping them united, as it were, as one.

29 "So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy *place*, as a memorial before the LORD continually.

With the breastplate of judgment secure, and with the names of the sons of Israel right over his heart, the high priest would bear their names as a memorial before the Lord continually. Charles Ellicott describes the obvious significance for the earthly high priest -

"The high priest was to be wholly identified with the people; to be one with them in affection no less than in action; to bear their names on his shoulders, as supporting them and wrestling for them, while he also bore their names on his heart, as loving them and feeling for them. Thus he was continually to present before God a two-fold "memorial" of His people, and to make a sort of double appeal, on the one hand, to God's power, and, on the other hand, to His mercy and loving-kindness." Charles Ellicott

³⁰ And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim,

Introduced here are two of the most enigmatic instruments to be named for all of the associated religious rites and instructions. The word Urim is the plural of the word *uwr*, or "fire." Thus it means "lights." It is found just seven times in Scripture. The word Thummim is the plural of the word *tom*, or "integrity." Thus it means "perfections" or "that which is blameless or innocent." It is found just five times in Scripture. Together, they are literally translated "Lights and Perfections."

Interestingly, this verse uses the exact same expression, *v'natata el*, or "And you shall put in..." that was used in Exodus 25:16 concerning putting the tablets of the Testimony into the Ark of the Covenant. And in both cases it is Moses, or "He who draws out," who puts the items in. A direct tie is being made to these two separate accounts once again.

What the Urim and Thummim actually did, what they were, or how they were used is unknown. But we do know that they were used for inquiring of God. This is seen, for example, in Ezra 2 -

"These sought their listing *among* those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they *were excluded* from the priesthood as defiled. ⁶³ And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim." Ezra 2:62, 63

Whatever they were and whatever they did, it appears Moses was already aware of them. No note of explanation is given concerning them, and so he already knew about them. In Deuteronomy 33:8, they are considered the greatest of glory to the tribe of Levi -

"And of Levi he said:

'Let Your Thummim and Your Urim *be* with Your holy one,
Whom You tested at Massah,
And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,"

30 (con't) and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD.

Along with the names of the sons of Israel, the Urim and Thummim are considered important enough to be thought of as being over Aaron's heart. What would be so important about them that this would be the case?

***30 (fin) So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.**

On the breastplate in full display were the stones representing the children of Israel. On the stones were their names, thus designating the tribes. And within the breastplate itself were the Urim and Thummim. Contained within all of this is the thought of "rendered judgment." This was to be continually before the face of the Lord.

Chains of gold running from breastplate to ephod

Rings of gold used to connect them together as one

A blue cord to keep the breastplate secure, we have been showed

But when worn, it remains unseen - why was this done?

Lights and Perfections hidden away

Kept in a pouch behind the fiery stones and over the heart

*What mysteries do they tell, who can say?
And when they are used, what truths will they impart?*

*The mysteries of these things brings curiosity to us
We long to see the meaning hidden away from our eyes
Somehow we know they point to Jesus
And so their meaning to us please apprise*

III. Pictures of Christ

The ephod, the memorial stones, and the breastplate are all united as one piece even though they have been described separately. The symbolism of the memorial stones from last week, then, was partially overlooked in order to complete this passage first.

There were two memorial stones made of the same type of stone. Two implies a difference and yet a confirmation of something. For example, there is the humanity of Jesus and the deity of Jesus. They contrast, and yet they confirm that He is the incarnate Word of God. There is the Old Testament and the New. They contrast; law and grace, but they confirm the entirety of the word of God.

As there were two memorial stones on two separate shoulders, they contrast and yet they confirm a whole. Six on each shoulder shows the number of man. Thus they picture the scope of humanity Jew and Gentile being born by Christ. He bore our sufferings and burdens before His Father, reconciling us to Him. Together they equal 12, or that of government.

The breastplate itself was to be fashioned of the same material as the ephod. The materials and colors carry the same meaning as each time they have been used. They picture Christ's deity/royalty for the gold, His fulfillment of the law for the blue; His royalty for the purple - which is a combination of blue and red; and His judgment for the red. Finally, the fine woven linen is a picture of His righteousness.

