



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 49: 1-28

“Jacob’s Last Words, part I”

TRANSCRIPT

Our Scripture reading this morning is from Genesis chapter 49 and we have I think just about two more messages in the Book of Genesis before we finish this wonderful book. I feel as I have often done in the exposition of a book for the first time and this is the first time I have gone through Genesis in the detail that we have in this series that I am now just at the place where I could make a real study of the Book of Genesis. It has been a great experience for me to study through this first book of the Bible in which we have so many of the great doctrines of the word of God in germ form here.

Now the chapter that is before us is one of the most interesting in the Old Testament and one of the important chapters on biblical prophecy containing one of the greatest of the prophecies of the coming of our Lord and we want to deal with that shortly. The Scripture reading is the first 12 verses of Genesis chapter 49 and so will you turn there with me and listen as I read these verses. Now remember that Jacob is nearing the end of his life. He has summoned again Joseph and his sons to his bedside and this is what we read.

“Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, ‘Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come. ‘Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob;

and listen to Israel your father. ‘Reuben, you are my firstborn; my might and the beginning of my strength, preeminence (or pre-eminent) in dignity and preeminent in power. ‘Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch.

‘Simeon and Levi are brothers; their swords are implements of violence. ‘Let my soul not enter into their council; let not my glory be united with their assembly (The word glory is another term for soul); because in their anger they slew men, and in their self-will they lamed oxen. ‘Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

‘Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down to you. ‘Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? ‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

You may have an Authorized Version before you and of course it reads to him shall be the gathering of the peoples. This word probably does mean obedience rather than gathering, but of course you can see that gathering, that idea is in this for the obedience of the peoples is to him and thus in their obedience there is a gathering to him.

“He ties his foal to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, and his robes in the blood of grapes.”

Now you can see from this too that the purpose of these last verses is to express the marvellous paradise that shall exist following the coming of Shiloh. You can see that it is a picture of excess of abundance and plenty, for they tie their donkeys to the vines,

and furthermore there is so much wine that wine has become the means of the washing of clothes. And furthermore blood of grapes is the means by which robes are washed.

Now that expression the blood of grapes is interesting because frequently you have people say, I wonder why the Lord Jesus chose bread and wine for the representation of what he did on Calvary’s cross? The bread suggesting the giving of his body and the wine the shedding of his blood. You can see that there is a tradition in the Old Testament of the juice of the grape being called blood. And his robes in the blood of grapes. And so the likeness between wine and blood is seen here early in the Bible. So it's not surprising that he should choose the wine as representative of his blood or the bread as representative of his body, though that is not spoken of here.

“His eyes are dull from wine (or darker than wine), and his teeth white or whiter than milk.”

So the picture is one of plenty following the coming of Shiloh. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

This morning is the first of two studies in the 49th chapter of the Book of Genesis and our topic for both this Sunday and the next will be “Jacob’s Last Words.” Jacob concludes his life in a manner worthy of the patriarchs. His last words are a brilliant prophetic blessing.

Now the critics have carped at it. They have said it's a case of *vaticinia ex ventipus*, or of prophecies that have been derived from the events that have occurred. They have claimed that they are prophecies fabricated from events that they appear to foresee, but that the prophecies were really written after the events and that’s why there is such an agreement between the prophecies and the events that are supposed to have come later.

Now critics who say that of course do not have any real reason for saying that. Attempts have been made to find some, but basically it means that they cannot accept prediction. They cannot believe that it is possible that someone shall look into the future and really see the things that are going to come to pass by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit. Now if we do come to the word of God and faith and we have thought this through and I do believe that it is unphilosophical to say that supernatural things cannot come to pass -- how can one prove that they cannot come to pass? -- then we do not have great difficulty with the prophecies such as this one before us. If you study these prophecies in the light of the history that followed, it becomes evident that they could not have been written after the events, but these are prophecies that Jacob was enabled by God, the Holy Spirit, to give to his sons.

