

Exodus 28:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.

Analysis

The stones correspond to Israel's twelve tribes by name, engraved like a signet ring. The phrase 'each according to his name' (וְאִישׁ עַל־שְׁמוֹ, ish al-sh'mo) emphasizes individual identity. God doesn't blur distinctions but celebrates them while maintaining unity. Signet engraving suggests ownership and authority—these names are officially God's, authenticated by His seal. Christ knows His sheep by name (John 10:3), each permanently engraved on His priestly heart.

Historical Context

Signet engraving required skilled artisans who could carve names without cracking precious stones. The permanence of engraving (versus ink that fades) demonstrated that tribal identity before God was irrevocable—once named, always named.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's knowing you 'by name' differ from generic or impersonal religion?
2. What does the permanence of engraving teach about the security of your identity in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶבְנִים	אֲבָנִים	בְּנִי	לִשְׁבָּא
And the stones	according to their names	of the children	of Israel
H68	H1961	H5921	H3478
shall they be according to the twelve	according to their names	according to their names	according to their names
H8147	H6240	H5921	H8034
תְּהִינִּים	שְׁמִים	שְׁמִים	שְׁמִים
like the engravings	of a signet	every one	according to their names
H6603	H2368	H376	H1961
לִשְׁבָּא	עֲשָׂרָה	שְׁבָתִים	תְּהִינִּים
shall they be according to the twelve	tribes	tribes	tribes
H8147	H6240	H7626	H8034

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 21:12 (References Israel): And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: