

Message Nine

**The Breastplate—
the Central and Ultimate Point of the Priesthood**

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:15-30

I. According to Exodus 28:15-30, the breastplate of judgment is the central item of the priestly garments and the central and ultimate point of the priesthood:

- A. The main purpose of the breastplate of judgment was for God's leading; God's people act according to God's leading obtained through the reality of the breastplate.
- B. The breastplate typifies the church, and if we do not know the church, we do not know what God's leading is; actually, God's leading and the church are one.
- C. God reveals what we should do through the church, by the church, and with the church; the church is God's leading, for the church bears the divine alphabet by which God makes known His leading—v. 21; cf. Psa. 73:2-3, 16-17, 22-28.
- D. The breastplate being borne upon Aaron's heart for a memorial before Jehovah signifies the entire church as one built-up entity being borne upon Christ's loving heart for a memorial, a pleasing remembrance, before God—Exo. 28:29.

II. The twelve precious stones on the breastplate, on which the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved, signify all the redeemed and transformed people of God built together to become one entity—vv. 17-21:

- A. The twelve precious stones set in gold (vv. 17-20) symbolize the saints as transformed precious stones built together in the divine nature of Christ to become one entity, the church as Christ's Body (1 Cor. 3:10-12a; Eph. 1:22-23).
- B. As components of the church, the believers, who were created from dust (Gen. 2:7), must be transformed in their human nature by and with the divine nature through the working of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3, 18) to become precious stones for God's eternal building (Matt. 16:18; John 1:42; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 21:18-21); the Christian life is a life of transformation—daily God is seeking to transform us (Rom. 12:2-3; 2 Cor. 4:16).
- C. The number twelve, composed of four (the creatures) times three (the Triune God in resurrection), signifies the mingling of the Triune God with His creature, man, for the complete

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and perfect carrying out of God's administration eternally—cf. Rev. 21:12-13.

- D. That the stones were arranged in four rows with three stones in each row indicates that the believers are not only transformed but also mingled with the Triune God.
- E. The setting of the stones in gold (Exo. 28:20) signifies that the transformed and mingled believers are built in the divine nature of Christ into one entity (2 Pet. 1:4).
- F. In God's eternal plan and according to His eternal view, the church, borne on Christ's heart (Exo. 28:29) and held in the span of His loving care (v. 16b; cf. John 10:28), is such a mingling of the Triune God with redeemed humanity.

III. The engraving of the names of the twelve tribes on the precious stones corresponds to the inscribing of Christ into the believers' hearts, making them living letters of Christ, with Christ as the content—2 Cor. 3:3:

- A. Christ is inscribed into the believers through their experience of Him and by the inscribing of the New Testament ministry—vv. 2-6.
- B. The letters engraved on the twelve stones typify Christ as the letters in the heavenly alphabet—cf. Rev. 22:13a.
- C. If we are not transformed and transparent and if we have not been inscribed with the Spirit of the living God along with Christ as the content but are merely opaque stones without any letters inscribed into us, it will be impossible for God to speak through us.

IV. After the Urim and the Thummim were put into the breastplate, it became not only a memorial but also a breastplate of judgment—Exo. 28:30:

- A. *Urim* means "lights," "illuminators"—v. 30:
 1. The Urim was an illuminator inserted into the breastplate under the twelve stones; it had the capacity to contain oil for burning, and the fire used to burn the oil came from the altar.
 2. The Urim had twelve illuminators, one to illuminate each of the twelve transparent precious stones on the breastplate so that they could shine with light (David Baron).