Others have said simply that it's improbable that a decrepit old man a hundred and forty seven years of age should have uttered thoughts that are so clear cut and virile. Now Robert Orbin said he didn't even remember when he was young, that sometimes he thought he went directly from Dr. Spock to Dr. Shoal, but Jacob was a man who had travelled a hundred and forty seven years and he still had a great deal of his mind about him and this was an important event for him. And so he summoned up all of the clarity of his mind and God the Holy Spirit gave him the clarity that he did not naturally have and so he spoke these words with remarkable clarity and with remarkable wisdom.

Even Socrates in his apology said, "I am about to die and that's the hour in which men are gifted with prophetic power." The same idea is expressed in the lines written by a poet, "The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed, lets in new light through chinks that time hath made." Some have even said that the twelve sons of Jacob are not really the twelve sons, that they are really the twelve signs of the zodiac.

Well Jacob's actions are very wise. It's very nice to bring your family together as you are about to die and especially if you have twelve sons like he did who are going to be important in the history of Israel. It wouldn't be bad you know for believers when

they write up their will, and they designate the things that are going to go to their survivors, to their children. It wouldn't be bad at all if they were to require that certain things be read to those who shall be their heirs, and others who shall be affected, because it is well for us to remember that the things that we pass on are things that are given to us in the grace of God, and we hold them in trust.

And sometimes our children and other members of the family need to know the things that have guided us in our lives. The saving in guiding grace of God manifested in the lives of Christians and given forth as last words to members of the family have a peculiar force. So what Jacob did was not simply something that was acceptable; it was something that was wise. And I suggest to you that it's not bad at all for you to remind those who shall be your heirs of the things that have dominated you in your life, and if you cannot say those things and really mean them, then perhaps it would be wise for your life to be modelled after Jacob.

Now the blessings that he has set forth here are beautifully constructed. I wish it were possible for all of us to read this in the Hebrew text. There is rhythm about the poetry. There are beautiful figures of speech. There is play on words or paronomasia that is remarkable. It is a poem of exalted character and yet at the same time, there is a warm spirit manifested in it. And even in the blessings that turn out to be almost curses for some of the children, there is some instruction for us.

Now some have said it's not even a poem of blessing, it's rather a poem of curses. But that isn't what the Scripture says. In the 28th verse we read all these are the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him. And so it was a blessing and even when he spoke sharply to some of his sons, it was a blessing to have their father speak to them in that way.

Now the mid point of the chapter may be in spite of the fact that this statement occurs after the mention of the seventh of the twelve children, verse 18 "For Thy salvation

I wait, O Lord.” And there Jacob gives us something of the turner of the disposition that marked him when he made this remarkable prophecy, but the high point of the prophecy no doubt is the messianic prophecy concerning Judah the Lion in Verse 10 and I want to say right now in spite of what my friends knoweth of the Mason-Dixon Line say. I am going to pronounce this LION L-I-O-N. I am not going to say ly-on every time I go north of the Mason-Dixon Line they say what were you saying and I say well lion. That’s what we say in the language of Canaan [laughter] down south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Lions. It's ly-on. And so they like to put a little y in there, and I am just going to say lions. So when you hear that kind of word that just sweetly comes across your mind, it's lion L-I-O-N. I am not going to say anything more about it because I have to stop and pronounce the other and I am liable to lose the train of thought.

So this is the high point. It's the prophecy concerning Judah, the Lion. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Well let’s look now at this great prophecy and particularly we will look at the 12 verses, which contain the prophecies to Reuben, Simeon, and Levi and then Judah. Now Jacob issues a kind of formal call and that indicates that he is conscious of his solemn look into the future which is being given him by the Holy Spirit.

Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come. “Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob.”

Now the purpose of the call is said to be he wants to tell them what’s going to take place in the last days. There’s a Hebrew expression *acharyith* *‘yowhim* which means “in the end of the days,” is an expression that points to the future. At almost always in the Old Testament points to the Messianic age. Now from Jacob’s standpoint of course, he spoke from the standpoint of long before the days of Moses and consequently there were lots of things in the immediate future that are in the end of the days for him and you will find as you go through this prophecy that the point of Jacob’s prophecy time wise is

not so much the future of the Second Advent of the Messiah as it is the entrance into the land of Canaan.

