

The Lion King

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[0 : 00] I want to read from two portions of Scripture, first of all in Genesis 49. Genesis 49, I want to read the first two verses, and then from verse 8 to verse 12.

We read of Jacob in his farewell speech, I suppose, as farewell blessings to his sons. Verse 1 and 2, then Jacob called his sons and said, gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.

Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel, your father. And then verse 8, Judah, your brothers shall praise you.

Your hands shall be upon the neck of your enemies. Your father's son shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub.

From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, as a lioness, who dares rouse him. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him.

[1 : 19] And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Finding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine, and his vesture in the blood of grapes.

His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk. And then in Revelation chapter 5, reading of Judah and the prophecy that Jacob gave of Judah and his majesty.

And let's read the fulfillment, the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy. Revelation 5, 1 to 5. Then I saw on the right hand of him who was seated on the throne, a scroll written, and on the back sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, He was worthy to open the scroll and break its seals. And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more.

[2 : 35] Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

And may God add his blessing to that reading from his holy word. As we turn particularly to the passage we read, first of all in Genesis 49, where we read not just the prophecy concerning Judah himself, the fourth son of Jacob, but ultimately words in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ.

These words that tell of the power and the majesty of Jesus and his glory and his preeminent glory as the divine Son of God, the one who came from heaven to earth, who came in all his glory, who came in his majesty and his preeminent majesty, who came in all his splendor as the Son of God, and all that we've said there, even in these few words, telling of the prophecy that Jacob gave immediately of his son Judah, ultimately of the Lord Jesus.

And God willing, in these next three Sunday evening services, we're going to look at, well, what we might say are some of the lesser known passages that tell us of the coming of the Lord Jesus.

This is the time of year when so many minds, so many thoughts turn to the incarnation, the coming of Jesus to earth. And the next three Sundays, God willing, we'll look at some, as we said, some of the lesser known passages that tell of the Messiah to come, the Christ to come.

[4 : 25] We can't dismiss them, of course. They are God-breathed. This is the Word of God, the inspired Word of God. And yes, the Word of God that promised the coming of the Lord Jesus, promised the one whom we read off in Genesis 3.15, the one who would bruise Satan's head.

That first prophecy, the coming of the Savior, the coming of the Lord Jesus, and that prophecy telling of the complete victory of Jesus over the evil one and subsequent prophecies telling of the Christ to come.

And well, what about these prophecies? What about this particular one in Genesis 49? In many ways, this is one of the most poignant of references to the Lord Jesus and his coming to earth. And the prophecy is uttered by Jacob. Jacob in his final parting words to his sons. And just as we noticed this morning, when Moses was giving his final parting words to Israel. So the words that we're going to look at, even certainly part of the farewell of Jacob to his sons. [5 : 49] You know, farewell words carry weight. They carry meaning. They carry purposes. They carry special emphasis. And this is no different. This is no different at all. Because Jacob has been given these words to give that have this special reference to the Lord Jesus.

But you know, each of these 12 sons of Jacob, they were given particular words, started with Reuben the eldest, right through to Benjamin the youngest. These were words of prophecy concerning them and those who would follow them from their own tribes. But there's only one son amongst these 12 for whom there's this special prophecy, this special meaning given to this particular son in connection with the coming of the Lord Jesus to earth.

Yes. And, of course, we know from Scripture, we know from different parts of Scripture that Judah, the son of Jacob, this fourth son of Jacob, Jacob would, that Judah rather would be a human ancestor of King David and, of course, ultimately, human ancestor of the Lord Jesus. Jesus' humanity. And, of course, as we read in Revelation 5, the name Judah would be associated with Jesus. Jesus referred, as we read there, of the lion, the lion king, the lion, the tribe of Judah. [7 : 18] Jesus in all his glory, all his majesty, and all his splendor is that king, that lion king, the lion of the tribe of Judah. So, we want to consider what these words are saying of Jesus to enable you the more to worship him, yes, the more that you see Jesus in all his glory, majesty, and splendor.

And really to grasp his greatness, the greatness of our Lord Jesus, his greatness as king. Jesus, who came from heaven to earth. He came to bring in his eternal reign into the hearts of his people. But before we actually look at these words of prophecy, we do need to know a little bit about Judah. Suppose if we, you know, were to ask, who was Judah? What about his past? Well, we can certainly say something at the moment of Judah himself. Well, if you know the passages where Judah is mentioned in Genesis, you'll know that certainly Judah wasn't the perfect man.

In fact, he was anything but. He was one of the brothers, remember, who conspired initially to kill Joseph out of sheer jealousy because Joseph, remember, in his dreams, he saw, in dream anyway, others bowing down to him.

[8 : 42] And of course, the influence being his brothers bowing down to him. And certainly Judah, along with the brothers at first, wanted to kill Joseph out of sheer jealousy.