The square shape of the breastplate matches the square brazen altar and thus signifies judgment. But it also matches the altar of incense and thus it signifies petition and intercession. Its size introduced a new word to us, *zereth*, or span. It comes from another word, *zarah*, which means "to scatter." This word is consistently seen to indicate judgment, such as scattering the people in exile or winnowing grain - which is in itself a picture of judgment, such as in Isaiah 41:16 -

"You shall **winnow** them, the wind shall carry them away,
And the whirlwind shall scatter them;
You shall rejoice in the LORD,
And glory in the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 41:16

Thus, the size of the breastplate indicates judgment, just as its name states - the Breastplate of Judgment. The stones on the breastplate are 12 in number, but are listed as four rows of three each, and so they signify all of the created who have been redeemed. They signify the complete Divine plan for redemption. As they total 12, they signify the "*perfection of government*."

Unlike the shoulder stones which were two - like but separate stones - signifying Jew and Gentile, these are 12 individual stones united into one whole on the Breastplate. They then are what Paul speaks of in Romans 10 -

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him." Romans 10:12

Though there is a difference, there is now no distinction; we are no longer divided. We are all one as the Lord intercedes for us before His Father. AW Pink explains this to us -

"On the jewels were inscribed the names of Israel's twelve tribes. Therefore, what we have foreshadowed here is Christ, as our great High Priest, bearing on His heart, sustaining, and presenting before God, His blood-bought people. There is a slight distinction to be drawn from what we have here and that which is set forth in Exodus 28:9-12. There, too, we have the names of Israel's tribes borne by their high priest before God. But there they are seen resting upon his "shoulders," whereas here (v. 29) they rest upon his heart. In the one it is the strength or power of Christ engaged on behalf of His helpless people; in the other, it is His affections exercised for them."

Christ bore the sins of all, Jew and Gentile - represented by the two like, but separate stones on His shoulders. Now we are united as one as He exercises His mediatorial role for all without distinction.

The engraving of the names upon the stones is specific. It is to be as a signet. These words imply eternal security. The name is engraved in the stone itself. It shouts out, "This is a son of Israel." The believer's standing before God never changes. The judgment has been wrought by Another and so we are inscribed once and forever within the stone of God's governmental perfection.

Likewise, each stone is set in a gold filigree setting. We are, attached, if you will, by the Lord through an act of faith in His accomplished work. This is exactly seen in the pure gold chains attached to the gold rings. The chains of verse 22 are

described as "braided cords of pure gold." The word for cords is *aboth*. It is something that binds something together. It is used in a negative way in Isaiah 5 -

"Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
And sin as if with a cart **rope**." Isaiah 5:18

However, in verse 22, they are "of pure gold." It is the same word, *tahor*, which was used to describe the gold of the Ark, of the Mercy Seat, the Menorah, and the other implements which picture Christ. In this case, we are literally chained to Him as our High Priest through His perfect and unstained work.

Let us now remember the significant point that the adjective "pure" is lacking from the golden rings and from the settings. Why would this be? The reason is that we are saved by an act of grace through faith. When we receive His work, which He bore on our behalf, we are accepted into His kingdom.

We move from the burden of His shoulders to the place above His heart. However, it is the pure gold of His work which saves us. Our faith may be weak and imperfect, but His work which saves is not. Thus the chains, representing what He did for us, have the adjective "pure." The rings, representing our faith don't.

And yet, our faith not being pure, is represented by a ring. There is no beginning or end to a ring. Thus, the exercising of our faith in the work of Christ, no matter how shallow, results in an endless security because of what He did. God asks for faith from His faithless creatures... and so just a little bit will do. The picture we are given is astonishingly exact in how it presents our salvation.

Concerning the stones, it has been seen that we simply don't know what most of them were. This is for a reason; it doesn't matter. The focus is not on us, but on

the Lord. As adopted children of God, we are precious in His sight, just as the stones were precious in nature.

There is no internal illumination from the stones. Rather, only when the light of Christ shines on us do we shine out, or reflect, the radiant beauty that God has given us. In our previous state of darkness, this was unseen and wasted.

But in Christ, we go from being justified to being glorified. The light of Christ radiates off of us and illuminates who we truly are meant to be. When we stand in God's presence some day, we will see what He already sees because of Christ. We may not feel radiant at times, but to God, we shine forth in a dazzling display of beauty. The stones then, regardless of their actual identity, are fully known to God. As Paul says to Timothy, and which perfectly resembles this thought -

"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" 2 Timothy 2:19

Another thought about these stones is that they certainly came from a variety of areas. Some may have come from a particular land, others from another, some from the ocean, some from the river. However, they were all incorporated into the one breastplate.

