

Prophecies from Balaam (Numbers 22:36-24:25)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Numbers

I. Introduction

- a. We are now in the last year or two of the 40 years (or 42 in the LXX; compare **Joshua 5:5-6**) that the Israelites would spend in the desert, before entering the Promised Land.
- b. The Israelites conquer the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, and take over their territory on the east side of the Jordan River. As a result, the other nations are filled with fear.
- c. This part of **Numbers** involves episodes in the life of Balaam, a prophet who is not Jewish.
 - i. Jesus, Peter and Jude all make mention of him, and assume that those they are addressing know this story. Important warnings are given to Christians based on things in the life of Balaam. (**Revelation 2:14, 2 Peter 2:15-16** and **Jude v.11**)
 - ii. As we discussed in the prior lesson, Balaam was someone who:
 1. When we first encounter him is *good* (seeks counsel from the Lord and will only follow that);
 2. However, then He turns *bad* in his heart on the road to Balak (where he encounters the Angel of the Lord and his donkey speaks to him);
 3. Then he *repents and becomes good again*, agreeing to say only what the Lord tells him to say (which he does throughout the text covered in this message, where he speaks four prophecies);
 4. Then finally, he becomes *very wicked* and leads the Moabite women to pull the Israelite men into idolatry and immorality. (**Numbers 25** and **Numbers 31:16**)
- d. Balak, a Moabite king, sends representatives to Mesopotamia to hire Balaam, a noted pagan *seer* (or prophet), to come and put a curse on Israel. Balaam is offered a great deal of money if he will assist in this mission.
 - i. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Balaam as he was on his way to meet with Balak.

- ii. During this encounter with the Angel of the Lord, God released the mouth of Balaam's donkey, who then was able to speak with Balaam.
- iii. The Angel of the Lord told Balaam he could proceed on his journey to meet with Balak, but warned:
 1. "...only the word I may speak to you, this you must be careful to speak." (**Numbers 22:35**)

II. Balaam's First and Second Prophecies

a. Balaam's first prophecy.

i. Read **Numbers 22:36-23:12**.

ii. Storyline:

1. Balaam arrives in the land of Moab and is met by king Balak.
2. Balaam instructs the king to have seven altars built, on which seven young bulls and seven rams are to be sacrificed.
3. Balaam inquired of the Lord, Who reveals Himself to Balaam.
4. The Spirit of God comes upon Balaam, and he utters the first of four prophecies.
 - a. Rather than curse the Israelites, he blesses them.
 - b. Balak is not pleased with Balaam blessing Israel and complains about that. However, Balaam replies, "Should I not be careful to speak only what the Lord may put into my mouth?"

b. Balaam's second prophecy.

i. Balak gives Balaam a 'second chance' to curse Israel, but the outcome is the same.

ii. Read **Numbers 23:13-26**.

1. Balaam enquires of the Lord, and the Lord "puts a word in his mouth". (**Numbers 23:15-16**)
2. Balaam then blesses Israel: "I shall bless and not reverse it. There shall be no trouble in Jacob, nor shall distress be seen in Israel, for the Lord his God is with him..." (**Numbers 23:20-21**)

iii. A few things to notice here.

1. First, notice that the word “*unicorn*” is used in this passage in the OSB translation I was reading from.
 - a. Today, when we hear the word “*unicorn*”, people generally think of mythical or imaginary creatures that look like horses or ponies with a single horn coming out of their foreheads.
 - b. However, the word simply refers to any creature that has one horn (instead of the more typical two horns). A practical example would be a *rhinoceros*.
 - i. We will see this term again, and it may take on greater significance. For now, we need to disassociate the term, when we see it in Scripture, from any mythical association.
 - c. **Side Comment:** A friend and Bible teacher who has a popular teaching website and newsletter, once provided his readers with quiz related to animals in the Bible. One of the questions referred to imaginary animals that were not in the Bible.
 - i. There, he included the ‘*unicorn*’.
 - ii. I wrote to him and explained that the unicorn indeed *is in the Bible*, in the LXX, and it is not an imaginary animal. In fact, it is a term that applies to the a well-known animal: the *rhino*!
 - d. Related to this “unicorn” or “one-horn” reference, there are several places in the Scriptures where it speaks of a “*horn*” having special significance.
 - i. There are places where someone blows a *horn* to sound a call to action or to get attention before making an important announcement. (**1 Kings 1:34**)
 - ii. Sometimes a *horn* is used in Scripture to carry special anointing oil. (**1 Samuel 16:13**)
 - iii. A *horn* can be used as a figure of speech to represent the strength or power of someone or something. (**Psalms 18:2**) In that regard, I think of the function of a horn on a *ram* (a male sheep or goat).

