

The Cave of Abdullam

We often hear today that we are on the verge of a “new day” or that God is about to do a “new thing” in the earth. If these sayings be true, and we pray they are, as the present order has fallen far short of the Lord’s intentions, then we find ourselves in a day of transition. We have not yet attained that for which we are pressing toward. What is one to do in such a time, or rather, we should ask, what is the Lord doing in such a time? Understanding the Lord’s ways in the day of transition is vital so we will not miss our time of visitation nor grow discouraged. Worse yet that we would become scoffers, saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?” and cast off all restraint. (II Pet. 3: 3,4) Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:16-17 of our need and dependency on the Word of God to fully equip us for the work. Let us consider a few passages from the life of David who also found himself in a day of transition. They are found in I Samuel 22:1-3.

David grew up during a time of great change. His generation was seeing the close of the day of the Judges and had entered into the day of Israel’s first king. As David shepherded his father’s flock in the Judean hills, he would have grown well-acquainted with the caves that were scattered throughout the region. He would have used them to shelter his flock during storms and found them to be a relief from the heat as well. He could never have realized that one day he, himself, would return to those caves, this time in order to find shelter from the storm clouds of an ever-maddening king. He would first find shelter there himself, only to be followed by a “little flock” that would gather around the Lord’s true shepherd.

As we consider these verses, we will first look at how this cave of Abdullam affected David, and then those who gathered with him. Keep in mind that we are seeing the Lord’s activity with His chosen ones during a day of transition. This was a time in David’s life where circumstances had forced him to flee from Saul’s service. Saul’s envy and increased madness had driven David from his presence. This was not a choice David made, but rather one that was made for him. David would have continued to serve faithfully under Saul and would have gladly given his life in battle to secure the kingdom for the Lord’s people. The call of God and the Word of the Lord spoken through the prophet, Samuel, needed to find its fulfillment. Like Joseph before him, “Until the time that his word came: the Word of the Lord tried him.” (Ps. 105:19)

David's fear of death and need for self-preservation sent him to Achish, the king of Gath. Through that experience he learned an important lesson of God's Kingdom. He came to know what the Greater David would say to his disciples, years later, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." David had to lose his life. The cave of his childhood now became a place of death, a tomb to hold David in its powerful grip until the Lord's work was completed. David was then separated from all he had once known: his family; his wife; his dear friend, Jonathan; Samuel, the prophet; and his former way of functioning in service. They were now all so far removed from him that they must have seemed like only a dream. The promise spoken by Samuel now, like a seed, had to go deep down into the earth and die. How far removed was this cave of death from the throne, which he knew to be the will of God. It was necessary for David to die to all he once knew, and for the dark cave to swallow up all hope of his attaining to the call of God apart from the Lord's working.

This day of separation and loneliness is necessary in the lives of those who are called to participate in the coming Kingdom. Like Jacob before him, David was left alone. Psalm 142 was written during this period of his life. There we find David describing the loneliness and sense of abandonment he was feeling. Verse 4 of that psalm shows his agony. Verse 5 depicts a man who, though left alone, finds his God. David boldly declares that he, like the priests, would have God as his portion, his only inheritance. Perhaps it is out of this experience that David penned the words of one of his most well-known psalms, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." (taken from Psalm 23: 4, 5) David found the reality of a life in communion with God; a life that finds all it needs in Him. This is where we must begin, all those who are called into the service of the Kingdom. Only a living relationship with our God will sustain us in the day of transition. We must come to experience and live in this vital union. Though David was alone, with no human hand to hold, he found the hand of his God and from this new union would come forth God's true expression of His Kingdom, not that of man's.

Maybe you too find yourself separated from all you once knew, separated from a service to which you have faithfully given yourself; questioning the Word of God and the time of its fulfillment. If so, welcome to the cave of Abdullam. Welcome to the tomb of the Lord's choosing. Welcome to the working of the Lord in the day of transition. May you, like David, find your God; the one who declared He would never leave you or forsake you. Despite the many shortcuts that are being offered today with their empty promises of revival and success, the way of death is still the only way that leads to life. May we yield our lives afresh to this process, for His sake, that we may find the only life that is truly fit to serve in His coming Kingdom.