

LIONS

The lion is commonly referred to as “the king of beasts.” Certainly lions are majestic creatures, and more than a little frightening. I remember being at a zoo one time looking at the big cats. I was inside, and there was a glass barrier, probably four inches thick, separating me from a huge male lion. He opened his mouth, and out came a tremendously loud ROAR! I think every hair on my head stood straight up. Glass barrier or no, I promptly left the area!

In Scripture, both Jesus and Satan are referred to as lions. How can this be? Think about it – some of the characteristics of lions apply to both Jesus and Satan. Those qualities can be used for good or for evil. We’ll see some of these as we go along.

In Genesis 49:9-10, Jacob pronounced this blessing upon his son, Judah: “Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him shall be the obedience of the people.” This prophetic blessing indicated that the tribe of Judah would be the kingly tribe in Israel. And, indeed, it was! Though Israel’s first king (Saul) was of the tribe of Benjamin, his successor, David, was of Judah. After David came a long dynasty consisting of 20 more kings (and one queen usurper). David’s son, Solomon, sat upon “a great throne of ivory, overlaid w/ pure gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round at the back, and there were armrests on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the armrests. Twelve lions stood there, one on each side of the six steps; nothing like this had been made for any other kingdom” (1 Kings 10:18-20). Obviously, lions were closely associated with royalty.

In Revelation 5:5 Jesus is called “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.” In the very next verse, he is seen as a Lamb “as though it had been slain.”

So the Lamb of God who gave Himself in sacrifice for us is also now our king! Later, in Revelation 19:11-16 Jesus is described as follows: “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns (these are diadems, royal crowns). He has a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.”

So, Jesus, our King, is portrayed in Scripture as a lion. He is fierce, strong, and conquering. But Satan is also portrayed as a lion! Peter warns: “Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Yes, Satan is a formidable enemy. We ought not to dismiss him as insignificant. Paul refers to him as ‘the god of this age,’ not meaning that Satan is the Creator or that he is equivalent to the one true God. Rather, he is the god (small g) of this age inasmuch as multitudes of people are following him, submitting to his rule.

Bottom line, we have two lions. One is also a Lamb who gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He is a warrior King who rules in righteousness and conquers evil. The other lion is a fierce predator who seeks to devour us. Eventually he will be destroyed in the lake of fire that is prepared for him and his servants, but in his wake he leaves a trail of destruction.

The good news is, “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4)