- iv. However some of the Biblical references to “horn” are more directly connected to Christ. For example:
1. “The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. “He will give strength to His king, And exalt the *horn of His anointed.*” (**1 Samuel 2:10**, NKJV)
 - a. In the LXX Greek, it says literally, “...the horn of His Christ”.
 2. “But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, and in My name *his horn* shall be exalted.” (**Psalm 89:24**, NKJV)
 - a. This psalm features prophecies about Christ, the promised son of David who would rule over the eternal kingdom.
 3. “There I will make *the horn of David* grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.” (**Psalm 132:17**, NKJV)
 - a. This psalm also speaks about the Christ, the Anointed One, the son of David.
 4. “And has raised up a *horn of salvation* for us In the house of His servant David...” (**Luke 1:69**, NKJV)
 - a. Here Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is giving a prophecy about Jesus, the Christ.
2. Second, notice that the *nation of Israel* is referred to in these first two prophecies as “they” (plural, as referring to multiple people), but in places also as “he” (singular, as if someone is addressing a single individual).
- a. The significance of this point will become more apparent as we move to the third and fourth prophecies of Balaam.

III. Balaam's Third and Fourth Prophecies

- a. Why this matters, to us.
 - i. Several early Christian writers saw in this third and fourth prophecy some rather fascinating prophecies about Jesus, given about 1400 years before His birth in Bethlehem.
 - ii. Eusebius, writing in the early 300s in his apologetic work *Proof of the Gospel*, starts off book 9 (on the incarnation of the Son of God, His birth and infancy) with a passage from these prophecies. He also discusses another of these prophecies, later in that short book.
- b. **Questions/Challenges:** As we read the text of these two prophecies, please consider the following questions:
 - i. Is there anything here that might be associated with the birth and infancy of Jesus (**Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2**)?
 - ii. Are there any other lines in these two prophecies that might be prophecies regarding other aspects of Jesus Christ? [*Hint: such as His resurrection from the dead.*]
 - iii. Are there any lines or phrases in these prophecies that remind you of another, similar but perhaps more famous prophecy given prior to this, also found in the writings of Moses? [*Hint: such as in **Genesis** or **Exodus.***]
- c. A question my wife Alison asked me recently.
 - i. My wife Alison asked me a very good question this week, one which helps illustrate the importance of prophecies such as the ones we will cover later in this message.
 - ii. Her question: "How can I best explain to someone who does not believe, why we believe all these things (especially in the midst of a culture that is going in a completely different direction)?"
 1. What *anchors me spiritually* that others around us do not see?
 2. How can I share my faith *without just resorting to some personal, subjective statement* that points to me (what I feel, personal experiences I have had, or what 'makes sense' to me)?
 3. How do I challenge the beliefs of others without coming across as narrow-minded, arrogant or judgmental?
 4. How can I do that clearly and simply? What is the best approach to take?

iii. My response:

1. What I believe has nothing to do with me and my personal experiences. It has to do with things that were established *long before I was born*. If I had never been born, these things would still be true.
 - a. Therefore, this has *nothing whatsoever* to do with my own subjective experience!
2. The foundation of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead on the third day. This was in fulfillment of prophecies written hundreds of years before he was born (including the one we are about to read), and also confirmed by eyewitnesses who went to their death defending what they saw. This is based on an historical event, backed up by evidence. Either it happened or it did not!
 - a. Jesus explained the basis for His authority on this, as He explained right after He cleared the temple in **John 2**.
 - i. “So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.” (**John 2:18-22**, NKJV)
 - b. Paul said the same thing in **1 Corinthians 15**.
 - i. Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-8**.
 - ii. Read **1 Corinthians 15:14-19**.
 - iii. Our entire faith hangs on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, in fulfillment of prophecies and seen by eyewitnesses.
 - iv. It happened, or it did not. It has nothing to do with my subjective experience or opinion, or the group I belong to.

