

The Precious Gems of the Breastplate (2)

The First Row

In the breastplate, there were four rows, each consisting of three stones, or gems. As with the gems on the shoulders of the ephod, these also were engraved with the names of the tribes of the children of Israel (Ex. 28:17-21). The fact that they are in the breastplate, pictures for us the place of nearness and affection believers experience and enjoy today.

The sacred Scriptures record, *“And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually”* (Ex. 28:29). What a picture, beloved child of God, of our great high priest, who continually bears our names before the throne of grace.

Paul wrote in the book of Romans, *“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”* (Rom. 8:34). The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews described the function of the unchangeable priesthood of the Lord Jesus, *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Heb. 7:25).

These precious stones of the breastplate, individually and collectively, set forth the varied glories and divine attributes and offices of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God (Heb. 2:17). We cannot be certain as to the exact meaning or representation of these stones. The thoughts presented in this series of articles are from a personal perspective and appreciation of the person of our Lord Jesus in relation to the precious stones.

The first row consisted of a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle. It has been suggested that the sardius stone, referred to by some as a ruby, signifies joy. We might remember that when the angel announced the birth of the Lord Jesus to the shepherds, he said, *“behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people”* (Luke 2:10). What a joyous moment it was indeed, when the Lord Jesus, came into this world in wondrous incarnation!

Nehemiah encouraged the people of Israel with the words, *“the joy of the Lord is your strength”* (Neh. 8:10). The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”* (Jn. 15:11).

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, said of the Lord Jesus, concerning the work of the cross that was ever before Him, *“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb. 12:2). The psalmist wrote, *“in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”* (Ps. 16:11).

There are a number of suggestions as to what the topaz signifies. Some have suggested that, because of its striking beauty and varied hues, it speaks to us of the divine glories of our Lord Jesus Christ. In reference to the announcement of the birth of the Lord Jesus, mentioned earlier, we might bear in mind that the Scriptures record concerning the shepherds, *“the glory of the Lord shone round about them”* (Luke 2:9).

John wrote, of the humanity of the Lord Jesus, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”* (Jn. 1:14). He wrote concerning that occasion, when the Lord Jesus turned water into wine, *“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory”* (Jn. 2:11).

Just prior to going to the cross, the Lord Jesus prayed, *“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee”* (Jn. 17:1). We may not think of His death on the cross as glorifying, but in accomplishing the will of His heavenly Father, in the work of

redemption, He declared God's righteousness, whereby God could be just and the justifier of him who believes on Jesus (Rom. 3:26). He glorified His Father and God.

Shortly after, He spoke these words, *"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me"* (Jn. 17:24). Both the apostle Peter (1st Pet. 5:11) and the apostle John (Rev. 1:6), ascribe glory and dominion to the Lord Jesus throughout the eternal ages.

The carbuncle, said to be a flashing, or fiery red stone, offers various thoughts to our minds. It has been described as suggestive of beauty and wealth. Although, according to Solomon, He is the chiefest among the tens of thousands and altogether lovely (S.O.S. 5:10, 16), yet for our sakes, He was willing to become despised and rejected of men and as having no beauty that we should desire Him (Isa. 53:2-3).

As the creator of all things (Col. 1:16), the Lord Jesus is immensely wealthy. The psalmist wrote of how the Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the world and the fulness thereof (Psalm 50:10-12). King David acknowledged that all of the materials of vast wealth that were offered for the construction of the Temple came from the hand of God and that all that is in heaven and earth belong to Him (1st Chron. 29:11-16).

Yet, amazingly, Paul could write, *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye through his poverty might be rich"* (2nd. Cor. 8:9).

Another thought is that carbuncle represents divine favour. Isaiah wrote prophetically of Jehovah's delight in His perfect servant, the Lord Jesus, *"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth"* (Isa. 42:1). On more than one occasion, the heavens were opened and the voice of the Father declared, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:17, 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Luke 9:35).

It has also been suggested that the carbuncle represents certain healing properties. When we think of our Lord Jesus, we remember how He healed the multitudes of every sickness and disease (Matt. 12:15; Mk. 6:13; Luke 4:40). We remember the woman who touched the hem of His garment and was healed (Matt. 9:20; Mk. 5:29; Luke 8:44). In fact, we read that as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole (Matt. 14:36; Mk. 6:56).

Apart from the physical healing that He provided, there was also the spiritual healing from our sins, which He provided through the shedding of His own precious blood. The prophet Isaiah wrote, *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"* (Isa. 53:5).

The prophet Malachi who called Israel to repentance and faithfulness, prophesied of a future time of restoration for the nation at the return of the Lord Jesus, *But unto you that fear (reverence) my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings* (Mal. 4:2).

*Above all kings, above all thrones,
Endowed with power and might;
Adorned with many precious stones,
The essence of pure light.*

*The varied glories of our Lord,
Too vast as can be told;
The gracious Spirit, from His Word,
To raptured minds unfold.*

*Great intercessor, advocate,
For guilty man once stood;
Twixt God and man did mediate,
By His own precious blood.*

*Before the throne of God appears,
For saints, at their behest;
Whose names, so faithfully He bears,
Engraved upon His breast.*

Bernie Payne