



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various Scripture Passages

"Judah Raised"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our theme is "The Old Testament Anticipation of the Messiah". We're looking at passage in the Old Testament that point forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And today we are centering attention upon Genesis chapter 49 verse 8 through verse 12, and especially the 10th verse in which Jacob giving his final blessing to his sons before his death said, "The septime shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come. And unto him shall the gathering of the people be." So our subject is "Judah Praised, Triumphant and Reigning in the Coming One".

It's a prevalent view of modern theology that the early church is responsible for the view that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled in his life and ministry the Old Testament Scriptures although he is not really there at all. In fact, modern scholarship pictures the church as ransacking the Old Testament to find texts to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. The names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were *nomes de plume*, but they were not the real authors. Unknown members of a day later than our Lord are responsible for the gospels. There are many flaws in this scheme of things. In the first place it discounts objective Christian tradition for the subjective speculations of scholars notorious for changing views. And second, it assumes that the early church had no interest in the factuality of Jesus' life, a thoroughly unnatural perception of human psychology.

More fundamental, however, is the conviction of many scholars that predictive prophecy is impossible. Contrary to most liberal scholars Rudolph Bultmann was very forthright in acknowledging that there are no miracles in our day. "All of our history," he claimed, "occurs within a closed continuum and in it everything precedes according to natural law."

R.P. Carol, the author of *When Prophecy Failed*, sympathizes with the view that God can foresee the range of things that may happen but he cannot see what is to happen. What is to happen depends on the exercise of human freedom. What Carol has is a limited God, what I would call an ungoded God. These humorless scholars who apparent fail to recognize their assumptions remind me of the well-known Chinese proverb, "To prophesy is exceedingly difficult, especially with regard to the future."

Actually the early church did not ransack the Scriptures for Old Testament texts to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. If they did then they missed some scintillating ones when are not found in the New Testament at all. A bipartisan reading of the Old Testament reveals that the New Testament is quite restrained in citing messianic texts. The authors omit many clear ones such as Genesis 3:15, which is not cited in the New Testament. Numbers chapter 24 verse 17, Isaiah 9:6, and Isaiah 32:1 and 2. Even some admitted as genuine messianic texts by the critics such as Isaiah 11:1 through 5 and Jeremiah 23:5 through 6. None of these texts are cited in the New Testament as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ and yet they seem in the Old Testament context to clearly point forward to the coming Messiah.

In our continued study of the Old Testament anticipation of the Messiah we now look at one the critics missed. Genesis 49:10 where Jacob in his final blessing of his sons looks into future and foretells what awaits them in their tribal descendance. Of Judah he says, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come. And unto him shall the gathering of the people be" -- surely a magnificent messianic passage pointing forward to the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, let us look first at verses 8 and 9 for they belong to the context of Jacob's words to Judah. The first thing that we notice in Jacob's prophecy is that he would be recognized by his bretheren as having leadership. In the 8th verse we read, "Judah, thou are him whom thy bretheren shall praise. Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies. Thy father's children shall bow down thee." This series of blessing upon the tribal heads of the nation are the last words of Jacob as is clear from the last verse of the chapter which reads, "And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons he gathered his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his people." That's verse 33. Some have thought it incredible that Jacob at his decrepit old age could utter thoughts so clear cut and virile. That reminds me, an old man too, of Robert Orbin's words, "I don't even remember when I was young. Sometimes I think I went directly from Dr. Spock to Dr. Scholls." Actually Socrates in his apology says, "I am about to die," and that's the hour in which men are gifted with prophetic power.

The same ideas expressed in the lines, "The soul's dark cottage battered and decayed lets in new light through chinks that time hath made." Jacob's last charge has a great lesson in faith and his death is sublimely recounted. There is always something grand in a believer's death. He breathed his last, the passage says, indicating that there was little in common with our Lord's death for he bowed his head and voluntarily gave up his spirit as John 19 verse 30 says. Then the text says that he was gathered to his people, suggestive of consciousness and recognition when he passed from this life into the next life.

Luther once said that ministers were made by *arotio* or prayer, *meditatio* or meditation, and *tentatio* or trial. If that's true then I can hear the angel who introduced Jacob to Adam in paradise, if there is anything like that above, saying something like this, "Adam, first believer of the human race, let me introduce you to Jacob, a crooked man who learned of God's sovereign grace in the fires of *arotio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* with a lot of the third." Of course, Jacob is a man who had many trials.

Judah was the fourth son but he is the first in the list of Jacob's sons to receive such a rich and unmixed blessing. To him Jacob says, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies. Thy father's children shall bow down before thee." And he goes in on in the 9th verse to say, "Judah is a lion's whelp, from the prey my son thou art gone up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion and as an old lion. Who shall rouse him up?"