- v. If Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, He is the Son of God just as the Scriptures say. He has ultimate authority in all matters. This changes everything.
 - 1. And this is why the prophecies matter. This is the strongest and most reliable evidence.
 - 2. In the prophecies, we have ‘the receipts’.
- d. Read **Numbers 23:27-24:19** and **Numbers 24:25**.
 - i. Here we find the third and fourth prophecies of Balaam, which feature important prophecies related to Jesus Christ.
 - ii. In the Orthodox Study Bible (OSB) translation I often read from, it speaks of “*missiles*”, which may seem odd to us in this context.
 - 1. Many of us, when we hear that term, think of a modern self-propelled weapon of war.
 - 2. However, the term “missile” refers to any weapon that is sent away from its owner, whether thrown by hand or by some mechanical device. Therefore, a stone or javelin that is thrown or an arrow that is shot from a bow would be considered a “missile”.
 - a. This is in contrast with a weapon that would not leave a warrior’s hand, such as a sword or spear.
 - 3. In the Greek text of the Septuagint (LXX), the same phrase that appears here in **Numbers 24:8** also appears in **Exodus 19:12-13**, where typically it is translated “shot with an arrow”.
- e. Regarding the statement that the man who will come from his seed shall “rule many nations”.
 - i. In the LXX, these prophecies here speak of a man to come from Israel who will “rule many nations”. (**Numbers 24:7**, LXX)
 - ii. **Question:** Other than Jesus, can you think of *any* Jews who would come to “rule many nations”?
- f. Regarding the star and the Man who will come.
 - i. Reread **Numbers 24:17-19**.

1. The third prophecy spoke of a Man who would come from the seed of Israel, “who shall rule many nations”.
2. Here in the fourth prophecy, it says in the LXX that a star shall arise *AND* a Man shall arise, out of Israel.
3. Eusebius pointed out in book 9 of *Proof of the Gospel* that the Lord set the stars in the heavens “for signs and seasons”.
 - a. Read **Genesis 1:14-15**.
 - b. The Greek word translated “signs” here in **Genesis 1:15** in the LXX is the same Greek word we find in the LXX and in the New Testament in the following passages:
 - i. **Exodus 12:13** says the blood of the Passover Lamb on the door will be a “sign”.
 - ii. In **Numbers 21:8-9**, the Lord tells Moses to put a bronze serpent on a “sign”, which Jesus indicates in **John 3** foreshadowed Him being lifted up on the cross.
 - iii. In **Matthew 12:38-39**, Jesus said that the only “sign” that would be given to that generation would be Him being in the “heart of the earth” for three days and nights.
 - iv. In **John 2:18-19**, the Jews asked Jesus for a “sign” to confirm His authority to clear out the temple. To that challenge, Jesus responded, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (referring to His bodily resurrection).
 - ii. From Eusebius, **Proof of the Gospel**, book 9, the introduction and chapter 1:
 1. “Let us then begin, as the proof about His birth, tribe, and family is complete, by considering the star which appeared at His birth, which was new and a stranger among the usual lights of heaven. For this, too, was proclaimed by Moses long before in times far distant in the following words.
 2. “CHAPTER 1
 3. “Of the things that happened at the incarnation, and of the star that appeared at our Savior's birth.

4. "Moses, in the book of **Numbers**, says of the star that appeared at the birth of our Savior, as follows. [*Passage quoted by Eusebius: Numbers 24:15-19*]
5. "We are told that Balaam's successors moved by this (for the prediction was preserved most likely among them), when they noticed in the heavens a strange star besides the usual ones, fixed above the head, so to say, and, vertically above Judea, hastened to arrive at Palestine, to inquire about the King announced by the star's appearance. Matthew the evangelist witnesses to this as follows:
6. "'And when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.'" (**Matthew 2:1-2**)
7. "'And when they had been sent on their way they reached Bethlehem. And, behold, again, the (same) star, which they saw before in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young Child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and going into the house they saw the Child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped Him.'" (**Matthew 2:9-11**)
8. "This is the account in the holy gospel. But the word of the prophecy says that striking events will be heralded by the rising of the star and the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ...
9. [*Eusebius later continues*] "...Let us now learn the reason why the star appeared. Now Moses says, that all the stars were set in the firmament by God 'for signs and for seasons.' (**Genesis 1:14-15**) But this was a strange and unusual star, not one of the many known stars, but being new and fresh by its appearance here it portended a new luminary that should shine on all the universe, the Christ of God, a great and a new Star, whose likeness the star that appeared to the wise men symbolically showed. For since in all the holy and inspired Scriptures the leading object of the meaning is to give mystic and divine instruction, while preserving as well the obvious meaning in its own sphere of historical facts, so the prediction before us was properly and literally fulfilled in the matter of the star that was prophesied to appear at our Savior's birth.

