

Remnant Life Church
10.23.22
Joseph
Pt 3
The Brothers' Revenge
Gen 37:12-36

We began this series two weeks ago by making the obvious statement that...

- Jesus was the greatest man who ever walked the earth
 - He was a man, but also God – IOW He was perfect
 - And so, it is His life that we should try and copy in our own every day

But there are other lives we read about that also worthy of emulating

- One of those is Joseph found in the latter part of the first book of Genesis
- He is the 11th of the 12 sons of Jacob
- The 12 whose offspring would become the 12 tribes of Israel

Jacob loves Joseph more than his brothers and gives him a gift that sets him over his brothers

- This is not only bad parenting
- It is contrary to the family dynamics of the day where the oldest were in authority

Then, just to make things a little more interesting God gives Joseph 2 dreams that seem to indicate pretty clearly that Joseph was going to rule over not only his brothers, but his father and mother as well.

- This could have been something that Joseph would hide in his heart
- But no, he tells everyone!
- And their reactions are exactly what you think they might be

But what we took with us from the account of Joseph's dreams was...

1. The Hand of God was preparing the path of Joseph's life
2. Go was in control of it all as Joseph was the final piece of the puzzle that God would use to establish His people

But this morning I would like for us to look at the path Joseph's brother's took in their response to their brother

READ – Gen 37:12-36

From the home base of Jacob and his family in the Valley of Hebron (**Gen 37:14**) the boys have taken the flocks to Shechem, a distance of about 50 miles

- When Joseph gets to the place his father said they were, they were in fact, not there
- Joseph had to travel toward Dothan, another 14 miles
- This trip would have taken 17 year-old Joseph about 4 or 5 days
 - In that time, Dothan was a fairly large city and fully occupied
 - The area near the city is by a valley that cuts through the Carmel mountain range
 - This means that Joseph's brothers see him coming (**37:18**) and begin to formulate a plan on how they can rid of this favored dreamer

- It is likely that it begins with idle banter and some wild suggestions with much laughter
 - But it quickly turns serious, and the laughter becomes renewed anger
 - The Bible does not tell us who suggests it first, but murder is spoken and there is an obvious consensus (37:19-20)
- At this point the first-born of the brothers, Rueben, speaks up
 - There are one of 2 reasons that I believe he does this
 - First, as the oldest, he knows that Joseph and in fact all of his brothers are ultimately his responsibility, and his father has already shown a lack of confidence in his leadership by promoting Joseph over him
 - Second, he sees this as a way to get back into his father's good graces
 - He can not only bring back Joseph safely
 - But he can spin any story he wants to of what he saved Joseph from
 - We read (37:22a) that Rueben allowed the cistern to remain a part of the plan but apparently convinced the others to give up the murder portion
 - He did this so that he could go back later and get his brother (37:22b)
 - He would then bring him home and Jacob would be very grateful

What is a cistern?

- A good-sized deep hole hollowed out of limestone bedrock
- Or dug in the ground and lined with plaster
 - Rainfall in Israel was confined to 3 or 4 months of the year
 - These cisterns were strategically located throughout the land to collect rainwater runoff
 - They would then be available during the dry periods
- It was not unusual for them to be dry part of the time, so Joseph was not thrown in to drown as we are told in verse 24 that it was empty

So, his brothers see him coming

- They modify their plan to kill him
- And when he arrives, they strip off his coat (his status and his authority) and throw him into the hole

Before we continue, Joseph has been called a type of Christ or forerunner of Jesus

- This means that his life would be similar to the life of Jesus as a way for the people to begin to understand who they would be looking for by the way He lived
- Moses was also a type of Christ, as were Joshua, Solomon, Jeremiah, and Isaiah
- But look at how similar this situation is to what Jesus went through
 - *John 19:23 - When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes, dividing them into four shares one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. The garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.*
 - Soldiers would take the clothes of the accused to bring them shame and to state to the people who would be there, this person is nothing and not deserving to be clothed
 - Joseph's brothers were saying the same thing by their actions