Now the prophets of the Old Testament did not have perspective such as we are able to have now and so they spoke of the future and they put together prophecies concerning the first coming and the second coming just as if we were to look off as Chrysostom noted many hundreds of years ago to mountain peaks in a mountain range, not seeing the valleys that lie between the peaks. And so the first coming and the second coming are in the same prophecies.

Now for Jacob speaking from the vantage point at which he spoke, we have not only the distant future in the coming of Judah’s Lion, but we also have the immediate future of the entrance into the land. So in the end of the days encompasses not only the messianic age, but the days that precede that as they themselves look forward to that messianic age. Now he asks them to gather together twice. He uses two different Hebrew words, but they essentially mean the same thing and this double exhortation assemble yourselves; gather together is designed to show us that the words that he is uttering are doubly important for us.

He begins as you might expect with Reuben because Reuben was his firstborn son, the child of Leah. And there is a horrible contrast between the calling of Reuben as the firstborn son and his condition as it developed in his life. Now the historical situation that Jacob has in mind is described for us in the 35th chapter in the 22nd verse and I don’t think we will understand what he says with reference to Reuben if we do not understand that one verse. So I am going to remind you some of you’ve been with me all along congratulations there is such a thing as the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and I am so happy to see it manifested in your life.

You were here with lesson number 1 and you are now going to be here I hope at lesson number 65 when we finish the Book of Genesis. But in the 22nd verse, you may remember there was a rather enigmatical statement about Reuben. We read “And It came

about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it."

Now nothing is said at that point concerning Jacob's response to the fact that his own son went in and lay with his concubine wife, but now we have his evaluation of that event. He says in the 3rd verse "Reuben you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength. Pre-eminent in dignity and pre-eminent in power." His providential position was the firstborn. In other words, he was to have a double blessing because he was the firstborn. He was to have a double share of the inheritance.

He was also to be the priestly head, but that place could be lost by sin. And in 1 Chronicles chapter 5, it is set forth he lost his position by virtue of his sin. And it was such a horrible sin. There is a withering contrast between the majestic phrases of verse 3 pre-eminent in dignity, pre-eminent in power and then the phrases of verse 4, uncontrolled as water. You shall not have pre-eminence because you went up to your father's bed, then you defiled it. He went up to my couch and so vileness and weakness and undisciplined behaviour are manifested in Reuben, and so the ignominious collapse is set forth very plainly and frankly in the word of God. We sometimes talk about our *grande pasion*. Well, words were never written more unflattering about lust than these that Jacob wrote about this son guilty of incest.

Now I want you to notice how he does this. He does not smooth over things at all. If you read this in the Hebrew text, there are two things that show that he emphasizes that last clause. He went up to my couch. In the Hebrew clause at that point, the couch is thrown forward for emphasis and so he says to my couch, to my very bed, my marriage bed this son of mine went up.

But you will notice also not only does he throw the word bed into the first of the clause for emphasis to my bed, he went up, but he uses the third person. He has been speaking in the second person. He says you shall not have pre-eminence. You went up to your father's bed. You defiled it. But then he turns to the other brothers who were

there. The other eleven and says to them he, maybe this is the first time it was revealed to them, he went up to my couch and so it is frank.

Now when we say that this is a chapter in which there is very little blessing for some, there was not a whole lot of blessing for Reuben for he was exposed here as a son who was guilty of incest who lost his rights by virtue of it, but nevertheless you know there is a blessing in being told frankly the spiritual condition in which we are. And so Jacob very frankly and forthrightly speaks to Reuben. Reuben never amounted to much as a tribe after that. You can go through the Old Testament and check it out for yourself, but the curse of God or the discipline of God rested upon that tribe in the history of Israel. Now the next words that Jacob has are for Simeon and Levi and these two brothers, also the sons of one mother, were the ones who were guilty of the vendetta described in chapter 34. There is a great difference between a massacre that is set forth by God as the divine will and a personal vendetta. You remember the story in chapter 34. Dinah was violated. Their sister was violated by one of the Shechemites and then that man wanted to marry Dinah, and so finally there was an agreement of sorts made and it was said to the Shechemites that if they would be circumcised, then the children of Israel would live among them and have part of their land. But the sons Simeon and Levi waited until those men were circumcised and then when they were in great pain, they took their weapons and slew all of the men of the city.

