

WHEN GOD'S TIME COMES

Introduction

The experiences of Jesus and his people are so similar that either can be used to illustrate the other. And the experience of one child of God sheds light on the experience of others.

David had to exercise faith and patience while he waited for God to fulfil his promise of becoming king. So did Jesus. But God's time came, just as it did for Jesus – 'the hour is at hand' (Matthew 26:45) – to be exalted as well as to suffer.

What lessons can we learn from their experiences? They were the **culmination** of a long preparation. David and Jesus both made a **covenant** with their people. But there was a long **contest** even after they had sat on the throne.

Culmination

There was personal preparation as they experienced God's faithfulness and were equipped to care for their people. Both received the Spirit of God, David as he became more godly, Jesus at the start of his ministry. They both showed patience, wisdom, the fear of God, and love for their enemies. The preparation only came to an end when God himself acted. In David's case it was when Saul died in battle; in Jesus' case it was when God raised him from the dead.

There was also a process of preparation going on among their respective people. Israel learned slowly to give up hope in their current king, and then to remember that God had anointed David for the role. It may take a long time to acknowledge that rebelling against God is futile.

Christian people also had to give up their attachment to worldly things and dependence on their own righteousness. It took time before they finally received Jesus Christ. So often we think only about ourselves, and others as doing no more than meet our needs. It may take time to recognise what wonderful Person Jesus is.

Covenant

David made a covenant with the people. For centuries that had been common when someone took on the role of king. It was an agreement in which one party accepted his role as king, and the other party agreed to be subject to his government. It was mutual commitment. The terms were also included – the obligations and privileges of each side.

In the case of Jesus there is also what amounts to a covenant with his people. Baptism is God's promise and our response expressing an agreement. The Lord's Supper confirms it.

Converting to Christ involves agreeing to him being our Lord, and his Word as our law of life. This is in addition to him pardoning our sins. Like Israel and King David it is an acknowledgement of God's choice – we do not make Jesus Lord, we acknowledge that he is Lord.

On his part he commits himself in to us in love. He will teach us (prophet); by the Bible applied by his Spirit; intercede for us (priest), presenting our persons and worship to the Father; and govern and protect us (king). We may trust him completely.

In other relationships a breach of covenant may arise that relieves the other party of their obligations. In the case of Jesus the terms with believers include his blood cleansing them from all sin so that the relationship continues.

Contest

David's first victory was the capture of what has become Jerusalem. It was a Jebusite stronghold and appeared impregnable. But it was in the centre of Israel and using it as his capital would avoid suspicion that he was favouring his own tribe as would have been the case if he had stayed in Hebron.

The task was undertaken by Joab, and involved climbing through the tunnel that took water into the fortress. The Jebusite taunt was that the 'blind and lame' could protect the fortress since it was so strong. Mockery has often been used by the enemies of God, from Nehemiah's day, through Jesus' experience, to the writings and speeches of militant secularists today.

When the Philistines heard that David was king over all Israel and had captured the fortress of stronghold of Zion they assembled their army to attack him.

Christ's entry into the world was met with extraordinary demonic hostility. The proclamation of his gospel arouses the same hostility (see Revelation 12).

That is true for the church and for individual believers. A successful Christian work is also likely to come under attack. Examples of such things are: Job, Nehemiah, Jesus' wilderness temptations, Jesus' apostles. If we cling successfully to our comfort zone it suggests we are not attempting much for God's kingdom.

When David was attacked he sought God in prayer. Jesus' life was one of prayer. So must ours.

When God gives us the victory it is important that we give him the credit for it.

David destroyed the Philistines' idols. Jesus challenged everything that stood against God, whether it was demons or religious traditions that had no basis in the Bible. We are called to get rid of anything in our lives that has become a rival to God. And to pray to the Lord to keep us, for our heart is not so strong we can resist temptation in our own strength.

Victory must not leave us complacent. After David had defeated the Philistines they attacked again. The same thing happened to Jesus; the devil left him 'for a season' – 'until an opportune time' (Luke 4:13). We are called to persevere with Jesus in all the trials and temptations that his body on earth suffers. 'He who endures to the end shall be saved' (Matthew 24:13).

Again David asked for guidance from the LORD. A different plan was presented to him. God does not always use the exact same methods though he works within the parameters of Scripture.

Another significant difference was that David's army was told to wait until they heard a sound in the treetops. When that happened they were to understand that the LORD was going before them and their responsibility was to advance as hard as they could.

There is such a thing as God's time. That does not mean we are to be lazy in those periods when nothing seems to succeed; the lesson is to redouble our efforts when there is evidence that God has begun to work. We are only messengers; it is the Holy Spirit who achieves the saving and sanctifying work, and when he is active our victory is easy – we must press on.

This applies when a person we have prayed for or worked with starts to show an interest. It would apply when a community started to waken up to the gospel.

These things are a foretaste of the final victory. In the meantime Christ's servants must be sensitive to his leading and follow diligently.