

Joseph's Enslavement

Genesis 37:12-36

By Scott Huckaby

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Genesis 37:12-17, Joseph Looks for his Brothers

¹² Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am."

¹⁴ Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. ¹⁵ Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?" ¹⁶ So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks." ¹⁷ And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

v12-14 – What is the significance of Joseph doing a mission for his father?

As Joseph willingly responded to his father's request and authority, so too did Jesus [18]:

John 8:42 – *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me."*

God the Father sent God the Son.

What is the significance of Joseph living with his father when he was sent on his mission?

As Joseph lived with his father when he was given his mission, so did Jesus [19]:

John 17:5 – *Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.*

What does this tell us about Jesus?

That Jesus had set aside His prerogatives as God for His mission to earth (Philippians 2:5-8). He even attributed the miracles He did to the Father...

John 14:10 – *The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.*

Note here that Jesus' words = works ... what Jesus says happens.

What is the significance of Joseph being sent on a mission to assist his brothers?

As Joseph was sent on a mission to help his brethren, so was Jesus [20]:

Galatians 4:4-5 – *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

What does it mean that Jesus redeemed us?

Jesus paid the penalty of our sin so that we may live with Him for eternity.

What is the significance of Shechem where Joseph was to be sent?

Shechem was the place where Dinah, Jacob's daughter was raped by a Hivite prince and this wrong was terribly avenged by the girl's brothers Simeon and Levi (Genesis 34). So, as Joseph was sent to a wicked, worldly place, so was Jesus [21]:

John 3:16 – *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

v15 – What was the significance of Joseph not being able to find his brothers?

As Joseph was sent to his brothers who were not where they should have been, so was Jesus [22]:

Luke 19:10 – *the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

Before we were saved, we were lost in a condition not where God would have us.

Genesis 37:18-24, Reuben Speaks Against Murder

¹⁸ Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. ¹⁹ Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!" ²⁰ Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has

devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"²¹ But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him."²² And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.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.

v18 – What is the significance of Joseph's brothers plotting to kill him?

As Joseph's brothers conspired to kill him, so too did the brethren of Jesus [23]:

John 11:51-53 – *being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation... Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.*

v19-20 – What is the significance of Joseph being ridiculed for his dream?

As Joseph was ridiculed for being a king, so was Jesus [24]:

Matthew 27:29 – *When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"*

What is the significance of Joseph being rejected only for the words he spoke?

As Joseph was rejected for what he spoke of, so was Jesus [25]:

John 12:48 – *He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*

There will be no eternal life for those not believing the words of Jesus.

What is the significance of the idea Joseph's dream could be proven false by killing him?

As his brothers thought Joseph's dream could be proven false by killing him, so too did the brethren of Jesus [26]:

Matthew 27:42 – *If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.*

This is Satan's motive for killing off the Jews during the Tribulation... no Jews, no Kingdom promise fulfilled.

v21-22 – What is the significance of Reuben trying to appease the blood lust of his brothers?

As Reuben attempted to appease the desire of his brothers to kill Joseph, so too did Pilate attempt to do the same with the Jews regarding Jesus [27]:

John 19:10 – *From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.*

v23 – What is the significance of Joseph being stripped of his tunic?

As Joseph was stripped of his tunic, so too was Jesus stripped of his clothes [28]:

Matthew 27:28 – *And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.*

v24 – What is the significance of Joseph being cast into an empty pit?

As Joseph was cast into an empty pit, so too was Jesus placed into an empty tomb [29]:

Matthew 27:59-60 – *When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock*

What was the significance of Jesus being buried in a new tomb?

It fulfilled prophecy:

Isaiah 53:9 – *they made His grave with the wicked— But with the rich at His death*

A new tomb was something only the rich could afford.

Genesis 37:25-28, Judah Speaks Against Murder

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.*

v25-28 – What is the significance of Joseph's brothers sitting down after casting him into the pit?

As Joseph's brothers sat down to satisfy worldly interests, so too did those who crucified Jesus [30]:

Matthew 27:35-36 – *Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots... Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there.*

What is the significance of what the company of Ishmaelites was transporting?

Among the spices was myrrh, one of the gifts of the Magi and was commonly used for burial [31]:

Luke 23:55-56 – *And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils.*

Myrrh is also likely a component of the blend of spices known as spikenard which a woman used to anoint Jesus...