Now the story takes a very interesting turn as we see the providential hand of God at work

- The brothers have sat down to eat and they see a caravan of traders coming (37:25)
- We read that the caravan is comprised of Ishmaelites and Midianites
 - The Midianites are descendants of Abraham through Keturah the woman he married after Sarah's death (Gen 25:2)
 - Their 4th son was named Midian
 - The Ishmaelites are also descendants of Abraham through Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl that Sarah gave to Abraham to start a family with (Gen 16:1-4)
 - Their first son was named Ishmael (Gen 16:15)
 - His means that Midian, Ishmael, and Isaac were half brothers
 - They were Jacob's uncles
 - And all those traveling in the caravan were 2nd and 3rd cousins of the 12 sons of Jacob
 - Joseph was sold to his relatives
- So a caravan of relatives are approaching and Judah, the fourth brother, speaks up (37:26-27)
 - He suggests that, instead of killing Joseph – after all, he says, he is our brother - what will we gain if we do that?
 - IOW – hey fellas, we can make a little bit of money here if we use our heads and not let our anger get the best of us
 - But consider a couple of things as we watch this drama unfold
 - Reuben's motives for his intervention are clear
 - He intends to come back, rescue Joseph, and return him to his father
 - As we said earlier, there might be a couple of reasons but at least we know what his intentions are
 - Judah is perhaps conflicted
 - He may be squeamish about murder
 - But he obviously does not have concern for Joseph's welfare
 - If Judah's motive is greed, he didn't really strike a very good bargain
 - We read in verse 28 that they sold their brother for 20 shekels of silver
 - That amount was a fairly typical amount paid for a slave in that day
 - It represented about 2 years wages for a shepherd
 - Sounds like they really made out well, doesn't it
 - Until you divide that amount by 10
 - Especially when you consider that their father and family was pretty well-to-do

This portion of the story concludes with Reuben returning to get Joseph only to find his brothers have already sold him to the Midianites

- We do not know where Reuben was or why he was not with the others
 - Perhaps a more important question to answer is why was Reuben so ineffective in leading his brothers?
 - As the oldest he was the heir to the leadership of his entire family

- He was supposed to be the leader of his brothers – they would have looked to him for guidance in all things
- Why not in this instance?
 - You have to go back to the 35th chapter to see that Reuben committed a great sin and effectively lost his position
 - *Gen 35:21- 22 – Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder. While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father’s concubine, Bilhah, and Israel heard of it.*
 - We see, once again, the consequences of sin
- So, Reuben must deal with the fact that Joseph is gone forever
 - So much for regaining his father’s favor
 - Now, they must come up with a clever, plausible, believable cover-up story
 - We are not told who came up with the story to give Jacob
 - Perhaps it was Reuben himself, desperate to keep from falling further away from his father
 - Sin will always take you places you did not want to go, cost you more than you wanted to pay, and keep you longer than you wanted to stay
 - It has taken these 10 brothers to the place of selling their own flesh and blood
 - Taken them to the place of having to concoct a grand lie to sell to their father
 - It has cost them the peace that sin robs you of every time
 - It will haunt them for decades as they must one day live with the sheer terror of standing before Joseph some 25 or so years later (42:21-22)

Finally, the robe they all hated so much as the symbol of their father’s love for Joseph is torn in pieces

- A goat is slaughtered
- The coat is dipped in the blood
- And they must then watch their father collapse in all-consuming, soul-crushing grief as they tell him the lie that Joseph is dead

The final verse of the 37th chapter leaves the reader in suspense as we are told that Joseph, still alive, has been sold into Egypt to Potiphar (37:36)

- This was a man of great importance
- He was the captain of Pharaoh’s guard
- Men lived and died at his command
- And God was very much directing the life of Joseph to accomplish the will of God for His life and the nation of Israel