

Nov 26, 2016

**Numbers 24:17**

*Baby Jesus Foretold: The King Foretold*

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**Numbers 24:17 (ESV)**

*I see him, but not now;*

*I behold him, but not near:*

*a star shall come out of Jacob,*

*and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;*

*it shall crush the forehead of Moab*

*and break down all the sons of Sheth.*

**Website:** In Numbers 24:17, Balam prophecies to the king of Moab that “in the latter days” (v. 14), a king will come who will fight against the enemies of God. Balam gives two signs, that of the star, and that of the scepter. In his third oracle, in Numbers 24:9, Balam links the scepter with the sign of the lion. These two signs, that of the star and the lion, tell us Jesus is a king who both brings hope and wages war, achieving victory for his people. How will you respond to King Jesus? Will you receive the hope and bend the knee, or will you reject him? This Christmas, I invite you to receive the light and the lion of Christmas, King Jesus. Listen to to the sermon audio, review the slides, or download the sermon outline. Merry Christmas!

#BabyJesusForetold

\*See sermon slides on website (S1-21).

**(S1) Introduction:**

1. How many of you started listening to Christmas music early or have already put out your decorations?
2. How many of you thought Christmas came too early and changed the radio station when XMas came on?
3. **(S2)** This is a picture of our household two days after Halloween this year.
4. When I posted a picture this picture on social media, I caused quite the stir.
5. Some thought our lights were a crime and others loved that we had decorated so early.
6. Those who don't like early decorations feel like Christmas comes too early (what about Thanksgiving?!).
7. But those who love them feel like Christmas can't come early enough (Holidays go too fast!).
8. One thing is true for all of us—the sign of Christmas provokes a response in each of our hearts.
9. In our series, *Baby Jesus Foretold*, we're going to look for early **signs of Christmas** in the OT.
10. More specifically, we're going to look at prophecies that foretell the birth of Jesus Christ.
11. How will your heart respond to these signs of Christmas?
12. I hope they won't cause you to reject Jesus but help you to pause and worship.

A. This week's Christmas signs appears in Balam's oracles (poetic prophecy) in Numbers 22-24.

1. **(S3-The Exodus)** After the Israelites left Egypt they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.
2. As they neared the promised land, they fought several foreign kings (Numers 21).
3. Balak, the king of Moab, calls a foreign prophet named Balam to curse Israel (22:1-6).
4. But instead of cursing them, Balam blesses them four times (23:7-10, 18-24, 24:3-9, 15-24).
5. In the first two he blesses the people and in the second two he describes a different type of blessing.
6. Balam prophecies that a *king* will come "in the latter days" (v. 14) who will defeat Moab.

**(S4) Numbers 24:17** I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. (ESV)<sup>1</sup>

(Moab here symbolizes any enemy of God's people—anyone who rejects God.)

(A special king will come *in time and place* who will fight for God's people.)

(Two signs tell how he will come, a star speaks of hope and a lion of victory.)

I. **(S5) Star.** The king will bring hope to his people. (*a star shall come out of Jacob*)

A. The king brings hope to the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

1. This summer we studied the book of Genesis and a man named Abraham.
2. God promised to bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse him (Gen 12:1-3).
3. God blesses Israel because he plans to use Abraham's family to bless "all peoples on earth."
4. In Genesis 15, God promises to multiply his descendants beyond number using an analogy.
5. **(S6) Genesis 15:5.** And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (ESV)
6. Abraham is going to have a great multitude of "offspring", many-many stars.
7. As the Israelites wandered the wilderness, the stars would give them hope (Gen 22:17, 26:4)
8. However, Balam talks about a single star; the word "offspring" in Gen 15:5 is singular.
9. It's through a single star that Abraham's family will become a great multitude of stars.

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<sup>1</sup> A special thank you to Terry Iles for connecting for me many of these OT/NT verses and themes.

- B. Jesus is the king/star who brings hope to Abraham's family.
1. In the first verses of the NT, we read Jesus is the descendent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
  2. **(S7) Matthew 1:1–2** The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, (ESV)
  3. But that's not enough, remember Balam emphasized the sign of the star!
  4. **(S8) Matthew 2:1-2** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (ESV)
  5. **(S9) Revelation 22:16** "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." (ESV)
  6. "The morning star is Venus, herald of the dawn" (IVP-NT Background)
  7. God uses a single star, Jesus Christ, to multiply Abraham's offspring "as the stars of heaven."
  8. Any who know Christ become the spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gal 3:29, Rom 4:16)
  9. If you put your faith in Jesus, you join Jesus as one of the stars in Abraham's sky.

- C. **(S10)** Did any of you see the supermoon earlier this month?
1. A supermoon is when the moon is both at its fullest and at its closest orbit to the earth.
  2. A bright moon lights up the sky so that we can walk around and see things normally hidden.
  3. Jesus came to bring light into this world, to forgive our sins, and to push back our despair.
  4. The Holidays are actually a very difficult time for many; Jesus can shine in your darkness.
  5. I missed the supermoon earlier this month, don't miss the light Jesus offers.
  6. When you're a child, and you're afraid, you call out to your parents in the night.
  7. Call out to God the Father to light up your Holidays with the joy of Jesus.
  8. George Bailey in *It's A Wonderful Life* says, You want the moon, Mary? I'll lasso you the moon.

