

## 57. Windows into Wonders to Come (2007)

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Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning, and you'll find it back in the book of Genesis, at chapter 49, which is page 42, if you have one of our church visitors' Bibles.

First book of the Bible, and coming on pretty near to the end of this book of beginnings. We're going to read chapter 49, which goes along with chapter 48.

You'll see if you look at these chapters together, that they're kind of bracketed by the announcement of Jacob speaking about his death, the end of chapter 47.

The time drew near that Israel must die. He called Joseph to him, and so on. And you'll see at the end of our reading today, we have another repeat of that. Joseph, Jacob calling his sons to him, and speaking about his death, and indeed dying.

And in between, we have chapters 48 and 49, looking to the future, the future of the blessing, the future of the promise. Last time we looked at the detail of Jacob adopting Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to make them fully fledged sons of Israel, and his blessing upon them.

[ 1 : 26 ] And now we have Jacob's blessing, or I suppose we might say prophetic blessings, or prophetic oracles, about all of his sons as he looks to the days to come.

So Genesis 49, verse 1 then. Jacob called his sons and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.

An important phrase we'll think about later. Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob. Listen to Israel, your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the first fruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

Unstable 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.

Weapons of violence are their swords. Let my soul not come into their counsel. O my glory, be not joined to their company, for in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstring oxen.

[ 2 : 48 ] Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

Judah, your brothers shall praise you. Your hands shall be on 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 and as a lioness. Who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until, well, our version has tribute comes to him, or you'll see in the footnote, until he comes to whom it belongs.

And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Binding 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. Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea. He shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall be at side of it.

[ 4 : 12 ] Isaacar is a strong donkey, crouching between the sheepfolds or the saddlebags. He saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant. So he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant at forced labor.

Dan shall judge or vindicate his people. As one of the tribes of Israel, Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper in the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backwards.

I wait for your salvation, O Lord. Raiders shall raid Gad, but he shall raid at their heels.

Ashes' food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal delicacies. Naphtali is a dough let loose that bears beautiful forms. Joseph is a fruitful bower, a fruitful bower by a spring.

His branches run over the wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely. Yet his bow remained unmoved.

[ 5 : 22 ] His arms were made agile by the hands of the mighty one of Jacob, by the name of the shepherd, the stone of Israel, by the God of your Father, who will help you, by the Almighty, who will bless you with the blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breast and of the womb.

The blessings of your Father are mighty beyond the eternal mountains, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills.

May they be on the head of Joseph and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf in the morning, devouring the prey, and at evening dividing the spoil. All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him.

Amen. And may God indeed bless to us these words of his blessing upon his people. I'll do turn, if you would, to Genesis 49.

[ 6 : 43 ] One of my vivid memories of the first trip I made to Israel, it must be some 30 years ago now, is of the magnificent stained glass windows in the synagogue of the famous Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem.

I don't know if President Obama was there this week visiting those, but it's certainly well worth seeing if you go to Israel. The windows were commissioned by the Russian-French artist called Chagall in about 1960, I think.

And each window is a representation of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. And the inspiration principally comes from our chapter this morning, Genesis 49.

And Chagall said that he saw the windows as jewels of translucent fire to illuminate the synagogue, both physically and spiritually.

Well, I'm calling this chapter this morning, Windows into Wonders to Come. Because that is exactly what these blessings are. They are prophetic oracles, and they are rather like stained glass windows.

[ 8 : 01 ] They are somewhat opaque and obscure, and yet, at the same time, they show a wonderful and translucent light, both on the physical future for these tribes, as Jacob's family have now become, but even more so as to the spiritual destiny that they're caught up in as the covenant people of the mighty God of Jacob.

Jacob, as we've seen, knows that his earthly life is near its end, and his great concern is that the blessing of God's covenant, which has so directed his life, should be passed on.

And all his focus is on the future. Look at verse 1. It's about what will happen in days to come. That phrase is one that will become more and more important as the story of the Bible unfolds.

You'll come across it next, in Numbers 24, verse 14, where Balaam is giving his prophetic oracle about the future of the people of Israel. About what will come to pass, he says, in the latter days.

That's the way that phrase is normally translated. Moses speaks of these latter days, in Deuteronomy 4, verse 30, when he is looking into the future, long into the future, way beyond even Israel's exile, when God would at last remember his covenant and restore his wayward people in his mercy and grace.

