

February 3, 2019

Genesis 37: 5-11, 19-27 – Accept It

Introduction

For the past several weeks, our lessons have focused on the life of Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel. We have journeyed with him as he walked with God. We have experienced his highs and his lows. We have learned from him some important lessons that have encouraged and challenged us as we walk with God today. This week, however, we notice a transition. When we come to Genesis 37, we move to the last section of the book of Genesis. In this portion of the book, the attention shifts from Israel to his sons. More specifically, one son becomes the main character of this section, his name is Joseph. Let's consider what we discover about him in this study.

Rule Over Us? (Gen. 37:5-11). For many, the story of Joseph is fairly familiar. We remember his coat of many colors. We also remember how badly his brothers treated him. Interestingly enough, both of those elements of Joseph's life are described in Genesis 37. They help set the stage for what is to come.

The text for this lesson opens by explaining that Joseph had a dream (Gen. 37:5). In this specific dream, Joseph and his brothers are working together in a field binding sheaves of grain. At some point, as Joseph shares his dream, his sheaf stood up; when this happened, Joseph's brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. His brothers understood immediately the interpretation of and implication of the dream and they asked Joseph, "Are you really going to reign over us?" (Gen. 37:8). This dream caused Joseph's brothers to hate him more than they already did. Their hate caused them to devise a plan against him.

What Happens to Your Dreams Now? (Gen. 37:19-24). Some time passes after Joseph shared his dream with his brothers. Next, we find that his brothers have gone to Shechem to take care of Israel's flocks (Gen. 37:12). To find out how things are going, Israel sent Joseph to his brothers. When they saw him coming, "they plotted to kill him" (Gen. 37:18). Their plan was simple: kill Joseph and lie about what happened (Gen. 37:20). This would take care of Joseph's dreams! One dissenter in the group spoke up, however. An older brother, Reuben, sought to persuade his brothers not to harm Joseph. Instead, Reuben proposed that they simply place Joseph in a pit and leave him there. Reuben's ultimate goal was "to rescue him (Joseph) from them and return him to his father" (Gen. 37:22). This seemed like a good plan and there seemed to be general agreement. Sometimes, though, plans get modified.

What Do We Gain? (Gen. 37:25-27). According to Reuben's recommendation, Joseph gets thrown into a pit (Gen. 37:24). After this happens, the text indicates that for whatever reason Reuben leaves the group (Gen. 37:29). While Reuben is away, the brothers decide to do something different with Joseph. Instead of killing him or simply leaving him in the pit, they decide to "sell him to the Ishmaelites" (Gen. 37:27). So, for twenty pieces of silver, they sell their brother. This sum of money was the general price for a slave in that period.

Conclusion

The story of Joseph begins innocently enough. It soon takes some very tragic turns, though. The beloved son becomes the hated brother. Now, sold into slavery, Joseph begins a journey to Egypt. This is not the last we will see of Joseph, however. In fact, his story is just beginning. In coming weeks, we will see how God worked in Joseph's life.