



Sermon Date: Sunday July 15th 2007

Title of Sermon: The Breastplate of Judgment (Exodus 28: 15-30 and Numbers 17) #10

At **Baraka**, God has called us to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to always be honest with ourselves as we reflect upon ways in which scripture applies to us in the current social, economic and political context. This is our tenth sermon in the series on the Church. I hope like me, **utabarikiwa sana** (you will be truly blessed) as you read and reflect upon the same.

In the book of Exodus, we read the following:-

Exodus 28:15-30. *15 “You shall make the breastplate of judgment. Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, you shall make it. 16 It shall be doubled into a square: a span shall be its length, and a span shall be its width. 17 And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row; 18 the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; 19 the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. 21 And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.*

22 “You shall make chains for the breastplate at the end, like braided cords of pure gold. 23 And you shall make two rings of gold for the breastplate, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. 24 Then you shall put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate; 25 and the other two ends of the two braided chains you shall fasten to the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in the front.

26 “You shall make two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on the edge of it, which is on the inner side of the ephod. 27 And two other rings of gold you shall make, and put them on the two shoulder straps, underneath the ephod toward its front, right at the seam above the intricately woven band of the ephod. 28 They shall bind the breastplate by means of its rings to the rings of the ephod, using a blue cord, so that it is above the intricately woven band of the ephod, and so that the breastplate does not come loose from the ephod.

29 “So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the LORD continually. 30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron’s heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.”

In the book of numbers we also read the following:-

Numbers 17: 1 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and get from them a rod from each father’s house, all their leaders according to their fathers’ houses—twelve rods. Write each man’s name on his rod. 3 And you shall write Aaron’s name on the rod of Levi. For there shall be one rod for the head of each father’s house.*

4 Then you shall place them in the tabernacle of meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you. 5 And it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom; thus I will rid Myself of the complaints of the children of Israel, which they make against you.”

6 So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers’ houses, twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. 7 And Moses placed the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

8 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds. 9 Then Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod.

10 And the LORD said to Moses, “Bring Aaron’s rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die.” 11 Thus did Moses; just as the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

12 So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, “Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! 13 Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD must die. Shall we all utterly die?”

“Lord Jesus Christ, save us and cause us to love the truth of your Word, I pray. May we have no pleasure in unrighteousness, and may you keep us safe and make us totally dependent on you until the final hour. Raise in our families, in your Church and in the community of Kenyans in Austin especially, our love for you. Save us all from sin and from the enemy of our souls; to the glory of your Holy name. Amen.”

Church affairs are to be decided by the principle of the breastplate of judgment. This means that those among the Lord’s people who are matured and godly ought to bear on their shoulders and carry on their breasts all the saints of God. They should come to the Father and read the conditions of His people in His light. It is only then that they should come to a decision, knowing well that the affairs of a local assembly are not ordered by one or two persons. Let all brothers and sisters reflect on the fact that when the people of God become the Body of Christ, the Lord’s way of revelation to them undergoes a change. At that time, the Lord will reveal His mind through all His people. God’s will is to incorporate Himself in his people and His speaking is but an echo of Himself having spoken among His own people. Before the elders rise to speak, God has already put His thought into the hearts of the brothers and sisters. The affairs of the Church are to be decided by the revelations which the elders receive as they come before the Lord with godly fear and carry all the people with them. Elders should learn to know the mind of God. Further more; God has no way to speak in a local assembly except all in the assembly learn to receive the dealing of the cross daily. Whether elders or apostles, old or young, teachers or those taught – everyone has to allow the cross to break him or her. Then will God speak to all distinctly. The elders especially must accept the dealing of the cross, because every action and every word of the elders exerts tremendous influence on the people.

Before the elders make any decision they must not only scan the conditions of all the brothers and sisters but also carry their affairs to the Father of all lights for prayers and considerations. In the church, no one can despise anybody else. Even those who murmur and oppose the purposes of God in us, we must carry their murmurs and oppositions to

God and carefully read their complaints. We must still bear them on our shoulders and inquire of the Lord regarding even such as they. Consider David for example that brought to God even the words of personal reproach spoken by others against him and read and inquired about them before the Lord (2Samuel 16:5-14). If you do not want to be provoked into making decisions against God's will and to hurt the hearts of brothers and sisters, you must live strictly by this principle. By this principle the Lord is able to articulate His will through His children and make it known to us.

It is necessary to mention here briefly one important element: the question of authority. We shall have ample opportunity in the next sermon to speak on the subject but I must clarify on the meaning of the term "authority". On first appearance, it would seem as if authority is something based on position: whoever occupies a position of leadership has the authority that goes with it. According to the scriptures, what is real is quite different from what seems to be. For authority in the scriptures is not something based on position but instead has its basis in life. The people of Israel recognized the authority of Aaron, for example, because they saw that Aaron's rod budded. Authority without resurrection life is useless. Authority in the church is based upon life, not upon position. It is not because people have elected you that therefore you have authority. No one in the Church can boast of having authority on the ground of occupying a certain position. David submitted to the authority of Saul for he feared God, but Saul was rejected by God because he rebelled against Him. Saul had the *position* of a king, but he lacked the *life* of a king. Since the authority of Saul was by virtue of his position and not of life, God did not sanction or endorse his authority. To the degree that the resurrection life of God is in you, to that degree will be your authority. True authority is never established by someone assuming a stern face and declaring, I am an elder and therefore I have authority. Anyone who in such a fashion dares to threaten people to submit to his authority will have his authority questioned. In the Church, brothers and sisters submit to one another in humility. Authority is exemplified in love so that the children of God will obey their hearts. May the Lord have mercy on us by giving us examples in his Church.

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Rev. Peter K. Ng'ang'a,
(Rector Baraka)

Remember that holiness is not rapture but **doing the will of our heavenly Father. It is **relying** on God with unquestioning confidence and **resting** in His love. It is **walking** by Faith and not by sight and an entire **surrender** of the will to God. It is **living** by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and **trusting** God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light.**

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