

NOW LET ME DIE

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Each of us faces an appointment with death. Judgment follows (Heb. 9:27). It is interesting to observe various ways in which some described in the Scriptures approached death. Let us look at a few cases.

Jacob. The man whose name was later changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28) was bereaved of his son, Joseph. The seventeen year old lad had been sent to check on his brothers and had never returned home. The father was made to think that the boy had been killed (Gen. 37:31-34). It was horrible consuming sorrow. Indeed, Jacob's favored son was alive, but he thought that he was dead. Time passes, Joseph winds up on the throne in Egypt, and famine reaches Palestine. Jacob sends sons for food. Following the confrontation with their now exalted brother, Jacob's commissioned sons finally are made to realize that the harsh treatment they had been receiving in Egypt had come from none other than their previously sold brother. But years had passed by now. Joseph wants to know for sure that his father is yet alive. When Jacob learns that Joseph is alive, he and the rest of the family go to Egypt. When the family arrived, Joseph in his chariot rides out to meet his father, "he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while" (46:29). "And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive" (46:30). Have you ever known of someone on the verge of death who was "holding on" until a loved one arrived? The one near death was waiting for that final look or final sound of the welcomed voice before passing on. And after the loved one finally arrived, the sick ceased his efforts to remain, and passed away. There are, no doubt, many cases where those near death feel more ready to die after a final visit with a loved one.

Elijah. This man was indeed a mighty prophet of God whose greatness is partially seen in the fact that John the baptizer was to come in his spirit and power (Luke 1:17). He was a courageous man who in solitary fashion faced the 450 "prophets of Baal" and the 400 "prophets of the groves" who ate at Jezebel's table (1 Kings 18:19). The false prophets were called to mount Carmel. And there the great contest was held. An empirical demonstration would be called for in order to show who was the one true and living God. The false prophets called on their god for fire, and it fell not. Elijah called on the "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel" (18:36), and "the fire of the Lord fell" (v. 38). Following the fallen fire, Elijah had the prophets of Baal all killed (v. 40). When Jezebel learned of what had occurred, she threatened Elijah who then fled for his life (19:1-3). He left his servant in Beersheba at the southern end of Palestine and traveled for a day into the wilderness. He sat down under a juniper tree and asked the Lord to take his life (19:4). He wanted to die; he had had enough. An angel was sent to give food to Elijah, and in the strength of that food he journeyed forty days and nights to Mt. Horeb or Sinai (19:8). He found a cave and lodged there. God there met with Elijah and Elijah presented his predicament to God. Unfortunately, Elijah had lingered under the illusion that he was the only one left who was faithful to God, but God assured him that there were 7000 in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal (19:18). Elijah is told that his work is not yet done. He is given an assignment that he accepts and later completes. It is possible today that at times we are ready to go on before the Lord is ready for us to come. At such times, if they occur, we must "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (Eph. 6:10) that we might

be able to finish the course (1 I Tim. 4:6-8). It is not time for us to die, until the Lord says that it is time (James 4:15).

Simeon. After Jesus was born, according to the law of Moses he was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21). When the days of purification were completed, Jesus was brought to Jerusalem so that he could be presented to God and so that appropriate sacrifices could be offered (vs. 22-24). Luke tells us that there was in Jerusalem a righteous and devout man named Simeon. This man was “looking for the consolation of Israel” (v. 25). He had already been divinely informed that he would not die until he had seen “the Lord’s Christ” (v. 26). Simeon “came in the Spirit” into the temple, and when the Lord’s parents brought the baby Jesus into the temple, Simeon “received him into his arms” (vs. 27, 28), and he then by inspiration prayed, “Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, According to thy word, in peace; For mine eyes have seen thy salvation...” (vs. 29, 30). Simeon was allowed to live to see the person of the Christ. He saw the long looked for Jewish Messiah. He saw God’s divine means of saving the souls of men. He saw God in the flesh (Jno. 1:14). Today, no man living is ready for death until he personally experiences salvation from God (Acts 17:30, 31; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15, 16). 