10. "In the case of other remarkable and famous men we know that strange stars have appeared, what some call comets, or meteors, or tails of fire, or similar phenomena that are seen in connection with great unusual events. But what event could be greater or more important for the whole universe than the spiritual light coming to all men through the Savior's advent, bringing to human souls the gift of holiness and true knowledge of God? Wherefore the herald star gave the great sign, telling in symbol that the Christ of God would shine as a great new light on all the world.
11. "And the prophecy foretells a man as well as a star, for it says: 'A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a man shall spring from Israel,' (**Numbers 24:17**) naming first the heavenly light, the Word of God, and next the Humanity. And He is called, as I have shown in my former books, in other places by the varying names of Rising, Light, and Sun of Righteousness. And here, by applying to Him the verb from 'Rising,' 'a star shall rise out of Jacob,' it shows His Diviner aspect, as 'giving light to every man that comes into the world' (**John 1:9**); while it shows the Humanity, by the suffering that comes to Him, where it foretells that He will fall to rise again, in words like what Isaiah says of Him: 'And there shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to rule the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust.' (**Isaiah 11:10, LXX**) And we see how true it is that the light of our Savior, which rose from Jacob, that is from the Jews, has shone on all nations but Jacob, from whence it came forth.
12. "And while this can be found in many prophecies, which say as it were to Christ Himself: 'Behold, I have set you for a light to the Gentiles, for a covenant of your race,' (**Isaiah 42:6**) it is especially obvious in the words of Balaam, when he says: 'A man shall come from his seed, and shall rule many nations.' (**Numbers 24:7**) Whose seed but Israel's, as the context shews? And thus our Savior, the Word, as the prophecy foretold, ruling over the nations threw down the invisible noxious powers which had governed them so long, the spirits of evil, and the band of demons, called figuratively here the princes of Moab, Seth, Edom, and Esau."
- iii. Eusebius makes the claim that the pagan magi who were from "the East" (perhaps from Persia?) in **Matthew 2** were familiar with this prophecy of Balaam. Perhaps they knew this from reading the writings of Moses (**Numbers 23-24**), or from some other source.

1. **Question:** How credible is that claim of Eusebius, that the pagan magi could have been familiar with prophecies made by Balaam?
 2. Response: Actually, there is archaeological evidence that the writings of Balaam son of Beor, the seer, were known widely in the Middle East.
 - a. After teaching the previous lesson, one of those listening (Mark Felsher) brought to my attention an archaeological discovery that confirms the existence of Balaam son of Beor in the ancient world.
 - b. In 1967, the *Deir 'Alla Balaam Inscription* was discovered in Jordan. This inscription has been dated variously in the range of 600-800 BC. (That would make it about 700 years after the lifetime of Balaam.) It speaks of a "Balaam, son of Beor", a pagan prophet or seer in the ancient Middle East who had prophesied doom to his own people.
 3. There are several references online that give further information on this archaeological discovery, including:
 - a. <https://biblicalarchaeologygraves.blogspot.com/2014/12/bonus-38-deir-alla-balaam-inscription.html>
 4. From this information, it appears we have confirmation that Balaam was indeed a famous prophet, whose prophecies were recorded and in circulation in the Middle East hundreds of years after his death. Therefore, Eusebius may well be right, that the magi saw this star as a sign in the heavens that the one Balaam had foretold, the one who would rule the nations, was finally coming into the world.
- iv. From Justin Martyr, writing c. 160 AD:
1. "And that He should arise like a star from the seed of Abraham, Moses showed beforehand when he thus said, 'A star shall arise from Jacob, and a leader from Israel;' (**Numbers 24:17**) and another Scripture says, 'Behold a man; the East is His name.' (**Zechariah 6:12**, LXX) Accordingly, when a star rose in heaven at the time of His birth, as is recorded in the memoirs of His apostles, the Magi from Arabia, recognising the sign by this, came and worshipped Him."
 - a. (Source: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, chapter 26; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 252)