So it is with the redeemed of God. We are all different, we may come from the farthest corners of the earth, and we may look completely different from one another, but we all reflect the glory of the Lord in a marvelous and unique way. None is truly to be exalted above another. Paul sums this thought up in Romans 12 -

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

We are all precious stones in the breastplate of the Lord. When God the Father looks at Christ, our High Priest, He sees us on the very heart of His Son; He sees the redeemed people whom He purchased with His own blood. God could no more reject us now than He could reject His own Son. This is the intimate position we now hold before the Father of heavenly lights.

It is pictured in the breastplate as individual stones of various types, colors, and attributes. However, someday, when we are glorified, those distinctions will be erased. This is the promise from Jesus in Revelation 2 -

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*.'" Revelation 2:17

The very name of the breastplate, it being the "Breastplate of Judgment," conveys a purposeful intent. It is as a voice calling out in the presence of God, "Judgment has been rendered here! These are mine, and they are secure because of what I did." For this reason, it is called a "memorial before the Lord continually."

The Lord could no more forget us than He could forget His own agonizing passion on the Hill of Calvary. We stand justified, not because we deserve it, but because He has earned it for us. Judgment is complete; we are secure. The placement of the breastplate above the heart calls to mind the memorable words of the Song of Solomon -

"Set me as a seal upon your heart,
As a seal upon your arm;
For love *is as* strong as death,
Jealousy *as* cruel as the grave;
Its flames *are* flames of fire,
A most vehement flame.

⁷ Many waters cannot quench love,
Nor can the floods drown it.
If a man would give for love
All the wealth of his house,
It would be utterly despised." Song of Solomon 8:6, 7

The love of the Lord for the people He has redeemed is reflected in the placement of the breastplate. As far as the other four gold rings and the blue cord, those were kept unseen, hidden as it were from sight. And yet the details given are so exacting. The cord of blue signifies the law. We have seen this numerous times already. The rings again bear the same significance.

They are emblems of our faith. In all, there are six rings, six being the number of man. And yet, we are securely tied to our great High Priest by His accomplishment of the law for us. We trust His work in fulfillment of it and we are united to Him.

Our faith is tested and it often fails, but we are bound to Christ by His fulfillment and completion of the law. Peter's words exactly reflect this concerning the gold rings -

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love." 1 Peter 1:6-8

The blue cord and the rings aren't seen because they reflect our faith in what is unseen. We believe that Christ fulfilled the law for us - on our behalf - and we are saved. In our attempt to fulfill the law, there is only death - open and visible to all. But in Christ's fulfillment of it for us, the law is concealed, no longer to harm us. This is the same as the Tablets of the law being hidden in the Ark. Our wrestling with the law is ended and our misdeeds are hidden away. Instead, we are held fast to our High Priest by our faith in His works. This is seen in Paul's words to the Corinthians -

"The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:56, 57

But how can we be sure the symbolism is correct on this? The answer is in what the final two things mentioned in this passage signify, the Urim and Thummim. They are Lights and Perfections. But understanding what they point to requires looking at the etymology of the words as well as what Moses does with them.

There is a direct connection being made between the Ark and the Breastplate. Both are containers for the law. The tablets were placed by Moses in the Ark, and the Urim and Thummim were placed in the breastplate by him as well. These two items are what provide the word of the Lord to the people and they were used to render judgment for the people. Both of these functions are the same as the law.

Urim means Lights. It comes from *uwr*, fire, which corresponds to *owr*, light. Numerous times in the Bible, the law of the Lord, the word of the Lord, or the judgments of the Lord are said to be light. Three examples for us to see this are -

"For the commandment *is* a lamp,
And the law a light;
Reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life." Proverbs 6:23

"Listen to Me, My people;
And give ear to Me, O My nation:
For law will proceed from Me,
And I will make My justice rest
As a light of the peoples." Isaiah 51:4

"Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

The *Thummim* comes from the word *tom*. This corresponds to the adjective *tamim* or "perfection," and thus being blameless. This is seen in the following two verses -

"As *for* God, His way *is* perfect;
The word of the LORD is proven;
He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him." Psalm 18:30

"The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple." Psalm 19:7

In these, and other examples, we can find that the law of the Lord is what is pictured in the Urim and Thummim. It thus has the same significance as the tablets within the Ark. Christ fulfilled the law and it was secreted away under the mercy seat. He thus embodies the law and His blood covers the sins of the law for His people.

