

00-03-05c

We are ready now to resume our study in the book of Genesis, chapter 38. We're actually right at the end of chapter 37 and the beginning of chapter 38. A lot of what is taking place here in the despicable treatment of Joseph by his brothers is obvious to us that the hatred within the family would come to this point.

And we cannot help, as I said earlier, from seeing the parallels to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was despised and rejected by his own brethren in Israel. And you're tempted to just launch off into allegory. There are so many interesting parallels or coincidences or foreshadowings, perhaps, in this.

If you think about the mechanism by which Joseph is removed, the agency of his brothers, as Dan noted during the break, isn't it interesting that he's put in this pit, he's in the heart of the earth. And then is presented to his father as dead. And the evidence of the death that is presented to his father is the blood.

It's the blood of the goat. And of course the blood of goats and bulls will be used in Israel to symbolize and foreshadow the atoning work of Jesus Christ throughout the Levitical priesthood period. And far earlier, going all the way back to Cain and Abel, the evidence that comes before the father is the blood and the skin, if you will.

And there's a fascinating study that can be pursued in the Levitical offerings in the symbolism of the blood and what is done with the blood. When is it sprinkled? When is it applied to various things for purification? And what is done with the skin of the animals at certain points, the sin offering and trespass offering and so forth, where there are specific instructions for the disposition of each different part of the animal. But here, the primary thing we see is that Jacob, once again, through a tragedy and through a seeming disaster, God is working this together for good.

From Jacob's perspective, it's enough to send him down to Sheol in mourning for the rest of his life. There was a traditional period of mourning that would be observed seven days later on in Genesis. We'll find that Joseph will mourn his father Jacob's passing for seven days.

When Joseph himself finally passes away, I think they mourn him 70 days. And in various parts of Scripture, you find these periods of mourning. Jacob basically says, I will never stop mourning.

I will go down to my grave still in mourning. I will go down to Sheol to my son in mourning. And his father wept for him.

And the love that he had for his son, there was no necessity for this to take place. It took place because of sin. It took place because of problems within that family that had

separated the brothers from their father.

This schism and rift. They know what this is going to do to their father and they do it anyway. If they really loved Jacob, they would never put him through this.

Why do they do it? They are so anxious to rid themselves of Joseph that they will put their father, whom they ostensibly love, through this. And the father winds up bearing the grief. Joseph winds up paying the penalty for the sins of these brothers.

There are just many ways you can observe this. As we were talking about during the break, there are just so many things. There is not a wasted word in Scripture.

Every word in these verses has significance. We must necessarily move forward and leave some of this for a later time or for our own personal meditations. But just as an example, if you go back to verse 25, what does that verse say? When the brothers sat down to eat a meal, they lifted their eyes and looked.

And we know that that is the marker of something significant. Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked when he saw the mountain where Isaac would be sacrificed. And when they lift up their eyes and look, this is going to be the means.

This ties us back to Abraham and Isaac approaching Mount Moriah and the near sacrifice of Isaac. But what they see instead of a mountain is a company of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. And what do they have with them? They have camels bearing spices, balm, and myrrh on their way to carry them down to Egypt.

Well, you think about this cargo. Why is it mentioned? Do we need to know what the cargo of the Ishmaelites is? You could have just said they came with their camels. But it tells us specifically that they came from Gilead.

It tells us specifically that they are carrying spices, balm, and myrrh. And without delving deeply into the Hebrew words here, if you turn forward a few pages in Genesis to the return of the brothers, they've gone down to Egypt. You know this story where Joseph accuses them of being spies.

He keeps one of the brothers and sends the rest of them back. And they don't want to go back down there because they have to take Benjamin. Jacob doesn't want to let them go.

But they finally convince him that they have to buy more grain in Egypt. They've been down there and back once. And in order to return, Joseph said, you will never see my face again unless you bring your youngest brother, Benjamin, with you.

And, of course, they know that they can't do this. And they seem to have more concern for Jacob now than they did before. But they know that that would kill Jacob if they tried to take him down there.

But in the first part of chapter 43 of Genesis, they have to talk Jacob into letting Benjamin go because they're going to starve to death otherwise. And so Judah offers himself as surety. So Jacob finally consents in verse 11.

Their father Israel said to them, If it must be so, then do this. Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man, a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. And so when the brothers go back down the second time with Benjamin to approach Joseph to buy grain, they're going to be bearing with them the very same type of cargo that, for all we know, Joseph was lashed to the saddle of a camel that was bearing sacks full of this stuff when he went down as a slave.