- v. Irenaeus, bishop of the church in Lyons, in Gaul (modern-day France), writing c. 180 AD, also connected the prophecy of Balaam to the star that heralded the birth of Jesus.
 1. "...Moses says: 'A star shall rise out of Jacob and a leader shall spring up from Israel,' (**Numbers 24:17**) clearly announcing that the dispensation of His coming into being according to the flesh would be among the Jews; and from Jacob and the Jewish race He who was born, coming down from heaven, took up the dispensation and so laid down. For a star appears in heaven; and a 'leader' means king, for He is king of all the saved. But the star appeared at His birth to those men, the magi, who dwelt in the East, and through it they learned that Christ was to be born; and led by the star they came to Judea, till the star reached Bethlehem, where Christ was born, and having entered the house where the boy lay wrapped in swaddling clothes, stood above His head, showing the magi the Son of God, Christ."
 - a. (Source: Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, chapter 58; found in *Ancient Christian Writers* vol. 16, p. 86; translated by Joseph P. Smith, S.J., Paulist Press)
- vi. Origen, writing c. 248 AD also commented on how the **Numbers 24:17** prophecy pointed to the 'star of Bethlehem':
 1. "...with respect to the appearance of a star at the birth of Jesus there is a prophecy of Balaam recorded by Moses to this effect: 'There shall arise a star out of Jacob, and a man shall rise up out of Israel.' (**Numbers 24:17**) And now, if it shall be deemed necessary to examine the narrative about the Magi, and the appearance of the star at the birth of Jesus, the following is what we have to say, partly in answer to the Greeks, and partly to the Jews.
 2. "...I am therefore of opinion that, possessing as they did the prophecies of Balaam, which Moses also records, inasmuch as Balaam was celebrated for such predictions, and finding among them the prophecy about the star, and the words, "I shall show him to him, but not now; I deem him happy, although he will not be near," (**Numbers 24:17**) they conjectured that the man whose appearance had been foretold along with that of the star, had actually come into the world; and having predetermined that he was superior in power to all demons, and to all common appearances and powers, they resolved to offer him homage.

3. “They came, accordingly, to Judea, persuaded that some king had been born; but not knowing over what kingdom he was to reign, and being ignorant also of the place of his birth, bringing gifts, which they offered to him as one whose nature partook, if I may so speak, both of God and of a mortal man,—gold, viz., as to a king; myrrh, as to one who was mortal; and incense, as to a God; and they brought these offerings after they had learned the place of His birth. But since He was a God, the Saviour of the human race, raised far above all those angels which minister to men, an angel rewarded the piety of the Magi for their worship of Him, by making known to them that they were not to go back to Herod, but to return to their own homes by another way.”
 - a. (Source: Origen, *Against Celsus*, book 1, chapter 60; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 4, pp. 422-423)
- g. Regarding the phrase: “God led Him out of Egypt”.
 - i. Read **Matthew 2:13-15** and **2:19-21**.
 1. Most modern Bibles, in the footnotes, identify the “out of Egypt I called my Son” (**Matthew 2:15**) prophecy as referring back to **Hosea 11:1**.
 - ii. In chapter 3 of *Proof of the Gospel*, book 9, Eusebius ties the statement about Jesus having to come “out of Egypt” both to the third prophecy of Balaam in **Numbers 24:8** and to **Hosea 11:1** (in the Hebrew text).
 1. “God led Him out of Egypt” (**Numbers 24:8**, LXX, OSB)
 2. In **Exodus 4:22-23**, the Lord had told Moses to tell Pharaoh, “Israel is my firstborn son”.
 - a. Note that the Lord used this statement as a premonition of the 10th Plague.
 - b. The Lord said that if Pharaoh did not *release His firstborn son* (Israel), then He would kill *Pharaoh’s firstborn son* (which happened on the night of the Passover)!
 3. If we combine the above two statements from **Exodus 4** and **Numbers 24**, we get the equivalent of the statement we find **Matthew 2:15**, that God *called his (firstborn) son out of Egypt*.
 - iii. From **Hosea**:

