

# Exposition on Psalm 76

by St. Augustine

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's knowledge in Judaea, the true Judaea, and the name of God in Israel, and how we can see God by confessing our sins and making a place for Him in our hearts.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 49:10, Psalm 75:1-76, John 8:58, Romans 2:29

**Topics:** "Spiritual Lineage", "Divinity Of Christ"

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## Description

St. Augustine preaches about the significance of true Israel and Judah, emphasizing that being a Jew is more than just a physical lineage but requires circumcision of the heart. He delves into the history of the tribes of Judah and Levi, highlighting the importance of spiritual lineage over physical descent. St. Augustine connects the lineage of Judah to the coming of Jesus Christ, emphasizing His eternal divinity and superiority over earthly kings. He discusses the transformation from Jews to Christians, emphasizing the importance of true faith and belief in Christ.

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## Transcript

1. The Jews are wont to glory in this Psalm which we have sung, saying, Known in Judæa is God, in Israel great is the name of Him: and to revile the Gentiles to whom God is not known, and to say that to themselves alone God is known; seeing that the Prophet says, Known in Judæa is God. In other places therefore He is unknown. But God is known in very deed in Judæa, if they understand what is Judæa. For indeed God is not known except in Judæa. Behold even we say this, that except a person shall have been in Judæa, known to him God cannot be. But what says the Apostle? He that in secret is a Jew, he that is so in circumcision of the heart, not in letter but in spirit. Romans 2:29 There are therefore Jews in circumcision of the flesh, and there are Jews in circumcision of the heart. Many of our holy fathers had both the circumcision of the flesh, for a seal of the faith, and circumcision of the heart, for the faith itself. From these fathers these men degenerating, who now in the name do glory, and have lost their deeds; from these fathers, I say, degenerating, they have remained Jews in flesh, in heart Heathens. For these are Jews, who are out of Abraham, from whom Isaac was born, and out of him Jacob, and out of Jacob the twelve Patriarchs, and out of the twelve Patriarchs the whole people of the Jews. But they were generally called Jews for this reason, that Judah was one of the twelve sons of Jacob, a Patriarch among the twelve, and from his stock the Royalty came among the Jews. For all this people after the number of the twelve sons of Jacob, had twelve tribes. What we call tribes are as it were distinct houses and congregations of people. That people, I say, had twelve tribes, out of which twelve tribes one tribe was

Judah, out of which were the kings; and there was another tribe, Levi, out of which were the priests. But because to the priests serving the temple no land was allotted, Numbers 18:20 but it was necessary that among twelve tribes all the Land of promise should be shared: there having been therefore taken out one tribe of higher dignity, the tribe of Levi, which was of the priests, there would have remained eleven, unless by the adoption of the two sons of Joseph the number twelve were completed.

What this is, observe. One of the twelve sons of Jacob was Joseph....This Joseph had two sons, Ephraim and Manasse. Jacob, dying, as though by will, received those his grandsons into the number of sons, and said to his son Joseph, The rest that are born shall be to you; but these to me, and they shall divide the land with their brethren. Genesis 48:5 As yet there had not been given nor divided the land of promise, but he was speaking in the Spirit, prophesying. The two sons therefore of Joseph being added, there were made up nevertheless twelve tribes, since now there are thirteen.

For instead of one tribe of Joseph, two were added, and there were made thirteen. There being taken out then the tribe of Levi, that tribe of priests which did serve the Temple, and lived by the tithes of all the rest unto whom the land was divided, there remain twelve. In these twelve was the tribe of Judah, whence the kings were. For at first from another tribe was given King Saul, 1 Samuel 9:1 and he was rejected as being an evil king; after there was given from the tribe of Judah King David, and out of him from the tribe of Judah were the Kings. 1 Samuel 16:12 But Jacob had spoken of this, when he blessed his sons, there shall not fail a prince out of Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until there come He to whom the promise has been made.