And it's going to be such an irony when the brothers show up and now they are accompanied in their journey to Egypt by the same things that Joseph was accompanied by when he came down to Egypt. He was in a subservient role, and now they are in a subservient role, and they are going to be bowing down. And the reversal is so complete that it's pictured here just in these little details with the things that accompany the brothers when they come and bow themselves down yet again because this is the trip where Joseph is going to reveal himself.

And the revelation of the salvation of God through Joseph when he goes down with the caravan is mirrored and yet with a twist when the brothers come down with Benjamin. And they have in their hands these various... And they're offering... You figure Joseph, probably the last thing he wants to see is another bag of myrrh or another bunch of spices. He probably associates that with the process by which he came down.

But I'm sure it has already occurred to you that when the Lord Jesus Christ was put in the heart of the earth, when they took him down from the cross and prepared his body, the scripture tells us that the myrrh and aloes and spices and so forth that this was a part of what accompanied the women when they came and prepared his body and then put it into the tomb. And so all of these things are put in the Word of God under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to encourage us to think. And we don't have, as we talked about on Friday, God very seldom puts an exact one-for-one correspondence.

You would think, well, why was Joseph not sold for 30 pieces of silver and it would match Judas betraying the Lord for 30 pieces. But it says 20 pieces of silver. Well, that was the going rate for a slave in that day.

But also, if you think about it, these men who swung through Gilead to pick up these bombs and spices to take down to Egypt, why did they do that? Well, they're truckers, they're caravaneers. They mark these things up when they deliver them and they will sell the spices and bombs of Gilead for more than what they paid. And when they get Joseph down there and sell him to Potiphar, they're going to sell him for more than what they paid.

And if I had to guess at the number of shekels that they received for Joseph, it wouldn't surprise me at all to find out that it's 30. But God is obviously the master of all of the forms of literature that are employed in the Bible. And a lot of times he will leave things suggested rather than stated and implied rather than explicit in a passage because that is what stimulates our thinking.

That's what puts grist in our mill so that we can meditate. And it's one of the things that makes the Word of God so fascinating to study. If it was a product of human imagination, you would find these sort of tired, trite, obvious comparisons.

You can read literature that's been written in imitation of the Bible, for example. You have the Book of Mormon, if you want a good example. You read that and you can see ahead of time.

But the Word of God always draws us forward into deeper truth rather than hitting a wall of obviousness beyond which you can't go. And this is another example of that. But there are so many things.

I could point out half a dozen others here in this account. But we want to move forward now to look at chapter 38 because this is a break in the story. But two things about this remind me of the book we're currently reading in our family time at night when we're going through some of the Tarzan books.

And you think, well, the movies of Tarzan don't really inspire you to want to go read the books. But Edgar Rice Burroughs is really a good author and he's written some fascinating accounts and you can learn a lot about the animals. He thinks of evolution and there are some things that we can use as teaching points that he says in his books about how Tarzan has returned to the status of his forebearers.

Anyway, one of the things in the book we're currently reading, which is the return of Tarzan, is for one thing he's run across these people who have this fabulous ancient civilization that has fallen down in ruins and they've devolved back to being primitive people. But they wear these big gold jewelry all over the place. And the city of Opar, the gold of the city of Opar, figures prominently in several of the Tarzan stories.

And it reminds me of the Ishmaelites who are notorious for having these gold earrings and golden jewelry. And you can see them afar off. Well, there's the Ishmaelites.

They're all covered up with their... And you see people even today that run around with chains and lots of heavy gold jewelry as a mark of their prosperity. But also, a lot of times in a good story... And you find this in movies and lots of other examples where the author will be weaving two or three strands of narrative and interchanging them. You'll see the forward progress of one thread and then you'll cut away to something else.

And it'll be a different story. You look at that for a while and then you cut back to the first

one to see what happened. Edgar Rice Burroughs does this every couple of chapters.

You're watching Jane Porter and her adventures for a couple of chapters. And then you cut over to Tarzan. And Tarzan gets himself in a scrape and is an extremist.

And then you're left with a cliffhanger and you go back to Jane. And here she is in the lifeboat bobbing around about to die of thirst. And just when you think all is lost, well, you cut back to Tarzan.

And he's gone off and gotten himself captured by a bunch of these golden half-ape brute people from Opar. It cuts back and forth. Well, you have this happening here.

