

00-08-20b

Let's resume our study now after that rousing hymn, one of my favorites, Victory in Jesus, my savior forever. He sought me and bought me with his redeeming blood. He loved me ere I knew him and all my love is due him.

He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood. I remember my mom talking one time about some famous person and saying, I remember when they were plummeting to stardom. And I thought, well, that's actually kind of apropos, but that's a great turn of phrase in the chorus of that hymn.

He plunged me to victory and it is in the act of redeeming us and in the recognition of our helplessness and hopelessness that we find the victory that is in Jesus. Such a great hymn. All the words to that hymn are inspiring.

Let's turn back now to Genesis chapter 49. Resume our study in this really most prominent portion of the oracle that Jacob delivers about his sons. Not only in the space that it takes up, there is more space, more lines devoted to the fate of Judah than any of the other brothers.

We saw the reason for that, the eloquent speech that Judah gave before his brother Joseph, back before he knew who he was, when Joseph said, I'm going to keep your brother Benjamin here. And that was the thing that Jacob had expressly stated would kill him. If they took Benjamin to Egypt and didn't bring him back, he said, you will bring down my gray hairs to the grave.

Of the two sons of Rachel, he had already lost Joseph, at least in his perception, and he feared losing Benjamin. Rachel had already died. Judah pledged himself on behalf of Benjamin and took him to Egypt.

Joseph, perceiving, I am sure, what the instructions were likely to have been regarding Benjamin, says, I'm going to keep him. The rest of you, laden up your donkeys and return in peace. Take all the grain you want, but leave your brother Benjamin here.

And Judah launches into an eloquent speech. It is self-sacrificial. You can see the change in Judah's heart from his self-centeredness and his self-protectedness in the Ur and Onan incident with Tamar where he didn't want to marry off his sons and he was all concerned about maintaining a heritage to the self-sacrifice and the love for his father.

He is a changed man. He is not going to repeat the mistake that he made with regard to Joseph where he participated willingly in throwing Joseph into the pit and selling him into slavery. Here is the other son, equally beloved by the father, equal opportunity to be spiteful and say, here is a way to get rid of the last of these favorites of Jacob and we can finally have some peace.

Instead, he spends the better part of a chapter in Genesis explaining to Joseph why they absolutely cannot leave without Benjamin offering himself in Benjamin's stead. There is such a great foreshadowing of Judah's great, great grandson down through the ages and down through the generations. The Lord Jesus Christ is descended from this Judah in his humanity.

Like the other parts of this oracle, these things that are going to characterize the tribes, things that are going to be both opportunities and potentials and things that are going to be possible snares and pitfalls are mentioned. I have been working diligently on this oracle and finally discovered what I was looking for and that is what we are going to cover next Sunday. I think you will find that we are really in for a treat as we finish the rest of the brothers and then look at the meaning of this oracle.

You know how it is when you can tell that something is there and you don't know what it is, but you know there is something. Whether you are trying to solve a computer problem or trying to figure out why your child is frowning or your baby is crying, you know there is something and you are casting about and you keep looking and looking and then eventually you discover it and you have that aha moment. In working on this oracle, I have been somewhat frustrated because I could tell that there was something there that I couldn't find and this past week I found it.

So I will offer that for your consideration next Sunday. But in the oracle to Judah, we have studied the first half in some detail. We have seen the significance of the praise and the hand on the neck of the enemies, the bowing down of the father's children in terms of foreshadowing the rulership function which should have been Reuben's and was not, should have been Simeon's and was not, should then have devolved to Levi and was not.

All three of those brothers disqualified themselves through violating covenant. Reuben violated his father's marriage covenant with Bilhah. Simeon and Levi were the instigators of violating the covenant with Hamor and Shechem in the Dinah incident with their sister.

Judah on the other hand has manifested a loyalty to a covenant. He made a promise to his father regarding Benjamin and he has put his life on the line to keep it. And so the leadership that belonged to the firstborn son has descended through the first three to the fourth son, Judah.

And it is manifested and illustrated in these first two verses. But along with that blessing and that great potential, from those to whom much is given, much is required. And the opportunity and potential involved in being the leader also has its hazards and its pitfalls.

And we saw the foreshadowing of that. The lion who goes out and conquers the king of

beasts, who seizes the prey and brings it down and feeds on it, then becomes sated and lies down. And when he lies down, who's going to rouse him? He has the respect of the hyenas and the jackals and the other beasts who might want to come up and take a prey away from him.

