

What We Can Learn from the Death of Osama bin Laden

Gary McDade

The first time we heard the name of this now notorious character for many it was hard to pronounce or even remember. More than two decades later when al-Qaeda, the organization he founded in 1988 and led, is known world-wide as a “radical Sunni Muslim organization dedicated to the elimination of a Western presence in Arab countries and militantly opposed to Western foreign policy” and has found its place at the center of terrorism, the world is a different place—a decidedly more dangerous place (www.dictionary.com). And, “Safety” has risen in the thinking and practice of every country as a valued state of being. Before we turn the page of history on this man, perhaps a few moments reflecting on what we may learn from his death would be useful.

GOD RULES IN THE KINGDOMS OF MEN. The ancient King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, was ill affected until he came to “know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32). Once the hard lesson was learned by Nebuchadnezzar, God restored his place and he enjoyed a newfound appreciation for his proper state in life. Daniel recorded his declaration, “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (vv. 34-37).

GOD BRINGS EVERY WORK INTO JUDGMENT. The ancient King of the combined kingdoms of Israel and Judah, Solomon, toward the end of a legendary reign wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Sometimes God’s judgment is exacted within time, but a day of judgment is coming everyone will pass through. 2 Corinthians 5:10-11, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. . . .”

GOD SEES ALL AND KNOWS ALL. The beautiful 11th Psalm seems fitting here: “In the Lord put I my trust: How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.”