

January 28

Scriptures: Read Genesis 49 & 50

Key Verse: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good...”
(Genesis 50:20)

Overview

This is a scripture verse which most clearly expresses the divine providence of God. It sometimes seems as though the evil people have the advantage over the godly, but in the end the plan and purposes of God will indeed prevail. Throughout the whole book of Genesis we see the providence of God over and over again.

Jacob, now 147 years old, called his sons to bless them and prophesy concerning their future “in the last days” (49:1). In their context this meant the days before the coming of the Messiah (that is, the first time when Jesus was born in Bethlehem). In the original language, his words are very beautiful, like a poem having rhythmical movement, figures of speech, and clever plays on words. Unusual expressions and parallelism all combine to make a warm, heart-felt monologue spoken as the Holy Spirit led him. He gave a great messianic prophecy: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” (cf. Revelation 5:5), “until Shiloh comes”, referring to the Messiah Jesus. “Shiloh” may mean “to whom it belongs” that is the scepter of the “lawgiver”. This shows that Judah was to be the governing tribe of Israel (King David’s line) and pictures the Messiah as the ultimate governor from that tribe, which was fulfilled in Jesus. It seems Jacob split the birthright between Judah, the ruler with spiritual leadership and recipient of the messianic promise, and Joseph’s son, Ephraim, who would see national prestige, material blessing and success (Joshua, Deborah, and Samuel came from his tribe).

Judah had proven himself to be worthy in offering to be personally responsible for Benjamin (43:9) and offering himself as a substitute for him (44:32, 33). Historically, the tribe of Judah remained firm in the faith, even when the other tribes (except Benjamin) fell into idolatry during the reign of Jeroboam. In Jacob’s blessings to his sons, we can see that the Holy Spirit guided his words so that he saw, by faith, the history of the nation. Jacob was speaking these things while on his deathbed and, in the middle of his discourse, it seems with longing that he says, “I have waited for your salvation, O Lord” (49:18; cf. Isaiah 25:9; 1 Peter 1:10). He knew he was about to die any moment and may have been gasping for breath and looking by faith to that salvation which he foretold; “Shiloh” will come and subject all people.

After his blessings, Jacob told his sons that he was to be buried in Canaan and in giving details he made it very clear that they understood where the cave was in the field of Machpelah. Jacob live a long life and possibly the best years were spent enjoying the bounty of Egypt with all his sons together in unity. The third patriarch, a great man in the Bible, died in peace with all his sons around him. Joseph fulfilled his vow and with much splendor, and accompanied by many Egyptians, Jacob’s sons carried his body to its resting place in Canaan.

After Jacob’s death, Joseph’s brothers were afraid that he would take his revenge against them for what they had done to him. But Joseph kindly showed his brothers that he had truly forgiven

them and promised to continue taking care of them. Joseph lived a consistently godly life. He walked faithfully day by day in the fear of the Lord. He had a peaceful life and lived to enjoy his great-grand-children (50:23). He, too, requested that he be buried in Canaan with his father and grandfathers, however, with faith he said they could take his bones with them when God brought them out (Hebrews 11:22; Exodus 13:19).

Joseph lived to be 110, and throughout his life he was used mightily as an instrument of God. We see in his life an example of faithfulness and trust in God whose will is good, perfect, and acceptable (Romans 12:2). Whether good or evil happens to us, God has a purpose for “we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Prayer

O Lord, because You are our Lord, we trust You to work all things together for good in our lives, in order that Your purpose may be fulfilled.