But to be strong and be in a position of leadership, you can also become unapproachable, uncorrectable, not susceptible to correction, rebuke or instruction in righteousness. We have a great victory in Jesus as believers in the church age. The leadership role that should have gone to God's firstborn, the nation of Israel, Israel has been passed over for the same reason.

They violated covenant. We have the new covenant in Christ's blood. The opportunities that were originally the nation of Israel's have devolved to us.

And we have that ruling position that is ours through Christ. What are we going to do with it? Are we going to be sated? Are we going to be filled up and satisfied with what we have and become uncorrectable and unapproachable? This is the hazard that is built into this responsibility. We have to remain alert.

Our eyes have to remain open. The scepter in verse 10 will not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet. If there was any doubt as to what the meaning of these first two illustrations meant, here it is stated explicitly.

The ruling scepter, not only over his brethren, but over the surrounding peoples and nations, will not depart from between his feet until tribute is brought to him. There has been a lot of ink spilled over Shiloh. We ironed that out last time.

I have a high degree of confidence that this is what the original said and what it meant. You have the normal progression in Hebrew, distik, di, stitch, if you will, two lines. You have a line stating one thing and then the second line is an increase and an enhancement over the first.

This rulership function is going to stay within, when there is rulership in Israel, it is going to be from the tribe of Judah. It is going to culminate when tribute is brought to the ruler from Judah and the obedience of the peoples is to him. These peoples, haam, these are the peoples surrounding Israel.

So his hegemony, his authority, his ruling capacity is going to extend beyond the borders of Israel to the surrounding nations. This of course is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ in the millennial kingdom. Then in verse 11, binding his donkey to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes.

His eyes are darker than wine and his teeth whiter than milk. I don't know about you, but I find this to be very cryptic. So the first suggestion we have here is of prosperity

because the vine, the production of grapes, this requires rich soil, good irrigation or rainfall or the abundance of water.

You know what's inside a grape. It's a lot of water. That's why you can get raisins from them when you take the water out.

There's not near as much of the grape there after you take the water away and make it a raisin. So there has to be an abundance of water and rainfall. There has to be rich soil.

It has to be able to be protected from animals who would come in and the vines require tending and care. This is why the great wine grapes in the world come from these lush areas of the central valley of California, the south of France. Germany is, from my observation, just one big vineyard with just a few interruptions for autobahns and cities, but the rest of it is just one big vineyard.

I was so surprised. I had no idea. When I thought of Germany, I thought of swastikas and booted helmets and things, but it's all wine country.

I don't know why we don't have more said about German wines because all it is is grapes. I drove through untold miles, thousands upon thousands of acres of nothing but grapes. It looked real similar when we drove through central California.

But you've got to have prosperity. Vines and the abundance of vines is prosperity. This is why Jesus uses that figure over in John.

I am the vine. You are the branches. There is a possibility for abundant bearing of fruit in the vine.

He doesn't say I'm the oat stalk or I'm the barley plant. He says I am the vine and you are the branches. It's the most abundant and picture of great fruitfulness.

So if he's binding his donkey to the vine, what does this mean? Well, in one line, we have three suggestions of prosperity because first of all, he owns the vine or he wouldn't be binding his donkey to it. He also owns the donkey or he wouldn't have something to tie to the vine. And he is so unconcerned about what might happen to the vine that he's willing to bind the donkey to it and let the donkey eat its fill, which it will.

If you've ever seen donkeys, asses as they were called in the King James, they are kind of like goats. They'll eat just almost anything and particularly lush vegetation like this. If he's going to bind his donkey to it, he has so much that he's not worried about what might happen to the vine.

If you had ten little vine plants, you're not going to let an animal anywhere near them. But if you've got ten thousand acres of vines, you can stall your animals in the midst of them and let them eat their fill and you're not worried about it. So we find here a triple

picture of prosperity.

Donkeys were the possession of the wealthy. You can find this from looking at passages such as Job. You remember Job chapter 1 and verse 3? What was one of the measures when the Bible is telling us about Job and his initial status? A man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, blameless, upright, feared God, shunned evil, seven sons, three daughters.

Verse 3, his possessions were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. He's got 500 donkeys and that is an indication of the incredible wealth among the camels and the other things. Possessing donkeys, possessing camels was a great sign of wealth.

So here is Judah, the tribe of Judah, possessing this donkey. There are two different words here used for donkey. You'll notice in the first two lines of verse 11, binding his donkey to his vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine.

In Hebrew there are two different words here. The first word means a young donkey and a male donkey. This is the first one.

The second one is the word that's used for a female donkey. It's mules that are a cross between a donkey and a horse and you get a mule and they don't reproduce. We're not talking about mules, we're talking about donkeys.

They reproduce. You may remember the description of Esau earlier in Genesis. What did it say? He was a wild ass of a man and that wasn't designed to be derogatory as it might sound today.

A wild donkey of a man. The donkey was a picture of strength. They can bear incredible burdens.

Some of you have seen, I've got a stereopticon viewer from back in 1915 or so and I have a set of cards for that that are from World War I. And amidst all the different scenes of battle and destruction and so forth, there are all these different pictures. One of them shows a small artillery piece which was packed and put on the backs of donkeys. And they used donkeys to take these through the mountain passes that were too rugged to traverse with the vehicles of that day.

You remember automobiles and trucks and things were still in their very infancy. And so to get through, and roads and things, improvements for roads, especially over in Europe, were virtually non-existent. And an artillery piece is heavy and the ammunition for an artillery piece is heavy.

I've got a lamp made of one up there that weighs about 25 pounds and it's an empty

shell with the explosive removed. And I did check to make sure the explosive was removed. But they packed this on the back of a donkey.

They're very strong. They can climb with their own weight and all of this artillery stuff packed on their back over the passes. When it says Esau was a wild donkey of a man, he was incredibly physically powerful.

But all of that physical strength and that hale and hearty outdoorsman stuff stood him in no good stead. It was no help when it came time to receive the heritage and the blessing from God. He's on the outside.

His younger, wimpy brother Jacob is on the inside. Of course we find out that he's not all that wimpy when he single-handedly pulls the stone off the shell for Rachel that ordinarily took three or four shepherds to remove. But the donkey here that Judah is pictured as owning is a picture of wealth, prosperity, strength.

And the vine to which he tethers it means that the environment in which he has that donkey is lush and prosperous. Donkeys, by the way, also are a picture of being a beast of God. They were a beast of burden.

By the way, Balaam was pretty well off. He charged money for his prophecies and he's riding the donkey when the angel of God appears in the way and stops him those three times and he winds up beating the donkey. And then the donkey speaks and says, why are you beating me? It's one of the same words that's used here.

And Balaam was well off and he could travel on a donkey. But they were a beast of burden. They were in use from earliest days.

We've already seen in Genesis that Abraham owned these. There was a prohibition in Deuteronomy that at first seems a bit of a puzzle. In Deuteronomy 22.10, Israelites were prohibited from yoking an ox and a donkey together to plow.

Do not yoke your plow unequally to an ox and a donkey. You think, well, if you've just got one of each and it's tough ground, what's the problem with yoking an ox and a donkey together? Well, physically there's not a big problem. Donkeys are strong.

You can put two donkeys on a plow. You can put two oxes on a plow, but you can't mix them. Why? Well, it's not a matter of practical truth.

It's a matter of symbolic truth and not mixing things, keeping things pure. This is an object lesson. God built things into the daily life of Israel to remind them.

This is what we're trying to do for ourselves, isn't it? We want to remember who we are and why we're here. Well, God, in the law, gave these object lessons. Here a young man, 9, 10, 11 years old, goes out.

His father says, well, we've got to plow today there, Joab. Why don't you go out and hitch up the animals? Well, he goes out and finds that one of the oxen has foundered and has a sore foot and can't pull the plow. So he says, well, I'll just go get the donkey.

I'll hook the donkey up with our other ox and we'll be able to plow today. He goes out there and starts to hook it up. His father comes out and says, Joab, Joab, you've got to stop.

That's written in the law of Moses that we don't yoke these animals together. Joab says, well, why? The other one's foundered. He gives his father the opportunity to explain we are to be unmixed.

We are to be pure. We are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. There is a responsibility as the people of God to keep ourselves pure.

This is the same reason we don't use leavened bread for the Passover. It was a great teaching opportunity, a chance to remember in daily life. We have the opportunity to remind ourselves of who we are and why we're here.

And it can be simple things. You might chuckle at this, but when you put a refrigerator magnet on your refrigerator and it's got a verse on it, do we stop and read those? You know, we have these little round tuits and all these other things we stick. We have pictures and things we put on our refrigerator.

But do we put things in our path to remind us of who we are and why we're here? There are some great screen savers that put verses of Scripture up on your computer. A lot of us that deal with computers all the time. It's a great thing if you stop and read it.

If you remember, oh yes. Think about that Scripture. Just take 15 seconds out of the day and be reminded.

Now what am I doing? What's my attitude? Am I operating as under the Lord and not under men? Am I doing what I do heartily with the right motivation? Have I kept short accounts and acknowledged my errors and my sins and my failures before the Lord? God did that for Israel in the law. And the donkey, even as it is a symbol of prosperity, is also a reminder to be pure, to not mix unequal things. Don't leaven the bread with the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, as we've seen in our Luke study.

This donkey is also a sign of royalty. And you remember from, I think it's Zechariah 9, where there is the prediction that the Messiah is going to come in riding on the foal of an ass. I think I wrote that Scripture down somewhere, but I'm pulling it out from memory.

If I'm wrong, you can use a concordance and find it. But then you have the foreshadowed fulfillment of that when Jesus goes in on what has been called the triumphal entry, but what we know as the tragic entry, where Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass

that had never been ridden before. Palm branches and clothing are put down.

Hosanna. But when Jesus gets to Jerusalem, it is a hollow and empty trip, because He gets to the temple, He looks around, and He leaves. The things that He was expecting to find are not there, symbolized in the fig tree.

He goes to the fig tree looking for fruit, and it isn't there, and it should be. But it wasn't the season for figs. He curses the fig tree, and it withers.

The nation of Israel should have been ready for the Messiah and was not, because in their development, it wasn't the season for figs. It should have been, but it wasn't. So they missed the gospel of the kingdom that John the Baptist inaugurated and that Jesus and His disciples preached throughout the land.

Because they missed it, what should have been a triumphal entry turns tragic. It will be a matter of days. It will be less than a week, and Jesus will be on the cross.

So that royal association in the ancient world riding in on the foal of an ass was a reminder that here is someone who subjugates. Here is someone who is wealthy enough to own these animals. And if you have a colt, by the way, if you have the foal of an ass, that means that you've got enough of them to breed and to have offspring.

And so once again, it speaks of wealth. It speaks of dominance. Oh, here it is.

It is Zechariah 9.9. You might turn over to Judges. There are a couple of passages that don't get much scrutiny. Judges 10.4, how did you signal to others the fact that you were in authority and that you had ruling power? Well, in the days of the judges, you have here Jair in verse 3 of Judges 10, a Gileadite.

He judged Israel 22 years. He had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys. They also had 30 towns, which are called Havot Jair to this day, which are in the land of Gilead.

Then Jair died and was buried in Khamon. What's Jair's claim to fame? 30 sons, 30 donkeys, 30 towns. One son for each town.

His sons are the governors. His sons are the dispersed authority through the land in this period. And each of them rides a donkey.

It's a symbol of their authority, a symbol of their ruling power. Turn the page to chapter 12 of Judges and take a look at Abdon in verse 14 of chapter 12. After Abdon, he has 30 sons in verse 9, gave away 30 daughters in marriage, brought in 30 daughters from elsewhere for his sons.

He judged Israel 7 years. Abdon died, was buried at Bethlehem. After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel, judged Israel 10 years.

Elon died, was buried at Ejilon in the country of Zebulun. Remember Ejilon, that's where the sun stood still for Joshua. After him, Abdon, the son of Hillel, the Pirithonite, judged Israel.

Pirithon is a town or a region. He had 40 sons and 30 grandsons who rode on 70 young donkeys. He judged Israel 8 years.

Then Abdon, the son of Hillel, the Pirithonite, died and was buried in Pirithon in the land of Ephraim in the mountains of the Amalekites. I wish we had time to delve into what all of this means. There's not a wasted word in scripture and there are some fascinating lessons to be derived.

I'd just tantalize you with that and tell you I'm not going to tell you now because we don't have time. But once again, donkeys, symbol of wealth, prosperity, ruling authority, royalty in many ways. This is what is associated with Judah in these two lines.

Binding his donkey to the vine, his donkey's colt to the choice vine. The vine itself and vineyards were associated with opulence, particularly millennial opulence. You can go to Isaiah 61, verses 5-7.

Just as an example, one from many passages we could use to document this. You may be able to think of others. You shall be named the priests of the Lord.

Let me go back a bit. In verse 4, 61-4 of Isaiah, they shall rebuild the old ruins. They shall raise up the former desolations.

They shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks. And the sons of the foreigners shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.

That was the passage I alluded to earlier. Where are these strangers and sons of the foreigner that are going to be the plowmen and the vinedressers? Well, surprise, that's us. It's going to come from the ranks of the church.

But you shall be named the priests of the Lord. They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles.

And in their glory you shall boast. Who is the glory of the church? Who is the head of all things to the church? It's the Lord Jesus Christ, ultimately. Israel is going to glory in the one who was first gloried in by these sons of the foreigner.

And it's the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of shame, you shall have double honor. Instead of confusion, they shall rejoice in their portion.

Therefore, in their land, they shall possess double. Everlasting joy shall be theirs. And that, of course, is a picture of the Millennial Kingdom.

But notice you've got the vinedressers there. They're going to have their vineyards as a sign of great prosperity and blessing in the Millennial Kingdom. You find the same thing if you turn a few pages over to Isaiah 65, verse 21 and following.

This is another fascinating passage. We'll be revisiting these when we study the Millennium here in the not-too-distant future. Look at verse 20.

No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days. For the child shall die at one hundred years old, but the sinner, being one hundred years old, shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them.

They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat.

For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of my people. And my elect shall long enjoy the works of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble.

For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. This is a Millennial passage. It's fascinating.

There's going to be childbirth. The lifespan is going to be like it was before the flood, where even at a hundred, a man who dies at the age of a hundred will be considered to have died in his youth, to have died as a virtual child. People's lifespan will be like those of the trees.

You know, the treaty oak over here that the guy poisoned nearly, I think, I don't remember if they saved it or not, but things hundreds of years old. So vineyards, once again associated. You might also write down Zechariah chapter 3 and verse 10.

We don't have time to go there, but what you might look at is Isaiah chapter 7, verse 21 through 25, because here we have the vine associated with something else that's in our Judah passage. Isaiah 7, 21. It shall be in that day that a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep.

This, by the way, is the day of judgment. This is a disciplined passage for Israel, where their hair of their legs is going to be shaved, their heads and beards will be shaved off and so forth. If you look at the preceding, they're going to have desolate valleys and thorns in all their pastures.

In that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep. So it shall be from the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds. For curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the land.

It will happen in that day that wherever there could be a thousand vines worth a

thousand shekels of silver, it will be for briars and thorns. With arrows and bows men will come there because all the land will become briars and thorns. So this is the opposite side of the coin.

A picture of loss of prosperity, loss of blessing, is that you have just enough milk to make cottage cheese and live off of that and honey. Things that you scrape, you go out and try to find something natural because you can't grow anything. Your ground is cursed and doesn't bring forth vines anymore.

No more grapes, no more wine, instead you're living off cottage cheese and honey because of the discipline from God. Loss of prosperity because of apathy, indifference, distraction, all of the things that plagued Israel throughout their history. So, back in Genesis chapter 49, this is an opportunity and a potential, but there is responsibility with it.

What happens if Judah doesn't do what he's supposed to, if he doesn't pay attention? He can lose the donkeys, he can lose the vines. He washes his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes. Back before they had those purple worms that they crushed to make purple in the time of the Greeks, how did they make the purple robes of royalty? They dyed them with grape juice.

These are his royal robes. But even as you see the excess and the abundance, you see that he's washing in clothes. The wine is like wash water and he's got the royal robes that are dyed purple from the grape juice.

But at the same time, there is this sort of undercurrent. This is sort of wasteful. It sounds like he's just using the prosperity that God has given him like wash water, washing his clothes in the blood of grapes and squandering.

You think, couldn't this be put to better use? Isn't this wasteful to just tie your donkey to the vine and wash your clothes in the grapes? What do you do with the prosperity, with the opportunities that God gives? That's the question we ask ourselves. We have prosperity in many areas. We have opportunity in many areas.

Do we treat those wonderful grapes of blessing like wash water? Do we just allow the donkeys to eat them because we take it for granted? Isn't this a great picture of just taking things for granted? It also, on the positive side again, foreshadows the Lord Jesus Christ, His robes stained with blood, both in His own sacrifice and the blood of the new covenant in His blood, and also in the future, echoing forward to when He will have the blood running as high as the horse's bridles, the blood of judgment. All again a part of dominance and royal function. But then verse 12, this is where we really have to dig a little bit.

His eyes are darker than wine and His teeth whiter than milk. The word here that says

dark is only found twice in the whole Old Testament. We have a hapoxlegomena, which means it's only used once.

Well, this is used twice. It's a very obscure word. You can hardly even find cognates in the Syrian or the Arabic or anything.

But the other place where it's used, and this is very telling, is over in Proverbs chapter 23. So thus we find that our scripture reading this morning was more than coincidental. Proverbs 23, and we find this word in verse 29.

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Have you ever run into people who seem to have disaster after disaster befall them, and I don't know why these things happen to me. I don't understand it. But you can look from your lofty seat of objectivity and say, I know exactly why these things are happening to you.

Can't you see that it's the pattern of your bad decisions? It's your wrong priorities. It's your pursuit of selfish goals, your ignorance and apathy toward God and the things of God, and He is trying to turn you. And you say, why are these things happening to me? Who is it that has these things? Who has redness of eyes? The word translated redness there is the same word we have in Judah's oracle.

Dark or red, they're not real sure which way to translate this, so they split the difference. They translate it red in Proverbs and dark in Genesis. But what kind of eyes are these? If we say Judah's eyes are dark with wine, what does that mean? Are they red with wine? Are they dark with wine? What does it mean? Well, keep reading in Proverbs 23, verse 30.

Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine, do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and swirls around smoothly. Occupation with the pleasures and the prosperities of this life to superfluity, to excess, to the point of drunkenness, inebriation. Your eyes being red with wine is not necessarily a good thing.

He has become full of these prosperities, full of this dominance and blessing that God has given, and it has become a distraction. So even as it sounds like a picture of health and virility and it's been thought to be a picture of David, when the Scripture describes David in 1 Samuel 16, it says that he was a ready youth. It also says he had bright eyes.

He's exceptional in the tribe of Judah and instead of having eyes that are dull or dark or red with wine, it specifically says in 1 Samuel 16.12 that David had bright eyes. And why is it that he is favored and is the friend of God? He's exceptional in this regard. He's a member of the tribe of Judah, but his eyes are not red with wine.

Why does he excel above his older brothers? Why is he the anointed one? Among other

things, it's his eyes. So this brings us to our next subject then. Well, what does it mean to have your eyes clouded? Well, eyes are a picture of our judgment, our perceptive ability, our ability to discern.

You find this throughout the Scriptures. Look at Deuteronomy 28, verse 54. Deuteronomy 28, verse 54.

The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemies shall distress you at the gates. The tender and delicate woman who would not venture out among you to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness will refuse to the husband of her bosom and to the son and her daughter, and so forth. This is a picture of great judgment.

It's a real gory picture here. But when it says that he will refuse, will be hostile, the Hebrew there says he will have an evil eye toward. In his judgment, they're not going to be worth giving anything.

He's going to hoard it for himself. And in his judgment, he's not going to give it to them. You have in 1 Samuel 24 and verse 10, 1 Samuel 24, 10, David is talking to Saul.

Why do you listen to the words of men who say, indeed, David seeks your harm? Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave. Someone urged me to kill you, but my eye spared you. And I said, I will not stretch out my hand against my Lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.

My eye spared you. Your eyes have seen. This is perception and judgment.

What conclusion should you draw? Objectivity would indicate that what people have been telling you, Saul, about David is wrong. He does not seek your life. He had the opportunity to kill you and didn't.

Can't you perceive? Can't you judge? Can't you see with your eye the way things really are? What's going to happen if your eye becomes clouded and dark with wine? You have your prosperity and you want to hang on to it. You have your situation. You have your circumstances.

You want to protect it. You want to keep the status quo in certain areas. It's going to cloud.

It's going to darken our eye. The very things God has given us as abundance and prosperity can be our downfall if we are not willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Christ. He left behind all of his divine rights in heaven when he came to

earth and took on the form of a servant.

We're going to see in Luke 9, Jesus speak these very words. If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. We have to be willing, even as we enjoy the things that God has given us, to not become more occupied with the gift than the giver, to not become more occupied with enjoying our circumstances than to be willing to recognize that our circumstances are here to help us grow.

Sometimes they need to be difficult. They need to challenge us. They need to give us resistance to push against so that we can build our faith muscles.

If we become satiated and our eye becomes darkened with wine, and this is what is going to happen in the later history of Judah. Who are the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah? They're the sons of David. What happens to Israel under their rulership? Five cycles of discipline, conquest, deportation, ravaging of the land, destruction and sacking of the cities, because they became full of the things that God gave them with this ruling authority.

It's a great opportunity and a great privilege, but with it comes responsibility. We have great opportunity. We have great privileges.

We have the privilege of walking before God and representing ourselves before His throne. No intermediaries, no priests. We don't pray to Jesus.

We pray to God the Father. Why? Because Jesus Christ is the way to the Father. No man comes to the Father but by Him.

But by Him we come. Hebrews 10. We approach God the Father's throne and represent ourselves because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Do we take that for granted? Do we abuse it? Do we neglect it? Are we so caught up in the affairs of this life that we can't see the spiritual realities? Has our eye become dark with wine? It can make our eyes handsome. It can be a sign of great prosperity. But if it is to excess, it's going to cloud our judgment, cloud our vision.

Take a look at Ezekiel 5 and verse 11 for another picture. Ezekiel 5 and verse 11. Therefore, as I live, says the Lord God, surely because you have defiled my sanctuary with all of your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I also will diminish you.

My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. If we don't discern with our eye, it's going to be the eye of God that is going to discern for us. If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

But if our eye is clouded, we lose our objectivity, we lose our sense of direction, our

sense of who we are and why we're here, then God will discern with His eye. My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. If you want to do a great study for yourself, if you have some time for meditation on the Word of God this week, just get a concordance and look up the word eye, especially if you have a Strong's where it gives you the phrases.

Just look at what the eye represents in Scripture. I could give you dozens of passages, but it's a very fruitful study to see the eye that spares or the eye that does not have pity, talking about discernment and judgment. We can either do it ourselves or God will do it for us.

The second phrase in Genesis chapter 49 has to do with the teeth. His teeth whiter than milk. And you think, wow, sign of health, good calcium intake there.

And teeth are a picture of strength. And strength is a good thing, isn't it? Isn't it great to be healthy, have strong white teeth? The tooth being broken out was a sign of great injury. If you remember in the law, to have your tooth knocked out as a slave, you were set free.

The law of Israel says in Exodus 21, 23 through 27, don't have time to turn there, but a slave, if his tooth got knocked out, the law said set him free. What does that mean? Your teeth are worth the price of a slave. We've got Dan here, he takes care of those teeth and keeps them strong and keeps them functional because you can go through enormous suffering if your teeth are bad or you've got problems with your teeth.

But if a slave got his tooth knocked out, a little handle on a windlass or something came back and bashed him in the face and knocked out his tooth, law of Moses, law of Israel, he's free. He's a free man. Sign of strength, we have the teeth at Nash, the threat, you find this in Lamentations 2.16, you find it in Job 16.9, you find it in Psalm 35.16. Once again, you can use your own concordance, there's not a lot of entries for teeth, look them up.

Strength, the gnashing of teeth as an attack of the wicked against the righteous. Their teeth are bows and arrows, David says, in one place. It's a picture of strength.

But it's also a picture of beauty. In the Song of Solomon, chapter 4, verse 2 and 6, verse 6, talks about teeth being white like sheep and so forth. Strength can be a good thing, but strength can also bring you down.

Fed with milk, we know that the milk, the land flowing with milk and honey, the law of Moses is replete, I will bring you to a land flowing with milk and honey, this land will make you strong. You have the opportunity to grow and be strong and be handsome and have these white teeth. All these teeth whiteners they have out now, it's a picture of beauty and strength and health.

But, is your strength going to be your downfall? You think about Samson, his strength wasn't in his teeth, it was in his hair, but the same principle applies. Your strength can be a pitfall. Judah is going to be blessed with many things, many opportunities, many strengths, but there's also the potential for failure.

And that's what we need to think about in our lives. We've been given many things. We have access to great, fruitful teaching of the Word of God.

What are we going to do with it? Are we going to listen to it and have it pass over us like water over a duck? Are we going to meditate? Are we going to exploit the opportunities that the Lord Jesus Christ has given us? Judah, as a tribe, has some of the greatest successes, including the production of the Messiah, but they also have some of the greatest failures recorded in the Old Testament. From those to whom much is given, much is required. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of studying your Word. We thank you for all the privileges that you have given us in Christ. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these on our hearts and minds, that we will remember who we are and why we're here, and what your measure is of spiritual growth, spiritual fruitfulness, and spiritual production.

We ask these things in Jesus' name and for His glory. Amen.