Now Jacob regarded that as the execution of vengeance by men instead of God and so he spoke of how they had brought reproach upon his name because of what they had done. Well that's what he is speaking about here. He says Simeon and Levi are brothers. They are swords or implements of violence. They are two of a pair. They are two sons of Leah. And then he says let my soul not enter into their council, let not my glory be united with their assembly because in their anger they slew men and in their self will, they lamed oxen. Not only did they slay the men, but they went around cutting the

tendon of the oxen that caused the animals also to suffer. So it was excessive ruthless spite, personal vengeance.

You know the Bible says vengeance is mine, I will repay said the Lord. But frequently when people do us wrong, we say, Just think; they have done that to me and God has not done nothing about it. And so then we attempt to do something about it. In this case, that's the same kind of reasoning. God has done nothing about it and so we will take it into our own hands and it was murder. In the final analysis, anger is always an attack on the sovereign providence of God, and so he speaks cursed be their anger for it was fierce and their wrath for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. And so they were banded together for their harm and he will disperse them for their good.

You can trace the history of these two tribes and you will see the fulfilment of it. Simeon was scattered. Levi was scattered in a very interesting way because Levi did not inherit any of the land. They inherited certain cities in the land, 12 cities, and they were scattered in the land because they became the priestly tribe. That was a blessing. They were the ones who were responsible for the ministry of the Tabernacle and the ministry of the priesthood, and the reason for that is that they were reversed or they reversed their own position by the way in which they stood with Moses in the sin of the Golden Calf, for when there was indiscipline in the land of Israel then and a lot of rioting that was going on, Moses stood up and said, who will stand for the Lord, and the whole tribe of Levi stood with him. And the result was that in discipline, God, through the Levites slew three thousand of the children of Israel guilty of idolatry, and so Levi has reversed, but not reversed the prophecy. I will disperse them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. Simeon is scattered in judgment, Levi is scattered in blessing because of the later history of that particular tribe. In Levi have come some of the great names of the Bible: Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, Samuel, Jehoidah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Maccabees, John the Baptist; one of the great tribes the tribe of Levi.

But now we come to Judah. Really there are three oracles concerning Judah and you will notice it if you will look carefully at 8, 9 and 10. He says, Judah, your brothers shall praise you. Verse 9 Judah is a lion’s whelp. 10, the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet. Now if you look at this in the Hebrew text, you will notice that it is a case of three oracles and you can tell that not only from the subject matter, but also from the metrical arrangement of the verses. So we will look at it in that way.

Incidentally, Judah has some of the great names from that tribe. There is Caleb and Boaz and David and Solomon and Hezekiah and Daniel and of course, the greatest of all, our Lord Jesus Christ who was the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Now there are three notes here in this prophecy of Judah. One is the note of dominance and that is set forth in verse 8. “Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies.” And then there is the note of courage and strength in verse 9. He says “Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion or as a lioness” and so great stress rests upon the courage and strength of the lion and therefore of Judah and finally in verse 10, there is the oracle of the regal rule of Judah. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from beneath his feet, until Shiloh comes.”

And the last two verses described the overflowing abundance that shall follow his coming. There is a kind of note of glad animation in these words that are spoken concerning Judah and especially so because what he gives us in Judah is a miniature of the biblical scheme of history, because that’s what we do have. We have the coming of the Son of God and we have as a result of that the great blessing that shall flow from his second advent and so the note of dominance, the note of courage and strength and then the note of rule is just a fore-view of everything that the Bible teaches us.

Right now the lion is waiting in his lair, in his den having overcome the serpent and he is coming the second time. And when he comes the second time, he will destroy

the opposition against the throne of God and he will establish his kingdom of plenty upon the earth. Now we look at it. I do want you to notice first the oracle of dominance in verse 8. “Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down to you.”

