



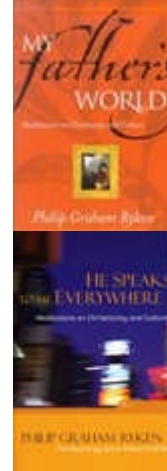
## Window on the World

### The Lion King

Window on the World is our weekly opportunity to examine our culture from the vantage point of biblical Christianity. Here you will find the text from Dr. Ryken's "Window on the World" talks from Tenth Presbyterian Church's evening service. If you missed one or wanted to send a copy to a friend, you will be able to find them here.

Please note: there is no "Window on the World" on third Sundays, selected other Sundays, or in July and August.

Windows on the World before 2003 are available in an older format. [Click here](#). Many of these are now published in [My Father's World: Meditations on Christianity and Culture](#) (P&R Publishing, 2002) and in [He Speaks to Me Everywhere: Meditations on Christianity and Culture](#) (P&R Publishing, 2004) by Philip Graham Ryken.



#### Dr. Philip Ryken



**Series:** Window on the World  
**Date:** 9/10/2006

#### Full Text:

The lion is the only animal that can dare lay claim to the title "the king of the beasts." Really, there aren't any other serious candidates. What other animal has the regal bearing of a lion, with its magnificent mane? What other animal sits with such quiet dignity, enthroned on its four great paws? What other animal has such a mighty and awesome roar? There is only one king of the beasts, and only the lion has title to that throne.

My recent preaching tour in South Africa gave me a rare opportunity to visit a lion park near Johannesburg and see wild lions up close and in person. As our guide drove us into the first enclosure, suddenly they were there: a small pride of lions. After watching a lioness with her young cubs, we circled around for a closer view of a full-grown male sitting in the sun, the lord of all that he surveyed. The lion was no more than ten feet away from us, and the only thing separating us from him was our windshield.

The lion looked absolutely magnificent. His tawny mane was golden in the late afternoon sun. His wide brown eyes seemed to express a depth of character, even of wisdom. His stately expression conveyed a sense of quiet strength—a king among beasts, if ever there was one.

Suddenly the lion stood up, and I felt the tingling thrill that only comes in the presence of something that is truly awesome. Even that simple act of standing up showed the lion's



powerful athleticism. Every muscle of the great beast was alive; every nerve ending was alert. One had the sense that anything might happen, that the lion could do anything it wanted to do—absolutely anything. We were in the presence of greatness, and also danger. We knew this because our guides had told us a cautionary tale about an unfortunate tourist who tried to pose with the lions for a photograph and came to an unhappy end.

Later on we saw the lord of another pride display a completely different aspect of the leonine temperament. The lion was sitting in the sun with his consort—his queen, if you will. She stood up, stretched, and prepared to walk away. But before she left, she took her leave of the king by gently nuzzling his face. As she stood kissing her mate, the end of her tail gently curled around his mane. The couple's interaction expressed astonishing intimacy, as the mighty king tenderly embraced his lover.

The lion is a familiar image from Scripture, where it is usually portrayed as a fierce and violent hunter (e.g. Num. 23:24; Ps. 22:13; Ezek. 22:25). People in biblical times feared the lion as a predator that killed their flocks and herds (e.g. Jer. 2:30; Zech. 11:3). They had also learned to respect the sound of its mighty voice (e.g. Job 4:10; Jer. 2:15). "The lion has roared," wrote the prophet Amos, "who will not fear?" (Amos 3:8). If a lion ever attacked a person, there was no hope of escape unless God intervened. King David used this image—possibly drawing on his own experience as a shepherd—when he prayed: "O LORD my God, save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces, with none to deliver" (Ps. 7:1-2).

The Bible also uses lions as a symbol of royalty, giving them the same status by revelation that they receive from creation: the lion is the king. In his final testament to his twelve sons, the tribes of Israel, Jacob conferred this royal blessing: "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. 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?" (Gen. 49:8-9).

In other words, the line of Jacob would run through the royal tribe of Judah. Even though he was not his father's eldest son, Judah would receive the praise, worship, and obedience of all his brothers. He would have the strength to crush his enemies the way a lion crushes its prey. And when Judah came into his kingdom, people would not dare to disturb him any more than they would dare to rouse a sleeping lion.

Jacob's prophecy came true. David and the other great kings of Israel came from the tribe of Judah. They ruled their brothers and defeated their enemies, just like Jacob promised. In time their kingdom came to be associated with the lion. For example, King Solomon's throne was flanked with twelve golden lions (1 Kings 10:19-20). Eventually the same image was used to describe the greatest king of all: Jesus Christ. In his end times revelation of the church and the glory of God, John described the Great King who alone held the power of divine judgment: "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" (Rev. 5:5).

Jesus Christ is the Lion King. He is the beautiful, powerful, dangerous ruler of the universe.



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Therefore "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" is the perfect title for him. It speaks of his majestic authority and mighty dignity. It also declares that he is the king of his own tribe, who uses his fierce power to defend the people he loves. We should give this mighty king the reverence that he deserves, worshiping him with trembling and awe. For when you are in the living presence of a lion, the lion is the thing that commands your attention and demands your respect.