Genesis 49:10 But from the tribe of Judah there came Our Lord Jesus Christ. For He is, as the Scripture says, and as you have but now heard, out of the seed of David born of Mary. 2 Timothy 2:8 But as regards the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, wherein He is equal with the Father, He is not only before the Jews, but also before Abraham himself; John 8:58 nor only before Abraham, but also before Adam; nor only before Adam, but also before Heaven and earth and before ages: for all things by Himself were made, and without Him there was made nothing.

John 1:3 Because therefore in prophecy has been said, there shall not fail a prince out of Judah, etc.: Genesis 49:10 former times are examined, and we find that the Jews always had their kings of the tribe of Judah, and had no foreign king before that Herod who was king when the Lord was born. Thence began foreign kings, from Herod. Luke 3:1 Before Herod all were of the tribe of Judah, but only until there should come He to whom the promise had been made. Therefore when the Lord Himself came, the kingdom of the Jews was overthrown, and removed from the Jews.

Now they have no king; because they will not acknowledge the true King. See now whether they must be called Jews. Now ye do see that they must not be called Jews. They have themselves with their own voice resigned that name, so that they are not worthy to be called Jews, except only in the flesh. When did they sever themselves from the name? They said, We have no king but Cæsar. John 19:15 O you who are called Jews and are not, if you have no king but Cæsar, there has failed a Prince of Judah: there has come then He to whom the promise has been made.

They then are more truly Jews, who have been made Christians out of Jews: the rest of the Jews, who in Christ have not believed, have deserved to lose even the very name. The true Judæa, then, is the Church of Christ, believing in that King, who has come out of the tribe of Judah through the Virgin Mary; believing in Him of whom the Apostle was just now speaking, in writing to Timothy, Be thou mindful that Jesus

Christ has risen from the dead, of the seed of David, after my Gospel. 2 Timothy 2:8 For of Judah is David, and out of David is the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believing in Christ do belong to Judah: and we acknowledge Christ. We, that with eyes have not seen, in faith do keep Him. Let not therefore the Jews revile, who are no longer Jews. They said themselves, We have no king but Cæsar. John 19:15 For better were it for them that their king should be Christ, of the seed of David, of the tribe of Judah. Nevertheless because Christ Himself is of the seed of David after the flesh, but God above all things blessed for ever, Romans 9:5 He is Himself our King and our God; our King, inasmuch as born of the tribe of Judah, after the flesh, was Christ the Lord, the Saviour; but our God, who is before Judah, and before Heaven and earth, by whom were made all things, John 1:3 both spiritual and corporal. For if all things by Himself were made; even Mary herself, out of whom He was born, by Himself was made....

2. Known in Judæa is God, in Israel great is the Name of Him Psalm 75:1. Concerning Israel also we ought so to take it as we have concerning Judæa: as they were not the true Jews, so neither was that the true Israel. For what is Israel said to be? One seeing God. And how have they seen God, among whom He walked in the flesh; and while they supposed Him to be man, they slew Him?...In Israel great is His Name. Will you be Israel? Observe that man concerning whom the Lord says, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom guile is not. John 1:47 If a true Israelite is he in whom guile is not, the guileful and lying are not true Israelites. Let them not say then, that with them is God, and great is His name in Israel. Let them prove themselves Israelites, and I grant that in Israel great is His Name.

3. And there has been made in peace a place for Him, and His habitation is in Sion Psalm 75:2. Again, Sion is as it were the country of the Jews; the true Sion is the Church of Christians. But the interpretation of the Hebrew names is thus handed down to us: Judæa is interpreted confession, Israel, one seeing God. After Judæa is Israel. Will you see God? First do thou confess, and then in yourself there is made a place for God; because there has been made in peace a place for Him. So long as then you confess not your sins, in a manner you are quarrelling with God. For how are you not disputing with Him, who art praising that which displeases Him? He punishes a thief, you praise theft: He punishes a drunken man, you praise drunkenness. You are disputing with God, you have not made for Him a place in your heart: because in peace is His place. And how do you begin to have peace with God? You begin with Him in confession. There is a voice of a Psalm, saying, Begin ye to the Lord in confession. What is, Begin ye to the Lord in confession? Begin ye to be joined to the Lord. In what manner? So that the same thing may displease you as displeases Him. There displeases Him your evil life; if it please yourself, you are disunited from Him; if it displease you, through confession to Him you are united....

4. There He has broken the strength of bows, and the shield, and the sword, and the battle Psalm 75:3. Where has He broken? In that eternal peace, in that perfect peace. And now, my brethren, they that have rightly believed see that they ought not to rely on themselves: and all the might of their own menaces, and whatsoever is in them whetted for mischief, this they break in pieces; and whatsoever they deem of great virtue wherewith to protect themselves temporally, and the war which they were waging against God by defending their sins, all these things He has broken there.

5. You enlightening marvellously from the eternal mountains Psalm 75:4. What are the eternal mountains? Those which He has Himself made eternal; which are the great mountains, the preachers of truth. You enlighten, but from the eternal mountains: the great mountains are first to receive Your light, and from Your light which the mountains receive, the earth also is clothed. But those great mountains the Apostles

have received, the Apostles have received as it were the first streaks of the rising light...Wherefore also, in another place, a Psalm says what? I have lifted up my eyes unto the mountains, whence there shall come help to me. What then, in the mountains is your hope, and from thence to you shall there come help? Have you stayed at the mountains? Take heed what you do. There is something above the mountains: above the mountains is He at whom the mountains tremble. I have lifted up, he says, my eyes unto the mountains, whence there shall come help to me. But what follows? My help, he says, is from the Lord, who has made Heaven and earth. Unto the mountains indeed I have lifted up eyes, because through the mountains to me the Scriptures were displayed: but I have my heart in Him that does enlighten all mountains....

6. There have been troubled all the unwise in heart Psalm 75:5....How have they been troubled? When the Gospel is preached. And what is life eternal? And who is He that has risen from the dead? The Athenians wondered, when the Apostle Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead, and thought that he spoke but fables. But because he said that there was another life which neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it gone up into the heart of man, 1 Corinthians 2:9 therefore the unwise in heart were troubled. But what has befallen them? They have slept their sleep, and all men of riches have found nothing in their hands. They have loved things present, and have gone to sleep in the midst of things present: and so these very present things have become to them delightful: just as he that sees in a dream himself to have found treasure, is so long rich as he wakes not. The dream has made him rich, waking has made him poor. Sleep perchance has held him slumbering on the earth, and lying on the hard ground, poor and perchance a beggar; in sleep he has seen himself to lie on an ivory or golden bed, and on feathers heaped up; so long as he is sleeping, he is sleeping well, waking he has found himself on the hard ground, whereon sleep had taken him. Such men also are these too: they have come into this life, and through temporal desires, they have as it were slumbered here; and them riches, and vain pomps that fly away, have taken, and they have passed away: they have not understood how much of good might be done therewith. For if they had known of another life, there they would have laid up unto themselves the treasure which here was doomed to perish: like as Zacchæus, the chief of the Publicans, saw that good when he received the Lord Jesus in his house, and he says, The half of my goods I give to the poor, and if to any man I have done any wrong, fourfold I restore. Luke 19:8 This man was not in the emptiness of men dreaming, but in the faith of men awake....

7. By Your chiding, O God of Jacob, there have slept all men that have mounted horses Psalm 75:6. Who are they that have mounted horses? They that would not be humble. To sit on horseback is no sin; but it is a sin to lift up the neck of power against God, and to deem one's self to be in some distinction. Because you are rich, you have mounted; God does chide, and you sleep. Great is the anger of Him chiding, great the anger. Let your Love observe the terrible thing. Chiding has noise, the noise is wont to make men wake. So great is the force of God chiding, that he said, By Your chiding, O God of Jacob, there have slept all men that have mounted horses. Behold what a sleep that Pharaoh slept who mounted horses. For he was not awake in heart, because against chiding he had his heart hardened. Exodus 14:8 For hardness of heart is slumber. I ask you, my brethren, how they sleep, who, while the Gospel is sounding, and the Amen, and the Hallelujah, throughout the whole world, yet will not condemn their old life, and wake up unto a new life. There was the Scripture of God in Judæa only, now throughout the whole world it is sung. In that one nation one God who made all things was spoken of, as to be adored and worshipped; now where is He unsaid? Christ has risen again, though derided on the Cross; that very Cross whereon He was derided, He has now imprinted on the brows of kings: and men yet sleep....

8. You are terrible, and who shall withstand You at that time by Your anger? Psalm 75:7. Now they sleep, and perceive not You angry; but for cause that they should sleep, He was angry. Now that which sleeping they perceived not, at the end they shall perceive. For there shall appear the Judge of quick and dead. And who shall withstand You at that time by Your anger? For now they speak that which they will, and they dispute against God and say, who are the Christians? Or who is Christ? Or what fools are they that believe that which they see not, and relinquish the pleasures which they see, and follow the faith of things which are not displayed to their eyes! You sleep and snore, ye speak against God, as much as you are able. How long shall sinners, O Lord, how long shall sinners glory, they answer and will speak iniquity? But when does no one answer and no one speak, except when he turns himself against himself?...

9. From Heaven You have hurled judgment: the earth has trembled, and has rested Psalm 75:8. She which now does trouble herself, she which now speaks, has to fear at the end and to rest. Better had she now rested, that at the end she might have rejoiced. Rested? When? When God arose unto judgment, that He might save all the meek in heart Psalm 75:9. Who are the meek in heart? They that on snorting horses have not mounted, but in their humility have confessed their own sins. For the thought of a man shall confess to You, and the remnants of the thought shall celebrate solemnities to You Psalm 75:10. The first is the thought, the latter are the remnants of the thought. What is the first thought? That from whence we begin, that good thought whence you will begin to confess. Confession unites us to Christ. But now the confession itself, that is, the first thought, does produce in us the remnants of the thought: and those very remnants of thought shall celebrate solemnities to You. What is the thought which shall confess? That which condemns the former life, that whereunto that which it was is displeasing, in order that it may be that which it was not, is itself the first thought. But because thus you ought to withdraw from sins, with the first thought after having confessed to God, that it may not escape your memory that you have been a sinner; in that you have been a sinner, thou dost celebrate solemnities to God. Furthermore it is to be understood as follows. The first thought has confession, and departure from the old life. But if you shall have forgotten from what sins you have been delivered, thou dost not render thanks to the Deliverer, and dost not celebrate solemnities to your God. Behold the first confessing thought of Saul the Apostle, now Paul, who at first was Saul, when he heard a voice from Heaven!...He put forth the first thought of obedience: when he heard, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute. O Lord, he says, what do You bid me to do? Acts 9:5-6 This is a thought confessing: now he is calling upon the Lord, whom he persecuted. In what manner the remnants of the thought shall celebrate solemnities, in the case of Paul you have heard, when the Apostle himself was being read: Be thou mindful that Christ Jesus has risen from the dead, of the seed of David, after my Gospel. 2 Timothy 2:8 What is, be thou mindful? Though effaced from your memory be the thought, whereby at first you have confessed: be the remnant of the thought in the memory....

10. Even once was Christ sacrificed for us, when we believed; then was thought; but now there are the remnants of thought, when we remember Who has come to us, and what He has forgiven us; by means of those very remnants of thought, that is, by means of the memory herself, He is daily so sacrificed for us, as if He were daily renewing us, that has renewed us by His first grace. For now the Lord has renewed us in Baptism, and we have become new men, in hope indeed rejoicing, in order that in tribulation we may be patient: Romans 12:12 nevertheless, there ought not to escape from our memory that which has been bestowed upon us. And if now your thought is not what it was--for the first thought was to depart from sin: but now thou dost not depart, but at that time departed--be there remnants of thought, lest He who has made whole escape from memory....

11. Vow ye, and pay to the Lord our God Psalm 75:11. Let each man vow what he is able, and pay it. Do not vow and not pay: but let every man vow, and pay what he can. Be not slow to vow: for you will accomplish the vows by powers not your own. You will fail, if on yourselves ye rely: but if on Him to whom you vow ye rely, you will be safe to pay. Vow ye, and pay to the Lord our God. What ought we all in common to vow? To believe in Him, to hope from Him for life eternal, to live godly according to a measure common to all.

For there is a certain measure common to all men. To commit no theft is not a thing enjoined merely upon one devoted to continence, and not enjoined upon the married woman: to commit no adultery is enjoined upon all men: not to love wine-bibbing, whereby the soul is swallowed up, and does corrupt in herself the Temple of God, is enjoined to all alike: not to be proud, is enjoined to all men alike: not to slay man, not to hate a brother, not to lay a plot to destroy any one, is enjoined to all in common.

The whole of this we all ought to vow. There are also vows proper for individuals: one vowes to God conjugal chastity, that he will know no other woman besides his wife: so also the woman, that she will know no other man besides her husband. Other men also vow, even though they have used such a marriage, that beyond this they will have no such thing, that they will neither desire nor admit the like: and these men have vowed a greater vow than the former. Others vow even virginity from the beginning of life, that they will even know no such thing as those who having experienced have relinquished: and these men have vowed the greatest vow.

Others vow that their house shall be a place of entertainment for all the Saints that may come: a great vow they vow. Another vowes to relinquish all his goods to be distributed to the poor, and go into a community, into a society of the Saints: a great vow he does vow. Vow ye, and pay to the Lord our God. Let each one vow what he shall have willed to vow; let him give heed to this, that he pay what he has vowed. If any man does look back with regard to what he has vowed to God, it is an evil.

Some woman or other devoted to continence has willed to marry: what has she willed? The same as any virgin. What has she willed? The same as her own mother. Hath she willed any evil thing? Evil certainly. Why? Because already she had vowed to the Lord her God. For what has the apostle Paul said concerning such? Though he says that young widows may marry if they will: 1 Timothy 5:14 nevertheless he says in a certain passage, but more blessed she will be, if so she shall have remained, after my judgment. 1 Corinthians 7:40 He shows that she is more blessed, if so she shall have remained; but nevertheless that she is not to be condemned, if she shall have willed to marry.

But what says he concerning certain who have vowed and have not paid? Having, he says, judgment, because the first faith they have made void. 1 Timothy 5:12 What is, the first faith they have made void? They have vowed, and have not paid. Let no brother therefore, when placed in a monastery, say, I shall depart from the monastery: for neither are they only that are in a monastery to attain unto the kingdom of Heaven, nor do those that are not there not belong unto God. We answer him, but they have not vowed; you have vowed, you have looked back.

When the Lord was threatening them with the day of judgment, He says what? Remember Lot's wife. Luke 17:32 To all men He spoke. For what did Lot's wife? She was delivered from Sodom, and being in the way she looked back. In the place where she looked back, there she remained. For she became a statue of salt, Genesis 19:26 in order that by considering her men might be seasoned, might have sense, might not be infatuated, might not look back, lest by giving a bad example they should themselves remain and

season others.

For even now we are saying this to certain of our brethren, whom perchance we may have seen as it were weak in the good they have purposed. And will you be such an one as he was? We put before them certain who have looked back. They are savourless in themselves, but they season others, inasmuch as they are mentioned, in order that fearing their example they may not look back. Vow ye, and pay. For that wife of Lot to all does belong. A married woman has had the will to commit adultery; from her place whither she had arrived she looked back.

A widow who had vowed so to remain has willed to marry, she has willed the thing which was lawful to her who has married, but to herself was not lawful, because from her place she has looked back. There is a virgin devoted to continence, already dedicated to God; let her have also the other gifts which truly do adorn virginity itself, and without which that virginity is unclean. For what if she be uncorrupt in body and corrupt in mind? What is it that he has said? What if no one has touched the body, but if perchance she be drunken, be proud, be contentious, be talkative?

All these things God does condemn. If before she had vowed, she had married, she would not have been condemned: she has chosen something better, has overcome that which was lawful for her; she is proud, and does commit so many things unlawful. This I say, it is lawful for her to marry before that she vowes, to be proud is never lawful. O thou virgin of God, you have willed not to marry, which is lawful: thou dost exalt yourself, which is not lawful. Better is a virgin humble, than a married woman humble: but better is a married woman humble, than a virgin proud.

But she that looked back upon marriage is condemned, not because she has willed to marry; but because she had already gone before, and has become the wife of Lot by looking back. Be not slow, that are able, whom God does inspire to seize upon higher callings: for we do not say these things in order that you may not vow, but in order that you may vow and may pay. Now because we have treated of these matters, thou perchance wast willing to vow, and now art not willing to vow. But observe what the Psalm has said to you.

It has not said, Vow not; but, Vow and pay. Because you have heard, pay, will you not vow? Therefore were you willing to vow, and not to pay? Nay, do both. One thing is done by your profession, another thing will be perfected by the aid of God. Look to Him who does guide you, and you will not look back to the place whence He is leading you forth. He that guides you is walking before you; the place from whence He is guiding you is behind you. Love Him guiding, and He does not condemn you looking back. 12.

All they that are in the circuit of Him shall offer gifts. Who are in the circuit of Him?...Whatever is common to all is in the midst. Why is it said to be in the midst? Because it is at the same distance from all, and at the same proximity to all. That which is not in the middle, is as it were private. That which is public is set in the middle, in order that all they that come may use the same, may be enlightened. Let no one say, it is mine: lest he should be wanting to make his own share of that which is in the midst for all.

What then is, All they that are in the circuit of Him shall offer gifts? All they that understand truth to be common to all, and who do not make it as it were their own by being proud concerning it, they shall offer gifts; because they have humility: but they that make as it were their own that which is common to all, as though it were set in the middle, are endeavouring to lead men astray to a party, these shall not offer gifts....To Him terrible. Let therefore all men fear that are in the circuit of Him.

For therefore they shall fear, and with trembling they shall praise; because they are in the circuit of Him, to the end that all men may attain unto Him, and He may openly meet all, and openly enlighten all. This is, to stand in awe with others. When you have made him as it were your own, and no longer common, you are exalted unto pride; though it is written, Serve ye the Lord in fear, and exult unto Him with trembling. Therefore they shall offer gifts, who are in the circuit of Him. For they are humble who know truth to be common to all.

13. To whom shall they offer gifts? To Him terrible, and to Him that takes away the spirit of princes Psalm 75:12. For the spirits of princes are proud spirits. They then are not His Spirits; for if they know anything, their own they will it to be, not public; but, that which sets Himself forth as equal toward all men, that sets Himself in the midst, in order that all men may take as much as they can, whatever they can; not of what is any man's, but of what is God's, and therefore of their own because they have become His. Therefore they must needs be humble: they have lost their own spirit, and they have the Spirit of God....For if you shall have confessed yourself dust, God out of dust does make man. All they that are in the circuit of Him do offer gifts. All humble men do confess to Him, and do adore Him. To Him terrible they offer gifts. Whence to Him terrible exult ye with trembling: and to Him that takes away the spirit of princes: that is, that takes away the haughtiness of proud men. To Him terrible among the kings of the earth. Terrible are the kings of the earth, but He is above all, that does terrify the kings of the earth. Be thou a king of the earth, and God will be to you terrible. How, will you say, shall I be a king of the earth? Rule the earth, and you will be a king of the earth. Do not therefore with desire of empire set before your eyes exceeding wide provinces, where you may spread abroad your kingdoms; rule thou the earth which you bear. Hear the Apostle ruling the earth: I do not so fight as if beating air, but I chasten my body, and bring it into captivity, lest perchance preaching to other men, I myself become a reprobate. 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 ...

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