[ 9 : 37 ] Of course, when you come to the prophets, they're constantly talking about the latter days, the days of fulfillment, when God would fulfill all his promises for his people, and indeed all his promises for the whole world.

But from the very beginning of the Bible's story, it has been a story of promise. God's first promise to the patriarchs about days to come, about days of fulfillment of those promises, and God's wonderful plan and purpose when it would come to its fulfillment at last.

So from the very beginning of redemption's story, God's true people, the people of faith, have been people looking to the future. People looking for what God will do in the days to come, in the days of fulfillment.

Looking forward to what Hebrews 11 calls the true homeland, the city of foundations. Looking forward to what was their true reward.

And then passing on that faith. Passing on this assurance of things hoped for, this conviction of things not yet seen. And that's what the whole story has been about in Genesis 37 to 50.

[10:58] It's not Joseph's story. It's Jacob's story. Indeed, it's Israel's story. It's a story about how God's promise will be passed on, and his purpose will be accomplished through his people.

Despite all the tangled web of sin and corruption that is so entrenched, even among his own covenant family.

I will build my church, says the Lord. His blessing and his purpose will not fail, despite the abundant failures of the people who bear his name.

And that is the clear message of these oracles today before us, that we can't fail to understand. Very much some of it may be obscure, and you'll see that some of it is obscure, like stained glass windows.

You can tell that just from the number of footnotes with alternative translations down at the bottom, and I read some of those when we read. And Mark Chagall's windows, if you've ever seen them.

[12:02] They contain many images for each one of these tribes, and they're not all immediately clear what they stand for. I mean, he was a modernist after all. But two images from these windows remain very strikingly in my mind.

The brightness and the beauty of the dazzling yellow of the Joseph window, with its images of plenty and abundance of God's blessing. And the crimson red of the Judah window, dominated as it is, by two hands and a great crown, signifying the glory of the king who is to come.

And indeed, it is those two images that dominate this chapter before us this morning, and purposefully so. It's Judah and Joseph who dominate the whole of the story from Genesis 37 to the end.

Because it's through them that God's purpose in their day is fulfilled. And God's people are rescued and reconciled with one another from their sin and disaster.

And restored to the place of blessing in God's gracious purposes. And in them is foreshadowed something far greater also. A far greater redemption and restoration that will come in the days to come.

[13:28] In the great days of fulfillment of all God's promises. Which will bring blessing not only to his people, but to all the peoples of the earth, as God had promised to Abraham.

And friends, therein lies our hope. Because the heart of the message of these oracles of blessing is of God's sovereignty and blessing despite man's sin, despite his people's unfaithfulness.

God's promise is so strong and so certain that it will not fail even if his people fail dismally and dramatically. Even if they fail to live up to their calling as bearers of this great covenant purpose of God.

And indeed, the chapter does begin, doesn't it, with a very salutary warning about exactly that kind of failure. This is a chapter about fulfillment. And it is a chapter about faith.

But look first at verses 2 to 7, which speaks of something different, of forfeit. The forfeit of a covenant place. Reuben's painful and sad forfeit and indeed, Simeon and Levi's also.

[14:51] The forfeit of their covenant place reminds us of the grave responsibility of all true covenant people. First, he tells us that Jacob's sons are gathered and no doubt they listen with rapt attention as the patriarch began his last oration.

Starting with Reuben, verse 3, my might, the fruit of my strength, preeminent in dignity and power. And yet, read verse 4.

As Derek Kibner puts it, it would be hard to find a more withering contrast between a man and his calling. Dignity gave way to depravity.

And for this, he forfeits his birthright to Joseph's sons. 1 Chronicles 5, verse 1, explains that succinctly and of course it explains what we saw last time in chapter 48 with Jacob adopting Joseph's sons in place of his first poor Reuben.

And Reuben's personal judgment here somehow was passed on, transmitted to his posterity. You shall not have preeminence. That's the verdict on his tribe for the days to come.

[16:10] And so it was. If you read on, you'll find the Reubenites just disappear into obscurity. The only leadership that they ever show in the history of the people of God is in infamy, in rebellion.

Number 16, they were leaders with the sons of Korah rebelling against Moses. And then verses 5 to 7 speak of a similar seriousness with Simeon and Levi, the two who had led that dreadful massacre, do you remember, against the Shechemites and had brought such disgrace onto the name of Israel.

