

How Various Individuals Faced Death

by Bill Crews

David

David is the Psalmist who wrote, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me”* (Psalm 23:4). A good shepherd was to guard the sheep under his care with his life. In keeping his father’s sheep David had to confront both a lion and a bear. He slew the wild animals and saved the sheep; he gave Jehovah credit for his deliverance (1 Samuel 17:33-37). No Israelite soldier was willing to accept the challenge of the Philistine giant, Goliath (he was 9 feet, 8 inches tall). But David, evidently too young to serve in the army, accepted the challenge and faced possible death without fear. David said, *“Jehovah that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out the hand of this Philistine.”* And to Goliath he said, *“Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin, but I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied”* (See 1 Sam. 17:37, 45.) He faced death with the same calm assurance when pursued by king Saul and when in conflict with pagan armies.

Joshua

Joshua, successor to Moses and leader of Israel in the conquest and settlement of Canaan, said, *“And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. ...”* and *“But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.”* (Joshua 23:14; 24:15) Joshua 24:29 says, *“And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Jehovah (emphasis mine, bc), died.”*

Esther

Esther, the Jewess queen of the Persian king, Ahasuerus (probably Xerxes I of Herodotus’ history), sought an official audience with the king, without a prior appointment or summons, to save her people from a decree that meant their annihilation. Such an audience without an invitation could mean her death. Said she, *“Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; so will I go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish (emphasis mine, bc)”* (Esther 4:6). She was willing to die attempting to save her people, and it seemed that only she could save her people.

Shadrach, Meshach, And Abednego

Their Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The penalty for refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s great golden image was death in a fiery furnace. They refused, were arrested, and were given another opportunity to escape death. Said they, *“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in the matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”* (Daniel 3:16-18) They were ready rather to die than to do what was wrong.

The Twelve Apostles

In Acts 4, because of what they were preaching, Peter and John were arrested, imprisoned, and brought to trial before the Jewish high court. There they were charged to cease their preaching and threatened (with beating, imprisonment, or death). Their response? *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God,*

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