

# MARRIAGE AND THE LIGHT OF TRUTH

DAVID was so hard pressed in combat with a giant that it became necessary for Abishai to come to his rescue. David's soldiery appreciated then the danger to which their leader was being exposed. As they expressed it, the light, lamp or candle of Israel might be quenched. Such a thought, more specifically the light of David, is a recurring theme in the record of the Kings and the prophets.

The soldiery, however, would have appreciated less easily that the light promised to David and to his sons would come near to extinction, not only in battle, but in the alliances and affinities created by royal marriages. This their future history would show.

If wedding bells there were, they rang in a terribly dark day for Israel when king Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians and, probably, high priest of Ashtoreth. What Ahab's motive may have been is not stated. Whether the marriage was wholly political or whether Jezebel had some attraction for Ahab is not disclosed. But Scripture has some powerful comments.

Ahab "did sell himself to work wickedness". What a slavery! Again—Ahab "whom Jezebel his wife incited". What a devil and a satan she was!

Baal worship, with all its attendant evils, spread through Israel like a plague. In an endeavour to stay the plague Elijah and Elisha appeared, with one of the four clusters of miracles in the Scripture record. But despite this display of the hand of the living God, the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel proved to be a national disaster for Israel. The disaster was prolonged when a daughter, Athaliah, was born. She was to mature into a true daughter of Jezebel.

Yet Judah was in good heart. Why should they worry? They had a good king, Jehoshaphat. He was seeking the Lord, destroying the high places and groves, and re-educating his people in the law of the Lord. Spiritually, politically and, when necessary, in war, he was successful.

Even so, disaster struck again. Judah became involved also. Jehoshaphat made affinity with Ahab. Little foresight was needed to see the likely results. Maybe Jehoshaphat thought his positive goodness would be a powerful antidote. It was not to be so. The affinity he made was such that the results were long lasting. His son married Athaliah. Good king Jehoshaphat had now the daughter of Jezebel as his daughter-in-law. He had a satan at home. Although divine warnings were sounded, Jehoshaphat found himself embroiled in joint ventures with Ahab. The links forged in the marriage proved to be manacles. Jehoshaphat was a prisoner.

The poet says that the prisoner can see, through prison bars, mud or stars. The prophet Micaiah understood Jehoshaphat's plight. The two kings, Ahab and Jehoshaphat, sat on their thrones, surrounded by the host of false prophets. Micaiah directs Jehoshaphat's view upwards, to see "the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left". Jehoshaphat needed the succour of a true prophet.

But the deed had been done. The prison bars remained. The two marriages were to bring the light of David near to extinction.

In time, Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, came to the throne of Judah. Then the influence of his wife, Athaliah, became evident. To secure the throne, all the brothers of king Jehoram were slain.

Then, a son, Ahaziah, was born. Not unexpectedly, he became involved with the affairs of Israel. He was overtaken by one of Jehu's onslaughts and perished.

This, in turn, provoked Athaliah. She blazed forth in the true spirit of Jezebel. She destroyed all the seed royal, as she thought, of the house of Judah. This was an outright attack on the promise to David that the light of his house should continue.

The attack failed because of a third strange marriage. King Jehoram and Athaliah had also a daughter. Some have thought, presumably because the daughter was so different from Athaliah, that she was Athaliah's stepdaughter. Still, there the daughter was in this treacherous family. Further it comes as quite a surprise to find that she, Jehosheba, had married not only a man much older than she, but a most exceptional man, the high priest Jehoiada.

So the evil arising from the first two royal marriages was to be stemmed by this third marriage. It was a strange family to be so connected with such a spiritually robust high priest, but, in this way, God was at work upholding his promise to David.

Jehosheba and Jehoiada, so positioned by God, rescued Joash, the lone survivor of the royal seed, and hid him and his nurse for six years in the much neglected house of God. In the seventh year Jehoiada acted and spoke. "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David". The light of David's house had not been quenched.

The importance of the choice of partners and of marriage is underlined heavily by this history of three royal marriages. There are not only the two individuals concerned. Many will be involved, all who, in so many ways, come within the influence of the marriage that has taken place.

The teaching of Christ and the apostles makes clear the potential for good or evil of every disciple's example. Surely the influence of the example of two disciples, made and acting as one, will be even more powerful. When a brother and sister marry and set up home, a new centre of influence begins. It can be a further sanctuary for other disciples and another outpost for Truth.

Such sanctuaries and outposts are likely to be of increasing importance as the last days darken around us, as surely they will, presaging the Master's return. Such may be God's way of ensuring that the light of Truth is not utterly quenched. It may seem like the glimmerings of scattered glow-worms in the night to some, but it has been decreed that the darkness shall not envelop the Light.

The New Testament provides at least one example of a married couple living up to this high standard—Aquila and Priscilla. This couple were Paul's helpers in Christ, tutors to Apollos, and in their home the ecclesia met. In their small corner, the candle of Truth burned brightly.

Surely, in the Lord, we can be thankful and appreciative of many good issues of marriage, and not only of the children.

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<sup>1</sup>. Vol. 113: The Christadelphian : Volume 113. 2001, c1976. The Christadelphian, volume 113. (electronic ed.). Logos Library System . Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association: Birmingham