

This time, the heart

Figure of King David from the synagogue at Gaza



Lord our God, who long prepared the way for our salvation, give us hearts to love you and a will to seek your kingdom, where your true anointed king reigns in glory forever. Amen.

Fruits of the Spirit

– a meditation on Galatians 5:22-23

The orange represents faithfulness

by Caroline Hodgson

The fact that the orange is sometimes used as a symbol of innocence is probably due more to its perfumed white blossom than its brightly coloured fruit. Thus a bride may wear orange blossom to signify purity.

The good news for Christians is that innocence can be regained through faithfulness and trust. Jesus showed this when he drew a child to him (Matthew 18:1-4) and taught that we need to be like little

children to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The poignant last words of the missionary James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) were: "I am so weak that I can hardly write, I cannot read my Bible, I cannot even pray. I can only lie still in God's arms like a little child, and trust." Hudson was gravely ill, but no matter how robust, vigorous and healthy we are, on one level we are all like helpless babies, utterly dependent on our God. When you meet one of life's challenges, stop to ask yourself: Am I really faithful and trusting in this situation? 🍊

“Our responsibility is simply to make our witness faithful; it is God's responsibility alone to make it effective.”

John MacArthur (born 1939), American pastor and author

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* 1 Samuel 15:34 – 16:13

It all starts so well, then goes horribly wrong so quickly. Israel's first king, Saul, looks every inch a king, but turns out to be a disaster. He hesitates when he should lead; he makes bad decisions; he ignores the advice of God's prophet Samuel. It is not his fault. He never wanted the job in the first place, and he has done his best, but his best is not good enough.

So Samuel goes to Bethlehem to find a new king. This time he is not looking for physical stature or good looks – Saul has those and it hasn't helped. This time he is looking for a heart that is brave and true. And he finds it in David, the youngest son of the family of Jesse, who just happens to be

stunningly good-looking as well.

We have reached a turning point in the Old Testament story. We have met David, the beautiful, talented, tragically flawed king whose line of succession will be such a central theme. He will show himself to be every bit as unwise as Saul, and rather more cruel, but there will be a crucial difference. David is God's choice. God will use him to show what kingship can be, when the king loves his people and is loved in return, and when he leads them with the anointing and blessing of God upon him. The human David will inevitably fall short, but he will have a descendant, another anointed one, whose perfect kingdom will never end. 🍊

The history of the Eucharist

Part II, the early Church

by Richard Greatrex

If the Eucharist was simply modelled on Passover, it would most likely have become no more than an annual event. But all Jewish meals are religious occasions, with ritual cleansing and special prayers, found at their most intense during the weekly sabbath meal, when bread is broken and shared before blessed wine is distributed. It was out of this environment that early Christian celebrations of the Last Supper arose, overlaid by Jesus' new

interpretation of broken bread as his body, wine his blood.

Eucharist in early Christianity was a full, communal meal, eaten on the evening of the first day of the week, growing out of familiar Jewish customs but focused upon remembrance of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Gradually, as more Gentiles became Christians, the reliance on Jewish practice decreased. By the second century it was no longer a complete evening meal but a synagogue-style morning act of worship, with scripture-based liturgies, prayers and a kiss of peace before the presiding bishop took bread and wine and gave thanks on behalf of everyone present. 🍊



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