

Text: Exod. 28:13-30

Title: "Jesus's Locket"

Time: 7/23/2023 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: American author Kate Chopin wrote a short story titled, "The Locket," which is about two young lovers, Edmond and Octavia, who were separated by Edmond's service in the Confederate army during the Civil War, and about the locket that bound them together. The author describes the importance of their locket after Edmond had read Octavia's letter from home:

"The letter had made Edmond heart sick and home sick. He stretched himself on his back and looked straight up at the blinking stars. But he was not thinking of them nor of anything but a certain spring day when the bees were humming in the clematis; when a girl was saying good bye to him. He could see her as she unclasped from her neck the locket which she fastened about his own. It was an old fashioned golden locket bearing miniatures of her father and mother with their names and the date of their marriage. It was her most precious earthly possession. Edmond could feel again the folds of the girl's soft white gown, and see the droop of the angel-sleeves as she circled her fair arms about his neck. Her sweet face, appealing, pathetic, tormented by the pain of parting, appeared before him as vividly as life. He turned over, burying his face in his arm and there he lay, still and motionless" [<https://www.pbs.org/katechopin/library/locket.html>].

In our study of the tabernacle, we have come to the prescribed garments of the high priest. We began last time with the ephod, described in the first twelve verses of Chapter 28. We noted that the material of the ephod symbolized the mediation we need as sinners to be right with our holy God,

which Jesus provides for us as the Divine Messiah, our Prophet, Priest, and King. The shoulder stones, with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on them, pointed us to the sealing we need to belong to God, and we saw that the shoulders that carried the stones represent those that are broad enough to secure the future we need.

And now we come to one of the centerpieces of the garments of the high priest in our passage this morning. It is connected to the shoulders of the ephod and made of the same material. This breast-piece is also designed by God to teach us through Aaron what it is that our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, has done for His people as the one divine/human Mediator between God and man.

Interestingly, this article of clothing is very much like a locket. Like a locket, it is beautiful in its design. Like a locket, it is relational in its content. And like a locket, it is worn inseparably over the heart. And so, as we contemplate together the symbolism of Aaron's breast-piece, I have titled the message this morning "Jesus's Locket." We will notice those three things about the breast-piece's similarity to a locket.

I. The breast-piece is beautiful in its design (vv. 13-20).

Illustration: When I read about the design specifications of the breast-piece, with its colored woven materials, its golden framework and chains, and its four rows of three rare jewels each, I cannot help but conclude that our God is a God of great beauty and artistic skill. Erin can design and make beautiful apparel accessories, and she has done so professionally. Our Lord appreciates that kind of artwork, He is very good at it, and those among us who possess the gift to make similar things have received a gift that comes from Him. It is a beautiful part of the image of God our Creator in us as humans.

Application: Our passage mentions that the breast-piece is a "cunning work," or the work of a skilled craftsman (v. 15). The Lord, who authored these instructions, is the ultimate skilled Craftsman. As the sovereign Creator of beauty, He issues these commands to Moses to craft a cunning work of art. Moses would be out of step with the nature of beauty to answer back to the Lord, "But Lord, I think this design is ugly." God's design is the optimal design. And so when we read about the execution of these instructions in chapter 39, the account ends its description of the craftsmanship with the phrase, "just as the Lord commanded Moses."

The beauty of the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet material, which is folded over as a square, depicts the importance of the work of the Divine Messiah to the well-being of His people, who came from above, returning there as our Advocate.

The beauty of the pure gold settings, and rings, and chains, holding the breast-piece to the High Priest, reminds us of the role of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, who unites us as one together to Christ.

There is the beauty of the jewels, varied and yet organized together as one ornamentation, set in the gold above the names of the twelve tribes, which indicate that God's High Priest views His people as His own valuable treasure.

In Malachi 3 the Lord rebukes His people for robbing Him of tithes and offerings. Their treasure had become the things of this world, which they clasped so tightly they had neglected the needs of the Lord's house. But there were those who feared the Lord, about whom we read, "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (v. 17). The Lord cherishes His people like a jeweler his jewels and a father his son.

What do we cherish when we look around at one another? Do we see what our High Priest sees? Do we see His jewels, very different from one another, but organized in such a way as to be beautiful together in Him? When we see our church as Jesus sees us, when we value one another as He has valued us, then we shall know what it means to build His house with gold, silver, and precious stones, rather than wood, hay, and stubble. The former will last to eternal reward, while the latter will go up in flames. The breast-piece is beautiful in its design. Do we see the beauty of His design for our church?