In placing the Urim and Thummim behind the stones representing God's redeemed people, and within the Breastplate of Judgment that is connected to the ephod by a blue thread attached to gold rings, it signifies that our faith in His work is what justifies us. If we need to consult God, we do it through Christ. Matthew Henry gives us a splendid analogy of this in regards to the Urim and Thummim -

Now, Christ is our Oracle. By him God, in these last days, makes known himself and his mind to us, Heb 1:1,2; Joh 1:18. He is the true Light, the faithful Witness, the Truth itself, and from him we receive the Spirit of Truth, who leads into all truth. Matthew Henry

The truly amazing thing about this is that such minute detail was given for things that were to remain completely unseen, and yet they perfectly describe what Christ has done for us. In Christ, we are safe, we are secure, and we are so forever.

We stand justified by faith, apart from deeds of the law because He has accomplished those deeds for us. It is all seen in these ancient symbols that until just an hour ago had no real meaning to you at all! Is that not right? But now you can see once again how minutely the plan of redemption is revealed in these ancient pictures. What a marvel!

If we must close, and close we must, let it be with a thought concerning the gold rings. Our faith is reckoned as good as gold to God, even if it is not pure gold. We

weaken at times, we question God's plan and His goodness, but when we get into that desperate pit, let us remember also the chains that secure us.

They are chains of the purest of gold. They are the deeds of Christ holding us fast to Himself. What He looks for is faith, we demonstrate it, and He accepts it. The eternal ring tells us that we are His. Let us remember that now and always.

Closing Verse: "Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You." Psalm 119:11

Next Week: What does the Bible say about our future? Even the Old Testament knows - The Rapture (Old Testament Types and Shadows)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Breastplate of Judgment

You shall make the breastplate of judgment

Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod

You shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread

And fine woven linen, you shall make it, as I have now showed

It shall be doubled into a square, you see

A span shall be its length, and a span its width shall be

And you shall put settings of stones in it
Four rows of stones, as I will show
The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald
This shall be the first row
The second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond
The third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst
And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper
They shall be set in gold settings; no detail shall be missed

And the stones shall have the names
Of the sons of Israel
Twelve according to their names
Like the engravings of a signet as well
Each one with its own name, certainly
According to the twelve tribes they shall be

You shall make chains at the end for the breastplate
Like braided cords of pure gold, as I now state
And you shall make two rings
For the breastplate, of gold
And put the two rings
On the two ends of the breastplate, just as you are told
Then you shall put the two braided chains
Of gold in the two rings

Which are on the ends of the breastplate
So shall you accomplish these things
And the other two ends of the two braided chains
You shall fasten to the two settings, as I relay
And put them on the shoulder straps
Of the ephod in the front, just as I say

You shall make two rings of gold
And put them on the two ends of the breastplate, as showed
On the edge of it, as you are told
Which is on the inner side of the ephod

And two other rings of gold you shall make
And put them on the two shoulder straps, please understand
Underneath the ephod toward its front
Right at the seam above the ephod's intricately woven band

They shall bind the breastplate
By means of its rings to the ephod's rings
Using a blue cord, so that it is above
The intricately woven band of the ephod, so do these things
And so that the breastplate does not come loose from the ephod
This is the reason for what you have been showed

So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel
On the breastplate of judgment over his heart, so shall it be
When he goes into the holy place
As a memorial before the Lord continually
And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment
The Urim and the Thummim, according to my word
And they shall be over Aaron's heart
When he goes in before the Lord

So Aaron shall bear the judgment
Of the children of Israel
Over his heart before the Lord continually
For this reason, these things I do now tell
How marvelous are these details, O God!
Precious and sublime are the things hidden in Your word!
Help us for all our days as in this life we tread
To search them out, seeking Christ our Lord
And through Him we praise You for all that You have done
For in Him it is finished, and in Him the victory is won

Glory to You, O King of the ages
For the marvelous splendor found in Your words pages

Hallelujah and Amen...