

BFF351 Priests Breastplates

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I've been out sooner than I thought. I was awakened by a dog barking. I jumped out of bed because usually when one is barking, it's because he's about to explode in their kennel. I threw clothes on and ran outside and walked the pups. I did see a beautiful sunrise, so there's always a perk somewhere.

Scott: Nice.

Steve: Today we're going to talk about another aspect of priests, and it's one that I didn't cover before when we were studying the tabernacle. It's about Aaron, the high priest, and his breastpiece or breastplate. Before we get into that, let's pray.

Father, we're continually learning new things from Your Word, and we appreciate how broad and how deep is Your Scripture. Thank You for inspiring it. Thank You for writing it. Give us a new sense of how we can understand these words and apply them in our lives today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: We're going to start by reading Exodus 28. It's a long chapter, and I'm not going to read the whole chapter, but I'm going to read enough.

Starting in the second verse. "You shall make holy garments for Aaron, your brother, for glory and for beauty. You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with the spirit of skill, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. These are the garments that they shall make" and the first thing they mention is a breastpiece.

Skipping down to the seventh verse. "It shall have two shoulder pieces attached to its two edges so that it may be joined together, and the skillfully wool wooden band on it shall be made like it and be of one piece with it, of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet yarns, and fine-twined linen.

"You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. As a jeweler in grave signets, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel.

"You shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree, and you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah on his two shoulders for remembrance."

I'm trying to visualize this. They must have been big enough stones that they could write on, and they were parts of his garment and they were called stones of remembrance.

Now the 15th verse, "You shall make a breastpiece of judgment," and describes what it's going to look like. "You shall set in it four rows of stones," and it describes all these stones, which I can't even pronounce – amethyst, jacinth, etc.

The 21st verse says, "There shall be 12 stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They should be like signets, each engraved with its name for the 12 tribes."

Then the 29th verse. "Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart when he goes into the Holy Place to bring them to regular remembrance before Jehovah. In the breastpiece of judgment, you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah. Thus, Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before Jehovah regularly."

That paints quite a picture to me of Aaron the priest coming into the Holy of Holies. We've talked about the fact that he's going to wash his feet in the brass basin at the door. When he comes in, he's going to fill up the golden lampstand.

He's going to make sure, not every day but regularly, that there's new showbread, or the bread of faces, for there are 12 loaves. Then he's going to offer incense, and he works with the incense and the golden lampstand twice a day.

He's coming into God's presence, and Aaron is carrying on his shoulders in the two onyx stones, six on each side, and he is carrying the breastpiece of judgment on his heart.

That last sentence, "Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before Jehovah regularly." Aaron is carrying these 12 tribes on his shoulders and on his heart into God's presence. He's bearing them. He's reminding God of the promises to His chosen people.

Carrying these stones of remembrance, Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah on his two shoulders for remembrance. This is similar language to Isaiah 49 and promises to Jerusalem. Zion is speaking as a person. And Zion said, "Jehovah has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me." God responds, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?"

"Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. Your walls are continually before Me." Zion is engraved on God's hands and God is telling her, "I haven't forgotten you, I'm bearing you. I'm carrying your image continually before me."

God doesn't forget, and God didn't engrave his promises on stones, God engraved promises to Jerusalem on the palms of His hands. A few chapters later, Isaiah 62:6. "On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen. All day and all night, they will never keep silent. You who remind Jehovah, take no rest for yourselves and give him no rest until he establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

God does not forget Jerusalem to the point where He has engraved Jerusalem on the palms of His hands, His walls are continually before Him, and then He appoints His children, His people, these watchmen.

He appoints them to do what He's doing. He's carrying Jerusalem on His heart, and He's asking these watchmen, "You continue to remind Jehovah until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

This is a picture of what Jesus does. In John 5:19, Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that He himself is doing."

So, the Son watches the Father, and he duplicates it. He mimics Him if you want to put it in a real childish way, but he does what he sees God doing, and just as God is carrying Jerusalem on His heart, He appointed people to do what He's doing, to also carry Jerusalem on their heart and pray until Jerusalem becomes a praise.

We see Jesus operating the same way, looking at his father saying, "Oh, you're doing that, I'm doing the same thing."

Big question is, what is Jesus doing now? We, as His children, can look at Him and do the same thing. **Romans 8:24** says, "Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

Hebrews 7:25 echoes this. "Consequently, He is able to say to the outermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

I was puzzled for many years because it says that we were not only saved by his death, but we were saved by his life. I used to wonder how can we be saved by his life? One aspect I think of that is that He is the living God, and He is alive. He not only died, but when He rose from the dead, He took His place at the right hand of God. He began praying for us. He's praying for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. He sees the Father, He knows what the Father is doing and what the Father is thinking. He is praying for us. As His children, now we're going to bring it full circle. Jesus said to his disciples, in the 20th, chapter of John, "As the Father has sent Me, even so, I am sending you." We are to lay our lives down. We are to follow Him, even if it means a martyr's death. We're going to follow Jesus. We're also going to pray because that's what He is doing. We are followers of Jesus and we are priests like Aaron.

