

We are on the verge of one of the great lessons of the Bible.

If you had never read the Bible and begin reading in Genesis, you would already be suspicious that this lesson is being taught.

But, now the lesson begins with unassailable force and it will intensify throughout the story of Joseph.

Many of you have learned the lesson personally in many ways.

*My first pastoral ministry was in Vermillion. We spent 3.5 years there.*

*The church went from 5 to 120 and then we lost most of our core leadership families...*

*and it was evident that the church was going to close. I resigned in order to begin looking for other churches.*

*It was one of the most difficult times in my life...*

*It was what God used to bring us to Beresford which has been a place of great blessing for me and my family.*

*I didn't know that then. But I did believe that God was in control.*

*And, God provided for us even though we went for months without full salary. (McDonalds)*

*All of these things God worked for my good and for His glory... though I had no idea of what He was doing.*

### **Behold, the secret sovereignty of God.**

We now enter the last of the three major sections of Genesis.

Chs. 1-11 The foundation of the Bible... the first 2,000 years. Five major events:

Creation

The fall

The first murder

The flood

The scattering at Babel... we learn the basics about God, man, sin and its consequences.

Chs. 12-26 The Patriarchs... where we learn to follow and cling to the promise of God.

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob... God is the God who makes and keeps promises, even to messed-up people.

Chs. 37-50 (Gen. 37:2) "The generations of Jacob" = what comes out of Jacob.

We are now going to follow the adventures of Jacob's sons... particularly Joseph.

We are going to learn of the secret sovereign workings of God in and through all kinds of events.

We are going to find out how it is that the children of Israel end up in Egypt.

It is not by their own design. It is by God's design... as is everything that ultimately happens to us all.

God is in control of everything.

If you thought that you heard about the promise of God over and over through Chs. 12-26...

Prepare to hear in coming weeks over and over that God is in control of everything.

Kreol: Bondye controle tout bagay.

Even, or especially, when people (God's people) are not in control of anything.

### **I. God's sovereign choosing and the hatred of the world.**

We learned that God chose to show grace to Noah. God chose Abraham. God selected Jacob and not Esau.

Now God picks out Joseph from among all of his brothers.

Up until this point in Genesis we know virtually nothing about Joseph except for this:

He is the youngest of all the brothers except for Benjamin, his only full brother. The other brothers have different mothers.

His mother has died delivering Benjamin.

His older half-brothers have already shown that they are deceptive and dangerous.

Now we get to know who Joseph is.

#### **Honesty and the love of a father vss. 2-4**

So, his brothers hate him for two reasons:

First, he is honest. This is simply the way of the world.

People don't like the one who shows them up, who tells on them, who outworks them, the one who is different.

His brothers hate him for that.

Second, he is favored.

Joseph is "the son of [Jacob's] old age" = we don't know how Benjamin fits into this.

Maybe the favoritism began before Benjamin was born. In any case, Joseph is the favorite at this point.

So, Jacob loved him more than all (favoritism runs in the family... back to Abraham)

Because of this, his father gives him a technicolor dreamcoat. That's the modern translation.

It was probably colorful and full length. It set Joseph apart as special.

Maybe his brothers were fearful that he would receive the blessing and birthright. They were Jealous.

Now, a third reason for their hatred.

Joseph has had dreams... and he tells them to his brothers. Maybe that is unwise.

The dreams show that God has picked him out to be honored over them and by them.

Are they even more jealous? Are they irritated? Are they fearful that the dreams might come true?

In any case, they only hate him more.

We are going to learn in the coming weeks that Joseph is one of the great heroes in the Bible.

In some ways he is like Jesus... and reminds us of the sort of hero that the Messiah will need to be.

Joseph is innocent, beloved of his father, sent by his father to his brothers.

He is sold for 20 pieces of silver. In prison he find himself innocent between two criminals.

He prophesies one to be saved, the other to be destroyed.

None of this would have happened but for his brothers' resentment, their plot to destroy him, and then sell him.

Joseph will be tempted by sin and he will be victorious.

He trusts God through horrendous injustice.

He ends up, for his brothers, being their lord and their savior.

Joseph has two dreams at 17 years of age that give us some little idea of what is coming.

### **Dream: the sheaves vss. 5-8**

There is no need for interpretation. His brothers figure out what the dream means and they don't like it one bit.

God has picked him out. God has chosen him... to rule over them.

God picks us out for a purpose.

It doesn't mean that we should not work hard and make the most of ourselves... quite the contrary.

You don't know what God has in store for you so you ought to work diligently to prepare yourself in every possible way.

### **Dream: the sun, moon, and stars vss. 9-11**

The dream has exactly the same meaning... and this time even his father is bothered. His brothers are jealous.

But we learn something else. "His father kept the story in his mind."

Why? His father has learned something about God. He knows that God chooses people for His purpose.

Jacob knows that God speaks to people through dreams... God did with him... and with Abraham.

Jacob is wise enough to know that God might be at work.

But, why are his brothers jealous? Well, this is how the world is.

When the world sees God at work it screams, "unfair! unjust! Why does God think He can do what He wants?"

People in the world think that people ought to determine the course of history and they don't like God's interference.

This is human pride and arrogance and we see it everywhere.

We want to be in control. We want to be great. We don't like God being great.

The world does not say, "God, how can I seek to understand what You are doing and live accordingly?"

So, the world hates people who are seeking to live according to God and His will.

And, God then uses the actions of these jealous, arrogant people to accomplish the very thing He wants...

Which is where we go next.

## **II. God uses the evil acts of the unrighteous to accomplish His purpose.**

### **Read Gen. 37:12-36**

#### **Faithfulness vss. 12-17**

Again we find Joseph carrying out his father's wishes, though he has some difficulty. He asks directions and finds his brothers.

All this serves to put Joseph in a place where no one but his brothers knows where he is. And, he is in danger.

#### **Treachery vss. 18-28**

Why? Why would his own brothers do this? Jealousy, Envy. And jealousy has caused a brother to do something like this before.

**Gen. 4:3-8** Cain let jealousy get the best of him.

Do you know what jealousy is? It is wanting what someone else has and being upset that you cannot have it.

Prov. 14:30 "Envy rots the bones."

James 3:16 "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice."

How about you? Are you jealous of someone? Is there envy in your heart? Don't let it take root.

For these brothers, not only does it take root... it bears fruit. This time the fruit of jealousy is not murder.

They back away from that and throw Joseph into what is probably a dry cistern.

Ruben has a thought to rescue Joseph. He's the oldest. Maybe he feels responsible. In any case, events get out of his control.

If Ruben really wanted to save Joseph, he should have had the guts to say something. He doesn't.

Judah sees an opportunity to make some money and he takes it. Joseph is gone.

Now what do they do? They lie. It is the family's besetting sin... passed on from one generation to another.

#### **Deception vss. 29-35**

They lie to their father and then they try to comfort him. How pathetic. Do you see what sin does? What jealousy does?

They are no better off... and their father is going to spend the rest of his life mourning his lost son.

Well... that is what he thinks, and for a long time that will be what happens.

But, God is at work. God is doing something.

#### **God's plan vs. 36**

Later, when Joseph finally meets his brothers again and reveals himself to them, He will tell them that God was in this.

**Gen. 45:4-8** God used their cruelty to Joseph for their good and for His glory!

They didn't know this. Joseph didn't know at the time what God was doing. But, God did. He always does.

What is God doing in your life right now? He has a purpose in it. Seek Him. Follow Him... and watch what He does.