But then after a change of heart, at least Judah had the, well, the change of heart to see Joseph sold into slavery rather than kill him.

But then, you need to further episodes in Judah's life where again, he's seen us again far, far from an ideal individual. Particular liaisons with other women that really tell us about his particular immorality.

But then, we might say God's grace came to him, entered his heart, changed this once selfish, self-centered, arrogant man.

And as the years progress, Jacob takes responsibilities and family leadership. And even, we're told, in Genesis 44 when he stands before Joseph, now Joseph, the second in command in Egypt, he doesn't know that this is Joseph, his brother.

[9 : 55] All he sees is this great dignitary, this man who has power over life and death. And it's Judah, all the brothers, Judah, who pleads before Joseph for his brother's sake, for Benjamin's sake, when Joseph, remember, was using Benjamin to bring back the family, to bring back the family into brotherly fellowship.

It's Judah who pleaded with Joseph a gift of mercy on a broken-hearted father and a mercy on the youngest brother, Benjamin. It was Judah who said he was prepared to be Joseph's slave in order that Benjamin be released.

And then, even though Judah was fourth in line of Jacob's children, he's the one who receives highest praise from Jacob.

That's what the name means, Judah. It means praise. He's the one who receives the highest blessing from Jacob. The elders, Reuben, well, he forfeited his right to the highest blessing because

of particular sins in his life.

The second and third brothers, Simeon and Levi, they forfeited their rights to succeed Reuben because they acted particularly ferociously, viciously, cruelly against the inhabitants of Shechem. [11:20] But it's Judah, it's Judah who receives the highest blessing. It's Judah whose name means praise and the praise of Judah and, of course, the successor, the ultimate successor of Judah who will receive the highest praise.

We know the name Judah, of course, is from what you get the name Jew. You go to the German language, of course, and you see that particularly emphasized. But you know Judah, you know of Judah through the family line of Jesus.

Jesus in his human nature descending from Judah. Jacob gave his son that name Judah, the name that means praise.

He gave him that highest honor. And you who know the Lord Jesus, you who know the line of the tribe of Judah, it's for you to praise his name, to praise the name of Jesus, to praise that name that's higher than any other name.

Praise him, even now in your hearts. Praise him. Praise him for who he is. Praise him for what he's done coming from heaven to earth. Praise him for the transformation that he's made in your life if you know him as Lord and Savior.

[12:35] what are you going to praise him for? What are you going to do in that praise? You're going to praise him for his greatness. You're going to praise him for his preeminent glory.

You're going to praise him for his preeminent majesty, majesty above all. You're going to praise him for his splendor just as Jacob prophesied about these great aspects of Judah that were fulfilled ultimately in Jesus.

And you know this, at this time of year particularly, when you think of praise, well you think of true, real, wholesome praise.

It's not the frivolity of a secular X-mas, but that true praise that has to be offered is the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ, the joy of Christ-mas, the joy of the birth of Jesus, the joy of the almighty ruler coming from heaven to earth, the joy of the lion of the tribe of Judah coming to bring in his reign, the joy of knowing Jesus as Lord and Saviour and King.

Because that's what we want to focus on, his greatness and his preeminent, first of all, his preeminent glory. Think back to his name, the name that is very similar to the Hebrew word for praise.

[14:06] Jacob latches on to that meaning, the meaning of Judah's name. Judah, your brother shall praise you, your hand shall be in the neck of your enemies, your father's son shall bow down to you.

In other words, Jacob's going to be the preeminent brother of all these twelve brothers. In other words, he's going to be the most excellent, he's going to be the most praiseworthy among the brothers and they're going to praise him.

Now, that prophecy was fulfilled. It's in a more immediate fulfillment in those who succeeded Judah, those who succeeded as king, King David, King Solomon.

They were from the tribe of Judah. They ruled over the whole of Israel. They conquered their enemies. But of course, in a greater sense, prophecy was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because he's the one who receives praise from those whom he calls his brothers. The Lord Jesus, your elder brother, it's for you who are his brothers and sisters to praise him.

[15:16] He's the one who subdued all his enemies. Where did he subdue them? He subdued them on the cross. It was on the cross that he gained that victory. Victory over sin.

Victory over Satan. Three days later, victory over death and his resurrection. And know this, the scripture tells us.

When Jesus returns to earth, you will see him. And you'll see and hear praise being uttered and offered from all who are his. Praising him all glory.

Glory to the Lord Jesus. And yes, those who treated Jesus as the enemy in life. We'll be praising, but we'll know that condemnation.

What about you? I mean, are you praising Jesus even now? Are you giving him the glory? Are you bowing in your heart to him in reverence and submission? Again, this time of year, we know that all times of year we should be coming before the Lord Jesus, seeing Jesus, worshipping him.

