

Genesis (2011) 37B

- Joseph is our focus
 - He is the next-to-youngest child of Jacob, but he's shown himself to be wiser than his years
 - The text last week said Israel loved Joseph more than his brothers
 - The true sense of that statement was that Jacob assigned Joseph the position of the birthright in the family
 - Since Joseph was the first born son of Rachel, Jacob has given to Joseph the position of the birthright holder after Reuben, the first born of Leah, disqualified himself
 - Jacob recognized Joseph's wisdom and emerging leadership qualities
 - We should take note that it says "Israel" not "Jacob" when speaking of Jacob's decision
 - Evidence that this was a godly action in keeping with God's will
 - He gave Joseph a coat of honor indicating Joseph held the position of authority in the family
 - Naturally, his brothers resented their younger brother gaining this position of authority
 - They hate him and won't even speak to him, we're told
 - But their hatred for their brother was due to his righteousness and their unrighteousness
 - Those who had sin and hatred in their hearts hated the one who did right and honored his father
 - This animosity will only grow with time
 - We also noted that Joseph is a picture of Christ, in many of the details of his life
 - Even the fact that he was the beloved son of Jacob chosen to rule over his brothers gives us a picture of Jesus

- Jesus was the beloved Son of God,
 - But he was born under humble circumstances
 - His outwardly appearance didn't impress the Jewish people as someone they should follow
 - He was hated by His Jewish brothers because he spoke truth and demonstrated righteousness
 - They put Him to death because they had evil in their hearts
- Nevertheless, Jesus is the One the Father has appointed to rule over the people of Israel
 - And He will obtain that rule in an appointed day
- Joseph's life is following this script perfectly, picturing Christ in every detail
- Today as we move forward, we're learning still more about how Joseph ends up in Egypt
 - The Lord is working in Joseph's life to bring about the transfer of Israel into Egypt, as He promised to Abraham

Gen. 37:5 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

Gen. 37:6 He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had;

Gen. 37:7 for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf."

Gen. 37:8 Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

- Joseph experiences a dream so powerful and vivid he feels the need to share it with his family
 - The dream involves sheaves of wheat in the field
 - Each brother is binding a sheaf of wheat in the field
 - And the sheaves of Joseph's brothers bow down to his sheaf
 - Symbolically, the sheaves represent the person

- So the clear message in the dream is that someday the brothers would accept Joseph's ruling over the brothers
- Remember, Joseph has already been appointed as the birthright holder over the family by Jacob
- So Joseph already has the right to rule over his brothers
- What's new in the dream is the brothers accepting his rule and submitting to it
- Joseph didn't need the brothers' acceptance in order to be the ruler of the family
 - He was appointed to that role by his father alone
 - But whether the brothers would accept that rule was another matter altogether
 - This dream was predicting that they would one day acknowledge Joseph's authority
 - Even the symbols used in the dream are important
 - The day of his brothers' submission will come in conjunction with a famine that drives them to Joseph looking for grain
 - They will be seeking wheat and will bow down before Joseph in order to receive it
- This is exactly a picture of Israel's relationship with the Lord Jesus
 - Jesus is the Messiah, the appointed One Who rules over the world and Israel
 - He will return in glory one day and rule the nations, including Israel
 - That rule will come with or without the approval of those He rules
 - One day, every tongue will confess and every knee will bow to Christ
 - But the question is whether the stubborn and stiff-necked people of Israel will ever accept Jesus as their Messiah?

- Paul teaches us in Romans 11 that one day the nation of Israel will accept Jesus as Messiah
- And on that day, all Israel will be saved and will receive Jesus upon His second coming
- So Joseph shares this dream with his brothers, and provokes them to great anger
 - His brothers understand its meaning, and assume Joseph is retelling it in their hearing so as to pressure them to submit
 - Didn't Joseph understand that repeating this story wasn't going to win him any friends?
 - Perhaps, but he spoke prophetic truth without fear for how it was received
 - We need to see Joseph not as someone who lacked tact
 - Or as a naive young man who lacked an appreciation for how his words were taken
 - Instead, we need to see Joseph as a man who was obedient to God and spoke truth without fear of the consequences
 - Clearly, this dream was given by the Lord, and therefore the message was a message from God
 - Joseph knew it, and his brothers feared as much
 - In fact, this is the first dream in the Bible where God isn't speaking in the dream
 - Joseph will be a man who hears from God in dreams
 - This is a departure from the patriarchs' experiences
 - When we look at God speaking in dreams in scripture, we need to notice an important pattern
 - God reveals Himself in dreams to both Jews and Gentiles
 - When God doesn't speak personally, He uses symbols and scenes to communicate some truth