1. “When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.” (**Hosea 11:1**, NKJV) Note that this is based on the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text; the LXX is different here.
2. This phrase “out of Egypt” is a significant theme in the second half of Hosea. There are *three levels* to this “out of Egypt” picture.
 - a. The *first level*: the nation of Israel came out of Egypt physically in the story of the exodus.
 - b. The *second level*: Egypt figuratively represented the old life in pagan idolatry.
 - i. In Hosea, the first part of the book, Israel is portrayed as being like an unfaithful wife who abandons her husband and goes back to prostitution.
 - ii. In the later chapters, Israel is portrayed as (figuratively) “*going back to Egypt*” in returning to the idolatry of their old way of life.
 1. Egypt is a figure for the old life, before we become Christians. It represents life prior to our baptism, just as Egypt was the dark kingdom of bondage that the Israelites were redeemed from when they passed through the ‘baptism’ of the Red Sea. (Consider **1 Corinthians 10:1-2**.)
 2. Recall that in **Deuteronomy 17** the future kings are given several warnings.
 - a. They are told that they must copy the **Book of Deuteronomy** for themselves and read it every day so that they don’t think of themselves as being better than their brothers.
 - b. They are told not to multiply wealth for themselves.
 - c. They are told not to multiply wives for themselves.

- d. And they are warned not to return to Egypt for horses, since they must *never go back to Egypt!*
 - i. I believe this warning was included, like the warning to get rid of all the yeast after the Passover, to provide a spiritual foreshadowing for us.
 - ii. This is to burn into the minds of God's people: *we must not go back to Egypt* (representing the old life of idolatry and spiritual bondage)!
 - iii. The *third level* is a foreshadowing of how God's own firstborn son (Jesus) was destined to come "out of Egypt", as revealed in **Matthew 2!**
- h. The lion's cub who sleeps and will be awakened.
 - i. Read **Numbers 24:9**.
 - 1. "He lies down and rests like a lion, and like a lion's cub, who shall rouse Him?"
 - 2. A *lion* is the animal associated with kings. Recall that Solomon's royal throne had a lion on each side of each step. (**1 Kings 10:19-20**)
 - ii. This phrase of prophecy is practically identical to one line from the prophecy that Jacob gave shortly before his death to his fourth son Judah.
 - 1. Read **Genesis 49:8-12**.
 - 2. This prophecy speaks of a lion and the cub of a lion who *sleeps*. Also, it includes the unanswered question: "Who will *wake Him up?*"
 - iii. Sleep throughout the Scriptures is used as a metaphor for death. Waking up, therefore, is a metaphor for resurrection from the dead. Consider the following examples:

1. “And many of those who *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall *awake*, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (**Daniel 12:2**, NKJV)
 2. “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all *sleep*, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (**1 Corinthians 15:51–52**, NKJV)
 3. [When Jesus is going to the tomb of Lazarus] “These things He said, and after that He said to them, ‘Our friend Lazarus *sleeps*, but I go that I may *wake him up*.’ Then His disciples said, ‘Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.’ However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.’” (**John 11:11–15**, NKJV)
- iv. We know from **Revelation 5** that this prophecy from **Genesis 49:9**, about Judah being like a lion and the cub of a lion, refers to Jesus, who is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah”. Since the **Genesis 49:9** and **Numbers 24:9** prophecies about the lion are essentially the same, the **Numbers 24** prophecy about a lion also must refer to Jesus.
1. “But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’” (**Revelation 5:5**, NKJV)
- v. Early Christian writers saw these twin prophecies (from **Genesis 49:9** and **Numbers 24:9**) about the cub of a lion who would sleep and then be raised up as figuratively explaining several aspects of Jesus.
1. He was a king begotten of His Father (a cub of a lion).
 2. He would die (figuratively described as “sleep”).
 3. He would be raised up after dying (figuratively described as ‘being awakened’ or ‘being roused’ from sleep).
- vi. Early Christians who comment on the significance of this prophecy regarding the lion that sleeps and then is awakened include:
1. From Hippolytus, writing c. 200 AD:
 - a. “The prophet, in using the expression, a lion’s whelp, means him who sprang from Judah and David according

to the flesh, who was not made indeed of the seed of David, but was conceived by the (power of the) Holy Ghost, and came forth from the holy shoot of earth.