(Star. The king will bring hope to his people.)

(Jesus is the king who brings hope to Abraham's family.)

## II. **(S11) Lion.** The king will bring victory to his people. (*a scepter shall rise out of Israel*)

- A. The king will rise up to defeat his enemies.
1. Scepters were symbols of a king's power and authority—the biggest, fanciest, club.
  2. Just a few verses earlier, Balam gives another royal sign, that of a lion (3rd oracle).
  3. **(S12) Numbers 24:9** He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." (ESV)
  4. At the end of Genesis, Jacob blessed his twelve sons who become the twelve tribes of Israel.
  5. He gave Judah a special royal blessing, saying an eternal king will come from him.
  6. **(S13) Genesis 49:9–10** Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (ESV)
  7. Balam is warning the king of Moab that a king is coming who will defeat him.
- B. Jesus is the king who defeats the enemies of God.
1. I want to go back to the start of Matthew so we can see Jesus' connection to Judah.

2. **(S14) Matthew 1:1–2** The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. (ESV) - David was called a man after God’s own heart (famous king).
3. God promised king David one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever (2 Sam 7:16)
4. What are we told about Jesus in the book of Revelation, he is a lion and a descendent of David.
5. **(S15) Revelation 5:5** And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” (ESV) - This lion will conquer!

- C. **(S16)** The most contact you’ve probably had with a lion is looking at them through zoo glass.
1. You probably looked at it for a while, watched it bathe in the sun, or watched it eat, then left.
  2. How would you feel if the glass disappeared? Would you linger, be more careful?
  3. Would you notice its huge jaws, sharp claws, and how it tears at its food?
  4. Lions are known as “apex predators”—they’re the top of the food chain.
  5. They kill zebras, giraffes, buffalos, wild hogs, even rhinos and elephants.<sup>2</sup>
  6. Balam is warning the king of Moab that the king of Israel is an Apex Predator.
  7. How will you respond to the Apex King? The glass is gone, will you run or worship?
  8. For those who trust Jesus, he is no longer the Apex Predator, but the Apex Protector.
  9. If a snake entered your side of the glass, you'd want the lion on your side.

(Lion. The king will bring victory to his people.)

(Jesus is the king who defeats the enemies of God.)

### III. **(S17)** King Jesus is the light and lion of Christmas. (*it shall crush the forehead of Moab*)

- A. Baby Jesus brings both hope to his people and victory over his enemies.
1. Balam tells the king of Moab that the coming king will crush the head of Moab.
  2. That’s a pretty graphic picture, but it’s a very specific recall to the Genesis chapter 3.
  3. **(S18) Genesis 3:15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (NIV®)
  4. The “proto-euangelion” (first gospel) says one of Eve’s descendants will defeat Satan, the snake.
  5. I love Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of The Christ* when Jesus stomps on the head of a snake.
  6. At the end of Revelation we actually get a picture of what Jesus did at the cross.
  7. **(S19) Rev 20:2-3a** He (an angel) seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.<sup>3</sup>
  8. **Big Idea:** *King Jesus is the light and lion of Christmas.*
- B. **(S20)** *Who will you side with?* The with king Jesus, the lion, or the king of Moab, the serpent?
1. Jesus is a good king who invites you to come and worship him this Christmas.
  2. He came to fight for his people, to fight for you, but you have to trust him.
  3. If you don’t know him, I hope you’ll hear Balam’s warning and submit to Jesus.
  4. Don’t respond like Balak who “went his way” (v. 25)—instead, come to Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> Lion Fact Sheet by Defenders of Wildlife <https://www.defenders.org/lion/basic-facts> (accessed 2016.11.23).

<sup>3</sup> New International Version, 2011. (NIV®)

5. The gospel is that if you trust in Jesus you're changed from an enemy of God to his friend.
6. You shine like a star with Jesus in Abraham's sky, you live like a cub in the lion's pride.

**(S21)** (King Jesus is the light and lion of Christmas.)

Conclusion:

1. The Chronicles of Narnia, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, describes Jesus as a lion.
2. The youngest of the children, Lucy, asks a talking beaver about Aslan, the ruler of Narnia.

“Is— is he a man?” asked Lucy. “Aslan a man!” said Mr. Beaver sternly. “Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea. Don’t you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion— the Lion, the great Lion.” [...] “Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy. “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “[...] Who said anything about safe? ’Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good.”<sup>4</sup>

3. Jesus is the star who pushes back our sins and darkness.
4. He is the lion who fights and defeats the enemies of God.
5. My king isn't safe, but he is good.
6. *King Jesus is the light and lion of Christmas.*

**Preview: Isaiah 7:14** Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (NIV®)

**Benediction: Revelation 1:4b-5a** Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. (NIV®)

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis, C. S. (2013-11-05). *The Chronicles of Narnia Complete 7-Book Collection with Bonus Book*: Boxen. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.