

Genesis 49:8-12.

⁸ “Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. ⁹ You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? ¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. ¹¹ He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. ¹² His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.

The Promised One Makes our Future Sure

Within the last 15 days we have celebrated two birthdays at our house. As the kids get older and especially as they reach these milestones I find myself thinking about their future. As a father I think it is only natural to wonder what the future will hold for my children. As parents watch their daughters grow, as fathers watch their sons play as boys and then grow into young men, they can’t help but wonder what the future holds. If we are paying attention we might recognize skills and personality traits, strengths and weaknesses, and make assumptions based on the evidence that we collect. There might be things that we can expect might happen and there will also be plenty of things that we could never see coming. Fathers and mothers look upon their children, their sons, and daughters, and a more than a few times they consider how things might turn out for their children.

At the end of his life Jacob looked out over his sons and in this final milestone of his own life, he considered what the future would hold for his children. What Jacob did, however, was more than your typical parent casting a vision of expectations for the future of his offspring. He did certainly draw from observation and years of experience with his sons, who were now grown men and who had certainly carved out for themselves a way of life already. However, as those who have the benefit of the rest of the story from the pages of Scripture, we know this was prophecy. From the high level of future accuracy and the amount of biblical importance we know these words to be much more than a father giving an educated guess, but rather Jacob sat in the spirit of God and spoke words of riveting and poetic prophecy, including a remarkable and vivid promise of the Savior. More than mere character evaluation and educated guesses about what might happen; this was God at work. One even wonders if Jacob truly could grasp the full meaning and significance of his words as he speaks about his sons; especially as he turns his attention to his son, Judah. God is indeed at work here as these words serve as a vision of the promised Savior. They give a promise of what would come and what is still yet to come and this promise is sure. For in this prophecy about his son Judah, Jacob would make a reference to the coming Messiah, the coming Christ.

In his prophetic prediction Jacob speaks of how Judah would establish a throne over his brothers, from his family line would be the ruling tribe, the tribe of kings. The promise most have seemed extreme, seem unexpected. Before the time of kings Jacob looks to his son and says, you will rule, your family will be a house of kings. It might have seemed far-fetched, but we know that the promise was sure. Even though at this point of time Israel was just a man and a family and had not yet become a nation, however, God granted Jacob the ability to foretell that Judah and not one of the older sons, Ruben or Simeon, would be the son of authority and royalty. By the power of God

Jacob speaks of Judah as ruler, pictured as a lion, who has power over his enemies, his rivals, even over his own brothers. He calls Judah a lion's cub who sits and crouches in power and honor, in respect and an air of privilege. ***9 You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?*** God promises through Jacob that from this royal family one would come forth who would reign in magnificent peace and prosperity, who would elicit obedience from not just his own people, but from the nations. This prophecy would be fulfilled in the kings who would come from the house and line of Judah, but ultimately it would be fulfilled in Christ Jesus. And so as we meditate on these words of God for this morning we will consider this good news that **Jesus, the Lion of Judah, is the one who makes our ultimate future sure. God's chosen one will reign forever. And he will have for us an abundance of blessings in his everlasting kingdom.**

Again what a shock this must have been for Judah to hear these words from his father. As the years went by there must have been times when Judah was skeptical or at least doubtful about his father's proclamation. *King, are you sure?* At the time this was a family that was still technically living within a foreign land. Sure, they were well off and established as far as having a household, but a kingdom, that was still quite a leap. And why heap the praise onto the one son in particular? Judah wasn't even the oldest.

This must have been quite the revelation. This must have been something that was at times extremely difficult to grasp or believe, because the currently reality was so far removed from what was promised. This must have been difficult promise to trust even in the time of peace and relative prosperity in the land of Goshen, consider how hard it must have been to hold on to such a promise in the midst of slavery and as the people of Israel wandered in the desert. Where was this promised royalty? Where were these lavish blessings that were promised? And yet the promise was sure. This was not merely coincidence or good fortune that Judah's family would eventually fall into, no this was the faithfulness of God. The promise was sure because it came from the LORD.

And so of course, this promise would come true. As a youth, Judah had shown that he had been blessed with a strong character from God and in accordance with God's good will and providence, the sons of Judah, his family, would continue in that trait of strength and leadership. The scepter came to the house of Judah and it would remain for a good long time. Think of the great Kings of Judah, such as David and Solomon, God would indeed fulfill this promise to Judah. Like the mighty lion David would sit on his throne and exude power. Like the king of the beasts receives honor and respect from the rest of the animal kingdom King Solomon would receive honor and respect from those in his kingdom and beyond. During the reign of David and Solomon, the land would produce and be fertile, power and blessings would fill their courts, victories and the spoils of battle would be placed into their treasury, borders would swell, and the surrounding nations would respect the power of the kings of Judah. Judah's line enjoyed luxury and wealth, health, power, security and safety, enduring praise and lasting honor and respect. The promise, which seemed, perhaps unlikely at the time, was sure. It would be fulfilled. There would indeed be a time when the sons of Judah would enjoy peace and prosperity, health and wealth, in unprecedented fashion.

