

sleepers or individuals, and, laying the image in the bed, covered it with a mantle.

It was a ruse sufficient to deceive Saul's servants when they came to collect David in the morning. "He is ill," said Michal, pointing to the prone figure with his head barely showing; whereupon they, not wishing to arrest a sick man, reported back to Saul without him. But Saul, thoroughly determined this time, exploded, "Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him."

Frustrated and disappointed when he learned the truth of the matter, Saul rounded on his daughter: "Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?" Michal, however, had prepared her answer and covered her action with the excuse, "He said to me, 'Let me get away. Why should I kill you?'"

Safety with Samuel

Meanwhile, David had gone to Ramah, a few miles away, and found refuge in the home of Samuel the prophet, to whom he recounted all that Saul had done to him. Samuel, understanding the king's temper and ruthlessness, felt it prudent they should move at once to Naioth, the collegiate dwelling of the school for the prophets which he ran. It was a wise move, for, when word came to Saul that David was in Naioth of Ramah, men were dispatched to capture him. What Saul had overlooked with his usual insensitivity, however, was that the prophets, when in solemn conclave

along with Samuel, were under the influence and protection of the Holy Spirit. And when his men arrived to arrest David, they were confronted by a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader. So great was the power that had fallen on the assembly that Saul's men had to join in their devotions, and were thereby rendered powerless of themselves.

When the men returned to Saul and told him what had taken place, he added obtuseness to ignorance by sending a second arresting party, and, when it failed for the same reason, yet a third—and all to no avail. It is the mark of a foolish man that he must persist in his foolishness (Prov. 27:22). Yet that is exactly what Saul did when he then decided to go himself to Samuel and arrest David. Once more the Almighty intervened, so that His Spirit came upon the king, who began to prophesy long before he reached the college, where, in total subservience and humiliation, he took off his outer garments and lay down unclothed for the rest of that day and all the next night, prophesying before Samuel. The incident, when it became known, created such a stir that people began to say, either incredulously or in derision, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

By these interventions, Saul was finally turned from his present folly and David was given time to escape and return to Gibeah, where he went to consult with his friend Jonathan about what to do next.

(To be continued)

Exhortation

Light

Margaret Bilton

AS I WRITE this article, it is near the end of September. The nights are now 'drawing in' noticeably, and we have less and less light as each day goes by. We all need light: sunshine lifts our spirits; sunlight gives us vitamin D, vital for a healthy body; and plants need light to grow—if not enough is provided, they grow 'leggy' and pale in their search for light. The importance of light is obvious to us all, so we should not be too surprised when we read the first recorded words of God in the Bible: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3).

Light is a theme that runs through Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. According to the *Online Bible* on my computer, in the King James Version the word occurs no less than 235 times, including thirty times in Job, twenty-four times in the Psalms, twenty-one times in Isaiah and thirty-seven times in the Gospels. Some of these verses strike us as 'comic': "By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning," the Lord says of leviathan (Job. 41:18). Some allusions to light (or the lack of it) are more cautionary: in Egypt, God did not leave the children of Israel without light when the rest

of the land was plunged into “darkness which [could] be felt” (Ex. 10:21). Surely here a spiritual point was being made, too—that inner light was also essential for the wellbeing of God’s people.

The Psalms enlarge on the subject of light, as poems often do, expressing what we feel when we cannot find the words to do so. How readily we can associate with David when he says, “There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us” (4:6)! God responds generously, as an unidentified psalmist tells us later: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path . . . The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (119:105,130).

When God’s people had endured the gloom for many years, then came “the light of the world;” God’s Word made flesh, to dwell among them. “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up” (Mt. 4:16). But the Lord of light exhorted those people to take up their responsibilities as God’s witnesses: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put in under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Which is in heaven” (5:14-16). Some of those who were present to witness the Lord were blind, either

physically or spiritually, and they learnt how the Master could open the eyes of both groups of people: “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (Jno. 9:5).

Many there, who saw the healing of the man who had been without sight from birth, chose to find fault with the timing of the miracle, performed on the sabbath, rather than to see the true light; and in our own relationship with the Lord Jesus we do well to remember: “This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jno. 1:5-7).

Men and women all around us are in darkness, and have introduced into their lives unreliable sources of light like Diwali, the Winter Solstice and Hanukah. But we have the Light of the world as our example and guide, and an expectation based firmly in Scripture that “there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:5). Let us rise and shine and glorify our heavenly Father and His Son, our Saviour, even now, that we might look forward to living and reigning with them eternally in that wonderful day to come.