[16:24] But even this time of year, doesn't it bring you the more to see Jesus, the more to glorify him, the one who's come to earth, made it possible for you to know him, to know that great salvation.

You know, when you hear the Christmas stories repeated, and they will be repeated, we've got a carol service here on the 24th, 24th of this month, there's a Legion carol service on the 20th, those Christmas stories will be right here.

But when these stories are read, you listen, in fact, when you read them at home, read the stories, and listen and focus on the amount of praise that's offered to the Lord Jesus, and is coming to earth.

The praise of the angels, the praise of ordinary shepherds, the praise of these eastern magi who came and followed the star and bowed down and worshipped and praise, all praising the one who's worthy of all praise.

Even in glory, even at this moment in glory, there's that praise of the Lord Jesus, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[17:39] Even Revelation 5, 12 of that praise, worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.

But it's praise in the heart of all of you, even whether this time of year or all times of year. We're coming towards the end of another year. Has this year been a year when you have praised the Lord Jesus?

Because if you haven't been praising Jesus, if you've not been giving him the glory glory as of the divine Son of God, well you must have been praising something else or someone else.

But that someone else or that something else can't give you that fullness of joy, that fullness of life, that great salvation. Only the Lord Jesus can do that.

Only Jesus who came to bring in his reign of peace can give you that fullness of joy, that fullness of joy sufficient for you to praise him and to give thanks.

[18:51] So come to him, bow before him and give praise to your Saviour. And even now he's being praised in heaven. May the praise on earth join with that praise in heaven so that there's this gathering of praise before our Lord and King.

Because he is Lord, he is King, he has that preeminent majesty, as Lord, as King, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And that's really where we see Jacob speaking of that majesty of Jesus.

Notice the language that Jacob uses here about, well, the first instance, Judah and ultimately Jesus. This is the language of majesty, legal majesty. The language that Jacob uses here, it's language that speaks of a king, speaks of a royal ruler, speaks of somebody who's got all power, all majesty.

Judah is a lion's cub from the prey, my son, you've gone up. He stooped down, he crouched, that's a lion, that's a lioness, who dares rouse him?

Three types of lion, the lion cub, the male lion, the lioness. Lions, well, why lion? Well, at that time in Israel, lions actually were around in Israel.

[20:15] And their very fierce nature simply evoked imagery of power and strength. And that's what lions were associated with, royal power. King Solomon, when he built the temple, he had sculptures of lions that flanked the throne, not the temple, rather his palace, the royal palace, sculpted lions, either side of his throne to denote his power, glory, his majesty.

And that's why we read in Revelation 5 that great lion king imagery of Jesus, the triumphant, all-conquering Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, Jesus fulfilling the prophecy that Jacob gave about Judah.

He has that absolute power. He's defeated his enemies. He's rescued you. He's rescued all who are his to be with him forever. He is the true lion king.

But as we read in Revelation 5 12, the lion of the tribe of Judah is also the lamb that was slain. Jesus, the lion king, at the same time he's Jesus, the sacrificial lamb.

Jesus who suffered for you on the cross when he gave himself for you. Death, as we said, that death that won the victory.

[21:45] And he won victory not by force of arms, not by conflict, by fighting, but by a submissive obedience to his father when he offered himself a sacrifice on the cross.

You know, think of his majesty. We're thinking of the majesty of the Lord Jesus. Jesus' majesty was seen on the cross. It was seen in his being, that sacrificial lamb for you.

He was never anything less than majestic in the manger. He was never anything less than majestic when the magi came to worship him as king.

And he's never anything less than majestic in the glory of heaven. He's seated at the right hand of the father and for he reigns forever. Royal credentials are clear.

You see that in the prophecy verse 10. The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

[22 : 56] Why would we sing in Psalm 45a these prophetic words of Jesus? Your royal throne of God will last throughout eternity. Your kingdom's scepter will be one of truth and equity.

These symbols of royal power. Well the symbol, the ultimate symbol was the royal scepter. That ornamental stick that symbolized the rule of a king.

That's what Jacob's prophesied here. Saying God's going to bestow in Judah and upon his descendants royal power. From Judah that the monarchy is going to come.

From Judah that princes are going to rule and justice dispensed. As we mentioned, King David, the descendant of Judah, King Solomon and Sunday, they held, physically held the scepter of power.

But of course ultimately Jesus, Jesus the son of David, he holds the scepter of divine power because he's king, because he rules, and he rules eternally.

[24 : 01] He's brought in the kingdom, the kingdom of God, and it's for you to serve in that kingdom, to know that you're not of this world, but you're of the kingdom of God's dear son, you who know God's dear son as Lord and Savior.