When Judah was born he was given the name that meant praise. His nomen was an omen, to use a warn pun that someone authored. Jacob fills out the picture a bit by saying the Judah's bretheren shall praise him for military skill against their enemies. In other words, the royal stature of the tribe was acquired from his lion like nature manifested in David and of course in David's greater son the lion of the tribe of Judah the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the final analysis his nature and stature was given by God in sovereign electing grace. In the 9th verse of Genesis 49 Jacob says that he is recognized by the prophetic word. The picture Jacob paints in describing Judah's future is that of a young growing lion ceasing its prey, killing it, and then ascending to its mountain lair and resting in majestic quietness with nothing to fear from other beasts. The words point on to David's successes and the power of universal and power to come. From this source has come Great Britain's national symbol of the lion couchant. Since Judah is the lion of the tribes how suitable it is that Judah's noblest son should be called "the lion of the tribe of Judah". One of the commentators who's written a very suggestive little book suggests that the figure of the slain lamb standing in Revelation chapter 5 displays an even finer strength. Well, if the standing in Revelation chapter of the slain lamb represents resurrection power, and I think it does, then I have to agree. When we think of a standing slain lamb, why the contrast is remarkable and it certainly does indicate finer strength than the strongest of the lions for that represents resurrection power.

These two verses, verses 8 and 9 then create a tremendous sense of expectation, fully justified by the rest of the Bible. In the 10th verse we have the second part of the words of Jacob to Judah and we're going to call that the sovereign rule of the lion of Judah. And first he speaks of Judah's rule to the time of the coming one in the first part of the verse. The patriarch looks on down the path of time from his day and prophetic vision declaring, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come." And then he adds, "And unto him shall the gathering of the people be." His vision points to a critical time, the coming of something or someone called Shiloh or *Shelo* as the Hebrew text has it, and unfortunately a word not yet absolutely clear in meaning. And then the vision looks on to the gathering of the people. I would sum this up as a vision of a progressive march of events to the Messiah and his rule. Let us analyze the prophecy.

We have no problem in identifying the scepter as a long staff in its earliest form and a symbol of regal command. Judah shall have the Messiah from its ranks. But who or what is Shiloh or *Shelo*. It's wise to avoid dogmatism. There are three alternatives.

First, it's been surmised that Shiloh is the city of Shiloh referred to in the Old Testament. But Judah had no rule at Shiloh when that city became Israel's spiritual center, the tabernacle having been pitched there after the conquest of Canaan. If you're interested in that look at Joshua chapter 18 verse 1 and Judges chapter 18 verse 31. Nor had Judah rule up to that time so that Jacob's prophecy, if it referred simply to that, would be no prophecy at all being entirely unfulfilled.

A second suggestion is that it's a personal name meaning "rest bringer". Our Lord, of course, is a rest bringer when one trusts in him for eternal life. But the linguistic support of the meaning rest bringer for the word *Shelo* or Shiloh is feeble at best.

A third alternative is more promising. It's possible to take *Shelo* or Shiloh Old Testament be a clause meaning until he comes to whom it belongs. The Jewish Targum Uncalus has "until Messiah shall come" to whom belongs the rule. In fact, the Aramaic

word *mesbekah* is found in the Jewish Targum. This meaning finds some confirmation from Ezekiel chapter 21 and verse 27 for that text seems to be built upon this meaning of Genesis 49:10. In a clearly messianic passage Ezekiel has written giving the message God gave him and it's a message of judgment. "I will overturn it and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is and I will give it to him." I therefore understand Shiloh (or Shelo for it really is a Hebrew word that means this expression) until he comes to whom it belongs. I therefore understand Shiloh to be a clause that refers to the Messiah asserting that Judah shall have dominion until he comes to assume it personally.

Now in the last phrase or clause of verse 10 Jacob speaks of Judah's rule after he comes. Jacob refers to Judah's rule in the clause, "And unto him shall the gathering of the people be." The old patriarch's words ultimately refer to the end of the age when the Lord Jesus shall gather all his people to himself. He's the true and only center of the redeemed and together they form the secret sacred brotherhood of the genuine Christians who rest in his cross for eternal life.

The worldwide dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ is described in striking visual form in Revelation 5 verse 1 through verse 14 where John sees the lamb in heaven. He is the center of heaven's attention and worshipping having won for himself and his redeemed who are represented by him as their covenantal head the title to the universe he created. John heard the heavenly elders singing songs to the lamb containing these thrilling words, "Worthy art Thou to take the book and to break its seals for Thou wast slain and didst purpose for God with Thy blood men from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign upon the earth." Revelation, verse 9 and 10.

