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Topic: Exodus 28:29–30: "About Aaron's breastplate of judgment with the Urim and Thummim!"

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Everyone is warmly welcomed from all peoples, tongues, and nations. What more could we wish for than that God might have His way in every country? And not only in every country, but with each one of us. That we might actually reach the point of being in complete harmony with our God. That a truly divine harmony might arise and the Lord might have His way with us all.

We have already heard a wonderful Word. We could pause at every verse and delve into it. And perhaps before I quote the Scriptures from the Old Testament concerning the lights and perfections, I would like to touch very briefly on Ephesians 1. Ephesians chapter 1, I shall continue reading; Brother Russ has already read some wonderful verses, namely perhaps the second part of verse 9 and then on to verse 10:

[9] ***Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he has purposed in him-self,***

[10] ***that in the dispensation of the fullness of times...***

There is a development ordained by God in the plan of salvation, and all things proceed in an orderly manner in the kingdom of God, even if some things seem completely chaotic to us, with God everything is in order and takes its course according to how God has determined it.

We read on in verse 11.

[11] ***In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.***

Could it be stated any more clearly? Comprehensible to everyone who can read and write and who has ears, and especially to those who have ears to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

It is precisely in the reality of divine predestination that such a firm anchor for our soul lies. Nothing can shake us. We know this is how God has ordained it and so it shall remain for all eternity, whether over hill or through valley, or vice versa, in

rain or sunshine, in every situation and circumstance, we may walk with the Lord in the certainty that He will bring all things to good end.

Then it continues in verse 12:

[12] ***That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.***

In whom should we trust? In no one else. The law came through Moses. Grace and truth through Jesus Christ, our Lord. [Joh 1:17]

And we need both. We need grace and truth. And when these two are found in our lives, then we are those who have been granted grace, found in divine truth.

Verse 13 then goes on to say:

[13] ***In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,***

[14] ***Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.***

We cannot go into the details here.

But whilst many have the anointing, only those who are truly being transformed into the image of Jesus and who will share in the first resurrection and rapture have the sealing.

As I said, we cannot go into this in more detail. On Wednesday evening a passage was read here, which I would like to repeat from 1 Corinthians 2. 1 Corinthians 2, verse 12.

1 Corinthians 2, verse 12:

[12] ***Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.***

Not merely an anointing that causes us to rejoice, shout for joy, exult and sing, but that God's revelation is connected with it. And so we are told here, "***we have received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.***"

I read on:

[13] ***Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.***

Hallelujah! Praise be to God!

[13] ***... But which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.***

That is to say, combining Spirit-inspired content with Spirit-inspired language. The spoken word must correspond with the written Word, the content of the Word must correspond with the sermon in both letter and spirit. Both must be in divine harmony. If one seeks to expound the Word, which is spirit and life [Joh 6:63], by human reason, it does not work. But when the Spirit comes to our aid and unites the Spirit-inspired content with Spirit-inspired language, speech, and preaching, then God's Word is alive in our midst. Then it is as fresh as if the Lord were speaking to us for the very first time today. Then we are under the impression of this mighty Word of God and experience God anew time and again.

Since water baptism is also to take place, I must be very brief with everything that is said. I mentioned this morning that God has always ensured that people could know whether something is true or not. But there were times when the Bible had not yet been written. There were times when God had to give people an answer.

I would like to read here from Exodus 28. Exodus 28, verse 30.

[30] ***And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually***

The Luther translation and most others render the terms 'lights' and 'perfections' here. These were the two sacred lots that were placed in the breastplate, and God gave the answer through the light, provided the matter was correct.

From Leviticus chapter 8. Leviticus chapter 8, verse 8.

[8] ***And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim***

Very clear, written quite plainly. We shall not go into this in more detail. I shall simply continue reading the Scriptures. Numbers 27. Numbers 27, verse 21. It is very important that the things stated here are substantiated by Holy Scripture and given to the people.

What did I just say? Numbers 27. Verse 21.

[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 shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in...***

So God has answered; one could ask, and if God approved of the matter, the light would shine. If God did not approve, it remained dark. And the people knew exactly whether God was in agreement or not. And so they could consult the Lord and thereby learn God's will.

In 1 Samuel chapter 28. 1 Samuel chapter 28, let us also read. 1 Samuel 28, verse 6.

[6] ***And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.***

These were the three common forms in the Old Testament, at least since the days of Moses when this instruction was given. Here we read of three things: "***he inquired of the Lord, but the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets***."

So it was a common way of seeking God's will and receiving an answer from the Lord.

In Ezra chapter 2, we are then told that only when a priest came with this lights and perfections, so that God might be consulted, should certain things be permitted to be done. Ezra chapter 2, verse 62.

[62] ***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.***

[63] ***And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.***

You are familiar, of course, with the story of Ezra and Nehemiah, with the return of the people, with the rebuilding of the temple, with everything that took place at that time. And great importance was attached to the fact that those who professed to be part of God's people knew their tribe and presented their birth certificates. Before that, they could not be accepted.

Beloved, we too must be able to present our certificate of the new birth before God, if we wish to be incorporated into the house of God, into the temple of God, into the church of God, and baptized by one Spirit into one body. [1Co 12:13]

If we pursue this line of thought further, then it is truly necessary that every individual—and now specifically in relation to baptism—that every individual has a personal experience with God.

And this experience actually consists of two parts. The first is that the Spirit of God works upon the person, bringing about repentance and causing the person to turn to God. But when the person in question who turns to God is converted, that is, turns back, converts to the Lord, when this conversion takes place, then what Paul writes to the Romans must be fulfilled:

His Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we have become children of God. [Rom 8:16]

That moment must come, and I can personally recall it as if it were yesterday or today. It is a time of prayer, of wrestling, of weeping, of supplication. Suddenly, the whole picture changes and there is praise and thanksgiving for acceptance, namely

that God has looked upon us with mercy and accepted us and made us children of God according to the Scripture: ***As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name***. [Joh 1:12]

If you have believed in His name, in the name of Jesus, for your salvation, for your redemption, for the forgiveness of your sins, and this faith is alive and God has accepted you, then He gives you the answer. Suddenly, indeed, things turn around and you begin to praise and glorify and thank the Lord that He has accepted you. Yes, it is an experience.

[16] ***His Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we have become children of God***.

[17] ***And if we are children, then we are also heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ*** [Rom 8:16-17],

as it is written in Holy Scripture.

So, addressed especially to all those who wish to be baptized today: you know, we do not begin to work on the outward person. We leave it to God to begin working on the inner person. We have seen time and again that people come to hear the Word for the first time. They come just as they are. I have seen it in various countries, that women have come wearing full makeup, dressed up who knows how, with lots of accessories hanging from their necks, ears, and elsewhere. And lo and behold, during the sermon, the tears flowed. And later, during the prayer, one could see the difference between their own skin and the makeup. Yes, I've seen in many countries that the Spirit of God has worked in a mighty way, that tears have flowed. But everyone came just as they were. Many came with very short hair and so forth. They all came just as they were, and that is exactly how you should all come too. No one should try to look different, and one should not start by changing one's outward appearance, but leave that to the Lord to work on the inside. And then it follows that the Spirit will do the teaching.

For you, beloved sisters in Christ, those of you who still have very short hair, you know that it is still growing. Not only in youth, but even later on, hair does indeed continue to grow. The Bible actually says in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 that it is a disgrace for a woman to cut her hair short. [1Co 11:6]

And Paul even says, "***if she cuts her hair short, she should have it shaved off***", so that everyone may know who she is and where she stands.

The same Bible says in the same chapter that "***long hair is a woman's glory, for it is given to her as a covering.***" [1Co 11:15]

Feet for walking, hands for working, eyes for seeing, long hair given as a covering by grace.

But how glad we are when new people are added just as they are. Our sisters can embrace all sisters, regardless of how they come, in short or long trousers, with short or long hair, it doesn't matter.

God is beginning to work after all. Has he not begun with all of us? How did we come to the Lord? Everyone came just as they were.

That is why we ask that everyone feels at ease in God's presence, that no one judges anyone else, that no one looks down on another, but that we all remember where God called us from and brought us. Let us feel at ease in the presence of Almighty God.

I will never forget it: here in this side room I once cut the hair of two brothers. And though I am certainly no hairdresser by trade, they came here with long, really far too long hair and wanted to be baptized. I said: "Brothers, I'm delighted, but first a haircut." And that was funny back then. I hadn't been at a hairdresser for a long time. Brother Russ is my personal hairdresser. But as I said, you really see so much hair being cut off. But it was really worth it back then, I must say.

