

Genesis

Chapter 37:23-36

✠ **Gen 37:23-28** ²³ *So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. ²⁴ Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵ And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. ²⁶ So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ "Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. ²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.*

Last week we ended with Joseph coming to his brothers because his father, Israel, wanted Joseph to check on them. As we ended there was a discussion between his brothers whether they should kill Joseph or not, and Reuben, the oldest, said not to kill him but rather throw him in a pit, which we see they did starting this week. Even though they put him in the pit, they still had plans of killing Joseph. But then another brother, Judah, spoke up and said not to kill him, but rather sell him as a slave to the Ishmaelites.

The Ishmaelites were the descendants of Ishmael, who was Abraham's first son born through Hagar, Sarah's handmaid. Go back to chapter 16 if you don't remember this.

Joseph's brothers obviously didn't care for Joseph, because they wanted to kill him. After they threw him in the pit, they sat down and had lunch. Probably taunting Joseph at this time with their food and water. But little did they know that in the years to come they would be repaid for their evil against their brother. They will be in hunger and thirsting just as Joseph was here and they will have to come to Joseph for food.

So they sold Joseph for 20 shekels of silver, which was about seven dollars, but little did they know they were not selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites, but rather they were selling him to God. Remember at this time Joseph was around 17-18 years old, and according to God's command.

✠ **Lev 27:1-5 (NLT)** ¹ *The LORD said to Moses, ² "Give the following instructions to the Israelites: If you make a special vow to dedicate someone to the LORD by paying the value of that person, ³ here is the scale of values to be used. A man between the ages of twenty and sixty is valued at fifty pieces of silver; ⁴ a woman of that age is valued at thirty pieces of silver. ⁵ A boy between five and twenty is valued at twenty pieces of silver; a girl of that age is valued at ten pieces of silver.*

† **Gen 37:2a** *This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers.*

If a vow was made to dedicate someone to the Lord then for a boy between 5-20 years of age, an offering of twenty shekels was given.

So his brothers were in a sense dedicating Joseph to the Lord, although that's not what they had in mind. But the Lord had His hands on Joseph's life, as we will continue to see.

✧ **Gen 37:29-35** *²⁹ Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. ³⁰ And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?" ³¹ So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. ³² Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" ³³ And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces." ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.*

It's apparent that Reuben was not included in the selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites. He knew they threw him in the pit, but his plan was that by doing such a thing, it would subdue their anger towards Joseph and he probably thought that when they were ready to leave that they would take Joseph out. But to his surprise Joseph was missing and when Reuben saw this he tore his clothes, which was a sign of sorrow and mourning. Reuben then goes to his brothers and his concern is with himself as he says, "**and I, where shall I go?**" He knew he would be in trouble being the oldest and not watching over his little brother Joseph.

So instead of going to get Joseph and even buying him back from the Ishmaelites, they kill a goat and put it on Joseph's tunic (or coat) to make it appear that a wild animal killed Joseph. Then they took it to Israel and asked him if it belonged to his son Joseph.

They did this to make it appear that they never saw Joseph but only found his tunic, and then they would be cleared of any responsibility of having to watch over Joseph. Which probably made Israel even more upset knowing that he was the one who sent Joseph out there and he probably felt like it was his fault that his son was dead, even though he wasn't, but Israel didn't know this. This hit Israel like a ton of bricks, after all, wasn't he the son of promise from the Lord, and his favorite son. Now it appeared to Israel that the Lord had let him down.

Israel not only tore his clothes but also covered himself in ashes. Among the ancient Hebrews and other Orientals, to sprinkle with or sit in ashes was a mark or token of grief, humiliation, or penitence. Ashes on the head was one of the ordinary signs of mourning for the dead. The term "ashes" is often used to signify worthlessness or insignificance.

Israel's family tried to comfort him, but he was too upset at God and life and vowed to go down to the grave mourning the loss of his son.

So what was going on with Joseph while all of this was going on?

