

THE RECOVERY OF THE PRIESTHOOD FOR GOD'S BUILDING
(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven
The Central and Ultimate Point of the Priesthood

EM Hymns —

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:15-30

- Exo 28:15 And you shall make a breastplate of judgment, the work of a skillful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it; of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet strands, and of fine twined linen you shall make it.
- Exo 28:16 It shall be square and doubled; a span its length and a span its width.
- Exo 28:17 And you shall enclose in it enclosures of stones, four rows of stones: the first row shall be a row of a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald;
- Exo 28:18 And the second row, a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a diamond;
- Exo 28:19 And the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;
- Exo 28:20 And the fourth row, a chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold in their enclosures.
- Exo 28:21 And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a signet, each according to its name, for the twelve tribes.
- Exo 28:22 And you shall make on the breastplate twisted chains, a corded work of pure gold.
- Exo 28:23 And you shall make on the breastplate two rings of gold and shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate.
- Exo 28:24 And you shall put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate.
- Exo 28:25 And you shall put the two other ends of the two cords on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of it.
- Exo 28:26 And you shall make two rings of gold, and you shall put them upon the two ends of the breastplate upon its edge, which is toward the ephod on the inside.
- Exo 28:27 And you shall make two rings of gold and shall put them on the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod on the front of it, close to the place where it is joined, above the skillfully woven band of the ephod.
- Exo 28:28 And they shall bind the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a cord of blue strands, that it may be upon the skillfully woven band of the ephod and that the breastplate may not come loose from the ephod.
- Exo 28:29 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually.
- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.

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:

Exo 28:15-30 be omitted.

- 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.

Exo 28:21 And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a signet, each according to its name, for the twelve tribes.

Psa 73:2 But as for me, my feet were nearly turned aside; / My steps had almost slipped.

Psa 73:3 For I was envious of the arrogant, / When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Psa 73:16 When I considered this in order to understand it, / It was a troublesome task in my sight,

- Psa 73:17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; / Then I perceived their end.
 Psa 73:22 I was brutish and knew nothing; / I was like a beast before You.
 Psa 73:23 Nevertheless I am continually with You; / You have taken hold of my right hand.
 Psa 73:24 You will guide me with Your counsel, / And afterward You will receive me in glory.
 Psa 73:25 Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth.
 Psa 73:26 My flesh and my heart fail, / But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever.
 Psa 73:27 For behold, those who are far from You will perish; / You destroy all who go about as harlots away from You.
 Psa 73:28 But as for me, drawing near to God is good for me; / I have made the Lord Jehovah my refuge, / That I may declare all Your works.

- D. The breastplate of judgment functioned as a heavenly, divine, and spiritual typewriter to make known God's leading, and this heavenly typewriter was the very center of the priestly garments.
- E. The breastplate was called the breastplate of judgment because from it man found his solutions; when the high priest went into God's presence with the breastplate, God's light shined, certain stones became dark, and God's will was fully manifested.
- F. 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:

Exo 28:29 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually.

1. The church as the Body of Christ, the peak of God's divine revelation, is God's great will in the universe—Eph. 1:5, 9, 11, 22-23.

Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
2. The Body life as the practicality and expression of Christ's Body is God's great will for us on earth—Rom. 12:1-2.

Rom 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
3. The Body of Christ with the Body life is the good pleasure of God's will, His heart's delight—Eph. 1:5b, 9.

Eph 1:5b ... according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

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—Exo. 28:17-21:

- Exo 28:17 And you shall enclose in it enclosures of stones, four rows of stones: the first row shall be a row of a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald;
- Exo 28:18 And the second row, a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a diamond;
- Exo 28:19 And the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

- Exo 28:20 And the fourth row, a chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold in their enclosures.
- Exo 28:21 And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a signet, each according to its name, for the twelve tribes.
- 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).
- Exo 28:17 And you shall enclose in it enclosures of stones, four rows of stones: the first row shall be a row of a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald;
- Exo 28:18 And the second row, a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a diamond;
- Exo 28:19 And the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;
- Exo 28:20 And the fourth row, a chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold in their enclosures.
- 1 Cor 3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation, and another builds upon it. But let each man take heed how he builds upon it.
- 1 Cor 3:11 For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
- 1 Cor 3:12a But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, ...
- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
- B. Therefore, the breastplate is a miniature of the building up of God's people, indicating that the believers in Christ are distinct individuals but are not divided—Rev. 21:18-20; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27.
- Rev 21:18 And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.
- Rev 21:19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;
- Rev 21:20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- C. Precious stones are not created but are formed by the transforming of created things; this signifies that the church is produced by transformation, from something natural into something divine.
- D. As components of the church, the believers, who were created of 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).
- Gen 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
- 2 Cor 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.
- 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
- Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- John 1:42 He led him to Jesus. Looking at him, Jesus said, You are Simon, the son of John; you shall be called Cephas (which is interpreted, Peter).

- 1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- Rev 21:18 And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.
- Rev 21:19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;
- Rev 21:20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.
- Rev 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.
- Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
- Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
- 2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
- E. 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 and perfect carrying out of God's administration eternally—cf. Rev. 21:12-13.
- Rev 21:12 It had a great and high wall and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel:
- Rev 21:13 On the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.
- F. 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.
- G. 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).
- Exo 28:20 And the fourth row, a chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold in their enclosures.
- 2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
- H. These people, being of the number twelve, complete the eternal purpose of God and become the administration of the divine government in the universe.
- I. 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.
- Exo 28:29 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually.
- Exo 28:16b ... a span its length and a span its width.
- John 10:28 And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.

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:

- 2 Cor 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.
- A. Christ is inscribed into the believers through their experience of Him and by the inscribing of the New Testament ministry—vv. 2-6.
- 2 Cor 3:2 You are our letter, inscribed in our hearts, known and read by all men,

- 2 Cor 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.
- 2 Cor 3:4 And such confidence we have through Christ toward God,
- 2 Cor 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God,
- 2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- B. The letters engraved on the twelve stones typify Christ as the letters in the heavenly alphabet—cf. Rev. 22:13a.
Rev 22:13a I am the Alpha and the Omega, ...
- 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 Thummim were put into the breastplate, it became not only a memorial but also a breastplate of judgment—Exo. 28:30:

- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
- A. *Urim* means “lights, illuminators”—v. 30:
Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
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).
 3. The Urim typifies Christ as lights, illuminators (John 8:12; Eph. 5:14), shining through the Spirit (the oil) and the cross (the fire from the altar).
John 8:12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.
Eph 5:14 Therefore He says, Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.
- B. *Thummim* means “perfecters, completers”—Exo. 28:30:
Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
1. The names on the twelve stones on 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).
Heb 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.
Rev 22:13A I am the Alpha and the Omega, ...
 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).
Rev 3:14 And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the

- Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:
- Heb 1:2 Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the universe;
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.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
- Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- Rev 1:10 I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,
- Rev 4:2 Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting;
- Rev 17:3 And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.
- Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
- 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.
- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
- Deut 33:8 And concerning Levi he said, May Your Thummim and Urim be with Your faithful man, / Whom You tested at Massah, / With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah -
- Deut 33:10 They shall show Jacob Your ordinances, / And Israel Your law; / They shall put incense before Your nostrils / And whole burnt offerings upon Your altar.
- D. The word *judgment* in Exodus 28:30 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.
- Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually.
- 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.
- Lev 8:8 And he placed the breastplate upon him, and in the breastplate he put the Urim and the Thummim.
- Num 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.
- Deut 33:8 And concerning Levi he said, May Your Thummim and Urim be with Your faithful man, / Whom You tested at Massah, / With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah -
- Josh 7:16 So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken.
- Josh 7:17 And he brought the family of Judah near, and the family of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought the family of the Zerahites near warrior by warrior, and Zabdi was taken.
- Josh 7:18 And he brought the house of Zabdi near warrior by warrior, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.
- Josh 7:19 And Joshua said to Achan, My son, give glory to Jehovah the God of Israel, and make confession to Him. And tell me what you have done; do not hide anything from me.

- Josh 7:20 Then Achan answered Joshua and said, It is true; I have sinned against Jehovah the God of Israel; and this is what I did:
- Josh 7:21 When I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle of Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And now they are hidden in the earth in my tent, with the silver under it.
- 1 Sam 23:6 Now it so happened that when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, he came down with an ephod in his hand.
- 1 Sam 23:9 But when David learned that Saul was planning evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring the ephod here.
- 1 Sam 23:10 And David said, O Jehovah the God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah in order to destroy the city on my account.
- 1 Sam 23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O Jehovah the God of Israel, do tell Your servant. And Jehovah said, He will come down.
- 1 Sam 23:12 And David said, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And Jehovah said, They will deliver you.
- 1 Sam 28:6 And Saul inquired of Jehovah; but Jehovah did not answer him, not by dreams or by the Urim or by the prophets.
- Ezra 2:63 And the governor told them that they should not eat of the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.
- Neh 7:65 And the governor told them that they should not eat of the most holy things until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim.

F. God's leading through the breastplate always involved a judgment; God's law includes His judgments, and these judgments become God's leading.

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.

- Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
- Rom 8:1 There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.
- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- Rom 8:3 For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh,
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
- Rom 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Rom 8:7 Because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be.
- Rom 8:8 And those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.
- Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
- Rom 8:12 So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh;
- Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.

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:

1. The Lord's speaking through the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim

required the making of the breastplate with the twelve precious stones engraved with the names of the children of Israel and the bearing of the breastplate on the heart of the high priest.

2. In the same principle, God's speaking today through the church with Christ as the Illuminator (Urim) and Perfecter (Thummim) requires the building up of the church with the believers as transformed, transparent precious stones who have been inscribed with Christ as the letters of the spiritual alphabet (2 Cor. 3:3) and the bearing of the church on the hearts of the leading ones.

2 Cor 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.

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; it is the revelation of the Lord's mind concerning His people.
- 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 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.
 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.
 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.
 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 Cor 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.

2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

1 Chron 28:19 All this, said David, has He made clear by a writing from the hand of Jehovah upon me, all the details of the pattern.

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.
 Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me.
 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.
 Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
 Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.
 Psa 119:130 The opening of Your words gives light, / Imparting understanding to the simple.
 Isa 2:5 House of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of Jehovah.
 Eph 5:8 For you were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light
 Eph 5:9 (For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),
 Psa 89:15 Blessed are the people who know the joyful shout; / They walk, O Jehovah, in the light of Your countenance.
 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
 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.
 Heb 6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,
 Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
 Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
- 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.
 Exo 28 be omitted.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

TODAY'S APPLICATION OF THE URIM AND THE THUMMIM

The twelve transparent stones in the breastplate indicate that the saints should be transparent in order for Christ to shine through them so that God's will may be shown. Suppose the twelve stones on the breastplate had been opaque instead of transparent. Furthermore, suppose nothing had been inscribed on any of the stones and no light was shining. Then the stones would have been opaque, without inscription, and without the shining of light. In such a case it would be impossible to use the breastplate to find out God's will, God's leading. This is the situation in most Christian groups today.

There is no transparency, inscription, or light. It is very possible that this may be the situation of some local churches.

Many years ago in mainland China I visited some so-called churches. It seemed to me that everyone in these groups was opaque, altogether lacking in transformation and transparency. Furthermore, little of Christ had been inscribed into the saints. It seemed they had Christ in name, but they were very short of the experience of Christ. Moreover, there was no light among them. What they needed was a very basic, elementary kind of help. God's will could not be made known through them.

If you consider the condition of the majority of Christians today according to what we have covered in these messages, you will realize that in most cases with the believers there is opaqueness instead of transparency. There is virtually nothing of the inscription of Christ. Instead of the shining of light, there is darkness.

If as a local church we would be used by God as a breastplate, we all must be transparent, and we must have Christ inscribed into us. This means that we must have some definite experiences of Christ as the letters in God's spiritual alphabet. Our experience of Christ must not be vague. Rather, it should be clear and definite. However, the situation among most Christians, including us, is very different from this.

If we have been enlightened by the Lord and if we are bearing the burden of the Lord's interests, we shall be troubled by the situation among God's people. The more we consider the situation and condition of both the saints and the churches, the more burdened we shall be. We shall be deeply concerned about the lack of transparency, the lack of inscribing, and the shortage of light.

RECEIVING THE LORD'S LEADING CONCERNING THE CHURCH

Today's application of the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim also requires that the leading ones bear the saints and Christ on their hearts so that they may know the condition of the saints and the completion of Christ for God's leading. In every local church there should be a group of leading ones who bear the saints and Christ on their heart. These leading ones need to see the Lord's shining and read the saints. Then they will be able to receive God's leading concerning the church in their locality.

GOD'S WAY OF SPEAKING

God's way of speaking through the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim is the opposite of what we would expect. God speaks not through the stones that are shining, but through stones that become dark. This means that God speaks through negative situations. 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. Our natural concept would be that God's speaking through the breastplate came from the stones that were shining. Actually, He spoke through the stones that suddenly became dark.

Paul's Epistles and also the seven epistles of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches in Asia 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. Take, for example, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. If there were no negative things found in the church in Corinth, I doubt that 1 Corinthians would have been written. Paul wrote this Epistle according to his reading of the negative situation at Corinth. By considering that situation, he knew what to write. But although his writing was based on the negative things, in this Epistle he ministered positive things—the riches of Christ—to the church.

