

## **Saul, David and Jonathan**

*Exhort Walton 16.7.06*

In our reading from 1st Samuel ch. 31 regarding the death of Saul and Jonathan, we see the wonderful character of David, brought out in not holding any bitterness against Saul, in spite of the fact that Saul had determined to kill David – thrusting a javelin at him, using his army to hunt for him to kill him. When Saul found out that Ahimelech the priest had given David bread, he not only executed Ahimelech, but all of his family – such was his bitterness, towards David.

David, in revenge, could have killed Saul on more than one occasion, but he would not, because he was “the Lord’s anointed”, in spite of the fact that Samuel had already anointed David, to become king. David did not push himself forward, but waited for God to decide the time, for him to become king. He believed that vengeance belongs to God; God would repay as and when He thought fit.

This is an incredible example to us, of no matter how we are provoked, or treated, we must wait patiently for God to act.

Saul was chosen by God and initially he was humble and obedient, and successful against the Philistines and acknowledged that it was God who gave him success. It seems this made him over-confident; he began to rely upon himself, and became a proud, arrogant leader; he had confidence in the flesh, when, actually, he could do nothing without the Almighty’s blessing.

And today we, ourselves, can become a bit like Saul. When we are young in the truth we have great faith in God, but later we can get to rely more on ourselves; we, feeling that we can do this, that and the other, or talk others into agreeing with us, or talk ourselves out of a problem. The outward appearance of our love for the truth may not always be with the right motive. I think in today’s society we can become caught up in materialism, affluence and education that we can easily lose the first-century zeal.

Whilst Jesus commended the Thyatiran ecclesia for their “love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first” (Rev. 2:19), there were things he had to reprove them for.

The Laodiceans boasted, “I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need anything”, but Jesus said that in his sight they were not so. They were spiritually poor, blind and naked. It is confidence in the flesh that is the problem, instead of the confident belief, and genuine faith in God, such as David had that we also need to have.

In the Jeremiah reading we have the terrible siege and destruction of Israel. And why? Because they turned away from God; their service was insincere and consequently they were punished in order to later bring them to repentance because God, in faithfulness to the promises to the fathers always leaves a remnant.

Turning to Matthew ch. 16 we have the background to the transfiguration. In Mark ch. 16 vs. 21-23. Let us read that together matt 16 v 21.23 Read. We learn of Peter not understanding why Jesus should die. Their hope seems to have been, that Jesus was going to destroy the Romans, but Jesus rebuked Peter, because he was allowing the mind of the flesh, to dominate over the will of God.

Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James and John up a mountain, doubtless they thought for a night of prayer. These three were the ones that Jesus took with him to watch in Gethsemane

(they were also the three who witnessed the raising of the little girl at Capernaum). They seem to have been especially privileged. We read that Jesus “led them up a high mountain”. As Jesus led the way they followed in his footsteps. We are not told which mountain, possibly Mt. Nebo. You will recall how Moses died there. It is 4,000ft. above the Dead Sea from which one could see all over the promised land. Working out the location of Elijah when he was taken up in the chariot, it seems he was at Mt. Nebo (2 Kings 2:11). So Moses and Elijah ended their ministries at Mt. Nebo. Here was Moses and Elijah “talking with Jesus”, speaking “about his departure which he was about to bring to fulfilment in Jerusalem” says Luke. (Luke 9:31).

Why were three chosen to witness this? The law only allowed the sentence of death to be agreed in front of two or three witnesses, (Deut 17:6) and they were to witness things concerning Jesus’ decease, being discussed with Moses and Elijah.

Luke (9:29) tells us, “As Jesus was praying the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightening”. It was not just a quick flash of lightening, but as brilliant as a long-lasting flash. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light”, a phrase, we understand, is paralleled with, “the light of the Shekinah glory”.

God’s glory speaks of His righteousness, purity, power and justice, the very characteristics that are the opposite of the mind of the flesh, which is impure and dark. But because of the things concerning Jesus’ decease – we are going to manifest God’s glory – we try to do that today, but in a very feeble way, but then in a far, far greater way in the future. For when Jesus comes, “Then shall the righteous shine forth, as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43). Daniel says, “They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament” (12:3). In Colossians (3:4) we read, “Then shall ye also appear with him in glory” – that is the glory we shall experience, when we are transformed into Divine beings.

Was the transfiguration just a vision or real? Vine defines the word “vision” as “that which is seen” and as far as Peter was concerned, it was very real; he even suggested making three tabernacles, and when referring to it in his Epistle says that he was an eye-witness of Jesus majesty on that occasion. (2 Peter 1:16-17).

Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah “appeared in glorious splendour” talking with Jesus, so they, too, were enshrouded in this glory. What were they talking about? We are only told it was concerning his decease, or departure. The original word is ‘Exodus’, ‘ex’ meaning ‘out’ and ‘hodos’ ‘a way’ – so meaning ‘a way out’ – the way out of Egyptian-like slavery, to be redeemed and freed from slavery.

This unrecorded conversation was not only assuring to the apostles, but stimulating for Jesus. Here he was actually talking with Moses.

Moses had attempted to free his people from the Egyptian bondage, but failed, and had to flee to the wilderness. Why did he have to flee into Egypt? Because he was not acting in full accordance with God’s will, but when the right time came, God revealed Himself in the manifestation of glory in the burning bush.

Although God, through Moses, had led them out of Egypt and through the desert, Moses was so often despised and rejected by Israel, “He suffered the reproach of Christ”. Here they were, discussing in person how God’s people would be delivered, Moses doubtless encouraging Christ to endure the rejection and despising of men, and his own cruel death, which would result in the deliverance of God’s people.

As for Elijah, he too endeavoured to free his people and turn them back to God; he was rejected, fled into the wilderness and sustained by God. He had the courage to confront Ahab and saw, by faith, the glory of God revealed in the fire of the sacrifice. He had a hard, disappointing life, yet God wonderfully transported him away in the whirlwind. Possibly he would have discussed with Jesus the means of salvation for God's people and may be his second mission of turning back Israel when Jesus returns to God.

Sometimes I think we can over-emphasize grace; of course without it we cannot be saved, but as well as the goodness there is the severity side of God. David showed by his life his belief. Paul urges us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom. 12:1). The AV renders it "reasonable service", from the Greek 'Logikos' – something which is reasonable and rational. Jesus himself tells us, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me". What is the path to glory, following the example of the Master, who totally dedicated himself to his Father's will.

What was the reaction of the three apostles to this? Let us look at the account in Luke 9 v 32 and read about them. Luke 9 v 32:

"Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men standing with him".

The expression "very sleepy" has more than one meaning; the NEB says, "they had been in a deep sleep". I think it was a type of resurrection; for example when God made the covenant with Abraham and he prepared the sacrifice of confirmation, he cut the bullock in pieces on the altar; he "fell into a deep sleep" and woke up and the sacrifice was then miraculously burnt, (Gen. 15:12 etc.). It was symbolical of his resurrection and the ratification of the promises through Christ, his seed, in the future.

Daniel, when hearing of the future, was terrified and fell prostrate on the ground – a kind of appearing before the judgment. Daniel goes on, "Then he touched me and raised me to my feet" (Dan. 8:15-18).

In Ezekiel's vision of the living creatures, when the glory of the Lord was revealed, he fell face down and was told "stand up on your feet and I will speak to you. As he spoke the spirit came into me and raised me on my feet" (Eze. 1:28; 2:1-2). What does it imply, Ezekiel was so petrified he could not of himself stand up, but as the spirit entered his body he stood up.

As I see it, at the judgment we will fall down and tremble at Jesus' feet. Not one of us is worthy, but he will put his hand on us – Stand up – and as we rise, in a moment these frail, skin-and-bone bodies will feel the surge of the spirit as we are transformed into divine beings and become an integral part of the glory of the Lord.

Of the three apostles, Luke tells us, "a cloud appeared and enveloped them". To envelope is to wrap up or cover completely, they were covered, enfolded by the spirit.

Peter's reaction was to build three tabernacles. It is thought by some that this was in fact about the time of the feast of tabernacles. Would it not be wonderful to have Jesus, Moses and Elijah each in a tabernacle and the three apostles serve them during the seven days feast. But that was not God's purpose. Moses and Elijah were subservient to Christ and only one tabernacle – the temple of Jesus' body – was sufficient.

The answer to Peter's request was a voice from the cloud (Matt. 17:5, "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him." What an encouragement this must have been to

Jesus to hear these words from his Father!. Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish” (John 10:27-18).

The three witnessing the transfiguration would have been tremendously strengthened by seeing it – a real taste of the glory ahead.

Let us look at 2 Pete ch. 1 and read Peter’s account of what happened It is significant that the three apostles, Peter, James and John, all died as martyrs – James killed by Herod, Peter crucified and John boiled in oil. For all of them the transfiguration must have lived in their minds and given them confidence as they were killed. Let us read 2 Peter 1 vs. 16-19.

Peter was in no doubt as to the literality of the transfiguration and we, too, can take comfort from it; although we were not there we believe it. We also have the sure word of prophecy – events prior to and since Peter’s days have been dramatically fulfilled.

Let us look again at Matt. 17 vs. 10-13, where they asked the question about Elijah whom they had just seen. Matt. 17 vs. 10-13:

John the baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah. The people listened initially to him, but did not repent from the heart and were party to his death. Likewise they were to reject Christ and kill him, but because of his perfect sinless life, God raised him from the dead and opened up the way for others to escape from the clutches of death.

Elijah will return again and turn Israel back to God.

Looking back at ch. 16 v 28 we read: “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom”. The three Disciples had a foretaste of Jesus in his glory at the transfiguration. However, these words have an especial significance for us, that they could have had to any previous generation of believers. It is highly probable that all of us here this morning – will not taste of death until we see the Kingdom of God come with power. It could well be the present conflict in Gaza and Lebanon is a prelude to the gathering of the nations to Armageddon.

It was only a few months ago Israel forcibly removed Jewish settlers in Gaza; there are now no Jews in Gaze and so Israels army can capture Gaza which is in accord with prophecy. Isaiah, referring to the exiles’ return to Israel, says they will swoop down on the slopes of Philistia to the west” (Isa. 11:11-14) – that is modern Gaza (also Obad. v 19). We, of course, do not know if this is it, but certainly the intensity of the signs of Jesus’ coming are tremendous, although we may yet have to face part of the time of trouble such as never was, but we will be delivered. As our final quotation, let us look at Rev. ch. 7 vs. 13-16 to see a picture of our future. Rev. 7, 13-16 (I will quote)...

So then, let us take courage from these things. Away with depression and downheartedness and feelings of despair. Here we have in the Bible, words of soberness and truth and comfort which we know will become realities.

Now we come to the things associated with this table. We are to concentrate our thoughts on the very theme Christ, Moses and Elijah did on the Mount, “His death, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem”.