Mark 14:3, 8 – *as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head... She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial.*

What is the significance of Judah pointing out, “he is our brother and our flesh” (v. 27)?

As Joseph was of the same flesh as his brothers, so too is the church with Christ [32]:

Ephesians 5:30 – *For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.*

How are we of Christ’s flesh and bones?

- We make up the body of Christ; each member has unique gifts and function just as does the body.
- Also, we are children of God... thus we are in the family of God because we are related spiritually.

What is the significance of the brothers selling Joseph into slavery instead of killing him?

As an alternative to killing Joseph was proposed by Judah, so too did Pilate give the Jews that same opportunity, but they chose Barabbas instead [33]:

John 18:39 – *But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?*

What is the significance of the brothers selling Joseph for 20 shekels of silver?

As Joseph was sold for the price of a slave, so too was Jesus (20p in 1900 BC, 30p in 33 AD, inflation) [34]:

Matthew 26:14-15 – *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.*

What is the significance of Judah being the brother with the idea to sell Joseph?

The Hebrew name Judah in Greek is Judas [35]

What is the significance of there being two different leaders (Reuben & Judah) judging what was to happen to Joseph?

As Joseph’s fate was considered by Reuben and Judah, so too was Jesus’ fate considered by two different governmental rulers, Pilate and Herod [36]:

Luke 23:6-7 – *When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.*

Genesis 37:29-36, The Cover-up of the Crime

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.

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

v29-30 – Why did Reuben react the way he did when he found Joseph gone from the pit?

As the oldest, Reuben’s father would expect from him an explanation of what happened to Joseph.

v31 – What is the significance of Joseph’s tunic being dipped in blood?

As Joseph’s tunic was dipped in blood, so too would Jesus’ robe be when he returns [37]

Revelation 19:11-13 – *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True... He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood*

What is the significance of Reuben yielding to peer pressure to go along with the plot to be rid of Joseph?

As Reuben, the leader of the band of brothers yielded to the plan to be rid of Joseph, so did Pilate [38]

Mark 15:15 – *So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.*

What was the significance of it being goat's blood on the tunic?

The Passover animal which points to the sacrifice of Christ could be a goat [39]:

Exodus 12:5 – *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.*

It is also interesting to note that goats were specified to be used on the Day of Atonement...

Leviticus 16:8 – *Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat.*

v32 – What is the significance of Joseph's brothers lying about his death?

As Joseph's brothers lied about him being alive, so too did the soldiers guarding the tomb of Jesus lie about His resurrection [40]:

Matthew 28:13 – *Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.'*

v33-35 – How did Jacob react to the news about Joseph?

He tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and went into mourning. He refused to be comforted by his other children.

v36 – What is the significance of Joseph being taken to Egypt?

As Joseph escaped death by being taken to Egypt, so too did Jesus [41]:

Matthew 2:14 – *So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt*

Why do we do we spend time looking at all these details that point to Christ?

- They are beyond coincidence
- They reinforce that God is in control of events and all Scripture is inspired by God.
- God arranged for all these details to happen and recorded them to reveal more about Jesus.

How is it encouraging to remember the Bible is inspired?

- We can believe the promises of God.
- We don't have to wonder about what is true.
- We know we have an absolutely reliable resource.

How is it encouraging to remember that God is in control of history?

- When we see disturbing trends (like the loss of our freedoms and not having a voice in the government) we can be confident that God is allowing this for a reason.
 - Evil must have its day and run its course to prepare the world for the Millennial Kingdom.
- The worse it gets, the sooner it will be for us to be with Jesus!
 - Luke 21:28 – *when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near*
- End time events will unfold at an accelerating, exponential rate.
 - Daniel 9:26 – *The end of it shall be with a flood*
The "it" here is a veiled reference to the inter-advent era (the Church Age). The end of "it" will be like a flood, characterized by rapidly unfolding events.

Genesis 38 – Meanwhile back in Canaan, Judah arranged for Tamar to be a wife for his son who died then he gave her to his second son who also died but the third son wasn't old enough yet. Tamar got tired of waiting and tricked Judah into getting pregnant by him and bore twins, the firstborn was Perez and he was in the genealogy of Jesus.