

# Windows into Wonders to Come

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- [ 0 : 00 ] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this evening, and we're continuing our series in the book of Genesis. So please turn to Genesis chapter 49. And that is page 42.
- If you're using one of our visitor Bibles, we have plenty of copies at the side and the back if you don't have a Bible with you. So page 42. And we're reading the first 28 verses of Genesis 49.
- Beginning there, verse 1. Then Jacob calls his sons and said, gather yourselves together that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.
- Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits 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.
- [ 1 : 20 ] He went up to my couch. Simeon and Levi are brothers. Weapons of violence are their swords. Let my soul come not into their counsel.
- O my glory, be not joy into their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. 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 hand 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 tribute comes to him.
- [ 2 : 29 ] 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 Sidon. Issachar is a strong donkey, crouching between the sheepfolds. 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 labour. Dan shall judge 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 heel, so that his rider falls backward.
- I wait for your salvation, O Lord. Raiders shall raid Gad, but he shall raid at their heels.
- [ 3 : 40 ] Asher's food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal delicacies. A thali is a doe let loose that bears beautiful fawns. Joseph is a fruitful bough.

A fruitful bough 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.

His arms were made agile by the hands of the mighty one of Jacob. From there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. By the God of your father, who will help you.

By the almighty, who will bless you with 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 blessings of my parents.

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.

[ 4 : 44 ] In the morning, devouring the prey, and in the 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. May God bless his word to us this evening. May God bless you. Turn with me, if you would, to Genesis chapter 49, and the passage we read together.

Some of you may know, and some of you may have been there, but the synagogue in the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem is famous for its twelve magnificent stained-glass windows by the Russian-French artist Marc Chagall.

And each of the windows represents one of the twelve tribes of Israel. And they're inspired in the main by the prophetic oracles here in Genesis chapter 49. I'm calling this chapter Windows into Wonders to Come, because that's what these blessings are.

They are prophetic oracles. And they are rather like stained-glass windows, in the sense that they're somewhat opaque, somewhat obscure. And yet at the same time, they shed wonderful light on the physical future of Jacob's family, and also, even more so, on their spiritual destiny as the people of the mighty God of Jacob.

[ 6 : 20 ] Now, as we've seen, Jacob's great concern at his life's end was the blessing of God's covenant.

That had been so much what filled his own life, and his determination is that that should be passed on. Look at verse 1 here in our chapter. All the focus on the future is about what will happen, he says, in days to come.

In days to come. That's always a phrase that's connected with prophecy. It's often translated in our Bibles, in the latter days. Moses speaks about the latter days in Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 30, where he is looking long into the future, long beyond even Israel's exile.

And indeed, all the later prophets speak in those terms, don't they? About the fulfillment of all God's promises of his covenant grace for the world. And from the very beginning of the Bible story, way back here in Genesis, it's been a story of promise.

And God's people have been called to be a people of faith, looking to the future, looking to fulfillment. Looking to the things that God would at last do decisively in days to come.

[ 7 : 35 ] As Hebrews 11 puts it, looking forward to their true homeland, to the city with foundations, to the true and lasting reward.

They were the people of faith, and passing on that faith, passing on the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things yet unseen.

And that's what this whole story from Genesis 37 onwards has been about. It's not Joseph's story. It's Israel's story. It's a story of how God's promise will be passed on, and how his purpose will be accomplished in days to come.

And that's the case through this people. Despite the tangled web of sin and corruption that's so entrenched, even in the midst of God's covenant family, as we've seen, I will build my church, says the Lord.

And his blessing and his purpose will never fail, despite all the failures of those who bear his name. And that's the clear message of these oracles, however obscure they are in the details in this chapter in front of us.

[ 8 : 42 ] And you'll see from the footnotes, there are so many footnotes, it tells us that the text here is quite obscure. There's lots of difficult translations. It's a very ancient poem, so we shouldn't be surprised. It is, in that sense, a bit like looking through a stained glass window.

But those windows of Mark Chagall, likewise, in that synagogue, they contain many images, and some of them are very obscure. But I remember two very overwhelming impressions from when I saw them over 30 years ago.

Actually, it's probably nearer 40 years ago when I first saw them. I'm getting old. And the two things I remember was, firstly, the dazzling yellow and the beauty of the Joseph window, full of images of abundance and plenty and blessing.

And the second was the deep crimson red of the Judah window, which is dominated by the image of a crown, signifying the glory of the king who was to come in Judah's line.

Never forget it. And it is those two images that dominate this chapter, just as Joseph and Judah have dominated the story all the way through since chapter 37.

[ 9 : 52 ] It's through them that God's purpose will be fulfilled in their day. God's people are rescued from sin and disaster. They're restored. They're reconciled through God's blessing.

But more than that, in them is foreshadowed a far greater redemption and restoration in days to come. When the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise, way back to Abraham, will be fulfilled to restore all families of the earth to the blessing of God forever.

And therein lies our hope, you see, because so strong, so certain is God's promise. Even way back here, it cannot fail.

Even if his people continually fail dismally to live up to their calling. And of course, what we see first of all in this chapter is a salutary warning.

It is a chapter full of the message of fulfillment. It is a message, a chapter that speaks of faith. But first of all, in verses 2 to 7, you can see, it also speaks of forfeit.

[ 11 : 07 ] The forfeit of a covenant place. See, Reuben, and also Simeon, and Levi, face a painful and a sad forfeit of their covenant place.

And that reminds us, doesn't it, of the grave responsibility that there is on all true covenant people. Verse 2, we're shown that Jacob assembles his sons for his last oration.

And I'm sure there would have been rapt attention. And he begins in verse 3, speaking of Reuben, my might, the first fruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and power.

And look at verse 4. As Derek Kidner puts it, it would be hard to find a more withering contrast between a man and his calling. Dignity gave way to depravity for Reuben.

And for that, he forfeits his birthright, which is given to Joseph's sons. We saw that last time in 1 Chronicles 5, verse 1, explains it very succinctly.

[ 12 : 16 ] And Reuben's personal judgment somehow was passed on to his posterity. You shall not have preeminence. That's the verdict on his tribe in years to come.

And so it was. The Reubenites fell into obscurity. The only leadership that they ever produced was leadership in infamy. You can read about it in Numbers 16. They led a great rebellion against Moses.

And then in verses 5 to 7, you see there's a similar serious word about Simeon and Levi. Those are the two, remember, who led that dreadful massacre at Shechem. And so it brought such disgrace onto the name of Israel.

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

And so it was. Simeon was eventually subsumed into the tribe of Judah. The Levites had no territory allotted to them at all in the land of settlement. Do you mind, it wasn't that terribly unfair to be disqualified, whole tribes, because of just one fateful sin of their father.

[ 13 : 29 ] Well, first of all, it's not just one fateful sin long ago, but rather Jacob is summing up the character of each of his sons.

And these dark deeds seem to epitomize what their whole lives had become. It's what they stood for. Reuben, he says, was unstable, uncontrollable, like water.

Simeon and Levi were characterized by fierce and vengeful anger, by cruel wrath. And that's what they were. That's what they'd become. And there's no suggestion that they'd left that behind.

But to transmit that to their posterity? Well, there is mystery here, isn't there, for sure? But we simply have to recognize that the Bible does recognize such a thing as corporate solidarity in sin.

and that the entail of sin can and does overflow, sometimes down many generations, as indeed does the entail of grace. And it's hardly surprising, is it, to think that if a family where parents have grown cold in their faith, where they've abandoned the way of the Lord, it'd be surprising, wouldn't it, if that did not have effect on their children and indeed on future generations.

[ 14 : 53 ] And it's very salutary. Parents should take note, fathers in particular. It's a real word of warning. God is sovereign indeed. He blesses the tribes of Israel by His sovereign power as He declares this future for them.

And yet, He doesn't bless them independently of their character, does He? See, it's because God is sovereign that He makes His people responsible for their response to His covenant grace.

And as Paul makes very clear in Romans chapter 1, in the end, He gives men over to their heart's desires. And yet, as Bruce Wolke puts it in his commentary, in terms of the nation's destiny, even these anti-blessings are a blessing, he says, because they save Israel from reckless and wicked leadership.

They prevent the kind of cruelty and vengefulness of these men from dominating and poisoning the whole community as their leaders. Do you see? God is sovereign. He will protect His church, His people.

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?

[ 16 : 11 ] The sovereign Lord will not allow His people's future to be poisoned by the bitter root of unrepentant sin among His people, no matter how eminent the sinner. And Reuben was very eminent in the family.

And that was a warning that the church needed to hear in Moses' day, wasn't it? Moses was writing this for his people. So often they were heart of heart. So often they rejected their responsibility as God's people have promised.