✧ **Gen 37:36** *Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.*

Joseph was sold to Potiphar a captain of the Egyptian guards. This was all part of God's plan to save his children Israel, and for God's words to Abraham to come to pass. Remember back in chapter 15?

† **Gen 15:13-16 (NLT)** ¹³ *Then the LORD told Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, and they will be oppressed as slaves for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵ (But you will die in peace, at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶ After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, when the sin of the Amorites has run its course."*

As we read on, by the end of Genesis we will read of Joseph and the family of Israel living in the land of Egypt. Then in the beginning of the book of Exodus we read of how a new king arose in Egypt who knew nothing about the children of Israel or the vow made by the former king.

† **Ex 1:8-11** ⁸ *Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; ¹⁰ "come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.*

And as you read the rest of Exodus it tells of how God used Moses to bring His people back to Israel, the land of promise.

A lot of times we go through things and wonder why they are happening. We wonder, "Has God forgotten about me? Does He still love me? How can God allow this to happen to me?"

But as we read on in the rest of Genesis we never read of Joseph saying or thinking any of this. We encourage Joseph on because we know what's going to happen, but do we encourage ourselves on, knowing that the God of Joseph is our God too? Or do we think that what we are going through is just too hard for God to handle.

We believe that Jesus raised the dead, healed the sick and lame, cast out demons and even turned water into wine. Which are impossible things, but we think our situation is just too impossible for Jesus to handle. If Jesus was here right now, would you go to Him and ask

for His help or would you doubt Jesus? Sure it's easy if Jesus was here, we would run to Him and seek His help. But He's not here, so we think that because we can't see Jesus that He doesn't hear us or care about us, or that heaven is just too far away for Jesus to help me here on this earth.

"I need money to pay the rent, or my son is sick with a disease that there's no cure for."

"My husband has left me for another woman and I have no job and all these kids to take care of."

"I just got laid off or fired from my job and have no way of taking care of my family."

These are not excuses, but rather, they are real concerns and problems that people have. Maybe you are even going through one of them or another problem right now. You are wondering what to do, you've prayed and it seems that the Lord isn't answering your prayers. You're feeling like the Lord has left you all alone to deal with this.

God says; ***For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Heb 13:5b***

You believe everything in the bible but do you really believe this? These are God's words not man's. Do you believe that God is with you right now? If no then why not? Is it because your prayers are not answered? Maybe they are being answered, just not in the way you think they should be.

As we go through the rest of Genesis, think of the situations you are going through. Then look at Joseph and see how it seems things get worse for him, but in reality they are getting better, because God is setting the stage for a miracle to happen, and that miracle is taking Joseph as a prisoner and an outcast by his brothers, to being the second in command in Egypt.

As we read on you will see God at work in Joseph's life. And as you are reading in Genesis think about what would have happened if Joseph's brothers did pull him out of the pit and they all just went home?

Joseph is also what's called a type of Jesus. This means that through other people we can see the things that will happen to Jesus. Joseph brought to his brothers God's words and prophecy, but they rejected and despised it.

‡ ***Gen 37:8 And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.***

The religious leaders of Israel rejected Jesus' words and teaching.

‡ ***Luke 16:14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.***

Joseph was rejected by his brothers but accepted by those who were considered sinners and bad people.

- † **Gen 39:20-22** ²⁰ *Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. ²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²² And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing.*

Jesus was also rejected by the so-called religious leaders, but was accepted by the sinners and tax collectors.

- † **Luke 15:1-2** ¹ *Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them."*

Joseph was rejected by his brothers.

- † **Gen 37:4** *But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.*

Jesus was rejected by his people, the children of Israel.

- † **Luke 20:17** *Then He looked at them and said, "**What then is this that is written:
'The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone'?***

Joseph's brothers wanted to kill Joseph.

- † **Gen 37:18** *Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him.*

The people of Israel wanted to and killed Jesus.

- † **Acts 3:14-15** ¹⁴ *"But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.*

We will see more of this as we continue on in Genesis.

Next week we will start in chapter 38 and read of Judah and his sins against his family and even his own daughter in law, then in chapter 39 we will return to Joseph. May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy!