

The Lion-Lamb

by G.W. North

Jesus Christ is the Lion of Judah, the warrior-king who overcame Satan and won the victory at Calvary, and He is also the Lamb of God, who sacrificed Himself for the redemption of humanity.

Scripture: Revelation 5:5

Topics: "Redemption", "Dual Nature of Christ"

Description

G.W. North explores the dual nature of Christ as both the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God, emphasizing how these titles reflect different perspectives on His identity and mission. The elder around the throne sees the Lion as the victorious King, while John, with his human perspective, sees the Lamb as the sacrificial Savior. North illustrates the significance of the cross as the battleground where Jesus triumphed over evil, highlighting the prophetic lineage of Judah and the ultimate victory of Christ. He concludes that the Lamb's sacrifice is foundational to redemption, and the Lion's strength is evident in His victory over sin and death. The sermon invites believers to deepen their understanding of the Lion-Lamb and the profound implications of His sacrifice.

Transcript

The Lord the Lamb is referred to by John in Revelation chapter five as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which may at first be regarded as surprising, for the lion is an unclean beast. The lion had no place in the Levitical scheme of sacrifices, but roamed freely on the earth as the mighty lord of the animal kingdom. But this titular relationship to the animal world is not made about Jesus in connection with sacrifice. When He is called the Lion it is by one of the elders around the throne, but when John looks for the lion he sees 'a Lamb as it had been slain' standing in the midst of the throne. The Lion and the Lamb are one; the elder sees the Lamb as the Lion and John sees the Lion as the Lamb.

At the time both are gazing upon the throne, John sees the cross, the sacrificial Lamb, the blood; the elder sees the tomb, the royal Lion-King, the resurrection. John, all-human, can never forget the One whom they pierced; the elder, all-divine, can never think of Him save as King of creation. Their individual perspective was quite natural to them both. They speak as they should, each from their first and longest knowledge of their Lord. The elder knew Him first as God and King. John knew Him first as man and slave: the elder knew Him as God and King made man and slave, but John knew Him as man and slave made God and King. Each knew and worshipped Him in the reverse order to the other and therefore spoke of Him in that way - we know Him to be one and the same. What a privilege is granted us.

It seems that the elder regarded Calvary as the great battleground where Jesus won honour and gained the authority to open the seven-sealed book held in the hand of the inscrutable One sitting on the throne. He saw the cross as the place where the greatest spiritual battle of all the ages was fought. It was as though Golgotha was a jungle where two mighty lions met and fought to the death. Neither granted the other any mercy; two ancient enemies matched themselves against each other in sheer naked strength. As those two lions met and engaged in battle, primitive forces of good and evil were unleashed, and with unmitigated hatred they fought on until one should destroy the other.

It was a foregone conclusion who would win. The battle was short and sharp, and even though he mustered all demon forces to his aid, the devil was defeated. He rallied all his hosts, but the lone Lion of Judah overcame him and them. In view of this, some things spoken by Jesus before His crucifixion take on new significance: one was spoken in Gethsemane - 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?' The other was to Pilate - 'Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above'.

Just previously Pilate, in his ignorance, had said, 'I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee', and Jesus' remark was primarily an answer to that claim. But His final acceptance of the Father's will in Gethsemane and the point-blank refusal to accept angelic help were the Lord's declaration that He was determined to allow nothing to stand between Him and the cross, and that He required help from no one. The Lord's answer to Pilate could be interpreted to mean, 'I am going into battle with satan and you cannot prevent me'. He went, He won. Hallelujah! That is how the elder saw it.

However, the words John heard were more than a revelation of an angelic or heavenly view of Calvary; his words also show the divine view of history. Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is the root of David, the warrior-king. In Jewish eyes David was the greatest king in Israel's history; he was the man who won back the promised land for Israel. Kings of Judah liked to trace back their lineage to him but few of the kings who sprang from David were like their 'root father'. None of them knew that he himself in spirit sprang from Jesus the Lion, the root of the tribe. Jesus is the root and foundation of true kingship; His lion-like effort and total victory at Calvary took Him to the cross and the throne. He had overcome satan as surely as David had overcome the raging lion, the prowling bear and mighty Goliath; He was the root of David's victory, and the foundation of his throne and kingdom and royalty and glory.

The patriarch and prophet Jacob had first seen it. Judah was his fourth son and seemed unlikely indeed to be given the kingly crown and sceptre; had he not three brothers older than himself? He had indeed but, as the eye of God, Jacob penetrates into the cause of present events and also sees into the distant future. Reuben, his firstborn was weak, unstable as water; he could not have the pre-eminence, there was nothing kingly about him. Simeon and Levi, next in order and named together, joined to commit a most deceitful crime; they united their strength to sin and consequently forfeited what either separately might have obtained. They were therefore divided and scattered in Israel; neither of them could wear the crown.

'Judah', said Israel his father with prophetic voice, 'thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise', and first in Judah as a person and then through his family and tribe the lion-like qualities of his father emerged, culminating eventually in the kingly virtues of David and then of David's Son. Neither weak nor divided, He was first a lion's whelp, then He couched as a lion, an old lion, waiting till the crown and sceptre were His; He became the root from which David sprang.

The prophetic saga of Judah was the spiritual manifest of the best qualities of Jacob the man, Israel the nation and David the conquering shepherd king. But chiefest of all, the Lion-Shiloh, unto whom the crown and sceptre belong and the gathering of the people shall be, is Jesus Christ the King. The elder saw it all and proclaimed Him as 'the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David', and there before him John saw Jesus the Lamb on the throne. As realisation dawned on him, John in heart and by many visions passed into the fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy. At last he heard myriads of angels around the beasts and elders, together with every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth and in the sea, praising God and the Lamb. Every one was gathered.

What a Lion the Lamb is! How much He accomplished on the cross - far too much for us to attempt to list or classify here even if we knew it all. New discoveries of His triumphant crucifixion shall surely continuously be revealed to us as time unfolds; and eternity itself shall add new dimensions and perspectives to our grateful understanding. Although we must await these great future revelations, let us with all our heart enter more deeply into the things that are already revealed. The Lion-Lamb has both overcome satan and also completely borne away the sin of the world.

In this chapter the theme of praise around the throne is the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain to redeem us to God and to make us a kingdom of priests who shall reign on the earth. In heaven the theme is redemption through the blood of the Lamb; in this connection the Lord's name is never directly linked with any other animal on earth, not even with those listed in the Pentateuch. The reason for this is that of all the animals mentioned in the Bible the lamb is the one most commonly associated with sacrifice, and the only one named for redemption. When referring to the sacrifice made before the foundation of the world it is the Lamb that was slain. The sacrifice of the Lamb is foundational to everything God builds.

No other kinds of animal were slain for redemption; their blood(s) were not even considered by God for that purpose. For reasons decided by Him alone, only the blood of the lamb was redemptive. There is a quality of life in the Son of God so precious in His Father's eyes that has earned Him the title 'the Lamb of God'. Somehow this divine mystery has been woven into nature itself, for in the whole realm of the animal kingdom there is nothing so sweet and endearing to the human heart as a lamb. There of course the likeness between the innocent animal and Jesus ends, for a lamb is well-nigh helpless and powerless. It is not these features of a lamb that speak to us of the Lord, and this is why, in order to describe Him as adequately as possible in animal terms, the qualities of the lion are ascribed to Him. On the cross He was a lion to destroy the devil and his minions, and a lamb to redeem souls in their millions.

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