

Prayer

Lead us into Your will Lord God. Guide us in our pathways; show us how to speak and what to say; lighten the darkness of this world and ease the heavy loads we have to bear. We do not ask for an easy life, but for Your presence by which we know we are not alone, but loved and helped along our way. Thank You Lord. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Babies

We will pray this coming week for issues concerning babies! Pray for anyone you know who is pregnant, and pray that they will receive good quality, loving treatment.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for local doctors and nurses who serve the local community*
- *Give thanks to God for the liberties you enjoy*
- *Pray for those who repair and renew our roads and bridges*

Meditation

Where may the human spirit begin to find peace within this world?

Where do you find your spiritual and mental peace within this world?

In the company of other believers?

Whilst doing the work of the Kingdom?

In the home where love and care abide?

Lost in 'wonder love and praise'?

In pursuing evil and resolving wrongs?

On the streets where the world and all pass by?

Speaking out for the poor and the oppressed?

In a quiet place of Bible study and prayer?

Or is it just within a peace found when we realise

That God is there in every circumstance of life,

And His peace is there when we open our eyes

To find Him anywhere, everywhere, and all the time.

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 6:20-23

²⁰ *When David returned to bless his household, Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, 'How the king of Israel honoured himself today, exposing himself today in view of the maids of his servants, in full view, like some commoner!'* ²¹ *David replied to Michal, 'It was before the Lord that I danced, the Lord who chose me in place of your father and his dynasty. He appointed me ruler of Israel, the people of the Lord. ²² I will make myself more contemptible than this, and even humiliate myself; but I shall be held in honour by the very girls of whom you have spoken!'*

²³ *Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.*

Review

Yesterday we read about how David brought the Ark of the Covenant to his new capital city, Jerusalem, in a procession of worship, employing both old and new forms of worship and within an atmosphere of celebration and joy. David himself was a leader of this worship, and 'dancing' clothed in a linen ephod.

David and Michal As he arrived in Jerusalem, he was met by the one person he had insisted should be brought to him when the northern tribes agreed to accept his kingship with Abner (2 Sam 3:13,14); his first wife Michal. She takes centre stage in this passage, and we should recall what happened to Michal since the days when she had helped him escape from the clutches of her father, King Saul (1 Samuel 17:11ff). Despite Michal's clear early love for David, Saul had married her off to Paltiel the son of Laish (1 Samuel 25:44) when David was exiled. Then, when Michal was brought to David after her father's death, she was suddenly separated from her husband, a man who clearly loved her dearly (2 Sam 3:15,16). The relationship between David and Michal was on rocky ground.

We should also remember that, from the point of view of the writers of 2 Samuel, there was an underlying concern for who would become King after David. God had promised David that 'one of his line' would be on the throne of Israel for ever (2 Sam 7:12), but who would that be? David had already had a number of children by a number of wives (1 Sam 25:43, 2 Sam 3:1-5). If David were to have a son by Michal, then he would probably be accepted as the natural heir above other sons, because of the connection through Michal, with the house of Saul. Today's story today shatters any hope that this might be God's will

Michal's complaint When David came to Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant, he was clearly high in spirits, still overflowing with the praise that had clearly been present in him as he danced and led worship before the Ark of the Covenant and before the Lord. As he entered Jerusalem, his beloved Michal who had risked her life for him years ago, but their exchange was shattering (6:21,22). Was Michal genuinely annoyed with David's display because she did not understand his worship of God? Was she annoyed that David had danced naked (see 'exposing himself' 6:20), so she felt debased as his wife? Was she furious at how she had been pulled away from her husband, and determined to humiliate David in his hour of victory?

Many theories have been advanced, but one of them can be dismissed, which is the notion that David danced naked. Some think David was dancing in some kind of frenzy, just as people did before 'gods' in those days, and is attested in the literature of the day; certainly, Michal was disgusted for some reason. However, there are too many assumptions here. Israel was not like other nations in its worship of God, and secondly, the talk of exposure does not necessarily mean nakedness (that word association is modern) and the Hebrew word for 'naked' is not used (it is elsewhere – see 1 Sam 19:4). Thirdly, the word 'ephod' has never been properly defined in Hebrew, but this is what scripture says David wore. It was certainly a linen garment, embroidered and ordained for priestly use in earlier times (Exodus 28:4ff), but it could well simply mean 'vest'. This fits our story perfectly well. David wore a light garment like a vest for his dancing before the Lord, something that simply allowed him free movement, instead of his more weighty royal robes.

A parting of ways David stood before Michal bearing her rebuke on such a wonderful day, and replied that he was the anointed King, his dynasty would rule all Israel in place of her father, and he would worship the Lord as he chose and be honoured by all for so doing. One can only imagine the tension and sorrow as this conversation broke the relationship between Michal and David. The final verse of our passage indicates that Michal certainly did not bear David's heir. We are not told the real reason why Michal rejected David, neither can we be sure that Michal's offence and misguided response was caused by her desire to have David exclusively for herself. In view of David's comments about the dynasty of Saul (v21) it is most unlikely that the two of them had much to do with each other after this, certainly not as husband and wife.

The tragic story of David and Michal is perhaps unique, but it does illustrate how evil can worm its way into any occasion, even great and important occasions when the Spirit of God is moving creatively, and inspiring new worship such as in the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem. Men and women were created by God to be one in Him (Gen 1:27), and it is fundamental to His work amongst people that this should be honoured. When relationships break down, the work of God in them is compromised, and many of us will know of tragic stories of where this has happened. We cannot 'take sides' in the story of David and Michal to conclude what happened or apportion blame, and we probably have much sympathy for Michal and the poor treatment she received from her father. We should also respect the uprightness of David for not receiving Michal's rebuke; he had done the right thing in the spirit of praise during the celebration of bringing the Ark of God to Jerusalem, despite personal problems.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Was David justified in replying strongly to Michal? Do you think that he could or should have saved his relationship with Michal by being more understanding?
2. John Wesley used verse 22 to justify his preaching in the open air, saying he was happy to be 'so vile' as to do this. In what ways can or should we become 'more contemptible' for the sake of the Gospel?
3. Do your personal relationships help or hinder the work of the Gospel?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

This difficult personal situation is hard to assess. I am personally of the opinion that whatever the personal reasons for the breakdown, it was not God's will for Michal to bear a son for David who would become the next King of Israel after him. The eventual story of the succession becomes complex enough without any connection to the Kingship of Saul!

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Pray for all those you may know about who are having a difficult time in their relationship, whether married or perhaps not yet married. Such difficulties can bring out very tough times and people can feel very exposed. Bless any people you know in this situation with your prayers.*
- *Reflect on the institution of marriage as you see it in your country. Is it truly Christian? How can the church work best within society to maintain godly standards of marriage?*

Final Prayer

In Your providence, Lord God, keep our families safe from the attacks of the evil one. Grant us such a presence of Your holy Spirit that we may know Your care and love at all times; and may the whole church be blessed through the its families. Thank You, Lord God; AMEN