

Chapter 3 – Levi and the Carbuncle

The third stone is *carbuncle (1304)*: (bareqeth /baw-reh'-keth/) a red gem (the Hebrew word for the gem means “flashing”).¹

Symbols in the stone

Red, as previously mentioned, represents blood, sacrifice, blood atonement, the passing over of God’s judgment (see Ex. 12:3-28; Josh. 2:18-21); it also represents royalty, prosperity, prestige, and valiance (Lam. 4:5; Dan. 5:7,16,29; Nah. 2:3).

This gem was known to reflect light brightly and suddenly, hence the name *flashing*. Therefore, the stone symbolizes the glory of God reflected through the saints (Mat. 5:14-16).

Symbols in the order of the stone

Three is the number of the Godhead (1 Jn. 5:7) and the number of testimony, or witness (Deut. 19:15; Mat. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). Since the stone is the third, it is also symbolic of the yielding, or producing, of seed and fruit (Gen. 1:9-13). Believers are expected to bear God’s seed, the word of God (Lu. 8:11) and bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9).

Facts about Levi

- ▶ His name means “joined”.
- ▶ He was Jacob and Leah’s third son.
- ▶ Leah believed Jacob would now be genuinely “joined” to her since she had given him three sons (Gen. 29:34). In other words, she thought Jacob would be devoted to her instead of Rachel.
- ▶ The Levites served in the tabernacle and temples as priests (if they were Aaron’s descendants) and as assistants to the priests during offerings and in the maintenance of the places of worship.
- ▶ They are the only ones who stood on the Lord’s side when Moses rebuked Israel for worshipping the golden calf (Ex. 32:26).
- ▶ Levites were not given any tribal land in the promised land. Instead, God said he would be their portion (Num. 18:20). However, they received 48 cities from the other tribes that they could live in.

Jacob’s prophecy about Levi

See discussion on Jacob’s prophecy of Simeon in Chapter 2.

Moses’ prophecy about Levi

¹ Strong, p. 24.

“And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah.” (Deut. 33:8)

In the blessing Moses has for Levi, he is actually praying to God on the tribe’s behalf. The following are definitions to help us understand this scripture better:

- ▶ *Thummim(8550)*: (Tummiym /toom-meem’/) plural of 8537 (tom /tome/) which means completeness, integrity, or perfection; perfections.²
- ▶ *Urim (224)*: (Uwriym /oo-reem’/) plural of 217 (uwr /oor/) which means flame or light; lights.³

The Thummim and Urim were objects placed on the breastplate of judgment so the high priest could “bear the judgment” of Israel (Ex. 28:30). Apparently, if an issue came up that needed God’s attention, the Lord would communicate to the high priest through these objects to tell him what he wanted done. No one is sure what the objects actually were.

Moses’ prayer is that God’s lights and perfections would be with Levi, the Lord’s holy one. It was crucial for the Levites to be able to hear from God so they could discern good or bad and right from wrong.

Application: We as saints of God have God’s perfections and lights in our hearts through Christ so we can make correct judgments about various matters in life. Our judgments must not be according to appearances, but we must judge righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24). Looks can be deceiving so we must stay in close contact with God to know the truth behind what we may see in life’s serious situations.

The Levites were tested at Massah (meaning “testing, see Ex. 17:1-7) and Meribah (meaning “strife”, see Num. 20:1-13) when the rest of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron. Levi was the only tribe to remain faithful to their God-given leadership. However at Meribah, Moses and Aaron reacted to Israel in a way that displeased the Lord and as punishment they were not allowed to go to the Promised Land.

Observation: God allows us to face moments of testing and will strive with us at times (like he did when he wrestled Jacob) to show us where we stand spiritually (Prov. 17:3). These are situations which reveal our level of spiritual maturity and the Lord uses them to let us know whether he is pleased or displeased with how we think and act.

“Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word and kept thy covenant.” (Deut. 33:9)

It was more important to the tribe of Levi to obey the Lord than to have any regard for their friends or family when Israel bowed down to the golden calf at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 32:26-29). They reflected character that was true to the commandment God gave them in Deut. 13:6-11 which stated that any person, no matter how close to you, was to be stoned if they tried to turn

² Strong, p. 125.

³ Ibid., p. 10.

you to idolatry.

Observation: Jesus upheld the principle behind this commandment when he told us that anyone who puts family before him was not worthy of him (Matt. 10:37; Lu. 14:26).

“They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.” (Deut. 33:10)

The Levites had the responsibility to teach the whole nation of Israel the word of God and to be in charge of the worship services. The worship services included burning incense (symbolic of the prayers of the saints; see Ps. 141:2, Rev. 8:3) and offering burnt sacrifices (symbolic of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins).

Application: Christ has made us his royal priesthood and now every saint’s responsibility is to know God’s word and to share it with others, especially the lost. We are called upon to pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17) so our prayers should be constantly rising to heaven like sweet-smelling incense. As Christ sacrificed his life for us, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). In summary, our lives are to be a worship service to the Lord.

“Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.” (Deut. 33:8-11)

Since the Levites’ duties were so important and serious, they would need Jehovah to bless everything pertaining to them and to accept their works. Undoubtedly, theirs would be a thankless job in many instances so rewards from the Lord would be needed for their encouragement. Furthermore, standing for the truth and having a ministry such as theirs could stir up jealousies and hatred in others. Therefore, they would need God’s divine protection to defeat their enemies so their works for God could continue.

Observation: Standing for righteousness and speaking the truth in love in this sinful, dark world can be discouraging at times. However, when God blesses us and we are aware that he accepts our works, the persecutions we face prove to be nothing in comparison to God’s approval. If necessary, the Lord will bring down our enemies when they try to hinder us from completing the works he called us to do.

In summary, Levi and the carbuncle represent the following ideas & characteristics: our being joined to the Lord through Christ; royalty; prosperity; prestige; valiance; saints bringing forth spiritual seed (the word of God, Lu. 8:11) and the fruit of the Spirit; mercy; longsuffering; gentleness; temperance; blessings from the Lord on our godly partnerships but curses on our ungodly ones; maintaining God’s perfections and lights in our hearts; testing from God; striving with God; learning God’s word and sharing it with others; the importance of pleasing God over pleasing men, especially family; God’s defeat of our enemies in the midst of our lifestyle of service to him.