

Genesis 49:27 — Benjamin Shall Raven as a Wolf

The Morning and Evening of the Millennium, Moral Glory Greater Than Official, and the Hidden Mystery

Scripture Reading: Genesis 49:27; Hebrews 13:20

“Benjamin shall raven as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at even he shall divide the spoil.” (Genesis 49:27)

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20–21)

The Structure of Genesis 49: Israel’s History to the Close of the Millennium

Genesis 49 is one of the most far-reaching chapters in all of Scripture. Jacob calls his sons together and says: gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. The Spirit of God has here called upon Jacob to review the whole history of Israel from his time until the close of the millennium. His twelve sons represent various stages and aspects of that history. Not every blessing has the same character, and some — notably Dan — carry troubling notes, though even Dan has the cry of verse 18: I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD, and a place in the millennial land distribution.

One of the striking features of the chapter is the disproportion of space: Joseph receives far more than any other son. Benjamin receives comparatively little. That contrast itself is instructive.

Morning and Evening: The Millennium in Benjamin's Blessing

Benjamin shall raven as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at even he shall divide the spoil. The morning and the evening speak of the millennium. The morning is the great millennial morning that the prophets look forward to — the morning in which the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in his wings (Malachi 4:2), when the wicked are put down and the righteous established in the earth. This is the inauguration of millennial power. Benjamin devouring his prey in the morning is the picture of that great commencement — the enemies overthrown, the kingdom established, the Son of Man taking his authority over all the earth.

At evening he divides the spoil. The evening brings the close of the millennium, the final judgments, the great white throne, everything brought into its settled order as the Lord delivers the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. Benjamin's blessing thus encompasses the whole span of the millennial kingdom from its beginning to its close.

Moral Glory Greater Than Official Glory

Why is so much given to Joseph and so little to Benjamin, when the Benjamin-character speaks of so great a thing as the inauguration and close of the millennial kingdom? The answer is that what is moral in Christ's person is greater than any particular office he takes. What he is morally — in his character, his heart, his ways with his brethren, his suffering, his fidelity — is greater than the official glory of ruling over the nations. The moral glories of the Lord Jesus surpass his official glories, because what he is morally is what he is in his very

person. He is God who has taken manhood into his person; and what that person is in itself, in its love and its suffering and its faithfulness, outweighs any particular authority he exercises.

Joseph as a type gives us those moral glories in detail: the coat of many colors and the father's love, the dreams, the hatred of his brethren, the pit, the false accusation, the prison, the faithfulness throughout, the tears when he saw Benjamin, the way he drew out the confession of sin from his brothers, the revelation of himself, the weeping over them. All the moral glories of Christ in his rejection and his recovery of his own. It requires a man of that moral character to be fit to portray the Benjamin-glory. The official glory of the millennial king rests on and flows from the moral perfection of the one who suffered.

The Mystery: Hidden, Not Hinted

One thing Genesis 49 does not contain is the mystery of Christ in the church. The chapter gives the history of the people of Israel upon earth, from Jacob's time to the close of the millennium. The church is not there. This is entirely consistent with what the New Testament says: in Romans 16:25 it was kept in silence through eternal ages; in Colossians 1:26 it was hidden from ages and from generations. Hidden means hidden. Silence means silence.

Some teachers, unwilling to accept this, argue that the mystery was not really hidden — that it appears here and there in the Old Testament if you look carefully enough. But what they find, when examined, are passages about the salvation of Gentiles in the millennium, of which the apostle Paul makes application for the present time. That is not the same thing as the mystery being revealed. Millennial blessing for Gentiles is explicitly predicted in the Old Testament; the mystery of the church as one body with Christ as head in heaven, seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, with uncovenanted blessings that are not

subject to any earthly covenant — that was absolutely hidden.

There is room left in the Old Testament for the mystery. The blessings of the father surpassing the blessings of his progenitors — the enlarged and overflowing blessing of verse 26 leaves room. There are types of the bride, types of the house, types of the heavenly sanctuary in the tabernacle. But there is no type of the body. None has been found, and it is fitting that none should be found, because the body is the most distinctive and hidden aspect of the mystery. Types are not prose language and not prophecy; they leave room but say nothing directly. Silence was kept.

Covenants, Position, and the Branches Over the Wall

The blessings that reached over the wall to the Gentiles — Joseph's branches running over the partition — are uncovenanted blessings. Covenants are for the earth. There is no covenant for a heavenly position. There is no covenant that places anyone in Christ, seated in the heavenlies. Millennial saints will be blessed on the earth under the reign of Christ, but they will not be in Christ in the sense of Ephesians 2 — that is the position of those who belong to the mystery, the church.

The Lord Jesus is the king of Israel and the ruler of the nations in the millennium. He is the Lord of the church — not king of the church, for kingship implies subjects in a kingdom, and the church is not in that relationship to him. He is our Lord; he is Lord of all. Lordship and kingship both denote authority, but the character of the authority differs. He takes up all these offices in himself and makes them perfectly good. And what is moral in him — what he is in his person — underlies and surpasses every office he bears.

The Accuracy of Scripture

The chapter as a whole, read carefully, traces the whole history of Israel upon earth from its beginning to the close of the millennium. The moral precision of Scripture is evident throughout: the right amount of space given to each son, the figurative language that is none the less real for being figurative, the foreshadowing of Christ in the specific features of Joseph that are given by inspiration. That this was written by Moses at the dictation of the Spirit of God, who understood all that was placed in it far better than any reader ever shall, is the only sufficient explanation of what it contains. The attacks on the Pentateuch by higher critics are attacks on the underpinnings of the whole house of Scripture. If the foundations are taken out, the house collapses. The accuracy of Scripture, however, is its own evidence to those who read it with believing hearts.

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