But I did it with so much love; there wasn't even a sore spot afterwards, after the cut. Everything was fine, done out of love. Believe me, whatever God does always has healing in it. No wounding, no injury, no punishment, always seasoned with divine love.

And so it shall remain here and become even more intimate, so that one day it may be said, as the Lord also proclaimed in the Gospel of John: "***By this everyone will know that ye are my disciples, if you love one another.***" [Joh 13:35]

Not by doctrine, not by some form in the church, but truly by this: "***if you love one another***".

And "***love does no harm to one's neighbor.***" [Rom 13:10]

Love is for the truth and rejoices in the truth. [1Co 13:6]

Since we have already read in the Old Testament about the lights and perfections, let us carry this thought over into the New Testament for a moment, just very briefly, in a figurative sense.

John had already begun this; in the first chapter of the Gospel of John he said: "***I have come to bear witness of the light.***" [Joh 1:7-8]

So it is a matter of enlightenment. "***He was to be the light for the enlightenment of the nations,***" as we read, if I'm not mistaken, in Isaiah chapter 49, verse 6.

Isaiah 49, verse 6:

[6] ***And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will***

also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

And if you then read verse 8, it says:

[8] ***Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee.***

God is gracious, he's merciful, he's faithful. He does not want anyone to be lost, but for all to have eternal life, so that they may live with him forever.

I believe that this point too ought to be clear to us all. Only those who have eternal life can live forever. And there is only one who has eternal life, and that is God. And God has revealed himself in Christ, and thus eternal life has come to us.

And that is why Scripture says: "***Whoever has the Son of God has eternal life; whoever does not have the Son does not have life.***" [1Jo 5:12]

We could live for eons, and an eon could be a thousand years or ten thousand years; that would make no difference at all. But eternal life, not eonic life, eternal life can only be possessed by those who can live up to 1 John chapter 5, verse 20 and have also experienced it. I shall read this verse. We cannot read many scriptures now because of time. 1 John chapter 5, verse 20:

[20] ***And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.***

Very clear for all who wish to believe it, who wish to accept it. No one needs to interpret it any further.

One verse from Acts 22 and then another from 26. We are all familiar with these scriptures. Acts chapter 22, verse 6:

[6] ***And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.***

God is light. And we have read this here before; Jesus said: "***Whoever follows me will not remain in darkness, but will have the light of life.***" [Joh 8:12]

In chapter 26, Acts chapter 26, verse 13 states:

[13] ***At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.***

God dwells in a light. And when he reveals himself, he can and does appear in a light even brighter than the sunlight at midday. I believe this, just as it is written here, with all my heart and with all my soul.

You know, I once saw the glory of the Lord and also the supernatural light at the turn of the year from the last day of December 1980 to the first day of January 1981. Oh yes, I have seen the glory of the Lord and am very grateful to God for it. I have recounted it to you here, described how this radiance into which I was allowed to look for just a moment truly is. The best way I can describe it is that the sun is shining on freshly fallen snow, and that glittering of billions of sparks, so that one thinks the whole thing is alive and moving. That is how imbued this glory of God was, this light with such a glitter. I did see it, that's why I can describe it. I know it is very difficult for some to believe, but I would have no reason or cause to tell you fairy tales. I can describe the whole thing in great detail from start to finish, the entire experience. God can, God has appeared in the light, and he bestows light, he gives light. Whoever follows him will truly not remain in darkness, but will have the light of life.

From Romans 8:16; I wanted to read this verse after all before we briefly touch on baptism, to let everyone know that it is precisely the Spirit of God who grants this assurance by grace. Romans chapter 8, verse 16:

[16] ***The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.***

Not that we will become, but that we have become through faith in Jesus Christ, by grace. Everyone born into this world will sooner or later know and understand. And whoever is born of God will sooner or later know and understand: "***the Spirit of God bears witness to our spirit that we have become children of God by grace.***" [Rom 8:16]

For those who wish to be baptized, here is a brief passage from Romans chapter 6. We shall read from verse 1 so that a sermon on this topic is unnecessary. Romans chapter 6, verse 1:

[1] ***What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?***

[2] ***God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?***

[3] ***Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?***

[4] ***Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.***

[5] ***For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:***

[6] ***Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.***

[7] ***For he that is dead is freed from sin.***

Amen.