Their actions too turned their blessing into a curse. Cursed be their anger. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

And so it was, Simeon was largely subsumed into the tribe and territory of Judah. And the Levites also had no territory allotted to them in the land of settlement.

You might say, surely that's terribly unfair to be disqualified as whole tribes just because of one fateful sin of their father, the patriarch.

[ 17 : 26 ] Well, first of all, of course, it's not just one fateful sin long ago. It's rather that Jacob is summing up, if you like, the character of each of his sons in these verses.

And it's these dark deeds that seem to epitomize the character of these sons, what their whole lives had become, what they stood for.

Reuben, he says, is unstable like a torrent of water. Simeon and Lee were characterized by fierce and vengeful anger and cruel wrath.

That is what they were, that is what they had become. And there's no suggestion that they had repented and left all this behind. But to transmit that to their posterity, well, there is mystery here for sure.

But we simply have to recognize that the Bible does recognize such a thing as corporate solidarity in sin. The Bible does teach us that the entail of sin can and does overflow down the generations, sometimes down many generations, as indeed does the entail of grace.

[ 18 : 45 ] It's not surprising, really, is it, to think that in a family where parents have grown cold in their faith, where they've abandoned the way of the Lord, it's not surprising, is it, to see that that will have an effect on their children, indeed on future generations.

It's very real, isn't it? It's very salutary. Fathers, in particular, should take heed, shouldn't they? God is indeed sovereign, and he blesses the tribes of Israel in his sovereign power as he declares this future for them.

And yet, he does not bless them independently of their character. You see, it's because God is sovereign that he makes his people responsible for their response to his grace.

As Paul makes clear in Romans chapter 1, in the end, he gives men over to their own heart's desires. That's what we see here.

And yet, as Bruce Wolki points out, in terms of the nation's destiny, even these anti-blessings are blessings. Because they save Israel from the kind of reckless and wicked leadership they would have otherwise had.

[ 20 : 07 ] They prevent the kind of cruelty and vengefulness of these men from dominating and poisoning that whole community of people. See, God is sovereign.

He will protect his church. And as John Calvin points out, sometimes the Lord blesses us more by punishing us than he would have by sparing us.

But it's a warning, isn't it? The sovereign Lord will not allow his people's future to be poisoned, to be poisoned by a bitter root of unrepentant sin among his people, however eminent that sinner might be.

That was surely a warning that the church of God needed to hear in Moses' day, wasn't it? So often they were hard of hearts, so often they rejected their responsibility as God's people of promise, so often they rebelled.

Don't do it, that's what Moses is saying. Remember Reuben, remember Simeon, remember Levi. Yes, remember Levi, especially, because all hope is not lost.

[ 21 : 25 ] Levi, if you remember the story, Levi as a tribe was later restored to a place of honor in Israel. They were scattered, that's true, as Jacob says here. They had no inheritance in the land, but, you read forward to Exodus chapter 32, you'll see that it was the men of Levi who chose the Lord's side, in that great rebellion, the worship of the golden calf, and they were rewarded with the blessing of the priestly office forever afterwards.

And that reminds us, you see, that when God prophesies evil, it is primarily to drive his people to repentance, to drive his people to respond so that instead he might show them mercy.

Read the book of Jonah, that was the whole reason God sent Jonah to Nineveh, to prophesy doom to them so that they would repent, and they did repent. Read Jeremiah 18, verse 7 and following, it tells you very, very plainly there, what God means to do in prophesying doom.

And that's why even a prophetic curse like here is, is a blessing of God's grace, grace, because it's meant to lead to repentance and to mercy.

See, God's warnings, this is so important for us, God's warnings are a true means of grace for his people's blessing, if they will only heed them.

[ 23 : 00 ] The New Testament is just as clear on that, isn't it? And indeed, it tells us that that's why we have these very things preserved for us in our Bibles. For us, we live in the days of fulfillment that they longed to see.

These things happened to them, says Paul, to the Old Testament church in 1 Corinthians 10, he says, happened to them as an example, but they are written down for our instruction upon whom the end of the ages has come.

And so he says, let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. You also need to flee from idolatry, he says, that is New Testament church.

Lest you be similarly disqualified. Paul says, I must discipline myself. Here's the great apostle talking. I must discipline myself, lest after he preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified. I myself should forfeit my true covenant place. What did Paul not know that God is sovereign?

[ 24 : 10 ] Was Paul not properly reformed in his theology? Didn't Paul know that Jesus had said of his own, none will snatch them out of my hand? Didn't Paul understand about God's divine election and predestination?