March through the years of disobedience: the waywardness of God's people; the failings and the falling of David, Solomon, and the rest of that royal house. After those decadent years of glory the kingdom was defeated, the king and his people were taken captive, exiled. And so what about the part of the promise that mentioned how the scepter would not be removed from the between Judah's feet. This is where we certainly look to the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Judah. God was faithful, his promise remained. The scepter would never truly depart from Judah for even

though the people were taken away the nation was preserved. Even though they returned as a shell of themselves, they did indeed return. Even though in their return they were governed by foreigners their future remained in the hands of God. Most importantly, the promise of the Messiah remained intact. The Messiah who was to come as the culmination of God's plan, came just as promised. However, it was clear that when he first came into the world he came to bring about a different kind of kingdom. He came in humility and not power. He lived a meager existence. For a time this Messiah did not even have his own place to lay his head. And then as was opposed and harassed, captured and put on trial, Jesus stood before a Roman ruler and hours before his death he was treated with disgust and contempt, not honor and respect. The shouts of praise from among his people, his fellow Jews, had turned to curses and cries of crucify. His enemies had stripped him of all honor and respect and had hung him on a cross for all to see; to see his shame and disgrace. This was not a picture of a mighty lion, crouched in honor and power and respect, this looked more like a powerless carcass stretched and flayed. His garments were shamefully stained in his own blood. Rather than the picture of health and wisdom, he was the picture of suffering and foolishness.

But this was the foolishness of God's plan that would bring about lasting glory, everlasting honor, and unending blessings for us who believe. God chose to take on our shame so that we might share in his glory. The king of the universe would humble himself to be born of a woman who was from the house and line of David, and from this tribe of Judah. Jesus would come to be this king that had been appointed for all eternity. This is the king who would come but upon his first arrival he would not be an earthly ruler, but rather he would establish a spiritual throne. He would come to preach and teach, proclaiming repentance and forgiveness. He would bring the free and gracious gift of eternal life, as the Lamb of God, sacrificed for the sins of the world. This promised king came to humility to defeat sin and death and hell as he lived as our perfect brother and sacrifice himself in our place. He would cover over all our sins, take them away, wash us clean. He came to bring salvation and victory. He came to make our future sure.

And so, the king of glory died in our place but then he rose again so that we could share in his glory. As he looked down through the centuries, as he looked upon his children, his kingdom of believers, he didn't just wonder about our future, but he made our future sure. As he looked down through the centuries he saw our strengths and he saw our weaknesses. He saw our personality flaws, our secret sins, our bad habits and evil practices. He saw our failings and fallings. And yet like only a perfect Father could, he loved us anyway, and he had mercy on us. He came for us and he will come again. We deserved shame and punishment and he promised us glory and honor. In his humility, he gained for us those priceless gifts of forgiveness and salvation. In his sacrifice, he brought us peace with God and opened the bountiful treasures of heaven, to those who are his children through faith. The promise, which seemed so far away in the darkness of Golgotha was reaffirmed and made certain in Christ's glorious resurrection from the dead. The grave could not hold him for this was indeed the one whom God had sent. This was indeed the one who brings peace and countless blessings to his people. This is the Christ, the chosen one, the Lamb of God who was slain, is now risen and ascended, and therefore is the Lion of Judah who sits in absolute glory.

Revelation 5:5 reminds us how this promise made back in Genesis is fulfilled in Christ. Then one of the elders said to me, ***“Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”*** Jesus, the son of Mary, from the tribe of Judah he is the one who is ruling over the present and who knows exactly what our future holds. He is the king who sits in unmatched glory, he is the one who dwells in honor and is surrounded by unending blessings. He is the one who promises to come again to take us to be with

him in glory that exceeds our imaginations. Think the treasures of Solomon, the honor of David, and the peace and security of a fortified kingdom of Israel in its golden age, take all of those blessings and then multiply it by the power 10 (and then some) and then have it last for all eternity. Yes, your future is made sure and certain in Christ. He is the Lion of Judah and we will be with him in his glory.

Jesus will come again, and he will rule over this kingdom forever. The one who was mocked and taunted for us or for our sins will be honored by all. The one who was bloodied and battered in our place will come as the very picture of strength and power. He will have complete power over his enemies. The one who rules and reigns over all things, will sit in power, and the nations will obey him, honor him, and revere him. And in his love for you us his children, he promises a place for us at his side, in his presence, in his glory.

And so what should we do with such a remarkable promise? As we live in this world the currently reality is so far removed from what is promised that it might lead us to question the promise. We are daily surrounded by those who mock Jesus, who question and criticize him and are skeptical of his power and might, and who often take out their hatred of Christ on those who follow Jesus. As believers we may cave to the pressures around us and the sin inside of us and may fail to give Jesus the honor he deserves. We may not openly question our Savior's return but have moments of internal doubt. Can he really come through on such a promise? As we struggle with matching up the present reality with the promise glory of heaven, as we struggle with the reality of how Christ deserves all glory and honor is so often treated with a lack of respect among us, we find great assurance and strength in the fulfillment of his promise to Judah. And we look forward to seeing it fulfilled in full. Christ is the coming King. The future of God's people is in his capable hands. God is faithful to all his promises. He will bring the unmatched glory that he has promised. As believers, our future is made sure in Christ Jesus, the promised Messiah, who will come again. So trust and believe in the promise of the glory of heaven. Share the message of the coming Christ with your children, with the next generation, and with your friends and neighbors. Look with eager anticipation towards the day of Jesus' return and serve him thankfully until he comes again.

At a milestone in his life Jacob looked down upon his sons and spoke the promises of God. And this promise of God was sure. Rulers would come forth from the line of Judah, and there would be one in particular who would be rather special. He would bring peace. He would bring glory and countless blessings. Dear friends, that Promised One has come. He was born as the Prince of Peace, he lived and died as the Lamb of God, and having risen from death and assumed his place in power and glory he will come again as the Lion of Judah who will bring us to the glorious kingdom that has been foretold. Your Father has looked down upon you and he has made your future sure. Despite all your faults and your imperfections Christ has a clear vision for your eternity. He has forgiven you and he will return to take you to be with him and we will reign with him. This is a promise that is sure, that is certain, that is true. This is a trustworthy message we can share with our children and our grandchildren, from one generation to the next. *Your future is sure in Christ. He will come again and he will take us from this world of sin to our home in glory.* Thanks, be to God. Amen.