II. The breast-piece is relational in its content (vv. 21, 29-30).

Illustration: Locketts are a special kind of jewelry. Most necklaces are prized for the monetary value of their stones. The content that makes them special is simply the rarity of their stones. But not so for a locket. The content that makes the locket special is the relationship its owner has with the people whose picture or name appears in the locket. Remember the description of Octavia's locket given to Edmond: "It was an old fashioned golden locket bearing miniatures of her father and mother with their names and the date of their marriage. It was her most precious earthly possession." That is the relational content that makes locketts precious.

Application: The breast-piece of the High Priest is precious for the same reason. It contains not only precious stones, but also precious names. The value of the stones merely symbolizes the priceless value of each name in the eyes of their High Priest, the Divine Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The design of the breast-piece reminds us that He values His relationship to His people not only in theory, but also in practice as He bears the names of His people on His heart.

1. He values us with His resolution. You probably have noticed that the breast-piece is repeatedly called *the breast-piece*

of judgment (vv. 15, 29, 30). That word *judgment* means *right decision or resolution*.

Illustration: I serve the Lord on the resolution committee of the American Council of Christian Churches, and in that role it is my responsibility to help the Council make right decisions together. When we pass a resolution, we are making what we believe to be a right decision, a judgment-call.

The breast-piece is the breast-piece of judgment because it represents the right decision that our High Priest has made concerning us His people, namely that He would do what it takes to bring us into God's holy house where we would be remembered by Him continually (v. 30b). What it took, of course, was the sacrifice of Himself for our sins. He became a man, lived a sinless life, and died in our place for our sins, suffering the wrath of God that we deserved.

One author pointed out that the tabernacle was most often called *the tent of the congregation*, and yet no one from the congregation was ever allowed in it. Then he pointed to the breast-piece with this comment: "Even though the people did not actually enter the tabernacle, there was a sense in which they entered it in the person of their spiritual representative, the high priest, who bore the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment" [Carl Armerding, "The Breastplate of Judgment," *BSAC* 118:469 (Jan 1961), 54]. Our High Priest Jesus valued us in His resolution to die for our sins that we might enter heaven in Him.

2. He values us with His intercessions. The Urim and Thummim are attached to the breast-piece of the high priest. And though we are not sure what these devices were nor how they worked exactly, we do know that *Urim* means *lights* and *Thummim* means *perfectings*. We also know from Num. 27:21 that the devices were a part of the high priest's ministry to

God's people, providing them with guidance, the ability to make right decisions, on their journey to the Promised Land.

Jesus still provides that guidance to His people today in His prayers for us, that we would know His sanctifying truth, which we find in His Word (John 17:17). The Bible is our light: Ps. 119:105, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"; Ps. 119:130, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple"; Isa. 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

And the Bible is the power that perfects us: Ps. 19:7, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple"; Heb. 4:12-14, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

Jesus, our Great High Priest, began our relationship to Him with His resolution to save us, and He is finishing what He began with His intercessions for us as He perfects our lives with the light of His Word. Are we willing recipients of this work of this Priest in our lives? Does He bear our name?

III. The breast-piece is worn inseparably over the heart (vv. 22-28).

Application: In the six verses of 22-27, God issues the command to fasten something to something five times. Then we

come to verse 28, and there the command *to bind* is issued, and the reason given for all these fastenings and this binding is “that the breast-piece does not come loose away from the ephod” (v. 28b). Unlike a locket that can be removed from over the heart of a loved one, the breast-piece of our High Priest, bearing the names of His people, cannot be removed from its position over His heart.

His is the heart described in the suffering of the prophecy of Ps. 22:14, “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” The heart of our High Priest is the heart of the one crucified on Calvary’s cruel cross for our hearts (v. 26).

His is also the heart of the prophecy of Ps. 16:8-10, “I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” The heart of our High Priest is the heart of the one risen from the dead that we might live.

This work binds our names for eternity inseparably over the heart of our Priest: “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 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. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Heb. 7:24-27).

Conclusion: In Kate Chopin’s fictional story, Edmond died on the battlefield of the Civil War, and Octavia’s locket was removed from him and returned to her.

In the historical case of the life and times of Jesus, our Great High Priest, He died on the battlefield of war against our sin, but His locket never had to be removed in sorrow, for He rose again and still bears the names of His people continually before the Lord.

Is Jesus your Aaron? Can you see your name written upon His heart before the Lord continually? Do you know that His heart had to die on the cross and rise again in order for your heart to be saved from your sins? Have you ever thanked Him for that in repentance and faith?

If you have, the breast-piece invites us to rejoice in this blessing. Are you secure that He who began this good work will finish it in you? Are you welcoming daily the blessing of the light and perfecting influence of His Word? God designed this centerpiece of the priestly garments as your invitation into the very heart of His love.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*