Well, of course he did. And he taught us plenty about it, didn't he? But Paul also knew very well the way that the sovereign God keeps those who are his.

And he knew that, to use Calvin's phrase, God is a physician who refuses to spare because he intends to heal. And God's medicine to those that he lost often involves real and salutary warnings, warnings of real loss to those who scorn the great privileges of their calling and who refuse the responsibilities that that calling demands.

Jesus himself gives very salutary warnings about exactly these things, doesn't he? John 15, about unfruitful branches being cut off and cast into the fire. Hebrews 6 uses exactly the language of Jesus, as does Hebrews 10.

Because, you see, covenant privileges, bring real covenant responsibilities. In fact, the whole point in Hebrews 10 to 12 is that we who live in these last days of fulfillment, know we have far greater privileges, even than they.

[ 25 : 43 ] And therefore, we bear far greater responsibilities for what we've been given. That's why the Hebrews writer says, how much worse do you think it will be for you if you spurn the Son of God himself?

That's why he reminds us the Lord will judge his people. And it's a fearful thing, he says, to fall into the hands of the living God. Do those words make you tremble when you read them?

I hope they do, friends. They certainly make me tremble. Just as going into the operating theater on a trolley would make me tremble, the sight of the surgeon coming to me in his mask.

mask. But God fulfills the office of a physician rather than a judge, says Calvin. He refuses to spare because he intends to heal.

He doesn't want your life or my life to end in forfeit, in forfeit of our reward, like Reuben's whose dignity was buried in defilement, or Simeon's, or Levi's.

[ 26 : 53 ] He doesn't want your Christian service or your work for Christ to be shown on the great day to be nothing but wood and hay and straw and stubble that's burned up so that you suffer loss of eternal reward.

Even though, as Paul says, you are saved but barely, only as one escaping through the flames, he doesn't want you forfeiting your true covenant place.

It is possible, says one writer, it is possible by our sins as believers to jeopardize our place in God's redemptive purpose.

How terrifying to forfeit our reward, to lose our crime, to suffer loss, to be ashamed before our Lord and his coming, where we might have been as those who shine as the stars forever, as royal diadems in the hand of their God.

Could anything be more tragic or disastrous? Well, the painful and sad forfeit of these men's true covenant place is a reminder of the grave responsibility that all covenant people bear.

[ 28 : 12 ] So don't let us fail to embrace the gracious blessing of God's healing warnings in the scripture like this. God's love. But nor, of course, must we miss the wonder of the dominant theme in this chapter, which is so unmistakably that of fulfillment, the fulfillment of covenant purpose.

God's powerful and sovereign fulfillment of his covenant purpose in these verses points above all to the great rescuer of God's people, and therefore to the certainty of the abundant blessings that are here heaped, especially on the head of Joseph and all who are his.

There's so much in these remaining twenty verses or so, after these sad words in verses one to seven, there's so much about rich blessing on Israel as a whole, on their corporate future as a family of nations within a nation.

There's the sense here of each one playing his part in the increase of Israel in size and scope.

There's Zebulun, verse 13, bringing flourishing trade.

He's mentioned ahead of Isaac, verse 14, his older brother, maybe that's because Isaac is painted here as rather lazy and lacking in drive. He's like a strong donkey who finds a good place and wants the easy way and then suffers for it.

[ 29 : 37 ] Then there's Asher, verse 20, bringing luxury and splendor. And Naphtali, verse 21, yielding poetry and beauty is the image there.

Then there's the strength of the courage of the military prowess of Dan, verse 16, a cunning fighter, and Gad, the raider, and then Benjamin, the lupine hunter at the end.

And you can trace with great interest how some of these themes crop up in Israel's history as it unfolds in the future. But it's absolutely obvious, isn't it, where our attention is meant to be focused here in Genesis 49.

The spotlight falls squarely on just two of the blessings, that of Judah and Joseph, which together take up nearly half of this whole poem.

By the way, this is the first major poem in the Bible. Now we shouldn't be surprised that these two dominate. Joseph and Judah have dominated the whole story from chapter 37 onwards.

[ 30 : 41 ] And it's the blessings that are associated with their progeny that will dominate the whole story of Israel's future and indeed the story of the future of the whole world.

The days to come are going to be focused in these latter days of fulfillment of all God's promise in the terms that we're reading here about Judah and Joseph.

