

Exodus 39:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

The stones bearing Israel's tribal names 'according to their names, like the engravings of a signet' (כְּפָתִיחָה חֹתֶם, ke-pituche chotam) emphasizes permanence and ownership. Signet engravings denote authority and covenant commitment. Each tribe—not a collective 'Israel' but individual names—appears on a stone, teaching that God's covenant encompasses both corporate (twelve tribes) and individual (each name) identity. This dual reality prefigures both the church's corporate identity and believers' individual assurance. The twelve tribes represent the fullness of God's covenant people, fulfilled in the church as the twelve apostles' foundation (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14).

Historical Context

Birth order determined the tribal names' sequence on the stones, maintaining the patriarchal structure given through Jacob's twelve sons. The engraving's permanence contrasted with written scrolls that could fade or be destroyed, emphasizing God's unalterable covenant promises.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does your name being 'engraved' before God, not merely written, guarantee salvation's security?
2. What does the twelve tribes' representation teach about God's faithfulness to His corporate covenant people?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶבֶנִים	אֶל	בְּנֵי	לִשְׁרָאֵל	נָה
And the stones	according to their names	of the children	of Israel	
H68	H8034	H1121	H3478	H2007
לְשִׁנְיִם	עַל	שְׁמָ וְ	פָּתֹוח	
according to the twelve	עַל	שְׁמָ וְ	like the engravings	
H8147	H6240	H5921	H8034	H6603
חֲתָם	אֶל	שְׁמָ וְ	לְשִׁנְיִם	
of a signet	every one	according to their names	according to the twelve	
H2368	H376	H5921	H8034	H8147
שָׁבָט	עַשְׁ	ר		
tribes				
H6240				
H7626				

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: