

## THE LION OF JUDAH

Presented by

**Tyler Mullins**

Have you ever been to a zoo in a large city? If you have, you probably saw some truly amazing animals. For example, maybe you walked up to the fenced enclosure around the giraffes—and then cocked your head backwards so your eyes could try to focus on the head of the giant animal standing in front of you that was **16 to 18 feet tall**. Or, perhaps you walked to another section of the zoo and stood in awe as you looked at the largest land-living animal in the world—a male African bush elephant that weighed **more than eight tons!** Or, maybe you stood on a bridge and looked in the water beneath you at the second-largest land-living animal in the world—a monstrous hippopotamus that weighed in at **two tons**.

But size is not always the thing that amazes us the most, is it? My guess is that if you are like most people, the animal that **really** impressed you was not a giraffe, an elephant, or a hippopotamus. I have a strong suspicion that it was an animal that was much smaller—yet one that you considered much more dangerous and vicious. So tell me: what was your reaction when you turned a corner at the zoo and unexpectedly found yourself staring face to face with **an adult male lion** with a full mane, inch-long teeth, and claws as sharp as razor blades? At that particular moment in time, you probably didn't care how much the lion weighed, did you? The only thing that ran through your mind was...**how fast can he run** (and how fast could **you** run!)?

Across the centuries, people have always feared lions. Today, of course, we can stand safely behind an iron fence and watch a lion as it paces within its cage or enclosure. But that was not the case during Bible times when lions were not found in zoos, but instead freely roamed the countryside. This, of course, meant that people had to always be on the lookout for lions. After all, lions are carnivores that are well known for the speed, ferocity, and finality of their attacks. A **hungry** lion is not a **happy** lion!

In fact, we learn from 1 Samuel 17:34-36 that David, as a young shepherd, spent much of his time protecting his sheep from lions. Later, when David became king of Israel, he selected as one of his army captains a brave man by the name of Benaiah who, according to 2 Samuel 23:20, had “gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day.”

But if a lion is hungry or angry, it can just as likely attack a human as an animal—as we learn from what happened to one well-known Bible character who was on the way to ask a lady to marry him. As he traveled, a lion suddenly jumped out to attack him. You probably remember the man's name—and how the story ended. His name was Samson—and according to Judges 14:5-6, he “tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand.” Of course, the first part of verse 6 tells us **why** Samson was able to accomplish such an unusual and amazing feat when it says that “the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.”

Other Bible characters were not so fortunate. We learn from 1 Kings 13:23-26 that when an unnamed prophet disobeyed God, he ended up being slain by a lion as he returned home. It is no wonder, then, that the lion became a symbol of fierce, sudden, deadly attacks. In fact, perhaps it was the lion's well-earned reputation that caused the apostle Peter to compare Satan to a lion when he told his fellow Christians in Asia Minor to be on guard for their spiritual welfare because "the devil walks about **like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour**" (1 Peter 5:8). This vivid word picture was intended to get across to Christians the idea that Satan is angry, strong, and dangerous—and must be avoided at all times by those who value their spiritual lives.

However, along with the lion's reputation for being fierce also comes a reputation for being **strong**. In Genesis 49, when Jacob prophesied about the futures of his twelve sons, he described one son, Judah, as a lion's cub who would grow up to establish a mighty kingdom (Genesis 49:9-10). This prophecy was fulfilled, in part, when the Southern Kingdom of Judah ended up being spared by God, while the Northern Kingdom of Israel was carried away into captivity and never heard from again.

As Blake ended his sermon, "When Our Heroes Disappoint Us," he made the point that there is one hero who **never** will disappoint us—Jesus Christ. Hebrews 7:14 tells us that Jesus was born into the tribe of Judah. Many years earlier, the prophet Daniel had uttered a prophecy regarding the fact that "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed...but shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, **and shall stand forever**" (Daniel 2:44). Toward the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry He told His followers about the permanency and power of that kingdom when He said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

Eventually, Christ went to the cross to save us from our sins, died, and was raised to reign forever at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19). In winning that great victory, Christ earned a name of honor that never was given to anyone else—a name that serves as the title of my sermon. In Revelation 5:5 Christ is called "**the Lion of Judah**." Only someone with such strength and power—Jesus Christ, the Son of God—could promise Christians that He would give them an eternal home in heaven, **and then make good on that promise**. The mighty Lion of Judah established a kingdom "that shall stand forever"—and in doing so, became the Savior of the world!

It is only through Christ's blood that we are made pure and clean so we can come before the Great "I AM." Paul told the Christians in Ephesus, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). At Christ's death, the veil of the temple was torn in two, indicating that, as Christians, we now have free and permanent access to our heavenly Father. The "Lion of Judah" is the only One Who can lead us through the Holy of Holies so we can approach our great God. As Paul told Timothy, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). This is why Jesus Himself said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Jesus—the Son of God—came to Earth in the form of a man to teach us, to die for us, to be raised for us, and to save us from the punishment that we should have suffered because of our sins. It is because Christ alone had the **power** to do all of those things that He is known affectionately in Scripture as “**the Lion of Judah**.” The apostle Peter, in his forceful sermon on the Day of Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection, told everyone within the sound of his voice, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Jesus—the Lion of Judah—is the true Messiah and the Savior of the world!

Without Christ—our real hero—we never could be called “children of God.” But because of Christ and the sacrifice He made on our behalf, we have a Father—the “Father to the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5)—Who loves us and protects us. Before Christ came, God spoke to His people through prophets and other methods, and the High Priest was the one who prayed for the atonement of the people’s sins. Now, however, according to Hebrews 4, Christ is our High Priest, and we can pray directly to God through Him.

With God and Christ as our refuge, each of us can say to Satan, “**Leave me alone!**” James 4:7 says that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. **Flee from us?** Why would **Satan** flee from **us**? It is because he is scared of that **bigger, stronger “Lion of Judah”** Who is fighting for us, and Who alone has the strength to “destroy him who has the power of death—the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

The Bible refers to Christ by many different titles, such as King of kings and Lord of lords, Prince of Peace, the Great and Good Shepherd, Immanuel (which means “God with us”), the Living Word, the Redeemer, and the Author and Finisher of our faith. But He also is known as **the Lion of Judah**. So, the next time Satan tries to beat you with temptation, remember that the Lion of Judah is strong enough and fierce enough to fight your battles for you. As God’s children, we are **never** alone. He Himself said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). If we will turn to our real hero—the Lion of Judah—He not only will protect us, but also will one day lead us safely home to God.