

## Gleanings In Exodus by A. W. Pink

### 50. The Urim and Thummim - Exodus 28:30

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: 'but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever' (Deut. 29:29). This seems to be a suitable passage with which to introduce our present inquiry. Things which Jehovah has not seen fit to make known unto us, it is presumption and impiety to attempt to pry into; hence the Christian needs constantly to pray, "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins" (Ps. 19:13).

Let us not attempt to be wise above that which is written. Let us seek grace to be kept humble, from invading the prerogatives of the Most High, and from endeavoring to handle things which are "too wonderful" (Ps. 139:6) for us. "Now I know in part" (1 Cor. 13:12); let us be thankful for this "part," and leave it with God to grant us a fuller revelation in the Day to come. On the other hand, let us not forget that the things which are revealed "belong" unto us. They are given for our instruction. They are given for us to study prayerfully and carefully. It is only by perseveringly comparing Scripture with Scripture that we learn what God has "revealed" in His Word. The Holy Spirit places no premium upon sloth. It is not the dilatory but the "diligent" soul who is "made fat" (Prov. 13:4). A rightly divided Word of Truth calls for a "workman" (2 Tim. 2:15), not a lazy man. It is because they spend, comparatively, so little time over the Scriptures, it is because they cannot truly say "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12), that the great majority of professing Christians have little or no conception of how much God has been pleased to reveal to us in His Word.

Now, in connection with the Urim and the Thummim there appear to be some things which God has seen fit to keep "secret," hence the profitless articles which many, who resorted to speculation, have written on the subject. Concerning the "Urim and the Thummim" no man, Jew or Gentile, knows, or can know, anything, save what God has "revealed" to us in His Word. But as the humble student attentively compares the different passages where they are mentioned, as he notes what is said therein, he discovers that God has been pleased to intimate to us not a little concerning their nature, use, and spiritual significance. Let us now note:—

#### 1. Their Names.

Both words are in the plural number, though this (as is often the case in the Hebrew of the O.T.) is probably what is called the "plural of majesty"—used for the purpose of emphasizing the importance or dignity of a thing. Thus, it is most likely that the "Urim" was but a single object, and the "Thummim" another; but of this we cannot be certain. There is no difficulty in ascertaining the English equivalent of these Hebrew terms. Urim signifies "lights" or "light," being the plural form of the word very frequently used for "light." In Isaiah 31:9; 44:16; 47:14; 50:11; Ezekiel 5:2 Urim is translated "fire" (its secondary meaning); while in Isaiah 24:15 it is rendered "fires." Thummim means "perfections" or "perfection." In the Sept. these two words are translated by "delosis" and "aletheim," meaning "manifestation" and "truth."

It is surely striking that reference is made to these mysterious objects in the Old Testament just seven times. In Exodus 28: 30, Leviticus 8:8, Ezra 2:63, and Nehemiah 7:65 they are spoken of as the "Urim and Thummim," but in Deuteronomy 33:8 the order is reversed "Thummim and Urim"; while in Numbers 27:21 and 1 Samuel 28:6 "Urim" is mentioned alone. It is also to be noted that no command was given to Moses by Jehovah to "make" them; he was simply told to "put" (Heb. nathan "to give" them in the Breastplate). Let us next consider:

## 2. Their Place.

This is made known in Exodus 28:30, "And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim." From verse 16, "Foursquare it shall be doubled," we gather that the linen fabric of which the breastplate was composed was made in the form of a bag, in which (more literally "into which") the Urim and the Thummim were placed. Thus, they also were worn upon the high priest's heart. They would be under the twelve precious stones which bore the names of Israel's tribes, and linked, too, with the onyx stones on Aaron's shoulders.

## 3. Their Use.

This may be gathered from the different passages where they are mentioned. The first is in Numbers 27:21, "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation."

From the above quotation it seems clear that, in certain circumstances, the mind of the Lord was conveyed through them. 1 Samuel 28:6 bears this out, for of Saul it is there said, "when he inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams nor by Urim, nor by prophets." From these two passages we gather that by means of the Urim, or "light," in the breastplate of the high priest, counsel or prophetic guidance was obtained from God.

Further confirmation of this is found in Ezra 2. In vv. 61, 62 we are told, "And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood." Then it is added, "And the governor said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim," i.e., till one through whom the mind of the Lord was clearly revealed.