Now Judah’s name means “praise” and he plays on the name of Judah here. He says your brothers shall “Judah-ize” you, or *Yebudab*, is the name for Judah and *yadab* is the name for praise, and so he uses both of those terms here, *Yebudab*, your brothers *yadab* who shall praise you. So he speaks then of Judah as the one whom the brothers shall praise. Now that was the name that was given to Judah by his mother. Back in Chapter 29 and Verse 35 again, we read, “And she conceived again and bore a son and said, “This time I will praise the Lord.” Therefore she named him Judah. Then she that is Leah stopped bearing.” So Judah’s name was praised and of course he looks onto our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not surprising that in the Bible, he is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah because he came from that tribe and Judah right from the beginning is the tribe that has ruled among the sons, and it is our Lord Jesus who is the Messianic king who comes and rules, and so Judah then is an illustration of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fact that he is described as a lion is the figure that is taken up in the New Testament and used of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the lion and so it's also not surprising that it should be said that his brother should praise him.

In fact, we who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior have been praising him down through the centuries. When his birth was announced, his mother praised the Lord “My soul doth magnify the Lord.” She praised him, all who know him and know what it is to have won the victory in him. Praise him. And we praise him also because his hand is on the neck of his enemies. And you can think of the lion who takes another animal and puts his paws around the neck or his jaws around the neck and squeezes in such a way that finally the breath goes out of the animal and it is dead. That’s what transpired at

Calvary's cross when the Lord Jesus Christ there took the sins of sinners upon himself and bore those sins to the full and there defeated the serpent, there defeated the opponents of the Lord God, and won the victory over sin and over Satan and so we praise him. As Christians, we praise the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now looking out over the audience, I am not sure about that. Some of us do anyway. The rest of you, I am wondering about you, but really, seriously, we do praise him because we have salvation through the victory of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Now the next oracle is an oracle of courage and strength. It's the picture of conquest. He says "Judah is a lion's whelp. From the prey, my son, you have gone up." So he is picturing a lion who has been out foraging for food and the lion sees an animal and he attacks the animal and he conquers the animal. He kills the animal and then he feeds upon the animal and then he goes back to his den. Have you ever seen an animal settle down upon its haunches? A lion? There is nothing that is more agile and more beautiful than a lion sitting down. Just perfect control of strength, and then the lion sits there with its paws out in front of him. That's the picture that he presents here. "From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion as a lioness who dares raise him up?"

And no one wants to try to raise up a lion. It's a picture then of Judah as a lion and so when we read in the New Testament in that great fourth and fifth chapter of the Book of Revelation about the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, we are not surprised that it should be a victory. You remember the picture there in those chapters. John in the Apocalypse is given a picture of the throne of heaven, beautiful picture of the throne, and then of the angelic hosts gathered around, the elders and the living creatures and the other angels in vast numbers, and then in the fifth chapter, he looks and sees in the right hand of the one who sits on the throne a book, and that book is sealed with seven seals. It's an illustration, it's a figure of a will or a disposition of the affairs of the earth, and the

affairs of the earth include rule over the earth and John looks and no one seems to be worthy to open the book.

Well, that's for John a signal that something is wrong because if no one is able to open the book, then we not only are not going to have rule over the whole of the earth as God anticipated and called man to in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, but we don't even have the forgiveness of sins, and so John begins to weep and one of the angels says, John stop weeping. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah has prevailed to open the book. What a beautiful expression that is, because it's a picture of the fact that when man has failed because of his sin, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has not failed. He has come, he has entered into mortal conflict with Satan on the cross and he has won the victory. Overcoming principalities and powers, he has triumphed over them openly in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John looks around and sees not a lion but of all things, a lamb. Now he sees this lamb as it had been slaughtered. Now everybody knows what a slaughtered lamb is who knows anything about the Bible. The lamb is the animal of sacrifice. It's the submissive animal, as it pictures the coming of the Messiah who is submissive. He will not even break a bruised reed. He will not even bruise that. He is that gentle, but having been slaughtered, he is the sacrifice and so it proclaims as plainly as it could be that there is no approach to God apart from the shedding of blood. So he sees the lamb as it has been slaughtered, sacrificed.

