

By Jerry Collins



Verse 27—*Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil.*

- **Benjamin is a ravenous wolf**—Like Judah's lion, the wolf is no less ferocious an animal than the lion but usually kills far more than it eats. Benjamin would be characterized by a vicious and warlike attitude. He would be ravenous by nature and his would be a mighty warrior tribe.
- **In the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil**—The history of this tribe would be filled examples of powerful ferocity. Benjamin's reputation would be its warlike character and actions.

Observations from the Tribe of Benjamin

- Moses' blessing of the tribe of Benjamin noted that *of Benjamin he said, "May the beloved of the Lord dwell in security by Him, who shields him all the day, and he dwells between His shoulders"* (Deuteronomy 33:12). The point was that Benjamin was to enjoy God's protection continually, since God would carry this tribe on His back between His shoulders.
- Saul was a Benjamite and his rule as king over Israel was ferocious. When the Ammonites besieged Jabesh-Gilead, Saul mustered the armies of Israel and attacked them by night so that *Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together* (1 Samuel 11:11). This victory helped the Israelites perceive Saul as their king, resulting in their commitment to him.
- Saul's son, Jonathan, was also a great warrior. First Samuel 14 records a brilliant maneuver of Jonathan and his armor-bearer in climbing a sheer cliff and slaughtering a Philistine garrison of 20 soldiers. Contrasted with his father's selfish zeal, Jonathan acted in faith in God's promise, in spite of the odds. *Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the Lord will work for us, for the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few"* (1 Samuel 14:6).
- Other ferocious Benjamites were— (1) Abner, Saul's cousin and commander of his army, who mercilessly killed Asahel and was himself murdered by Joab (2 Samuel 2:23; 3:30); (2) Shimei, who cursed David during his flight from Absalom and was himself killed by Solomon in return (16:5-13; 1 Kings 2:44-46), and (3) Sheba, who led a rebellion against David and was himself beheaded by the citizens of Abel Beth-maacah (2 Samuel 20:1-22). They serve as examples of how selfish and misguided zeal received its own punishment.
- Esther and Mordecai were stellar examples of Benjamite zeal for the glory of God. They were cousins in the Persian town of Shushan, and were boldly instrumental in saving their own people by turning the tables on Haman and other Jew haters (Esther 7 and 9). The Jewish festival of Purim commemorates their brave zeal.
- The Apostle Paul graphically portrayed the wolf-like viciousness of his ancestors. Summarizing his zeal, he described his *former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it* (Galatians 1:13). Furthermore, he stated, *"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons* (Acts 22:4). He testified *so then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them"* (Acts 26:9-10). Luke, the early church historian, described this son of Benjamin thus: *but Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison* (Acts 8:3).
- Just before his conversion, Luke indicated, *Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem* (Acts 9:1-2). Paul, the 'wolf,' tore in pieces the followers of Jesus until he was finally converted. His zeal did not abate, however; it was just channeled in a different direction. *"For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ"* (Galatians 1:10-12).

An Application—Fully resolve to live your life in such a way that God is pleased. Paul said it this way: *therefore, we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him* (2 Corinthians 5:9). Ambition is a good thing when it is directed toward eternal outcomes.

* Learn more by checking out our study of the "Twelve Tribes of Israel" at relationalconcepts.org *

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