- When God uses symbols in Jewish dreams, the Jews themselves are always able to understand the dream without interpreters
- Notice here that both Joseph and the brothers instinctively understand the dream's meaning
 - But when God communicates in symbolic dreams to Gentiles, they must always consult a Jew for the interpretation
 - Joseph interprets for Pharaoh
 - Daniel interprets for Nebuchadnezzar
 - As Paul said, the nation of Israel are the people appointed to receive the oracles of God
- And the dreams continue

Gen. 37:9 Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

Gen. 37:10 He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"

Gen. 37:11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

- Joseph's second dream communicates a similar idea
 - The symbols have changed from wheat sheaves to the sun, moon and stars
 - But the actions are the same
 - These symbols are bowing down before Joseph
 - Once again, Joseph's family instantly recognize the meaning of the symbols
 - The celestial bodies represent the members of Jacob's family
 - These bodies have a pecking order in man's perception
 - The sun is superior to the moon
 - The sun and moon are superior to the stars in the sky

- So Jacob makes the correct interpretation without hesitation
- He recognizes that the sun represents the patriarch of the family, that is Jacob
- And the eleven stars must represent the sons of Jacob
 - There are only eleven since Joseph himself is the twelfth
- Finally, the moon is the mother of the family, but which mother?
 - Logically, it would mean Rachel, since Jacob says “your” mother
 - But Rachel was dead by this time
 - So that means we’re looking at something other than a literal fulfillment in Joseph’s day
- This time Jacob is the one upset at the prospect of such an event
 - It’s one thing for the brothers to submit to Joseph’s authority
 - This was the proper thing to expect given that Jacob had placed Joseph over his brothers
 - So while the brothers may not have liked it, it was a proper thing to suggest
 - On the other hand, it is another thing for a child to suggest that his father would submit to his authority
 - Jacob drew the line at that suggestion
 - Notice again that Moses is calling him Jacob at this point, not Israel
 - The effect of this second dream is much the same as that of the first
 - The brothers hate Joseph all the more
 - Yet his father kept it in his mind
 - Even though Jacob reacted negatively to the suggestion that Joseph would rule over him, he was still willing to consider the possibility
 - He waited to see if it would come to pass

- But the brothers dismissed it altogether
- We know both of these dreams came from God, so therefore we must conclude that God intended the consequences that followed
 - The brothers were already upset at Joseph, so these dreams were designed to provoke that anger and take it further
 - The Lord is working to expose the sin in the brothers' hearts and turn it to good for His purposes
 - What is that greater good God intends?

[Psa. 105:16](#) And He called for a famine upon the land;
He broke the whole staff of bread.

[Psa. 105:17](#) He sent a man before them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.

[Psa. 105:18](#) They afflicted his feet with fetters,
He himself was laid in irons;

[Psa. 105:19](#) Until the time that his word came to pass,
The word of the LORD tested him.

[Psa. 105:20](#) The king sent and released him,
The ruler of peoples, and set him free.

[Psa. 105:21](#) He made him lord of his house
And ruler over all his possessions,

[Psa. 105:22](#) To imprison his princes at will,
That he might teach his elders wisdom.

- The Lord is at work teaching Joseph's elders wisdom
 - Joseph's elders include his father and brothers
 - They will learn important lessons through this experience
- But the good doesn't stop there
 - God is using the brothers' sin to ensure the nation moves into Egypt
 - And the time they spend in Egypt will itself be a good outcome designed to address the sin of Israel
 - We'll learn more about why the time in Egypt was a necessary thing in Chapter 38

- Finally, God will use Joseph's account to teach many generations wisdom about the Lord
 - And about the Lord's anointed, Christ
- Here again, Joseph pictures the Father's work through Jesus
 - When Jesus came for Israel, they rejected Him, just as God designed
 - That rejection was the result of their sin, but the Lord took full advantage of that sin to produce good
 - The rejection of Jesus led to the exile of Israel into the nations, like Israel going to Egypt in Joseph's day
 - The rejection of Jesus and the scattering of Israel made possible the salvation of the Gentile nations
 - In Joseph's day, that salvation comes in the form of the provision of bread
 - In Jesus' day the provision will be through the bread of life, that is the gospel going to the Gentile nations
- Some may be troubled at the prospect of watching the Lord stoking the anger of these boys against their brother
 - Is this fair? Shouldn't the Lord work to assuage the brothers' anger rather than provoke it?
 - While this perspective is understandable, it's simply wrong
 - The Lord is not in the business of accommodating or appeasing sin
 - Rather He is in the business, so to speak, of exposing sin and judging sin and bringing an end to sin ultimately
 - He won't accomplish those goals if He makes it easier for sin and righteousness to coexist
 - Neither in the life of a single individual, nor in the world as a whole
 - Instead, the Lord is working at all times to stir up sin, to bring it to light and turn it to good purposes

- The Lord harnesses sin for His purposes
 - We have to remember that the world became a place of sin after the fall
 - It is the dominion of the enemy and a playground for all manner of depravity and ungodliness
 - When faced with that result, the Lord had two choices
 - To bring immediate judgment and destroy all that deserved that outcome
 - Or forgo judgment for a time, and work with sin to produce a good and righteous outcome
 - Thanks be to God that He chose to work with sin, giving us the opportunity to be born and to be saved

[Gen. 37:12](#) Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem.

[Gen. 37:13](#) Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go."

[Gen. 37:14](#) Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

[Gen. 37:15](#) A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?"

[Gen. 37:16](#) He said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock."

[Gen. 37:17](#) Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

- From our study a few weeks ago, we might think it's a bit strange that Joseph's brothers would venture back into the region of Shechem
 - Shechem is nearly 50 miles to the north of Jacob's home in Hebron
 - Moreover, this is the place where the nation massacred the city
 - Why would they venture so far away and into a place that holds such bad history?
 - First, traveling long distance to pasture flocks was very common, especially in an arid climate like Canaan
 - Secondly, the brothers appear to be trying to escape Joseph's oversight

- The very fact that they have gone away with the herds without Joseph indicates they are trying to avoid him
- Finally, Jacob had owned land in that region, so his sons had grown up there, meaning they would have known the area well
- Jacob becomes concerned for his sons, perhaps because the last time they were in Shechem bad things happened
 - Notice it's Israel that sends Joseph, not Jacob, indicating that this is an act of divine intent
 - Do you think that Joseph had some trepidation in going to find his brothers such a distance away?
 - He will have to travel desert roads alone
 - He will walk at least 2-3 days
 - When he arrives, he will be far from the father's authority, vulnerable to his brothers' hatred
 - But as indicated by the name Israel, we know this request was according to God's purpose
 - God has ensured the brothers' anger was stirred up sufficiently
 - And then He placed the brothers in the right place, far away from his father's oversight and on a major trading route leading to Egypt
 - And for his part, Joseph accepts his father's request without hesitation, but he probably recognized the dangers involved
 - Joseph accepts the responsibility with all the risks it brings
 - Israel seems to phrase the request in the form of a question
 - And Joseph agrees to the request, saying "I will"
 - In fact, in Hebrew it literally means "Behold I am here"
- There is a beautiful picture of Christ formed in this part of the story
 - Like Joseph, Jesus was sent to the fallen world to rescue His brothers
 - The Bible tells us that before Jesus came to earth, He was with the Father

[1John 1:1](#) What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life – [1John 1:2](#) and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us –

- Then Jesus Himself said

[Heb. 10:7](#) "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME
(IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME)
TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'"

- He uses the same words as Joseph, behold...
 - Joseph left his father in Hebron
 - The term Hebron means fellowship or communion
 - This pictures the Son of God leaving the fellowship and communion with the Father in order to go to His people in the world
 - So like Joseph sent to Shechem, Jesus was sent to the fallen, sinful world
 - Shechem represents the sin of the world in this story
 - The name means to shoulder, as in bearing a burden
 - The events in that city were a burden that Jacob had to bear
 - And they represent the burden that Jesus came to bear

[Phil. 2:5](#) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
[Phil. 2:6](#) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
[Phil. 2:7](#) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
[Phil. 2:8](#) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- Even the detail of the man who finds Joseph wandering in the field forms a picture of Jesus
 - Joseph is wandering about Shechem but finds no one
 - Joseph is without a home or even a family where he wanders

- Similarly, Jesus came to a world that was not His home
 - He had nowhere to lay His head and no one to receive him

[Luke 9:57](#) As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.”

[Luke 9:58](#) And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

- At the end of John 7, we’re told everyone with Jesus went to their own home, but Jesus went to the Mt of Olives
- Jesus was literally homeless, wandering in this world since His home could not be found here
- And he had no family except those who obey His word

[Luke 8:20](#) And it was reported to Him, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.”

[Luke 8:21](#) But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”

- Finally, Jesus came for one reason only, to seek and find the lost
 - Just as Joseph has come to Shechem for only one reason, though he will be rejected on that basis
 - Just as it was with Jesus

[John 1:9](#) There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

[John 1:10](#) He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

[John 1:11](#) He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

- But glory to God that John 1 continues into the next two verses

[John 1:12](#) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

[John 1:13](#) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.