This text makes it plain that his worldwide dominion, that is the right to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing as all the hosts exclaim in that passage is grounded in his blood sacrifice. Salvation for his people and sovereignty over the universe are the purchased results of the blood that was shed on

Calvary's cross. It's no wonder that the Lord Jesus is the only center of true unity both to his people and to the world. No ecumenical movement in the churches that fails to accord him his divine rights and his exalted place in his creation can hope to succeed. It cannot be stressed too much that it is the cross of Christ around which true Christians gather. They may not agree on all points of Christian doctrine yet but they all agree about the Son of God and his saving sacrifice. And we love them who love him, our common Savior. We kneel in earnest prayer in his name to our Father and we arise to discover how much we are alike in our praise of him.

It's said that John Wesley the Arminian in his theology did not like Augustus Toplady, the Calvinist and his theology. Toplady in response called Wesley an old fox and said he would pluck him and have him tarred and feathered. Those were vigorous days when men were frank and unhyprocritically spoke their minds. But look at your hymnbook and you will find Wesley's "Jesus Lover of my Soul" by the side of Toplady's "Rock of Ages". With all their failings they found common ground at the cross of Jesus Christ.

"Unto Shiloh the rest giver, the coming one to whom it all belongs, shall the gathering of all his people be." Everything belongs to him and he shall have it. And that includes all those who found it difficult to get along perfectly on the earth. Even though we may disagree over points of doctrine here, if we have truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we have that common faith in him that makes us one in Christ.

Now Jacob goes on to speak in verses 11 and 12 of the golden age of abundance that will follow when Judah's Lord is to come, the one to whom it all belongs. He first of all describes the golden age under the figure of some animals in verse 11. Notice the words, "Binding his fowl unto the vine and his ass' colt unto the choice vine he washed his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes." The temporal sequence of things is continued here and thus the things referred to in this verse are things that follow the coming of the Messiah, the one to whom it all belongs or Shiloh.

And the subject of the abundance of possessions is the one to whom the blessing pertains, namely Judah. But of course Judah's blessings only come from the messianic warrior who conquers the enemies of heaven in his infinite power at his second advent, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The language is figurative no doubt but designed to portray exuberant intoxicating abundance being the golden age of the coming one as it has been put. Think of it. Grapevines are used as hitching posts and the wine from the vines is used for washing clothes.

The passage concludes with the figure of a man in verse 12. "It is stated his eyes shall be red with wine and his teeth white with milk." Wine and milk, the most valuable produce of the land, are so abundant that they may be enjoyed to the full. The curse of Genesis 3:17 after the fall of man about which we studied not long ago. The sorrow, the thorns and thistle, the sweat and the culmination in death are gone in the renewal of the earth that follows the coming of the Messiah. The king has overcome his enemies and as Proverbs declares, "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast."

The first of the messianic signs in John's Gospel, you may remember turning of the water into wine symbolized this very age to come in the same type of imagery. That was what John intended for us to see in that miracle performed in Cana of Galilee. And when he says there Jesus manifested forth his glory we look not simply at the of the saving cross but the glory of the Second Advent and the overcoming of the enemies of God and then the following kingdom of God upon the earth.

Let me say a few words by way of conclusion. In the celebration of the first coming of our Lord let us not forget the Second Advent when our Lord as Judah's noblest son shall gather all the crowns and septures of this earth to himself for he is King of kings and Lord of lords. We shall see to whom belongs the right to reign.

Spurgeon has a beautiful comment here. Have you not seen the picture that represents Nelson on board, a French man of war," he says, "receiving the swords of the various captains he has conquered while there stands an old tar at his side putting all

these swords underneath his arm as they are brought up. I have often pictured to myself our great commander," Spurgeon continues, "the only king by divine right coming back to this our earth and gathering up the septures of the kings and sheeps and putting them on one side and collecting their crowns. For he alone shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords. When the last and greatest of all monarch shall come a second time without a sin offering unto salvation, oh the glory of his triumph." There Mr. Spurgeon's words end.

And let us be sure that we are among the ones mentioned by the patriarch when he said those beautiful words, "And unto him shall the gathering of the people be." His genuine sheep drawn to him by the Father like iron filings are drawn to a magnet. Hear his voice and in the power of the eternal life given to them in marvelous grace they follow him. He's the good shepherd who gave his life for the sheep and he's become the great gatherer of his flock. Have we been gathered to him? Is it true that we belong to him? Have we rested in the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross for eternal salvation? Do we know that great text that Paul preached, "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works, lest anyone should boast." Do we as our own creed have that which is so remarkably the apostle's creed when Peter said at the Jerusalem conference, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they."

Have you believed in him and trusted in him. The only alternative to that gathering is the gathering of the spiritually dead before him at the judgment of the great white throne. Revelation 20:11 through 15, "It is either to him that we shall be gathered or before as the judge. In other words it's either to trust him now or tremble before him at his second coming. What shall it be?"

I urge you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ to lean upon the saving work of the Lord Jesus. Lean upon him. Come to him. Confess your sin. Acknowledge that sin that you have committed and the guilt that is yours, and plead the promises of the word of

God that the one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins. May God give you
grace to do that. Our next study...

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