- b. “For Isaiah says, ‘There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall grow up out of it.’ **(Isaiah 11:1, LXX)** That which is called by Isaiah a flower, Jacob calls a shoot. For first he shot forth, and then he flourished in the world. And the expression, ‘he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as a lion’s whelp,’ **(Genesis 49:9, LXX)** refers to the three days’ sleep (death, couching) of Christ...
- c. “...And David says to the same effect, ‘I laid me down (couched) and slept; I awaked: for the Lord will sustain me;’ **(Psalm 3:5)** in which words he points to the fact of his sleep and rising again. And Jacob says, ‘Who shall rouse him up?’ **(Genesis 49:9)** And that is just what David and Paul both refer to, as when Paul says, ‘and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.’ **(Galatians 1:1)**”
 - i. (Source: Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 206)

2. From Cyprian, writing c. 250 AD:

- a. “In the blessing of Judah also this same thing is signified, where there also is expressed a figure of Christ, that He should have praise and worship from his brethren; that He should press down the back of His enemies yielding and fleeing, with the hands with which He bore the cross and conquered death; and that He Himself is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and should couch sleeping in His passion, and should rise up, and should Himself be the hope of the Gentiles.”
 - i. (Source: Cyprian, *The Epistles of Cyprian*, No. 62, section 6; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 360)

3. From Cyril of Jerusalem, writing on prophecies about the resurrection of Jesus (c. 350 AD):

- a. “As then we set forth the testimonies concerning His cross, so come let us now verify the proofs of His

resurrection also: since the apostle before us affirms [*in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4*], He was buried, and has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. As an Apostle, therefore, has sent us back to the testimonies of the Scriptures, it is good that we should get full knowledge of the hope of our salvation...

- b. "...There is also the prophecy of Jacob saying in the Scriptures, 'He lay down and couched as a lion, and as a lion's whelp: who shall rouse Him up?' (**Genesis 49:9**) And the similar passage in **Numbers**, 'He couched, He lay down as a lion, and as a lion's whelp.' (**Numbers 24:9**)"
 - c. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, Lecture 14, sections 2-3; found in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 94)
4. From John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), bishop in Constantinople and famous preacher:
 - a. "A lion's whelp is Judah. from a stripling, my son, you have grown up': he is foretelling his kingship. You see, it is Scripture's invariable practice to refer by the image of this creature to royal authority."
 - i. (Source: John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 46-67*, in Homily 67, Catholic University Press, pp. 269-271.)
 5. From Eusebius, explaining the **Genesis 49** prophecy/blessing that Jacob gave to Judah, regarding the part about the lion and lion's cub, wrote (c. 320 AD):
 - a. "He calls Him then a *lion's whelp* because of His being born of the royal tribe. For He was of the seed of David according to the flesh. 'From a shoot you have grown, my son,' he says, because He was born of the seed and root of Jacob who foretold it, being primarily God the Word, and becoming secondarily the Son of man, through the dispensation He undertook for us.
 - b. "And the words, 'Falling down you slept as a lion and a whelp,' are significant of His death, because Scripture is accustomed, as is shown in many other places, from the conviction of their kinship to call death a sleep.

- c. “And ‘Who shall awaken him?’ is a wonderful reference to His resurrection from the dead. For he who said, ‘Who will awake him?’ knew quite well that He would be awaked. And it is remarkable that he should add, ‘*Who then shall do this and raise him up?*’ so as to impel us to ask who it was that raised up our Lord Who died on our behalf. For *Who else was it, but the God of the Universe, His Father*, to Whom the Savior’s resurrection is solely to be attributed, according to the Scripture which says, ‘Whom the Father raised from the dead’ (**Galatians 1:1**, **Acts 13:33**, and elsewhere)?”
 - i. (Source: Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel* Book 8, chapter 1)
- i. He is not only the lamb; He is the lion as well.
 - i. In **Revelation 5**, we see Jesus portrayed as *two different animals*:
 1. The *lamb* that was slain (**Revelation 5:6-12** and **Revelation 13:8**).
 - a. This was foreshadowed by the Passover Lamb (**Exodus 12**) and the one who was “led like a sheep to the slaughter” (**Acts 8:32**, following **Isaiah 53:7**, LXX), pointing to His *passion and sacrificial death* to redeem us.
 2. The *lion* of the tribe of Judah (**Revelation 5:5**).
 - a. This was foreshadowed by **Genesis 49:9** and **Numbers 24:9**, the one who would “sleep” (dying) but then be “awakened” (pointing to His *resurrection from the dead*).
- j. Eusebius noted the similarities between Balaam’s prophecy in **Numbers 24**, and the more well-known prophecy from Jacob in **Genesis 49**, stating that they obviously referred to the same thing. From that, he concluded:
 - i. “...the proof concerning our Savior may rest on a firmer foundation, established on the agreement ‘of the mouth of *two witnesses*.’”
 1. (Source: Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, book 9, chapter 3)