God appointed Aaron, "Carry these 12 tribes on your heart, remind Me, and keep praying." Then He told the watchmen and Isaiah, "You carry Jerusalem on your heart, and you carry them before me, and you keep praying for them." Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father.

He's praying, and He said, "Just like that my dad sent me to lay My life down and now I'm praying. I want you to pray. I want you to do what I'm doing, what Aaron has done, what these watchmen are doing."

Here's the primary verse that is the basis for this whole podcast, Galatians 6:2 "Bear or carry one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." This is what priests do. Priests strap on the breastplate, over their heart, and they carrying the 12 tribes. This was Aaron's particular burden. This was his responsibility. I want to carry people on my heart -- I have to stop and take a breath here -- I'm starting to tear up because as a dad, I feel like I have a breastplate.

Engraved on my breastplate are my wife and my sons and my grandchildren and my daughters-in-law, my family. That's my primary burden. I carry them before God, pretty much every day. This is what I do. I start with Sandy and John and Isaac and Arica, and I go all the way through each member.

I also pray for others that God has put on our heart. I have broken down my prayer prayer list to six days. On Sunday, I pray for those who I am carrying on my heart to be saved, Sunday -- Salvation. Monday, I pray for Missionaries, and Math-U-See. I pray for our family business, and I pray for those who are carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Tuesday, I pray for people that are Twos, families, couples. These are believers. I'm praying for them just like Aaron prayed, you might say, for the church when he was pouring oil into the golden lampstands. That's part of my job.

Wednesday, I pray for the people that didn't fit into Tuesday. I also pray for our government. I started this when George W. Bush was the president. I pray for W, his government, and I pray for elected officials.

Just like it says in 1 Timothy 2, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, Thanksgivings be made for all men." Then he goes on to say, "For kings and all those who are in high places." I pray for my elected officials all the way down from the president down to my county.

Then Thursday -- Thor's day, power -- I pray for ministries, lot of ministries that I'm aware of that I give to, but I want to pray for as well.

Then on Friday, I pray for extended family. Not only for my immediate family, which I pray all six days, but for my cousins and my cousin's kids, and my wife's family and their kids. I also pray for a whole bunch of dads -- Friday, fathers.

Then I have special prayers for people that are battling cancer, depression and mental challenges, marriages that are under attack. This is what I do to fulfill one another's burdens.

Carry one another's burdens, bear each other's burdens, bring them to the throne. James 5:16 puts it this way, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another." This is what we're doing.

Jesus said, "Pray for those who persecute you, pray for those who abuse you." I don't have a whole bunch of people on that list right now, but I have had some. Pray for God to send labors into the harvest.

Paul says, "Pray without ceasing." There's a lot of exhortations to pray, but when I do, I think of it in terms of that priestly picture of Aaron coming into God's presence with this breastpiece on carrying the burden that God had placed on his heart to 12 tribes. I want to be faithful in being a priest under the New Covenant, a priest following Jesus' example, and I'm going to be carrying people to God, and this is a part. Priests pray, but it's more than just going through the motions. We carry people on our heart. I've often wanted to go into a men's workshop and make vests, and have each man write down the names of his wife and their kids and put them on this garment, and then they could put it on each morning and carry them throughout the day because that's what I do as a dad.

All right, to another dad and another priest, what do you think?

Scott: I'm just struck by the weight of the whole thing. It's such a strong image. These stones on his vest. That would be heavy and rightly so because it is a heavy burden to carry the judgment of Israel on your chest. It probably ought to feel a bit of a heavy burden in being responsible in praying for our families and others.

Yet, we don't have to make stones out of it, and actually be weighed down by it. I never thought of that before, about how each stone...I've seen pictures where they have this elaborate vest, like in the old movies or whatever they show. It just looks like fancy jewelry or whatever, but no, it was very important to remind him of who he was praying for and what he was doing.

Steve: Yeah, it's such a visual, beautiful image and you can go lots of different places with it. This is what God asks us to do, is to stand by Him, which is what we talked last time. We're with Him, we're the priests, we're standing by Him, we're the closest to Him.

Steve: We're camped around the tabernacle as Levites. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, praying for us. Sometimes when I don't know what to pray, I say, "Father, I would like to join with Jesus right now." Whatever He's praying, I'm saying, "Amen." The scripture that says, "Where two agree, it shall be done." I said, "Jesus and me, we're agreeing right now on this." This is what He's doing. He's saving us by His life by praying for us. This is how we bear each other's burdens. Incredibly, as we bear each other's burdens we are fulfilling the law of Christ. Phew!

Father, thank You for the ennobling. Thank You for this calling. Thank you for this responsibility that we're sharing with You. You're praying, and we're praying.

We're doing what we see You doing, and we're doing what we saw Aaron doing and what these watchmen were doing for Jerusalem, so we do it. I pray that these burdens will not be heavy. You said Your burden is light, and Your yoke is easy.

It's doable, and so we do this today in Jesus' name. Help us to be faithful in doing it, and help us to be at our posts so that when You return You will find faith on this earth and find Your people praying?"

I believe You will, and I believe for everybody listening today that You'll help us to be faithful in believing regardless of what our eyes see, but believing for Your will to be done on earth just that as is in heaven, in Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen, and that's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@Gmail.com.