

The Doctrine of Urim and Thummim

Topics		
Hebrew	Scripture	The design of the Ephod of God
Uncertainties About Urim and Thummim	King Saul and the Ephod of God	David and the Ephod of God
The Ephod and Urim and Thummim	Urim and Thummim are not Mentioned, but Probably Used	Passages Incorrectly Associated with Urim and Thummim
Passages Where Urim and Thummim Should Have Been Consulted	The Demise of Urim and Thummim	Conclusion
Summary		Brief Summary
Charts, Maps and Doctrines		
Doctrine of the Ephod of God Alluded to	Urim and Thummim as Defined and Explained by Others	Interpretations of Urim and Thummim

Preface: The High Priest wore an Ephod, which had several stones affixed to it. There also appeared to be a pocket in this Ephod (or, in the breast piece permanently affixed to the Ephod) where there were two more stones (I am assuming this is what they were), known are Urim and Thummim (we really do not know the physical nature of Urim and Thummim). Some equate Urim and Thummim with lots which are thrown to determine God's will; and others see Urim and Thummim as referring to the stones which are affixed to the breast plate and shoulders of the priestly vesture.

Since Urim and Thummim are closely related to the Ephod of God, there will be a great deal of overlap in these two doctrines (the **Doctrine of the Ephod of God** will be covered in 1Sam. 23).

1. First the Hebrew:
 - a. Urim is *ʾūrîym* [אֲרִיִּם] [pronounced oo-REEM], which means *lights; revelations* and is transliterated *Urim*. Strong's #224 BDB #22.
 - b. Thummim is *tûmmîym* [תִּמְמִים] [pronounced toom-MEEM], which means *perfections; completeness, integrity*; and is transliterated *Thummim*. Thummim is a plural noun. Strong's #8550 BDB #1070.
 - c. Together, these words are sometimes rendered *Lights and Perfections*.
 - d. ISBE makes the apt observation that, going to the Babylonian language to make sense of these words puts us on dangerous ground, particularly since we already have Hebrew meanings for these words. Therefore, we will not explore this option.¹
 - e. However, ISBE does suggest that Urim and Thummim could be antonyms, and mean *Lights and Darknesses*, which would possibly suggest that these stones lighting up and not lighting up would give the answers to the questions asked of God. There are a number of Hebrew words based upon the same stem as *Thummim* which mean *concealing, closing up, darkness*, so this would be a reasonable interpretation. From all that I have read, I find this explanation to be the most satisfying; however, that by no means clinches the meaning of *Urim and Thummim*.

¹ You can explore this further in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. IV; p. 3041.

2. Urim and Thummim defined by others:

At this point, a chart is appropriate. Some of the sources had so much information on Urim and Thummim, that I preferred to include all of their work. Given the length of the definitions, I did not italicize the passages. The two explanations found here are taken directly from e-sword:

Urim and Thummim as Defined and Explained by Others

Commentator	Definition and Explanation
Fausett	<p>[Urim and Thummim mean] "lights and perfections." The article "the" before each shows their distinctness. In Deut. 33:8 the order is reversed "thy Thummim and thy Urim." Urim is alone in Num. 27:21 1Sam. 28:6. Saul is answered neither by dreams nor by Urim. Thummim is never by itself. Inside the high priest's breast-plate were placed the Urim and Thummim when he went in before the Lord (Ex. 28:15–30 Lev. 8:8). Mentioned as already familiar to Moses and the people. Joshua, when desiring counsel to guide Israel, was to "stand before Eleazar the priest, who should ask it for him after the judgment of Urim before Jehovah" (Num. 27:21). Levi's glory was "thy Thummim and thy Urim are with thy Holy One," i.e. with Levi as representing, the whole priestly and Levitical stock sprung from him (Deut. 33:8–9).</p> <p>In Ezra 2:63 finally those who could not prove their priestly descent were excluded from the priesthood "till there should stand up a priest with Urim and Thummim." Theteraphim apparently were in Hosea 3:4 Judges 17:5 Judges 18:14 Judges 18:20 Judges 18:30, the unlawful substitute for Urim (compare 1Sam. 15:23 "idolatry," Hebrew teraphim; and 2Kings 23:24, margin). Speaker's Commentary thinks that lots were the mode of consultation, as in Acts 1:26 Prov. 16:33. More probably stones with Jehovah's name and attributes, "lights" and "perfections," engraven on them were folded within the ephod. By gazing at them the high priest with ephod on, before the Lord, was absorbed in heavenly ecstatic contemplation and by God was enabled to declare the divine will.</p> <p>The Urim and Thummim were distinct from the 12 stones, and were placed within the folds of the double choshen. Philo says that the high priest's breast-plate was made strong in order that he might wear as an image the two virtues which his office needed. So the Egyptian judge used to wear the two figures of Thmei (corresponding to Thummim), truth and justice; over the heart of mummies of priests too was a symbol of light (answering to Urim). No image was tolerated on the Hebrew high priest; but in his choshen the white diamond or rock crystal engraven with "Jehovah," to which in Rev. 2:17 the "white stone" with the "new name written" corresponds, belonging to all believers, the New Testament king-priests. Compare Gen. 44:5; Gen. 44:15; Psalm 43:5, "send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me."</p> <p>Also 1Sam. 14:19. Never after David are the ephod and its Urim and Thummim and breast-plate used in consulting Jehovah. Abiathar is the last priest who uses it (1Sam. 23:6-9; 1Sam. 28:6; 2Sam. 21:1). The higher revelation by prophets superseded the Urim and Thummim. Music then, instead of visions, became the help to the state of prayer and praise in which prophets revealed God's will (1Sam. 9:9).²</p>

² Fausset's Bible Dictionary by Andrew Robert Fausset (1821-1910); taken from e-sword.

Urim and Thummim as Defined and Explained by Others

Commentator	Definition and Explanation
Smith	<p>U'rim and Thum'mim (light and perfection): When the Jewish exiles were met on their return from Babylon by a question which they had no data for answering, they agreed to postpone the settlement of the difficulty till there should rise up "a priest with Urim and Thummim." Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65. The inquiry what those Urim and Thummim themselves were seems likely to wait as long for a final and satisfying answer. On every side, we meet with confessions of ignorance. Urim means "light". and Thummim means "perfection".</p> <p>Scriptural statements. — The mysterious words meet us for the first time, as if they needed no explanation, in the description of the high Priest's apparel. Over the ephod, there is to be a "breastplate of judgment" of gold, scarlet, purple and fine linen, folded square and doubled, a "span" in length and width. In it are to be set four rows of precious stones, each stone with the name of a tribe of Israel engraved on it, that Aaron "may bear them on his heart."</p> <p>Then comes a further order. Inside the breastplate, as the tables of the covenant were placed inside the ark, Ex. 25:16 28:30, are to be placed "the Urim and the Thummim," the light and the perfection; and they too are to be on Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord. Ex. 28:15–30. Not a word describes them. They are mentioned as things already familiar both to Moses and the people, connected naturally with the functions of the high priest as mediating between Jehovah and his people. The command is fulfilled. Lev. 8:8.</p> <p>They pass from Aaron to Eleazar with the sacred ephod and other pontificalia. Num. 20:28. When Joshua is solemnly appointed to succeed the great hero–law–giver, he is bidden to stand before Eleazar, the priest, "who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim," and this counsel is to determine the movements of the host of Israel. Num. 27:21. In the blessings of Moses, they appear as the crowning glory of the tribe of Levi: "thy Thummim and thy Urim are with thy Holy One." Deut. 33:8–9.</p> <p>In what way the Urim and Thummim were consulted is quite uncertain. Josephus and the rabbins supposed that the stones gave out the oracular answer by preternatural illumination; but it seems to be far simpler and more in agreement with the different accounts of inquiries made by Urim and Thummim, 1Sam. 14:3, 18–19 23:2 23:4, 9, 11–12 28:6 Judges 20:28 2Sam. 5:23 etc., to suppose that the answer was given simply by the word of the Lord to the high priest, compare John 11:51 when, clothed with the ephod and the breastplate, he had inquired of the Lord. Such a view agrees with the true notion of the breastplate.³</p>

Most of these points and the various theories will be examined below.

My use of these sources does not in any way give credence to their content or to the other doctrines which they may present.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

It may be instructive to see how others have interpreted the physical image of Urim and Thummim:

³ *Smith's Bible Dictionary* by Dr. William Smith (1884); taken from e-sword.

3. Together, these words are found in: Ex. 28:30 Lev. 8:8 Deut. 33:8 Ezra 2:63 Neh. 7:65. Urim, by itself, is found in Num. 27:21 1Sam. 28:6. The definite article is found affixed to these, except in Deut. 33:8, which is insignificant, as that is poetry. The Greek phrasing of 1Sam. 14:41 is the same as we find in Deut. 33:8 (*Give clear manifestations*). In the Hebrew, the consonants of 1Sam. 14:41 are identical to those found in the word *Thummim*; however, it is used in conjunction with a verb (*to give*) in the Hebrew and without the definite article, which is not how it is used elsewhere in the Hebrew. The Greek allows for this passage to contain *Urim and Thummim*, and we will discuss this passage in greater detail below.
4. Ex. 28:4–30 describes the design of the Ephod of God. There are 14 stones associated with the Ephod and its shoulder piece; two which are on Aaron's shoulders and 12 which are affixed to Aaron's breast piece (Ex. 28:29). The breast piece and the Ephod are joined in such a way so that they do not come loose from one another (Ex. 28:28).
5. In the breast piece (or *breast pouch*) of judgement (or, *decision*), Aaron will keep the Urim and Thummim, or *Lights and Perfections* (or, *Lights and Darknesses*). We do not know what these two things are, as they are not mentioned previous to this passage, and their names don't help much either. I have always assumed that these were two additional, identical stones which were kept in the pocket of the breast piece, which would be drawn out to indicate *yes* or *no* as a directive from God (however, I would not bet any money on this perception). Ex. 28:30
 - a. What might help us somewhat is to look at the Hebrew of the related words: The first is *breast piece* or *breast pocket*. We find in Ex. 39:9 that it appears to be folded over double and in Ex. 28:30, Urim and Thummim appear to be placed *inside* the pouch (however, the preposition used means *unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to*). Strong's #413 BDB #39.
 - b. The previous word is sometimes used as a construct and is affixed to mîsh^epâṭ (וּנֶשֶׁאֱפָט) [pronounced *mish^e-PAWT*], which means *judgement, justice, a verdict rendered by a judge, a judicial decision, a judicial sentence, a verdict, a judgement of the court*. Strong's #4941 BDB #1048. The use of this word is sobering and indicates that the use of Urim and Thummim should not be taken lightly.
6. My uncertainty as to the exact nature of Urim and Thummim is shared by many others:
 - a. Josephus and the Talmud see them as simply referring to the stones which had been affixed to the breast piece. This is not a bad explanation.
 - b. Unfortunately, the Talmud takes this one step further, suggesting that the breastplate contained the names of the patriarchs. Another scholar suggests that these stones, which represented letters, moved from their place to form words.
 - c. One might even suggest that these are stones carried in the breast pouch, each of which represents a Hebrew letter.
 - d. Given the name, *Lights and Perfections*, one might suggest that individual stones would shine. The association with God would relate this to perfections.
 - e. However, there is nothing to suggest that any of these theories are correct (however, there is certainly nothing to suggest that we have additional stones affixed to the breast piece itself).
7. There is even uncertainty as to the nature of the answers given by Urim and Thummim.
 - a. ISBE suggests⁴ that Urim and Thummim provided more than *yes* or *no* answers and supports this with the passages Judges 1:2 20:18 1Sam. 22:10 2Sam. 5:23 21:1.
 - i. The short answer is, none of these passages are clearly associated with Urim and Thummim. However, even assuming that they are, let's look at them one at a time:
 - (1) Judges 1:2 would be answered if the stone representing Judah light up (assuming that is how one was guided by Urim and Thummim). These incidents will be examined in more detail below.
 - (2) Judges 20:18 would be answered if the stone representing Judah light up.
 - (3) 1Sam. 22:10 is built upon the lie of Doeg. Whatever he has to say about David and the priests at Nob is not to be trusted.

⁴ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. IV; p. 3041.

- (4) It is not clear how David spoke to God. Apart from a few isolated incidents (God speaking directly to Moses; God speaking to some in dreams), how God speaks to many saints is never revealed to us. David inquires of God and God tells David, “You will not go up; circle around behind them and come up at them in front of the balsam trees. It will be when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then you will act promptly, for Jehovah will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines.” (2Sam. 6:23b–24). We do not know how this communication took place; did God speak to David through a prophet? Did He speak to David in a dream? If Urim and Thummim were used, then that would preclude Urim and Thummim answering with more than *yes or no* or *this tribe* answers.
- (5) The previous comments are all applicable to 2Sam. 21:1.
8. When Aaron and his sons are consecrated, Aaron puts on the Ephod and also the breast piece (or pouch) with the Urim and Thummim in it. Lev. 8:7–8
 9. In Num. 27:18–21 we read: *And Jehovah said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him. And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight. And you shall put of your honor on him, so that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask for him according to the judgment of Urim before Jehovah. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation.”* This indicates that Joshua would have the right or option to ask Eleazar what to do as per the direction of the Urim. This passage gives us a general principle, but is not an example of its use.
 10. The Urim and Thummim are associated with the tribe of Levi (more specifically, the line of Aaron) in a blessing of Moses in Deut. 33:8. The *man of grace* in this passage, refers to Moses, to Aaron, to Eleazar; but, ultimately, to Jesus Christ.
 11. 1Sam. 14 is a fascinating passage which deals with King Saul and the Ephod of God.
 - a. First of all, we are told that the Ephod of God was worn by Ahijah in 1Sam. 14:3.
 - b. King Saul calls for the Ephod of God⁵ in 1Sam. 14:18, but does not appear to immediately use it in this context. Saul instead appears not to take the time to ask God through the High Priest, but immediately goes into action, making a foolish vow about not eating until evening and the avenging of Saul on his enemies (1Sam. 14:19–24).
 - c. Saul’s soldiers, because of the vow, were starving after their initial (but not complete) victory over the Philistines and not only do they immediately go after the spoil of the camp where the Philistines had been defeated, but they eat the meat with the blood (it is not clear whether the animals were not drained of blood or if they were drained and eaten in the same general area). 1Sam. 14:31–33
 - d. Saul, not having the guidance of Samuel, has his own altar to Jehovah built and attempts to properly slaughter these animals to God. However, when Saul asks God whether he would defeat the Philistines who remained encamped nearby, God did not answer him. We may assume that King Saul, in this passage, did consult Urim and Thummim by the priest Ahijah. 1Sam. 14:34–37
 - e. Because God does not answer Saul, Saul realizes that there must be something wrong. He had made a vow about not eating until that evening, a vow which his son, Jonathan, had unknowingly violated (1Sam. 14:38–39). 1Sam. 14:41 is a questionable passage where we probably find a cognate for Thummim, where Saul calls out, “Give thâmiym” to the Lord God of Israel. Although we are not told exactly what occurs here in the Hebrew, the Greek tells us that Saul did consult Urim and Thummim. In any case, Saul is apparently able to determine just who broke the vow that he made, which could mean that Saul is consulting the current High Priest who is using Urim and Thummim. Whatever is done, Saul does determine the truth of the matter, which suggests that God did allow Saul to find out the truth through some unnamed means (and, generally speaking, that would be by Urim and Thummim). The next use of *Urim* suggests to us that Saul did have legitimate access to Urim and Thummim and that he was possibly able to determine the truth from them at one time. In other words, Saul probably did consult Urim and Thummim in this passage.

⁵ The translation *Ark of God* is probably incorrect; this is fully dealt with in the exegesis of 1Sam. 14:18.

12. We next read in 1Sam. 28:6: [And when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah did not answer him, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.](#) Whereas, this appears to be a statement which applies to Saul and his situation at that time (the massive influx of Philistine soldiers), this is reasonably applied to Saul for the previous several years, if not decades, and helps to explain his slaughter of the priests in Nob (1Sam. 22). There are other theories which would explain this passage, most of which are inferior to what I have just explained. However, if you are interested, they may be found in the exegesis of the passage 1Sam. 28:6.
13. When David left Israel and moved temporarily into Philistia (actually, Ziklag), he was out of God's geographical will. However, he did have with him a priest of God and the Ephod (which was permanently affixed to the breast pouch or breast piece in which were kept Urim and Thummim). David does inquire of God when he gets into a jam, and this is probably using Urim and Thummim. 1Sam. 30:6–8
14. In Ezra 2:61–63, we read: [And of the sons of the priests, the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz, the sons of Barzillai \(who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name\). These looked for their register among those who were counted by genealogy, but they were not found. Therefore they were polluted from the priesthood. And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things until there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim.](#) These are those in Aaron's line who apparently could not verify their genealogy and, therefore, could not be considered as priests. The governor is simply saying that they cannot function as priests (including using Urim and Thummim) until their priestly line can be verified.⁶ Neh. 7:63–65 seems to say the same thing.
15. The Ephod and Urim and Thummim:
 - a. What we find in Scripture concerning the clothing of the priest, although very detailed, raise several questions about the Ephod and about Urim and Thummim.
 - b. An ephod appears to be a distinctive piece of clothing on the shoulders of a priest; and there are several instances where an ephod was worn which was not the Ephod of God. Judges 18:18–20 1Sam. 2:18 2Sam. 6:14
 - c. The Ephod of God is designed for the High Priest of God. It is permanently affixed to the breast piece (or, *breast pouch*) of judgement (or, *decision*). On the shoulders (on the Ephod itself), we have two precious stones, each representing 6 tribes of Israel; on the breast piece itself, we have 12 precious stones, each representing a tribe of Israel; and, apparently in a pocket or in the fold of this breast piece, we have Urim and Thummim. Ex. 28 39
16. Passages where the Ephod and Urim and Thummim are not mentioned, but probably used.
 - a. Joshua appears to have used the Ephod; however, it is never named specifically. In Joshua 6, God communicates with Joshua, but we are not given the exact mechanics—God simply appears to speak directly to Joshua (Joshua 6:1–5). When Joshua is defeated at Ai, he appears again to speak directly to God (Joshua 7:7–15). However, when he determines which person from which tribe is responsible for Israel's defeat, we are not given any details whatsoever, and some suggest⁷ that he used Urim and Thummim to determine who transgressed God's command (Joshua 7:16–19).
 - b. Although God appears to speak directly to Joshua in Joshua 13:1–7, the land appears to be distributed by lots, which method is never really explained to us (Joshua 15:1 16:1 17:1). We really have no idea whether this is related to Urim and Thummim or the ephod.
 - c. After Joshua died, the sons of Israel still had a great deal of land which needed to be conquered. They inquire of God who should continue the fight against the Canaanites in the land, and Judah and Simeon go up together against several cities held by the Canaanites. This narrative is found in the first two-thirds of Judges 1; however the key passage is the exchange between Israel and God in vv. 1–2. Even though the High Priest is not mentioned here, or the Ephod, or Urim and Thummim, it is reasonable to assume this was their approach to God.
 - d. We have a similar inquiry made of God in Judges 20:18–28. The tribe of Benjamin had become extremely degenerate, and God had Judah wipe out almost all of the tribe of Benjamin at that time. However, when Israel suffered some serious setbacks, they went to Phinehas ben Eleazar, the High Priest, for direction. Urim and Thummim are not mentioned, but it would seem reasonable that is what

⁶ This is my understanding of the passage; however, I have not studied Ezra or Nehemiah extensively.

⁷ E.g., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. IV; p. 3040.

Eleazar used in order to communicate with God. Also, there are several instances of God communicating to the people of Israel in this chapter; we may reasonably assume that all of this was done through Eleazar, the High Priest.

- e. David is going to attack a Philistine army, and God gives him some specific direction in 2Sam. 5:23. We really have no idea how God communicated this to David. If through Urim and Thummim, then Urim and Thummim provides much more than *yes or no* answers, as discussed previously. However, it is as reasonable to assume that God spoke to David through a prophet or through a dream. We simply are not given any specifics (which seems to be the rule rather than the exception in Scripture).
 - f. David asks God why there is a famine in the land, and God tells him, "[It is for Saul and his bloody house because he put the Gibeonite to death.](#)" (2Sam. 21:1b). We have no idea how God communicated this to David. The remarks made in the previous point apply here as well.
17. In my study of this, I have come across certain passages which are (probably) incorrectly associated with Urim and Thummim:
- a. Rather than putting all that was in Jericho under the ban, Achan took some things from Jericho for his own. Joshua goes through a ritual of choosing a tribe and then a clan from the tribe and then finally Achan. We are never told how Joshua makes this choice, implying that lots could have been used or Urim and Thummim. However, the verb found here is never used with either; and no words are found here which directly tie this passage to a place where lots or Urim and Thummim are used. Furthermore, the High Priest is never involved in this narrative. So, even though it is possible that Joshua used either lots or Urim and Thummim here, we simply have no indication that he did in the Hebrew. Joshua 7:10–21.
 - b. In Judges 18:3–7, we have a priest giving a blessing from God; however, there is no way to determine if this was legitimate or not. Given the general tenor of this chapter, I would suspect not.
 - c. In 1Sam. 10:20–22, Saul is chosen by Samuel to be Israel's king. ISBE suggests that this was done by the use of Urim and Thummim. However, there are no words in this passage which could be used in this way; and this will be fully discussed when we come to the exegesis of this passage.
 - d. The priests of Nob are wrongfully accused of providing David with divine guidance (which would have involved Urim and Thummim); which charge the priest Abimelech ben Ahitub denies. 1Sam. 22:9–15
18. There are many times when Israel or a leader of Israel should have consulted God through Urim and Thummim, but did not. Here are some examples:
- a. The Gibeonites fooled Joshua and the rest of Israel when they made a pact with them. Joshua should have consulted God before making a pact with anyone. Joshua 9 (particularly v. 14).
 - b. David eventually will flee to the Philistines in order to be safe by Saul. At this time, he does have the last remaining priest of Nob and the Ephod of God (which is affixed to the breast piece or breast pocket, in which is Urim and Thummim). However, David does not consult with Urim and Thummim; he simply goes to Philistia based on his own reasoning. This puts David out of God's geographical will; he is apparently out of fellowship; and he falls into morally ambiguous areas. David does not consult with the Lord until nearly a year and a half later. 1Sam. 27:1 30:6–8
19. Josephus marks the end of the use of Urim and Thummim 200 years prior to him; John Hyrcanus says that the Urim and Thummim were not to be found in the second Temple. Given that we do not find it (them?) used after the time of David, which uncertainty expressed about the priests after the return to Judah; and given the degeneration of the priestly line, and given the closure of the canon of the Old Testament Scripture, I would place its (their?) disuse much earlier.
20. Conclusion: all the we are completely sure of is:
- a. We do not really know what Urim and Thummim are; I have assumed two stones of equal size; but I could be completely wrong.
 - b. The Ephod of God and the breast piece (or, *breast pocket*) or judgment (or, *decision*) were permanently attached to one another.
 - c. The Urim and Thummim appear to have been placed into the breast pocket, which was affixed to the ephod.
 - d. Urim and Thummim were related to God's will and to the High Priest of God (Num. 27:18–21 1Sam. 14:3, 18 28:6 30:7).

- e. Moses and Aaron knew what they were; we do not. In fact, they were not even understood by those who translated the LXX or any other Greek version, as these words are not consistently translated.⁸
- f. Exactly what Urim and Thummim are is never revealed to us, and there is a reason for that. God is not looking for us to duplicate what He gave the Jews in the Old Testament. We are a part of the Church Age and God has a slightly different program for us. Trying to determine His will by somehow devising a Urim and Thummim is not a part of His plan. Along this line, I have seen believers, primarily immature and enthusiastic believers, who want to know, as they drive down the road, should they make a left or a right turn—which would God want them to do. They would prefer to have the Urim and Thummim affixed to their dashboard in order to indicate to them what they should do. However, this is not God's will for our lives; nor are we to obsess over trivialities, such as, should we turn right or left at the next stop light. If we are filled with God the Holy Spirit and if we know doctrine, then guidance is easy. Jewish believers did not have the entire canon of Scripture, and, therefore, needed additional direction from God. However, you will note that even the direction of the priest with the Urim and Thummim was used very little in Scripture, and, apparently, not at all past the time of David.

21. Summary:

- a. Urim and Thummim probably mean *Lights and Dark nesses*; however, it is possible that they mean *Lights and Perfections*. They are transliterated most of the time, as few translators feel confident of their exact meaning.
- b. We find these words very few times in Scripture.
 - i. 4 times in the Law: Ex. 28:30 Lev. 8:8 Num. 27:21 Deut. 33:8.
 - ii. 3 times in the historical narratives: 1Sam. 28:6 Ezra 2:63 Neh. 7:65.
- c. Urim and Thummim are closely associated with the Ephod of God, which is a colorful and ornate vest (for want of a better word; the ephod probably looked similar to a sweater vest, although it may have been longer). Although we have several occasions where ephod are worn by those associated with the priesthood, there is one Ephod of God which is worn by the High Priest. There are two stones on the shoulders and 12 on the breastplate. Some theories are:
 - i. Urim and Thummim refer to these stones and whether they light up or not when questions are asked of God. Although I lean toward this explanation, I would not be dogmatic about it.
 - ii. Urim and Thummim might be two stones kept in the pouch of the breast piece and used to determine God's will.
 - iii. Urim and Thummim might be the lots referred to and they are thrown to determine God's will (the exact nature of the lots is unknown).
- d. In any case, Urim and Thummim are used to determine God's will, although we have few instances in Scripture where there is clearly recorded (1Sam. 14 24:9–12 30:6–8). None of those passages actually mention Urim and Thummim; they do, however, refer to the Ephod of God.
- e. There are a handful of incidents where Urim and Thummim may have been used, but they are not mentioned in the context (Joshua 7:6–19 15:1 16:1 Judges 1:1–2 20:18–28).
- f. I believe that God kept their exact nature hidden from us because God does not want us to attempt to duplicate the construction of the Ephod and of Urim and Thummim. Our guidance is not from some external religious object telling us which way to turn, but from doctrine in our souls, which comes from learning the Word of God.

⁸ The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 850.

Brief Summary: Although Urim and Thummim were used to determine God's will, we do not know the exact nature of Urim and Thummim. Some translate these words to mean *Lights and Dark nesses* as well as the more common *Lights and Perfections*. However, what Urim and Thummim were is unknown to us at this time. Some believe them to be the 14 stones affixed to the Ephod of God, which would light up in order to determine God's will. Some believe these to be lots which are kept in the pouch of the Ephod (this is only a theory, as we are *never* told this in Scripture) and others believe them to be two stones kept in the pouch of the Ephod (again, there is no evidence of this in Scripture either). These words are only found 7 times in Scripture (Ex. 28:30 Lev. 8:8 Num. 27:21 Deut. 33:8 1Sam. 28:6 Ezra 2:63 Neh. 7:65), and they are never directly associated with a specific incident where God's will is sought and revealed. However, we may reasonably assume that the three instances associated with seeking God's will from the Ephod of God involved Urim and Thummim (1Sam. 14 24:9–12 30:6–8). There are other incidents where the Ephod is not specifically named where Urim and Thummim may have been used (Joshua 7:6–19 15:1 16:1 Judges 1:1–2 20:18–28).

God purposely denied us specific details about Urim and Thummim so that there is no way that they would be duplicated and looked to for guidance. At this point in time, we have the Word of God to guide us.

[Return to the Beginning of the Doctrine](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)