

The Light of Israel

When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David grew faint. (2 Sam 21:15)

Oh, he meant well. His mind and heart were up to the challenge but his body lacked the stamina and strength. Since the days of his youth, David had learned to put his faith in the Lord and when it was necessary to fight, to do so with amazing courage and faith. In fact, this very characteristic gave him acclaim throughout all Israel and amongst the nations that surrounded. In fact, they sang songs about his valiant behavior and combat prowess, and his exploits against the giant Goliath are famous even thousands of years later.

It seems that just before this, David had been in the process of ‘setting in order’ his kingdom. God had shown him an injustice that went uncorrected for a long time and he responded by putting things right. It was harsh justice, nevertheless, it was what was required. But don’t you know, when godly people start to recognize their failings and to take steps to make things right, the enemy is aroused and there is war.

And the story of this particular war leads us to a supremely important spiritual truth. Here’s the passage:

Then Ishbi-Benob, who was one of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose bronze spear was three hundred shekels, who was bearing a new sword, thought he could kill David.

But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, “You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel.”

Now it happened afterward that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of the sons of the giant.

Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregimfn the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam.

Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also was born to the giant.

So when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David’s brother, killed him.

These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand

of David and by the hand of his servants.

David became exhausted fighting a giant of a man whose spear or spear tip weighed a hefty ten pounds or so and who was girded with a new weapon, presumably a sword. It didn’t look good, but Abishai, one of David’s two military commanders came to his aid and killed Ishbi-Benob, the giant.

As his men gathered around, recognizing the seriousness of the situation, they vowed to the king, “You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp (or more correctly, the “light”) of Israel.”

Shortly after this, in other battles, three more of David’s men slew giants. But note that the passage above ends by saying that they “fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.” This, is more than a honorary tribute to the king; rather, it credits David appropriately. You see, David was a giant slayer and his men had become like him.

The invaluable lesson for us is not simply that his men adopted his passion or courage or forte, but that they became that way for a specific reason – they wanted to be like their king. Why? I submit that it

was because they saw him as “the light of Israel”. It is indeed human nature to emulate those whom you esteem highly.

Which begs the question, how do you see Christ? Your life as a Christian directly reflects your perception of Him. If, as a healthy Christian you desire to be like Him, your desire is absolutely affected by how you see or perceive him. Many Christians are tepid, loveless and ineffective because of this perception problem. The more clearly you recognize Him for Who He is, the more you will desire to be like Him. The more distracted your attention or clouded your vision, the less you’ll want to follow Him, or to be like him. And, when that is the case, the giants of this life will indeed overwhelm you.

The apostle John wrote, “*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He (Christ) is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*”

So how do we get and keep an accurate and even intimate view of the Lord? One of Jesus’ disciples, Philip said to Him, “*Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.*”

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:8,9)

Of course, this is the fundamental key and for Jewish people in general, a stumbling point – Christ is the visible embodiment of God. To see Christ is to see the nature, character, power, love, forgiveness, humility and wisdom of God the Father. Just as Philip had been with Jesus for quite some time and didn't 'get it', so many followers today are seeing Christ incorrectly.

The 'corrective lens' so to speak comes by way of a humble request from a submitted heart. "Ask and you will receive." Intellectual curiosity is insufficient. Passion or zeal alone won't cut it either. First of all, God requires sincerity and humility.

One thing Christ is not – He is not the product of your fanciful desires or notions. It is pointless to invent His character to be an embodiment of your wishes. C.S. Lewis addressed this in his Narnia trilogy in the following dialog:

"Aslan is a lion – the Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh," said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"...

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver... "Who said anything about safe?. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

If you've read the stories, you know that Aslan represents Christ. The point being that to see Him for Who He is, is to acknowledge that He is not necessarily Who you want Him to be – He is Who He is.

The divine course is for you and I to be transformed, by the renewing of our minds, into the image of Christ – not an imagination of our own. He does not conform to you, you conform to Him. And the great part about it is that when you see Him accurately – as the Light of Israel, as the Light of the World, the dragon slayer, the Savior and Liberator of mankind, the Creator and Keeper of the cosmos... on and on... you very naturally desire to be like Him.

When Jesus road into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, His followers acclaimed Him as King. In fact King of the Jews was the title Pilate hung above His head on the cross. But the acclamation was shallow and off the mark anyway. The key for Israel was and is to see Jesus Christ as the true Messiah.

Jesus told the religious elite, *"You shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the*

name of the LORD!" Jesus here revealed something of the conditions surrounding His Second Coming. When Jesus comes again, the Jewish people will welcome Him as the Messiah saying, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" – David Guzik

Now to keep this vision 20/20 spiritually, you must clear the line of sight. Remove all things that obstruct or cloud the picture. John the Baptist recognized Jesus clearly when he saw the sign that was given to him of the dove descending from heaven and resting upon Jesus at His baptism. Later, however, John was imprisoned and became unsure. He sent some of his followers to ask Jesus if indeed He was the One. After many miracles, Christ told them to return to John saying, "Go and show John again those things which you hear and see – the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who shall not be offended in me."

Simply put, Christ reminded John of the Scriptures. John may have come in prison to think incorrectly

but whatever the case, Jesus just pointed him back to the Word. That's where you maintain the clear view, the accurate impression. Difficulties and disappointments DO NOT define or change Who Christ is. Your prayer life and worship will reinforce to you the truth of His nature but will never substitute for the scripture. C.S. Lewis might say, "The Lion is Who He is and He is revealed in His own Word."

Like David's mighty men, can you look to Jesus your King and see Him as the Light?