The problem among Christians today is that because there is so much darkness, there is no way for God to expose darkness. When everything is in darkness, it is difficult to point out a particular matter that is in darkness. Suppose in a room there are many rows of lights on the ceiling. If all the

lights are shining, it will be easy to find one that becomes dark. This illustrates how God spoke through the breastplate. The darkening of a particular stone was God's instant speaking.

The situation of Christians today is abnormal. Instead of light, there is darkness. As a result, God has hardly any way to speak. In order for the darkness to be made known, there must first be the shining of light. If there is no light in a room, there is no way for darkness to be shown. But when all the lights are shining, it immediately becomes apparent when a certain light becomes dark. That darkness is an indicator that something is wrong. If in a certain church things that are wrong are easily found out, that church is normal. But if in a particular church it is not possible to find out what is wrong, this is an indication that the church there is in darkness. When darkness prevails, it is not possible for negative matters to be exposed. For this, light is necessary. What is exposed under the shining of the light is God's speaking. God speaks through things becoming negative. This kind of negative situation is an indicator of the shortage of Christ. By reading the negative situations in this way, we come to know God's leading. Then in our locality we shall know what God wants us to do, and we should then follow His leading.

JUDGMENT AND SUPPLY

The leading obtained through the breastplate always involves a judgment. This means that the Lord's speaking through the breastplate is through negative situations. If this speaking were only through positive situations, there would be no need of judgment, for everything would be positive and justified. But because the Lord's speaking is through negative situations, that speaking is a judgment.

The Apostle Paul was one who was truly shining. Under the shining of Paul, the darkness was exposed. Paul wrote certain of his Epistles according to the darkness, according to the negative condition, of the saints in the churches. Because Paul saw certain dark areas in the church in Corinth, areas that were letters of God's judgment, Paul could write Corinthians as a book of judgment. But along with all the judgment contained in this Epistle, there are many positive things: the riches of Christ ministered to the believers at Corinth. This is God's way of speaking. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, God's speaking is according to the negative situation, yet with the riches of Christ as the supply for His people.

THE NEED FOR THE ADEQUATE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

If we as the church would be the breastplate of judgment, we must fulfill certain requirements. First, we need to be transformed and transparent. Then Christ as the letters of the spiritual alphabet must be inscribed into us clearly and definitely. This is to have the adequate experience of Christ.

Recently a brother testified that often, when the leading ones speak to new ones or young ones about the experience of Christ, these leading ones realize that they themselves do not have the clear and definite experience of Christ. If we do not try to minister Christ to others, we may not realize how short we are concerning the experience of Christ. When we try to speak to others about the experience of Christ, we may find that we ourselves are still very short of experience. We may have little of the real experience of Christ to minister to others. As those who would shepherd the saints, we need the experience of Christ. Otherwise we shall lack the proper spiritual vocabulary required for ministering Christ. We may want to minister Christ to others, but what experience of Christ do we have? To some extent, we may be able to teach the Bible, for we may have been reading and studying it for years. But when it comes to ministering Christ, we have a shortage. We do not have that much of Christ inscribed into our being. Perhaps we have only part of a letter inscribed into us. This is the situation of many Christians today. Therefore, it is very difficult to know the Lord's leading through the breastplate.

Because there is such 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. Then we shall realize that, even if we are full of Christ, we still have a shortage, for something of Christ's riches is still lacking. This is what is indicated by the marvelous picture of the

breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim.

RECOGNIZING OUR NEED FOR MORE EXPERIENCE

With the breastplate and the Urim and the Thummim we see two kinds of alphabets. One kind of alphabet is for inscribing, and the other kind is for completing. If we are not yet full of Christ, what we need is the inscribing. Christ must be inscribed into us until we are full of Him. It is when we are full of Christ that we recognize the need for completion. Thus, if we are not full of Christ, we need Him as the alphabet for inscription. But when we are full of Him, we need Him as the alphabet for our completion. Believers like the Apostle Paul, those who are full of Christ, realize that they still need Christ. However, those who are short of Christ may not sense the need for Christ. Many of today's lukewarm Christians do not have any realization of how much they need Christ. It is when we have Christ inscribed into us that we realize we are still short of Christ. Then we shall seek Him to be our completion.

It surely is a mercy of the Lord we can speak about Christ inscribed into us and Christ completing us. It is not easy to find Christians who speak concerning this. What we need now is more experience. Only through experience can we understand what it is to have Christ inscribed into us and to have Him complete us. Therefore, we all need to pray more regarding these things. I hope that every local church will become a breastplate according to the picture in Exodus 28. (*Life-study of Exodus*, pp. 1429-1434)