After all, no one has any claim on a dead person. Indeed, others will probably have to pay for the funeral. You can no longer turn to the dead; he bears no further responsibility, he's no longer even there. For those who have died with Christ, there are no rights left that could be claimed or enforced anywhere. Rather, whoever has died with him has been taken out of the realm of Satan, death, and hell once and for all. And as we read together earlier in the opening word, we were destined for salvation by God before the foundation of the world. If we accept this salvation and truly recognize that, as it were, everyone was already in Adam from the outset. You know, God did not create every human being again and again and so on, but God created Adam, and then he took Eve from him and brought her to him. And he cried out: "***Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone. That is why she is to be called woman...***" [Gen 2:23]

That is actually what the original text says—woman, because she was taken from the man.

Well, applying this now, we have all been in the second Adam, namely in Christ. And whoever is now born of God is born again through the Word and the Spirit unto a living hope. Perhaps I must read the passage from 1 Corinthians 15 so that everyone knows what we are talking about. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 45:

[45] ***And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.***

A life-giving spiritual being.

[46] ***Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.***

[47] ***The first man is of the earth, earthy.***

So it is written here, or earthly. The language has changed a little, become a little more refined, but let us read it as it is written here.

[47] ***The first man is of the earth, earthy.***

That is from the earth.

[47] ***The second man is of heavenly origin.***

"... ***is of heavenly origin***". There is the first Adam, there is the second Adam. There is an earthly birth into this world, and there is a new birth through the Spirit of God into the kingdom of God. And one must have experienced both. For "***what is born of the flesh is flesh***" [Joh 3:6] and "***flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.***" [1Co 15:50]

That is why our Lord said: "***I tell you the truth: you must be born again.***" [Joh 3:3, Joh 3:7]

We read on here, but I like this text very much.

[47] ***The first man is of the earth, earthy. The second man is of heavenly origin.***

[48] ***As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.*** [1Co 15:48]

These are biblical truths. And now comes verse 49:

[49] ***And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.***

Praise be to the name of the Lord!

Could it be written any more clearly? No. It has been stated so clearly and plainly. So, to you, beloved, who wish to be baptized, and to all of us who have already been baptized, let us ask the Lord, let us implore him that we have had this experience with God, to recognize: "I was already in Christ. God chose me in him before the foundation of the world. I was with him and in him when he suffered, when he died, I went down with him, I came up with him, I have been transferred with him into the kingdom of heaven. I was in him and he is in me." So it is written in John 15: "***You in me and I in you.***" [Joh 14:20]

And then again: "***If my words remain in you and you remain in me, then you may ask whatever you wish, and it shall be given to you.***" [Joh 15:7]

We were in the plan, we were in Christ just as all humanity was already in Adam. And then each one came forth in their own time. Thus God was able to choose us in Christ. He has surveyed the entire span of time since time began, and time will end and flow back into eternity. Thus God has surveyed the entire span of time. He has seen it, he is all-knowing, and he was able to inscribe the names of those who would become believers in his book. As we have also read: "***everything runs according to the dispensation of the fullness of times he has ordained.***" [Eph 1:10]

And we may now at the end of the time of grace let ourselves be incorporated into this dispensation of the fullness of times and share in what God is doing right now.

All those who wish to be baptized should also know that here we are baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the biblical and apostolic doctrine, just as all the apostles baptized, in the knowledge that God has revealed himself as Father in the Son and through the Holy Spirit. And likewise in the knowledge that it happened in one name alone. "***You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.***" [Mat 1:21]

For "***there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,***" [Act 4:12] only in the name of Jesus.

So the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is Jesus. For that is the only name. If I were to ask: what is the Father's name, what answer would you give me? What would you say? When Jesus said: "***I have manifested thy name unto them,***" [Joh 17:6] what name did he reveal?