From these Scriptures the late Dr. Bullinger drew the following deductions: "The Urim and Thummim were probably two precious stones, which were drawn out as a lot to give Jehovah's judgment. 'The lot is cast into the lap (Heb. 'bosom'), but the whole judgment thereof is of the Lord' (Prov. 16:33)—bosom is here put for the clothing or covering over it: cf. Exodus 4:6, 7; Ruth 4:10... Thus, these two placed in the 'bag,' and one drawn out, would give the judicial decision, which would be 'of the Lord.' Hence the breastplate itself was known as 'the

breastplate of judgment' (v. 15), because, by that, Jehovah's judgment was obtained whenever it was needed. Hence, when the land was divided 'by lot' (Num. 26:55) Eleazar, the high priest, must be present (Num. 34:17—cf. 27:21—Joshua 17:4). When he would decide it the lot 'came up' (Josh. 18:11), 'came forth' (Josh. 19:1), 'came out' (Josh. 19:17), i.e., 'out' or 'forth' from the bag of the ephod. In Ezra 2:61-63 no judgment could be given unless the high priest were present with the breastplate, with its bag, with the lots of Urim and Thummim, which gave Jehovah's decision."

#### 4. Their Connections.

First, as intimated above, they were deposited in the bag of the breastplate. Not only so, the very name of this important part of the high priest's vestments is taken therefrom, for it was termed "the breastplate of judgment," i.e., of decision, as giving God's mind. In striking accord with this, we may point out how that the word used in the Sept. version (the first translation ever made of the Old Testament into Greek) is "logeion," which means oracle, because by it the high priest obtained oracular responses from God.

Second, as pointed out in the preceding article, the breastplate was inseparably connected with, yea, formed an essential part of, the "ephod" itself—see Exodus 28:6, 7, 28 and our notes thereon. Now, the "ephod" was peculiarly the prophetic dress of the high priest. By means of it (that is, through the Urim and Thummim) he learned the counsel of God, and was thus able to declare what course the people should take, or what events were about to happen. Upon this, the late Mr. Soltau has most helpfully pointed out:

"Thus we find Saul, accompanied by Ahiah, the Lord's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod, commanding the ark to be brought, that he may ascertain the meaning of the tumult among the Philistines. But, instead of waiting to receive any response from God, he binds Israel with a curse and enters into the battle (1 Sam. 14:3, 19, 24). Abiathar, the only surviving priest of the line of Eli, fled to David with the ephod in his hand, having escaped the slaughter at Nob. David ascertained by this means the purpose of the men of Keilah to deliver him up to Saul (1 Sam. 23:6, 10). Again, in the affair at Ziklag, David consulted the Lord through Abiathar and the ephod, and obtained a favorable answer (1 Sam. 30:7, 8). On a subsequent occasion we read of David inquiring of the Lord, and obtaining answers (2 Sam. 2:1). and although in this instance the priest and ephod are not mentioned, yet judging from the previous instances it is probable that the same mode of inquiry was adopted."

#### 5. Their Significance.

The twelve gems on which were graven the names of Israel's tribes were worn upon the heart of Aaron; the "Urim and the Thummim" were placed within the breastplate, beneath the precious stones. Thus they speak, first of all, of that which is found in the heart of the Lord Jesus. As said the apostle who leaned upon His bosom, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us,

and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "Light" and "Perfection" center in Him who is our great High Priest.

In Christ Himself we see the antitype of the "Urim." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men . . . that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:5, 9). Therefore did He say, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

"God is light" (1 John 1:5), and Christ could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Yes, He is the reality of which the Urim was the figure: the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

In Christ we see the antitype of the "Thummim." Every "perfection" is found in Him, for He is "altogether lovely" (Song 5:16). Concerning His Deity, He is "over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5). Concerning His humanity, He is "that holy thing" (Luke 1:35). As the God-man, the Father said, "This is My Beloved Son." In His speech He was perfect: "grace is poured into Thy lips" (Ps. 45:2) testified the Spirit of prophecy. "Never man spake like this Man" (John 7:46), confessed His enemies. In His character He was flawless: "a lamb without spot and blemish" (1 Pet. 1:19). In His conduct He was perfect: "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Yes, Christ is the reality of which the Thummim was the figure.

But is there not something else here, still more specific? We believe there is. "God is light" (1 John 1:5) and "God is love" (1 John 4:8), make known to us what God is in Himself. The balance between these, if we may so speak, was perfectly maintained and blessedly manifested by the incarnate Son. The love which He exercised was ever an holy love; the light which He displayed was never divorced from this love. In like manner, these two, the Urim and the Thummim—"light" and "perfection"—formed a unit, being together within the breastplate upon the high priest's heart. The antitype of this is found in John 1:14, already quoted. "Now, in this expression—'full of grace and truth'—we have, in brief, the two main thoughts of the breastplate. 'Truth' is the effect of the light, and God is light. Light is what manifests, brings out the truth, is the truth. Christ, the light of the world, is the truth come into it: everything gets its true character from Him. 'Grace,' while it is what it is in God, is toward man" (F. W. Grant).