And Jacob has understood this. Jacob is a prophet. He is speaking with great destiny, with great moment and all good. So verse 18, Judah, whose name means praise, remember, your brothers shall praise you.

All of them will bow down low before you. Now Judah was not given at the birthright of the first born. That went to Ephraim to Joseph's son instead of Reuben.

But Jacob does recognize that from Judah will come the seed of covenant promise. Remember, God had promised to Abraham and also to Jacob in chapter 35 that kings would come from his own body.

[ 32 : 00 ] And that is exactly what Jacob prophesies here. Judah's seed, he says, would be the victor over his enemies. He'll be the great lion, he'll be the king, the ruler.

He'll rule over all his brothers, but not just for a time and not just in the family. Look at verse 20. The scepter, the ruler's staff, will be his until, well, different ways of translating, until tribute comes to him or until he comes to whom it belongs.

However you translate this, it's very clear. that Jacob foresees a royal line from Judah until a great fulfillment, until one shall come to whom, you see verse 10?

The obedience not just of Israel, but of all the peoples will be to him. All the nations will buy them to him. And then, you see what his coming will signify in verses 11 and 12.

He's supposed to speak of almost unimaginable blessing at plenty. The vines so laden, so dripping in his kingdom, that even the beasts will share in that plenty.

[ 33 : 22 ] You won't think twice about tying up a donkey beside a choice vine, even though it's going to eat all the fruit. So abundant will be the grapes. and the abundance of wine.

Such is the prosperity in this kingdom that even the laundry is done not in water but in the finest champagne. That's the image here. Imagine it.

Pots full of water for washing, but not full of water, full of wine. That rings a bell, doesn't it? No longer is the ground cursed, no longer is life lived by the sweat of the brow, but here's the desert blooming like the rose.

These are the blessings that will flow in days to come, says Jacob. In the latter days when the great ruler, when the lion of the tribe of Judah will reign over all the peoples.

What a wonderful window into the wonders to come. Jacob was given here his deathbed. And surely the words about Joseph's seed, Ephraim above all.

[ 34 : 36 ] Ephraim's name becomes synonymous really with Israel when the ten tribes are in the northern kingdom. Surely this also is an image of abundance and of blessing.

Verse 22, spreading branches of abundance and fruit fullness. there's reference there in verse 23 to Joseph's own personal faithfulness despite his trials, the bitter sting of arrows that comes to him. But the chief focus you see is all about the source of the blessing in Jacob's God, the mighty one of Jacob, the shepherd, the stone of Israel, the almighty.

And this phrase, the mighty one of Jacob, is a favorite phrase of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah. And you'll find that in a particular way in the later chapters of Isaiah, where the prophet likewise is looking forward to the great days of fulfillment, when Israel's glory will be restored by God's chosen servant.

fulfillment. When the whole earth will be renewed and beautified in the presence of the king. Read Isaiah chapter 49, later read Isaiah chapter 60, and you'll see it's all about a great restoration, the salvation of the whole earth, when at last God's salvation reaches all the nations.

[ 36 : 01 ] And then, says the Lord, all flesh will know that I am the Lord, your Savior, and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

And in that day, the blessings of all the earth will come to God's people, says Isaiah, gold and frankincense and flocks and cedar and pine.

You shall suck the milk of nations, he says. You shall nurse at the breast of kings, and you shall know that I am the Lord, and your Savior, and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

the God who promised way back here in Genesis to bless Ephraim, with the blessings of heaven above and the blessings of the deep beneath, the blessings of the breast and of the womb, the blessings of your Father, mighty beyond the blessings of the everlasting hills and the bounties of the eternal mountains.

You see, Isaiah the prophet, and all the prophets all through the centuries, they were gazing through these same wonders into the wonders that were to come.

[ 37 : 11 ] The fulfillment of the covenant blessings that God had given right back at the very beginning, which Jacob speaks of here on his own deathbed, as he foresaw that day, and as he longed for that day.

The day of the great ruler of God, the lion of the tribe of Judah, who would be the great Redeemer. the mighty one of Jacob himself, from his own hand, making these blessings flow.

And Jacob, the New Testament tells us, like all these other patriarchs, he saw these things and greeted them from afar. It was still very far off, and his view was indeed more like an image on a stained-glass window.

It was like a poem, rather than the plain photography and the prose that make it so much clearer for us in the New Testament.

He couldn't know exactly how God's purpose was going to unfold throughout history. He couldn't know exactly that Ephraim would become the largest and dominant tribe throughout the conquest of the days of judges.

[ 38 : 22 ] Or that Judah would likewise rise to leadership in the days of Samuel and assume the kingship because of the sin of Ephraim. Or that Ephraim, the northern kingdom, as it then became, would ultimately so apostatize that both king and people would be destroyed and carried off into Assyria in captivity.

Read Jeremiah chapter 31, and you read of the prophet hearing Rachel, Joseph's mother, the matriarch of the tribe of Ephraim, weeping for her seed, Ephraim's children being taken away. Nor could Jacob know that Judah, too, in the end, would likewise be cast into exile and Judah's king led off like a slave. It would have shocked Jacob to think of that.

And yet, if Jacob could have read these marvelous chapters of Jeremiah, chapters that no doubt will eventually come to in our evening studies.

If Jacob could have heard Jeremiah's words when he says, in the latter days, you will understand this. At that time, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people.

[ 39 : 40 ] I will make them walk by brooks of water in a straight path where they will no longer stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Behold, days are coming when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

In those days, I will cause a righteous branch to spring up from David, the son of Judah, and he shall execute justice and righteousness, and my people shall at last be uprooted and overthrown no more forever.

If Jacob could have read those words, then he would have said, yes, of course, that is the promise that God gave me.

That's the promise I passed on. That is the glorious hope that I saw from afar and I held into my own dying day. It is. And if Jacob could have read the Gospels that we have, and the epistles of the New Testament that we read, that give us such a clear and such a wonderfully clear and certain view into the future.

And if he could have looked through that glorious window open into the heaven that John saw in his vision in the island of Patmos, where he saw the triumph of the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, receiving the praise from multitudes of every nation, the glory of heaven coming down to fill the earth.

[ 41 : 18 ] If Jacob could have read those words, he would say, yes, of course, that is the promise God gave to me. I see it so much more clearly now, of course, and it is so much brighter and more wonderful.

More wonderful than I could ever have imagined. It is so much deeper and more full of mystery and majesty. To see now that the ruler, the great Lion of Judah, is the ruler because he himself is the Redeemer, the mighty God of my fathers, my shepherd.

And that the Lion's greatness is because he also is the Lamb. That he's the ruler of all these peoples of the world because he is their Redeemer.

He ransomed them from their sins. It's all so much greater, so much fuller, so much more wonderful in every way. Now that window is fully open and clear.

We can see it all. as we have the privilege of doing. Living as we do. In the days to come.

[ 42 : 36 ] The latter days of fulfillment. In God's covenant purpose in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ruler and the rescuer and the restorer of all things to his people.

When it is made clear in the coming of our Lord. To use that language that the letter to the Hebrews might use.

We have a better window into the wonders of the future than Jacob ever had. And yet, friends, there are still days to come for us, aren't there?

Because the days of fulfillment have begun with the ascension and reign of the Lion of Judah, our Lord Jesus Christ. But they're not consummated yet, are they? Heaven has not yet come down to earth.

We don't yet live in a restored Eden, a wash with the abundance, where water has become wine, where famine has become feasting forever and ever. No. That day will come.

[ 43 : 40 ] Read the whole of Isaiah chapter 25, where I began our service with words from this morning. The day of great feasting, of rich food, of well-aged wine, the day when he will swallow up death forever.

The day when the Lord will wipe away all tears from all faces. And on that day we will say, says Isaiah, behold, this is our God. We waited for him that he might save us.

We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in the salvation we now possess. But even for us now who live in these last days, our full salvation has not yet come.

And that's why each of us will come to the time Jacob came to, when our death is near, and when we also face the grave.

the grave, unless the Lord Jesus should come first, and may that be so. But until that, friends, we also must say what Jacob said in verse 18.

[ 44 : 54 ] Do you see? See this one little verse right in the middle of the poem? Seems so odd, doesn't it? Stuck all on its own. But maybe not quite so odd in the light of that verse I read from Isaiah.

Behold, our God, we shall say, we have waited for him. That he might save us. What does Jacob say in verse 18? I will wait for your salvation, O Lord.

You see, having seen the future, having seen through the window of prophecy, on the wonders to come, on the fulfillment of all God's covenant purpose, Jacob is content to have faith.

Faith in the covenant promise. And Jacob's personal, sustained faith in the covenant promise points us likewise to the genuine response for all true covenant people.