But now who has ever seen a lamb, slaughtered and sacrificed, get up and stand? But John sees this lamb standing in heaven. The slaughtered lamb standing because of course he represents a risen Savior who has entered into the victory of the cross, has won the victory, and now stands by virtue of the power of the resurrection. It is he, John is told, who has overcome and he has been able to take the book in his hands and because of that he is going to rule and reign, and the whole rest of the Book of Revelation is a

detail through those great judgments, detailed picture of how the lamb is going to rule and reign, but at the same time he is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah as well.

You know I have just come back from England and as it's so often the case when you go over there, you go into lots of castles and palaces and then also even some manor homes of individuals who have been prominent in that part of the world and you often go in the door and shortly after you enter, you see the coat of arms, and you look at it and say I wish I had a coat of arms like that. Johnson, from South Carolina and Alabama, and look at this beautiful coat of arms signifying all of the majesty of that particular family.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ, if he had a coat of arms, there would be on it, the Lion couchant, because it beautifully pictures him. That belongs to Prince Emmanuel because he is the lion's wealth and he has overcome. So if I ever enter into my mansion and heaven, I expect to find on that great building in which we shall all have a part, I expect to find a coat of arms, and it's going to have a lion on it, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Now coming to the 10th verse. Of course this is the important prophecy and verses 8 and 9 have given us a sense of expectation and now we find it, dominion and sovereignty are here. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet." And I can see the lion in his den and in his lair. He is couching there and he is full and satisfied and no one dares raise him up and there between his legs is the ruler's staff. That would be on the coat of arms too because it belongs to him, the sceptre on his head, the ruler's staff between his paws, a picture of the Lord Jesus.

The sceptre shall not depart until Shiloh comes. Isn't it remarkable that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah or the Judah's Tribe has remained even to the present day? You studied the history of Israel and Judah became the dominant tribe. It became the tribe that was prominent. And finally the Lord Jesus Christ came and they point above the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ this is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. Jew is the term from Judah. The King of the Jews, not King of Israel, the King of the Jews, for then

the term Jew has come to represent the whole of the 12 tribes and so that there we speak of the Jews and we refer to those who are Israelites.

So that name has become dominant and, it was even over the cross and in the future, it shall be dominant because our Lord Jesus is Judah's greatest son and it is he who shall rule and reign and the sceptre shall never depart from Judah. Judah still has it. Judah's greater son is in heaven now, waiting for the time when he shall come and rule and reign.

Now he says the sceptre shall not depart from Judah or the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes. Now it's unsafe for me to dogmatise over the meaning of Shiloh. If you've studied anything of the Bible at all here in particularly in Genesis 49, you will know there has been a great deal of discussion of this term, shiloh. Some have suggested it's a place. That's unlikely. Some have suggested it's related to the Hebrew word for "send" which is *shalach*.

Now of course our Lord Jesus was one who was sent. He was commissioned with all of the insignia of the majesty of Heaven and sent forth as the son to do redemptive work, but it's unlikely that it's a reference to one saint. It has even been suggested that this word is derived from a root that means "son" and some have suggested that meaning. Until the son shall come, but that's very unlikely. Of course, our Lord is the son. He is the Son of God, and he had to come as God, otherwise we should have no real ultimate assurance that we do have redemption.

Then others have taking the word from a Hebrew word that means to be at rest or to be safe, the verb *sh'lah* have taken it to mean "rest-giver." Now of course that's very beautiful and very true. Our Lord Jesus is the rest giver. Everybody else tells us we must do this in order to be saved. They say observe the ordinances. Be baptized. Sit at the Lord's Table. Be a good person. Be educated. Be cultured. Do good works, all of the kinds of things that involve activity, but the Bible says, For by grace are you are saved

through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast.