You know, in these weeks that happened, started, and were continuing, there are many who will be singing Christmas carols, there'll be unbelievers, the agnostics, even some atheists, they might even dare to echo the lyrics, you know, singing of glory to the newborn king.

Will these words be sung in faith? Will they be sung with love for the Savior? Will they be sung with praise for the one who came as that newborn king? Will they be sung acknowledging that Jesus is Lord of lords and king of kings?

But don't point the finger at others. What about yourself? Even in your own day-to-day following Jesus, is he your king? Is he king? Is he lord?

Does he rule in your life? Does he reign? Reign in your heart? So that truly you can say your will be done. I mean, he's no longer the newborn king, but he's the eternal king.

[25 : 25] Yes, the eternal king in his humanity was born. And in humanity he lived and died and rose again to bring in his reign into your life.

It's your response. It has to be to bow before him. Even now in the quiet of your heart, bow before the majesty that's the Lord Jesus and bring him to reign in every aspect of your life.

That he rules and that he rule in your heart and rule for his glory, just as Jacob prophesied here, of the one who would come who would be all glorious as king and whose reign would attract the obedience of all peoples, all nations.

Because the majesty of Jesus is seen in all his splendor, preeminent splendor, all excellence, splendor. You see that in verse 11, binding his foe to the vine and his donkey's coat to the choice vine.

He's washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. What are these words saying? Certainly in Jacob's day, no one ever tethered their donkey to a vine.

[26 : 41] Vines were very, very valuable and you certainly didn't do such a mundane thing as tether your donkey to a vine. Certainly you didn't wash your clothes in wine. But Jacob's saying that this is what the king will do.

He'll show his power, he'll show his might, he'll show he's someone of great prosperity. Of course, one of Judah's success, Solomon.

Solomon reigned in what we might call a golden age of wealth and wisdom. him. But think of the Lord Jesus. He's brought in his reign and it's a reign of great eternal riches, great splendor, the eternal splendor of his reign, even the prospect of the glory of the new heavens and the new earth. That prospect of that golden age, that eternal age, there'll be no more tears, no more suffering, no more pain. The Lord Jesus will reign forever and ever in the splendor of the new Jerusalem, in the splendor of the reign of the Lord Jesus.

It tells of the beauty of the Lord Jesus. It tells of Jesus who's full of grace and truth. That's what Jacob brings out in his prophecy. His eyes are darker than wine and his teeth whiter than milk.

[28 : 05] These are just words that bring out the sense of beauty. In the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, Jesus is prophetically described as someone who's altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand.

And surely here Jacob's prophesying of that truth, the beauty of Christ, the spiritual perfection of Christ, the moral perfection of the Lord Jesus, the one who is altogether beautiful in his glory, in his grace, in his truth, in his majesty.

You might say this, that the king, the king, the Lord Jesus, is the loveliest person in the loveliest place. He is the one who is altogether lovely.

He is the one who is altogether beautiful in his person, in his glory, in his might. You know, roughly 1700 years before the birth of Jesus, an old man, this old Jacob, Jacob by this point in his deathbed, but given divine inspiration, given a, we might say, a glimpse of the one who come from the tribe of Judah, the one who would come and bring his eternal kingdom of peace.

Jacob being given that glimpse of Jesus, the two thousand years after the birth of Jesus. What about you? Jacob saw in vision the Lord Jesus.

[29 : 43] Do you see by faith the Lord Jesus? Do you see him as the king, as king in his glory, in his majesty, in his splendor? Well, if you do rejoice, rejoice that you have seen and do see by faith the Lord Jesus, because it's what we know of is in Jesus.

Yes, the one whom we remember and is coming from heaven to earth, the one who came as the prince of peace, the one who came so that he might rule in the hearts of his people forever.

And I ask you, do you know this king? Have you surrendered your life to king Jesus? Are you saying with one another, we would see Jesus? Lord, do you not want to see him?

Are your eyes shut to the Lord Jesus? Well, see him. He's seen in scripture, in God's word. He's seen in these pages of scripture. I pray that you will see Jesus.

See him by faith and that you'll know him as lord and king in your life. And when you know him as lord and king in your life, you'll never be disappointed.

[30 : 57] He never disappoints. Because he is lord, he's king, he's our saviour. Amen. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give you thanks for your word.

We give you thanks that we can, the more see the Lord Jesus in all his glory, in all his majesty, in all his splendor. Lord, may that truth impact our lives so that we might, the more follow him, the more worship him, the more give to him all that we are, that we might love him as we love you with all that we are.

So hear us, Lord, as we cry out unto you. Hear us, Lord, as we give thanks to you for our Lord Jesus Christ, as we praise you for all your goodness to us, even in sending Jesus for us.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue in worship before you now. We pray these things.