So often they rebelled. Well, He's saying, don't do it. Remember Reuben. Remember Simeon. Remember Levi. Actually, remember Levi especially because what that tells us is that all hope is not lost.

Because Levi, do you remember, as a tribe was later restored to a place of honor in Israel. They were scattered, as Jacob says here. But when you come later on in the story to Exodus, is it chapter 32?

It was the men of Levi, wasn't it, who stood by Moses' side when the people rebelled, when they turned to the golden calf. And they were rewarded and they were granted then the priestly office in Israel forever.

[ 17 : 23 ] So you see, when God prophesies evil to come, it is primarily in order to drive his people to repentance, to respond so that indeed God may have mercy.

Remember Jonah. That was the whole reason God sent Jonah to Nineveh to pronounce its doom, wasn't it? And they did repent and they were saved. Read later on, Jeremiah chapter 18 and verse 7.

It's stated very plainly there indeed that principle that God does this in order to bring people to repentance. And that's why even a prophetic curse like here is a blessing of God's grace because it's meant to lead to repentance.

It's meant to lead then to mercy from God. God's warnings are a true means of grace for his people's blessing if, if they will heed them.

And the New Testament is just as clear about this. In fact, it tells us it's the very reason why we have these things in the Old Testament preserved for us today. Us who live in these very days to come that Jacob here is speaking about.

[ 18 : 36 ] Paul says in, in his letter to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 10, that these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction on whom the end of the ages has come these last days.

And so he says, let any of you who thinks you stand firm be careful lest you fall. You too must flee from idolatry, he says to the Corinthians, which is the root of all kinds of sin unless you be disqualified.

Paul the Apostle says, I must discipline myself, he says, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified, should forfeit my covenant place.

didn't Paul know that God is sovereign? Wasn't Paul properly reformed in his theology? Didn't he know that Jesus said of his own, none shall ever pluck them out of my hand?

Didn't Paul understand divine election? Well, I think he did. He wrote plenty about it, didn't he? But he also knew very well that the way the sovereign God keeps those who are his is very often through exactly these kind of warnings.

[ 19 : 51 ] To use John Calvin's phrase, God is a physician who refuses to spare because he intends to heal. And God's medicine to those that he loves often involves real and salutary warnings, warnings of real loss to those who scorn the great privileges of their calling, to those who refuse the responsibilities that that calling demands of them.

And Jesus himself gives very solemn warnings, doesn't he, about fruitless branches being cut off and burnt in the fire. Read John 15. Hebrews chapter 6 uses exactly the same language as this Hebrews chapter 10 because covenant privileges bring real covenant responsibilities.

The whole point of Hebrews chapter 10 to 12 is that we who live in these last days have received far greater privileges than those in the former days and therefore we bear even greater responsibilities.

That's why the apostle says there, how much worse do you think it will be for you if you spurn the Son of God himself and his blood? The Lord will judge his people, says the apostle.

It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. I wonder if those words make you tremble. They're supposed to make you tremble.

[ 21 : 18 ] They certainly make me tremble. Just as lying on a trolley and going into the operating theater. You tremble, don't you?

I certainly do to face the surgeon. But as Calvin says, he fulfills the office of a physician rather than a judge.

He refuses to spare because he intends to heal. He doesn't want, God does not want your life or my life to end in forfeit.

Like Reuben's whose dignity was buried in defilement or Simeon's or Levi's likewise. He doesn't want your Christian service.

He doesn't want your work for Christ to be shown up at the last day to be actually nothing but wood and hay and straw. Wouldn't that be terrible? He doesn't want you to suffer the loss of eternal reward for these things so that you're saved, yes, but just scarcely by the skin of your teeth as if through the fire.

[ 22 : 22 ] That's the language Paul uses. Forfeiting your true covenant place. It's possible, says one writer, it's possible by our sins as believers to jeopardize our place in God's redemptive purposes.

How terrifying. To forfeit our reward and lose our crown, to suffer loss, to be ashamed before the Lord at His coming when we might have been as those that shine as the stars forever and are royal diadems in the hand of God.

Could anything be more tragic or disastrous? Hard to think so. Well, the painful and sad forfeit you see of these men's true covenant place is a reminder to us all of the grave responsibility of God's covenant people.

Don't let's fail to embrace the gracious blessing of God's warnings to us here and all through Scripture. But having said that, we certainly mustn't miss the dominant theme of this chapter which is so unmistakably about fulfillment, about the fulfillment of God's covenant purpose.

God's powerful and sovereign fulfillment of His covenant purpose in these verses points us above all, doesn't it, to the great rescuer of all God's people and therefore to the certainty, the certainty of abundant blessings that are heaped here, especially on the head of Joseph and all who are His.

[ 24 : 00 ] There's so much in these remaining 20 verses or so, we can't look at them all. So much about rich blessing on Israel as a whole. Despite their corporate failure, they have an extraordinary corporate future laid out here among all the nations as a family of nations within this one nation.

And each tribe playing its part in the increase of Israel's size and its scope. There's, well, look at Zebulun, verse 13, bringing the flourishing of trade.

He's mentioned ahead of his older brother Isaac in verse 14, maybe because the latter seems a little bit lazy and lacking in drive, a bit of a donkey who just seems to want the easy way and suffers for it.

But then there's Asher, verse 20, bringing luxury and splendor. There's Naphtali, verse 21, yielding poetry and beauty. Verse 16, there's the strength, the courage and the military prowess of Dan, who's a cunning fighter.

And Gad, the raider. And at the end, verse 27, Benjamin, the wolf-like hunter. And you could trace with all sorts of interest the themes of these that crop up all through Israel's history as it unfolds.

[ 25 : 16 ] And you see these things coming out. But it's absolutely obvious when you read this chapter where our attention's meant to fall, isn't it? The spotlight falls very squarely on just two of these blessings, the blessings on Judah and on Joseph.

And together, those two make up half of the entire poem. And by the way, this is the first, it's the oldest major poem in the whole Bible. But we shouldn't be surprised that these two dominate. because as I said, they've dominated the whole story.

They're the heart of it in these last chapters of Genesis. And it's the blessings associated with their progeny that are going to dominate the whole of the story of Israel's future.

In fact, the story of the future of the whole wide world in days to come, in the latter days of fulfillment of all God's promises. And Jacob, you see, has understood this because he's a prophet.

He's speaking words here of great destiny, great moment. He knows that. Verse 8, Judah, whose name means praised, remember. Your brothers will praise you and others will bow down before you.

[ 26 : 32 ] Judah wasn't given the right of the firstborn here. That went to Ephraim, Joseph's son, instead of Reuben. But Jacob now recognizes clearly that Judah, Judah is the one through whom will come the seed of promise.

Way back in chapter 35, God had promised Jacob that kings, no less, would come from his own body. And that is what he pronounces here. Judah's seed will be the victor over all his enemies.

He will be, verse 9, the lion, the king, the ruler over all his brothers. But not just now, not just for a time.

Do you see verse 10? The scepter, the staff of the ruler will be his until tribute comes to him, says our version or the footnote, until he comes to whom it belongs.

It doesn't matter which way you translate this. It's very clear, isn't it, that Jacob is foreseeing a royal line from Judah until a great fulfillment. One will come who will be, look at verse 10, the one to whom the obedience comes not just of Israel, but of the peoples, plural, the nations of the world.

[ 27 : 50 ] And then do you see what his coming will signify? Look at verses 11 and 12. It speaks, doesn't it, of almost unimaginable blessing and prosperity. The vines will be so laden that in his kingdom even the beasts will be tied up beside the very best of vines because even they will be sharing the bounty of the earth and the abundance of its wine.

Such is the prosperity that even the laundry, the washing is done not in water but in the best champagne. That's the image here. Wine, not water, is what fills the washing jars.

That sort of rings a bell, doesn't it? See, what we're seeing here is a picture at last of darkness utterly defeated. The abundance, the blessings of God's Eden restored.

No longer is the ground cursed. It's no longer just by the sweat of the brow. This is a picture of the desert blossoming as the rose. And these are the blessings that will come, says Jacob, in days to come, in the latter days.

When the great ruler, when the lion of the tribe of Judah reigns over all the peoples. It's a wonderful window, isn't it?

[ 29 : 09 ] Into the wonders to come that Jacob had even here. As surely are the words about Joseph's seed. Verse 22, the tribe of Ephraim.

Ephraim would become synonymous with Israel encompassing eventually all the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. And the image again is one of fruitfulness, of abundance, of spreading branches, of great numbers.

Verse 22. And there's reference in verse 23 there of Joseph's own faithfulness despite his trials, the sting of these bitter arrows right throughout his early life.

But the chief focus, do you see where it lies? It's on the source of blessings. Verse 24. It's on his God, the mighty one of Jacob, the shepherd, the stone of Israel, the almighty.

And actually, that particular name, the mighty one of Jacob, that is a favorite of the prophet Isaiah. And you'll find it especially in the later chapters of Isaiah where the prophet there likewise is looking forward, isn't he, to the days of great fulfillment of the promise when Israel's glory will at last be restored through God's chosen servant, through his Redeemer.

[ 30 : 25 ] If you read Isaiah 49 or Isaiah chapter 60, you'll see it's all about the days of great restoration, the days of salvation. When God's salvation reaches all the nations, all the peoples, the very ends of the earth.

And then, says the Lord, all flesh shall know that I am the Lord, your Savior, your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob. And in that day, he says, the blessings of all the earth will come to God's people.

Gold, and frankincense, and phlox, and cedar, and pine, and so on. You shall suck the milk of nations, he says. You shall nurse at the breast of kings. And you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

The mighty one of Jacob. The God who promised way back here in Genesis to bless Ephraim. With the blessings, he says here, verse 25 and so on, of heavens above, 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 eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills.

You see, Isaiah, all the prophets who came later, they were gazing through the same windows, weren't they? Into the same wonders to come in the wonderful fulfillment of God's covenant promises that God had given way back here, right at the very beginning.

[ 31 : 52 ] And whom Jacob spoke about here on his own deathbed. And foresaw, longing for those days, the day of the great ruler of God, the lion of the tribe of Judah, who would be the great Redeemer.

It would be the day of the mighty one of Jacob himself, the one from whose hand all these marvelous blessings would come. And Jacob, like all the other patriarchs, Hebrews 11 tells us, saw these things and greeted them from afar.

It was still very, very far off for Jacob. And his view was rather like the image of a stained glass window and a poem, much less like plain prose or a sharp photograph.

He couldn't know exactly how all of God's purpose was going to unfold through centuries of history. That indeed, Ephraim would become the largest and the dominant tribe through the conquest in the day of the judges.

And that then Judah would likewise rise to leadership in the days of Samuel and assume the kinship because of Ephraim's sin. You can read all about that in Psalm 78. Or that Ephraim and the northern kingdom would so terribly apostatize that the kingdom would be destroyed and taken captive into Assyria and its king left and disappeared.

[ 33 : 15 ] Read Jeremiah chapter 31 and the weeping prophet speaking about Rachel, Joseph's mother, weeping for her seed, weeping for lost Ephraim in captivity. And nor could Jacob know either that Judah too, in the end, would also fall so far and be cut off into exile and its king would be led off to become a slave.

That would have shocked Jacob, surely. But if Jacob could have read these marvelous chapters in Jeremiah and heard God's words from the prophet saying to the people, in the latter days you will understand this.

And at that time I will be the God of all the clans of Israel and they will be my people. I will make them walk by brooks of water in a straight path where they will not stumble.

I am a father to Israel. Ephraim is my firstborn. And 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 will execute justice and righteousness.

[ 34 : 27 ] And my people shall not be uprooted or overthrown anymore forever. See, if Jacob could have read that, then he would have simply said, yes, of course.

That's the promise God gave me. That's the promise I passed on. That's the glorious hope I saw from afar. That's the hope I held until my dying day. 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, such a wonderful window on the wonders still to come through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If he could have looked through that glorious window open into heaven that God gave the apostle John on the island of Patmos where he saw at last the triumph of the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, receiving the praise of multitudes from every nation in the world and the glory of heaven coming down to fill the earth, he would have said, yes, that's the promise the Lord gave to me.

And I see it, of course, so much more clearly and wonderfully now. It's much brighter. It's even more wonderful than I could ever have imagined. It's so much deeper. It's so much more full of mystery and of majesty to see that the great ruler, the lion of Judah, is great because he himself is the great redeemer.

because he himself is the mighty one, the almighty, my shepherd, my God. And to see that the greatness of this lion is because he too is the lamb who rules all the peoples because he's ransomed them, saved them from their sins by his own blood.

[ 36 : 24 ] It's all so much greater, so much fuller, so much more wonderful in every way. Now that I see that window finally opened and I see through the glass so clearly as we do, friends, living in these days to come, these latter days, these days of fulfillment of God's covenant promises, fulfilled at last in Jesus Christ, our great ruler, our rescuer, the restorer of the blessing of his people.

See, to borrow the language of the letter to the Hebrews, we might say we have a better window on the wonders to come than Jacob ever had. But there are still days to come in the future for us also, aren't there?

Days of fulfillment which have begun with the ascension of the Lord Jesus, the reign of the Lion of Judah, but they're not yet consummated, are they?

Because heaven has not yet come down to earth. We don't yet live in a restored Eden where we wash in champagne and even the donkeys drink the finest wine.

But that day will come. Read Isaiah chapter 25 which speaks of that day of great feasting, rich food, well-aged wine, the day when He, our God, will swallow up death forever and the Lord will wipe away all tears from all faces.

[ 37 : 56 ] And on that day, says Isaiah, we will say, behold, this is our God. We have waited for Him, waited for Him that He might save us. We have waited for Him. Let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

See, even for us who live in these last days, our full salvation has not yet come. And that's why each of us, each of us will also come to the time that Jacob came to unless the Lord should return first.

The time when our death is near, the time when the grave is fast approaching. And until then, we too must say what Jacob says there in verse 18.

Do you see that? One little verse right in the middle of this poem. It seems so odd there, doesn't it? On its own. Out of place. But maybe not quite so odd in the light of all the words that I've just quoted from Isaiah.

Behold, our God, we have waited for Him that He might save us. What does Jacob say? I wait. I wait for Your salvation, O Lord.

[ 39 : 12 ] You see, having seen the future through the window of prophecy, of the wonders to come, the fulfillment of God's covenant purpose, Jacob is content to have faith.

To have faith in the covenant promise. See, Jacob's personal and sustained faith in the covenant promise points us likewise, doesn't it, to the genuine response for all Jacob's seed, for all covenant people.

Whether it's then, back in the time of promise, or even now in this age of fulfillment because we too are still waiting for our full salvation. Jacob died without having received what was promised and Hebrews 11 tells us that God had provided something better for us and apart from us, Jacob and the other great saints of old should not be made perfect.

We have better promises to be sure. And yet, what does Paul say to us in Romans chapter 8? The whole creation is still waiting.

Waiting. With eager longing. Waiting to be set free from the curse finally and fully and forever. And we too are still groaning, aren't we?

[ 40 : 25 ] And we're still waiting for that full salvation, for the redemption of our bodies, these bodies of death. And you see, for Jacob and for us, that will only come when at last, as promised, all enemies are put under the feet of the Lion of Judah.

When all peoples bow to Him. When all things are at last subjugated to Him on the day of His coming. And on that day we will say, we have waited for Him.

Let us be glad in His salvation. And our renewed and redeemed resurrected bodies, at last, we'll sin no more and we'll die no more.

But until that day, friends, verse 18 is ours also, isn't it? We must say with Jacob, I will wait, Lord, for your salvation. That's what the Bible means by faith.

Very simple. If you wonder what faith is, waiting patiently for the wonders that God has promised to all those who love Him, to all of those who stake everything on that covenant mercy in His promise of the gospel.

[ 41 : 43 ] It just means waiting. When like Jacob, you can foresee and you see all around you perhaps great struggles from without and within. It's maybe no accident that verse 18 there comes right in the middle of those verses all about battles and conflict that's to come.

And we're terribly aware of that, aren't we? Of the battles that we have within, in a still sinful body, and the groanings without of life in a still fallen world.

And Jacob knew that, but in the midst of it, he had faith. He had glimpsed the wonders that are to come from afar, and he was content to wait.

For his place in that great salvation. In his own lifetime, in his own generation, he played the part God gave him to play. And he trusted the promise. And he passed the promise on.

And he was content to wait for all those wonders to come. And in his dying breath, you see, he pointed his family, and he pointed everyone else who would listen, to the lion of the tribe of Judah.

[ 42 : 55 ] to the great king who is to come. Well, friends, I think that that is a noble and a great aim for all of our lives, isn't it? Whatever generation we live in, whoever we are, to play the part God gives us in our time, to wait for the wonders he has promised, and to our very end, and at our very end, to point people, to the great king, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you and I can be given the grace to live that way, we can live and we can die well. Let's pray. Lord, you've opened for us so fully in these latter days, windows into the wonders of your glorious kingdom.

You've shown us so clearly through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so may we be people who live for him, who pass on that promise to all, and who face our own graves, crying in death, behold, behold the lamb, the lion, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Help us, we pray, to live thus. For we ask it in the name of the mighty one of Jacob, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus himself. Amen.