One of the whole points of the word of God is to teach us that it is not by what we do that we are saved, it is by what He has done. So the Lord Jesus finished his work and said it is finished. That work is done. Faith is resting in what God has done in Christ. That’s all faith is. Faith looks off hearing the message. Jesus Christ has borne the sin of sinners. I am a sinner. Evidently Jesus Christ has borne my sin, and if he has borne my sin, then he has paid my debt, and if he has paid my debt, then there is no way that heaven can demand anything else from me. And our Lord Jesus as the substitute has borne the debt of those for whom he came to die. That’s why we go free.

We have nothing to pay, because he has paid it all for sinners. And so we think of him as one who has done it and to rest is simply to say Christ has done it. I rest in what he has done and stop trying to do anything in order to be saved. God rests in what Christ has done. Faith is the rest of the believer in what he has done as well. It is as simple as that. Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say that when he heard the gospel and was saved, he was saved from the text that said, “Look unto me and be saved all the ends of the earth,” and he has said he had been struggling and trying to save himself by his activities and worrying over it, but when the preacher said look, look onto me, turn to me, he realized that what the text said was that God saves, and God saves completely. And the responsibility of a believer is simply to look off to the work that Christ has done and to rely upon that and rest in it.

And he said he rested in it and came to understand what it was truly to be saved. Well, he is the rest-giver, but I must confess I rather doubt that that’s the meaning of Shiloh. Now I think that this is probably a proper name, but it's a name that is figurative like *tsemach*, a branch in the Old Testament. And so *shiloh* is composed of a word, *sha* [phonetic] which is a relative pronoun descended from the Akkadian *sha*, and *loh* the prepositional phrase in Hebrew which means “to him” and it implies ownership. So that

the name Shiloh is like, the name, "branch." He was the Branch. Many times in the Old Testament, he is said to be the branch. This name Shiloh means "him to whom it belongs." And so it's a figure then of one who controls things, who is the one who owns everything by virtue of what he has done. So the sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until *Shiloh*, the one to whom it all belongs.

Now Ezekiel picks up this in his 21st chapter of his book, and says essentially the same thing, showing, that of course, Ezekiel has read this prophecy and he has interpreted it just like Lewis Johnson. [Laughter] One of my students one time over at the seminary thought he would have a little fun and he did have some fun. He put a picture of one of the bulletin boards at the seminary of John Calvin and John Calvin was looking at a book. It was obviously the Bible, but underneath were the words which were "I wonder what Lewis Johnson would say on this text?" [Laughter] Now Ezekiel... I really appreciated that. I have some clever students, very clever. I wish them all the persecution they can have in the ministry. [Laughter, Johnson laughs]

Now it is likely that this does mean then him to whom it all belongs or him to whom it belongs. So until Shiloh comes as a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who shall rule and reign, and the Jews and Gentiles shall all gather to him because he is the king. Now you will notice that text says at the end of verse 10 "And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."

In the final analysis, the Lord Jesus is the only center of true unity in the world. He is the only center of unity for his people as well. To him shall the obedience of the people be. The whole church has been exercised over the last generation over unity, ecumenism, the ecumenical movement. There is only one possibility by which people who turn to the Scriptures can ever be in union and it is to be in union over the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the center of all and at the cross, we can unite. Even Arminians and Calvinists can unite at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now John Wesley and Charles Wesley were not friends of Augustus Toplady, for Mr. Wesley or the Wesleys were Arminians and the Toplady was a Calvinist. They both wrote hymns incidentally. Well Mr. Toplady said about the Wesleys, he said that I think it was Charles he was speaking about, he said, "He was a fox and one of these days he was going to pluck him," he said. "And furthermore he ought to be tarred and feathered," and the Wesleys said the same thing about him, but we open up our hymn books and we read and sing "Jesus, Lover of my soul" and then we read "Rock of ages, cleft for me." And in our hymn books, Toplady and Wesley are together because they unite in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the true church of Jesus Christ, the one basis of unity, is the cross of Christ. Of course, we can differ on other points and they are important points. I do not think that Armenians fully understand the grace of God, but they speak about saving grace and so we have to acknowledge that is what they believe. We like for their faith to be a little purer of course, but when we talk about the cross of Christ, we can unite in the cross of Jesus Christ. It is there that the saints of God do and in this audience here, there are probably some here who would have differences among themselves and with me perhaps over things in the Scriptures, but we can unite around the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the gospel of the cross is proclaimed, God saves his people. If you have ever seen a great pile of things of disparate character, which also has a lot of steel or iron in it, you've marvelled how it's possible to separate the iron from the mass of other things until you have seen a giant magnet come down and all of the iron is caught up to meet the magnet. So in the preaching of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ in an audience like this, God through that draws to himself, to that magnet every man of the true metal and his elect are gathered as the word of God is proclaimed. In this audience, doubtless there are some perhaps who may not be among the elect, but there are many among the elect, and as the word of God goes forth, God through the Holy Spirit works in your heart, convinces you of your sin and draws you to him, and you come to worship him, and