In addition to the names of these two objects (what they were in themselves) foreshadowing that which is in Christ, the purpose for which they were designed, the use to which they were put, also receives its typical fulfillment in Him. As we have seen, they were employed for communicating to the people a knowledge of God's mind and will concerning them. How blessedly this pointed to the Lord Jesus as "the wonderful Counselor" (Isa. 9:6)! In Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). And therefore could He say, "I am the Truth" (John 14:6). The mind and will of God are perfectly revealed to Him and by Him.

Christ's perfect knowledge of the Father's thoughts are clearly intimated in the following Scriptures: "For the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John

5:20)—there is no restraint, no reserve. "No one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whosoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27, R.V.). "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John 3:35).

Christ's communication to His people of what the Father has given to Him is also without reserve. Speaking to His beloved disciples He says, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). This is developed, in a doctrinal way, in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son" (1:1, 2). Perfectly has Christ communicated to His people the mind of God; fully has He revealed the Father's heart. This, we take it, then, is the second great truth foreshadowed by the Urim and Thummim: the counsels of God are only to be learned through the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest; and those counsels (of grace) are inseparably connected with His own dear people—as symbolized by the Urim and Thummim and the twelve precious stones, bearing their names, being together in the breastplate.

Another blessed truth was also signified by the Urim and Thummim. When the people of God were doubtful as to what course they should follow, when they desired light upon their path, they could obtain it by coming to and seeking it from the high priest. "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim before the Lord" (Num. 27:21). "Thus we learn that the high priest not only bore the judgment of the congregation before the Lord, but also carried the judgment of the Lord to the congregation. Solemn, weighty, and most precious functions! All this we have, in divine perfectness, in our great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens; He bears the judgment of His people on His heart continually; and He, by the Holy Spirit, communicates to us the counsel of God, in reference to the most minute circumstances of our daily course. We do not want dreams or visions; if only we walk in the Spirit we shall enjoy all the certainty which the perfect 'Urim,' on the breast of our great High Priest, can afford" (C.H.M.)

Yet one other point remains to be considered in this striking type. In the quotation made above from Dr. Bullinger's works it will be seen that the Urim and Thummim played an important part in the allocation of Canaan to the different tribes in the days of Joshua. It was to them that God's mind was made known respecting Israel's portions in the promised land. The anti-type of this is most blessed, Christ has purchased for Himself an inheritance (see Psalm 2:8, etc.). His inheritance, both the heavenly and earthly portions of it, He will share with His people, for they are "joint-heirs" with Him (Rom. 8:17). In John 17 we find Him saying to the Father, "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (v. 22). The different positions which His people will occupy during the Millennium will be determined by the Lord Jesus. To one He will say, "have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17), to another, 'be thou over five cities" (Luke 19:19), and so on. Thus our Joshua (the Hebrew of "Jesus") will apportion the Inheritance according to the mind of God.

To sum up. In Christ, then, we have the reality of all that was foreshadowed by the Urim and Thummim. First, He is the "Light and Perfection" of God—the Brightness of His glory (Heb. 1:3). Second, in Christ the light and life, the righteousness and grace of God, meet together, and their balance is perfectly maintained. Third, Christ is the One in whom all the counsels of God find their Center. Fourth, the counsels of God which center in Christ are inseparably connected with His people. Fifth, to Christ and by Christ is made fully known the mind of God, for in Him are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Sixth, from Christ, by His Spirit, directions may be obtained for every step of our pilgrim journey. Seventh, by Christ the promised and purchased inheritance will be administered:

In conclusion, we may note a dispensational application which the Urim and Thummim had for the Jews. Ezra 2:63 informs us that there was no one with the Urim and Thummim to communicate the mind of God in the day of Israel's return from their Babylonian captivity. The company seen with Ezra typify the godly Jewish remnant in the Tribulation period. Though sustained by God, the Holy Spirit will not be on earth at that time, and they will be without many of the spiritual privileges which we now enjoy. But at the close of the time of Jacob's trouble, the Lord Jesus shall return to earth: "He shall build the temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6:13).

At the beginning of the Millennium, "It shall come to pass that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations . . . O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isa. 2:2-5). Then shall Israel enjoy that which, of old, was adumbrated by the Urim and Thummim in their high priest's breastplate.

N.B.—Having completed our own study of the subject, and after having looked in vain for any help from numerous commentaries ancient and modern, in the good providence of God we found an illuminating article in "Addresses on Hebrews," by P. R. Morford. This led us to follow up his suggestion of linking the "Urim and Thummim" with Hebrews 1 and 2; the results of which we give in a sermon preached thereon. The further and clearer distinction drawn between the spiritual significations of the Urim and Thummim explains the slight variations found in several Old Testament scriptures. In Numbers 7:21 and 1 Samuel 28:6 only the "Urim" is mentioned, because that had to do, specifically, with God revealing Himself. In Deuteronomy 33:8 the "Thummim" is mentioned first, in keeping with the thought of the verse as a whole.

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