Many have racked their brains over it, but without revelation it is a little difficult. With only a little knowledge, even theological knowledge, biblical revelations and divine revelations are not easily accessible. And so it pleased the Lord to provide clarity on this point as well and to lead us back to the doctrine of the apostles. For we know that they had the revelation from the Lord, for Christ our redeemer spent forty days with them after his resurrection, and it is written that he taught them about the kingdom of God, as can be read in the first verses of Acts chapter 1. And we believe that this forty-day teaching was subsequently reflected in the epistles, in the overall teaching of the New Testament. If we baptize as our fathers in the early church did, then it will certainly be right before God. We must always see the connections here too, as Jesus said, "***baptize them in the name***" [Mat 28:19], then this is truly about a name in which God has revealed himself for our salvation, and not merely about titles.

God is our Father, that is what he is. And that is why we pray, "***our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.***" [Mat 6:9]

But Father is not a name, we all know that. And Son is not a name either, it is a designation of what someone is. We have many sons here, many fathers, but none is called Son, and none is called Father. So this is really about the name. And that is not splitting hairs, and that's not being a know-it-all. Those are fundamental biblical truths that distinguish us as the church of Jesus Christ from all others.

And so let us be faithful in this matter by being prepared to bear the reproach of the name of Jesus Christ no matter what others say. There are many who say Jesus only, I have never been one of them. I do not know exactly what it means, but this much I do know, that I believe in the Almighty God, who is invisible to us, who is Spirit by nature, and who then came down from the fullness, who revealed himself as Yahweh, as the Logos, who proceeded from the fullness, and then became flesh. And in Jesus Christ we have "***Emmanuel, God with us***" [Mat 1:23].

Blessed are all those who see this. It is not complicated, but one cannot fully grasp it with the mind, nor explain it in words to the very end. But you can believe it and thank the Lord for it. This one can do at the beginning, in the middle, and then again at the end. So let us believe from the heart as the Scripture says and trust the Lord.

Whoever wishes to be baptized must take this thought to heart, that by doing so, they bear witness to being buried with Christ into his death. [Rom 6:4]

This is what immersion signifies. As the person being baptized is immersed, the primary point being made is that here this person has died with Christ, is buried

with him through baptism.

And bringing him out of the water means that he emerges with Christ into a new life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And that's no accident either, in this context. The person experiences the power of the resurrection. New divine resurrection life enters into us.

Fear not, only believe, and you will see and experience the glory of God manifested in yourselves.

These things are not merely proclaimed, they are believed and experienced. Praise be to the name of the Lord. Amen.

Let us rise for prayer.

Let us bow our heads. Remain in silent prayer before God and open our hearts to the Lord.

Before we pray, I would like to ask if anyone wishes to be included in this prayer whilst all eyes are bowed and we remain in prayer with no one looking around. Who has the courage to raise their hand in prayer? God sees the many hands. God bless you. God bless everywhere.

Heavenly Father, you have seen the hands, and you know the hearts. You have spoken to us through your Word, worked through your Spirit, O Lord. We thank you for this. Faithful God, now we pray for all those who have raised their hands.

Beloved and faithful God, you know their concerns, whether they are of a spiritual, earthly, or bodily nature. Faithful God, we all come together before your presence and ask you, intervene. With all our intercessions, with our prayer requests, with everything we come to you and thank you already for having heard us and for the fact that you will save, deliver, heal, and bless.

Beloved Lord, we also thank you for your Word this weekend. We thank you for the work of your Holy Spirit and ask you to remain with us even during the baptismal service, O Lord.

May you be present with your blessing. We present to you all those who are to be baptized and we ask you, accept them, forgive them all their sins and be gracious to them, O Lord, that they may seek and find union with you in prayer.

Yes, Lord, and that through your Spirit you may bear witness to them that they have become children of God, that you have accepted them, that your blood was shed for them on Golgotha, that you were "wounded, beaten, tortured, and crucified for them.

Beloved Lord, may you graciously place this living faith in every heart.

Once again our heartfelt and sincere thanks for this weekend, for the meetings, for your Word. We also thank you now for all our dear brothers and sisters from

Czechoslovakia, from Finland, from Romania, from France, from Belgium, from Switzerland, from Austria, from everywhere, O Lord. You faithful God, bless us all and be with us all by your grace. Yes, lift up your countenance upon us and grant us your peace, assurance of faith, joy in the Holy Spirit, and grateful hearts.

O great God, worship and honor be offered to you now and forever in Jesus' holy name. Hallelujah. Amen.