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3. The Urim typifies Christ as lights, illuminators (John 8:12; Luke 1:78-79), shining through the Spirit (the oil) and the cross (the fire from the altar).
- B. *Thummim* means “perfecters,” “completers”—Exo. 28:30:
1. The names on the twelve stones of the breastplate contained only eighteen of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet; the remaining four letters were put on the Thummim, making it the perfecter and completer (David Baron).
 2. By the shining of the Urim on the individual precious stones and by the darkening of the stones, the full alphabet of twenty-two letters could be used to spell out words and sentences.
 3. The Thummim typifies Christ as the perfecter and completer (Heb. 12:2); thus, He is the spiritual alphabet for both inscribing and completing (cf. Rev. 22:13a).
 4. Together, the Urim and the Thummim typify Christ as God’s witness, God’s testimony (3:14), as the means for God to speak to His people (Heb. 1:2).
 5. In the New Testament, the reality of the Urim and the Thummim is the mingled spirit—the unveiling Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, indwelling our receiving spirit, our regenerated human spirit—Rom. 8:4, 14, 16; Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.
- C. In Exodus 28:30 and in Deuteronomy 33:8 and 10, God’s judgments, referring to God’s law with its verdicts and judgments, are related to the Urim and the Thummim.
- D. The word *judgment* in Exodus 28:29-30 indicates that God has a regulation concerning everything among His people; the judgment leads to certain decisions, and as a result, we have God’s leading.
- E. According to the Old Testament, the Urim and the Thummim added to the breastplate were a means for God to speak to His people to indicate to them His leading; thus, we may say that the breastplate of judgment is a “breastplate of leading”—Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8; Josh. 7:16-21; 1 Sam. 23:6, 9-12; 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65.
- F. God’s leading through the breastplate always involved a judgment; God’s law includes His judgments, and these judgments become God’s leading.

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- G. In spiritual experience, in order to know God's leading we must judge whatever is of the flesh, the self, the old man, and the world.
 - H. In Romans 8:14 the leading of the Spirit, as the reality of God's leading through the breastplate, issues from, and is the totality of, all the judgments in verses 1 through 13 of that chapter.
 - I. The fact that God's speaking as His leading was through the breastplate signifies that God makes His leading known to His people through the church.
- V. The breastplate of judgment for God's leading was like a heavenly, divine, and spiritual typewriter, and His way of speaking through the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim is the opposite of what we would expect:**
- A. God speaks not through the stones that are shining but through stones that become dark; this means that God speaks through negative situations; because the Lord's speaking by the breastplate of judgment is through negative situations, that speaking is a judgment.
 - B. Normally the twelve stones in the breastplate were under the shining of the Urim; suddenly a piece inscribed with a certain name would become dark; this darkening of a particular stone was God's instant speaking:
 1. Paul's Epistles and the seven epistles of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 2—3) were all written according to this principle; they were written according to the negative situation of the churches, not according to the positive things found in the churches.
 2. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians according to his reading of the negative situation at Corinth, but although his writing was based on the negative things, in this Epistle he ministered positive things—the riches of Christ—to the church—cf. 1:9.
 3. The saints in Corinth became the letters used by Paul in the spiritual typesetting of his Epistle; in the same way, in a local church the leading ones need to seek the Lord's guidance by reading the actual situation and condition of the saints.

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4. The problem among Christians today is that because there is so much darkness, there is no way for God to expose darkness; in order for the darkness to be made known, there must first be the shining of the light; God speaks through things that become negative in the midst of the shining of the light—cf. Eph. 5:8-9.
 5. By reading the negative situations in this way, we come to know God's leading, His judgment; then in our locality we shall know what God wants us to do, and we should then follow His leading.
- C. If we as the church would be the breastplate of judgment, we must fulfill certain requirements:
1. We need to be transformed and transparent; then Christ as the spiritual alphabet must be inscribed into us clearly and definitely—2 Cor. 3:3, 18; cf. 1 Chron. 28:19.
 2. Just as God could not speak through the breastplate unless the stones had been inscribed with letters, so God cannot speak through His redeemed people unless they have been inscribed with Christ—Heb. 8:10.
 3. Because there is a shortage of transformation, transparency, inscribing, and enlightening, we need to pray that we may become transparent, have more of Christ inscribed into us, and experience more enlightening—Rev. 22:1; 21:11; Psa. 119:130; Isa. 2:5; Eph. 5:8-9; Psa. 89:15; 1 John 1:7.
 4. The fact that Christ is the spiritual alphabet for both inscription and completion indicates that He is inexhaustible; although we may enjoy His inscription, there is still something more of Him that we need for completion—cf. Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:10, 13-14.
- D. The breastplate is the building up of the Body life and the means for us to know God's will concerning His people; then we will receive the Lord's judgment of what we have to do or what we must not do; we will know the Lord's way, and the whole church will go on according to the judgment given by the Lord.
- E. We need to pray that every local church would become a breastplate according to the picture in Exodus 28.