discover afterwards you are one of those chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

It is through the cross of the Lord Jesus. To him, to him shall the gathering of the peoples be. There even Baptists can be at sympathy with people who are members of a Bible church, or a Presbyterian and an Episcopalian can unite around the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. This wonderful secret brotherhood of those who have truly believed in the Lord Jesus is the company of the unified saints of God. To him shall the gathering of the peoples be.

And I want to say to you this morning if you have young people in your family, if you have friends, if you have fathers and mothers, it should be your constant prayer that God would so work in them that they would be gathered to Jesus Christ too. Ask him to gather your children to the Lord. Ask him to gather your fathers and mothers, your brothers, your sisters, your friends to the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that God the Holy Spirit may bring them to Christ in his sovereign mercy.

Well, I know my time is gone. I wish that it would have been possible to speak about this last scene. It's a kind of earthly paradise, exuberant, intoxicating; plenty someone has said is found here and it truly is. This is a notable Messianic prophecy. It's a prophecy in which we have a further narrowing down of the prophecies that point to Jesus Christ. In chapter 3, we were told he should come from the world of mankind. He should be the seed of the woman. In chapter 9, it was said that he would come from the Semitic division of mankind in Noah's prophecy, and then in the word spoken to Abraham, it was said that he should come from Abraham and his seed, and now it is said that he should come from the tribe of Judah. Later it is said that he will come from the family of Jesse in the tribe of Judah and would be born in Bethlehem. God is patiently identifying the Messiah so that when he comes, there will be no misunderstanding if we are interested in knowing.

Let me close on this note. Jacob has called together his sons. He has exhorted them to gather themselves together and they have gathered, and we have said the true gathering place is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to say to you that if you do not gather to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, you are still going to be gathered to him. If you do not gather at the cross, you will gather at the throne, but it will be the great white throne and he will be sitting upon it in order to judge.

Every man must face Jesus Christ. He must face him as Savior and be saved acknowledging his sins, acknowledging the atoning work or he must ultimately face him and be judged by him. And so the word will go out. The word will go out to all of the vast hordes of the past, all of the Egyptians of the past, all of those who lived in Noah's day, all who lived in Moses' day, all who lived in the days of the prophets, to the four corners of the earth the word shall go out gather, assemble yourselves together, but it will be an assembly to the throne of the Lord Jesus, not to his cross.

If you are here this morning and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, you shall meet him one day. You shall meet him, but it will be a throne and our plea is that you now acknowledge your lost condition, acknowledge the love and grace of God in the gift of a savior, whose blood is sufficient for the sins of all men and come to him. Acknowledge your lost condition. Receive as a free gift salvation from the hand of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. And you are sure that you shall have the ultimate protection from wrath to come. May God help you to come. Come now. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful to Thee for these wonderful words that have been given us by Jacob, the patriarch. O God, may the solemnity of them impress themselves upon us. We thank Thee for the cross and the forgiveness of sins and O' God, work in such a way that there shall be not one person who has heard this message this morning in this auditorium shall ever have to face Him before the throne.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