And just when you're really getting all interested in what's going to happen to Joseph being sold down in Egypt, it cuts away and you're back up in Palestine with Judah. And you think, well, why is this here? Well, it'll become clear when we go through. Because it came to pass at that time.

And this is not just another wow consecutive or something in Hebrew. This is a phrase in Hebrew that means at that same time. It was at this time that Judah moved away.

You get the idea that the whole household of Jacob, a pall of gloom, has descended over it after this episode with Joseph. And Judah never was too keen on this whole idea to begin with. And so he leaves.

And, of course, he feels culpability. He's the one that suggested that they sell him into slavery. So at that time, Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite whose name was Hira.

Now, Adullam is up north. This is the same Adullam where David will hang out later on. It's north and west of Hebron.

And it's south and west of Bethlehem. You can find it on a Bible map if you want to look. But he's up.

It's still off in the general direction of when they went up to Shechem and so forth. But it's not all that far from Bethlehem and the region that Judah's descendants will eventually occupy. So he's up there.

And he visits this Adullamite whose name was Hira. Maybe they had had some dealings in grazing their flocks up that direction. So Hira is his friend up there in Adullam.

And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. And he married her and went into her. So she conceived in Boresan.

And he called his name Ur. She conceived again in Boresan. And she called his name Onan.

Then she conceived yet again in Boresan. And called his name Shelah. He was at Kazebo when she bore him.

Then Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn. And her name was Tamar. But Ur, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord.

And the Lord killed him. Judah said to Onan, go into your brother's wife and marry her. And raise up an heir to your brother.

But Onan knew that the heir would not be his. And it came to pass when he went into his brother's wife. That he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother.

And the thing which he did displeased the Lord. Therefore he killed him also. Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law.

Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown. For he said, lest he also die like his brothers. So Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

Now in the process of time, the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died. So Judah is now a widower. And Judah was comforted and went up to his sheep shearers at Timnah.

He and his friend Hira, the Adolamite. Timnah is about 14 miles on further from Adolam. I'm sorry, 4 miles.

And it was told Tamar, saying, look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep. So she took off her widow's garments. Covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself.

And sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown. And she was not given to him as a wife.

When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot. Because she had covered her face. Then he turned in to her by the way and said, please let me come in to you.

For he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. So she said, what will you give me that you may come in to me? He said, I will send a young goat from the flock. So she said, will you give it to me as a pledge till you send it? He said, what pledge shall I give you? So she said, your signet and cord and your staff that is in your hand.

Then he gave them to her and went in to her and she conceived by him. So she arose and went away and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood. And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adolamite to receive his pledge from the woman's hand.

But he did not find her. He asked the men of the place saying, where is the harlot who was openly by the roadside? They said there was no harlot in this place. So he returned

to Judah and said, I cannot find her.

Also the men of the place said there was no harlot in this place. So Judah said, let her take them for herself. That means the signet and the cord and the staff.

Lest we be shamed. For I sent this young goat and you have not found her. And it came to pass about three months after that Judah was told saying, Tamar, your daughter-in-law has played the harlot.

Furthermore, she is with child by harlotry. So Judah said, bring her out and let her be burned. When she was brought out, she said to her father-in-law saying, by the man to whom these belong, I am with child.

She said, please determine whose these are, the signet and cord and staff. So Judah acknowledged them and said, she has been more righteous than I because I did not give her to Shelah my son. And he never knew her again.

It came to pass at the time for giving birth that, behold, twins were in her womb. And so it was when she was giving birth that the one put out his hand and the midwife took a scarlet thread and bound it on his hand saying, this one came out first. Then it happened as he drew back his hand that his brother came out unexpectedly.

And she said, how did you break through? This breach be upon you. Therefore his name was called Perez, which means to break out or break through. It means to breach in the sense of breaching a wall.

Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand and his name was called Zerah. And in this scenario, Zerah is the firstborn because the first part to come out of the womb, if it's his hand, then he's first. But then his hand drew back in and his younger brother slipped out ahead of him.

And so that's why they called him Breacher, the one who breaks through. So that's the story. We have it interposed here just as Joseph has been to all appearances, as far as his father is concerned, killed.

His blood is on the coat. And Judah has gone up and gotten married. And we saw in our chronological study that Judah needed to be old enough to do some of these things.

And by straightening out the chronology, he is. So we know from chapter 37 and verse 2 that Joseph was 17 years old at this time. So when he gets sold into slavery, he's 17.

It is going to be, if you recall, when Joseph is 39 that his father is going to come down to Egypt. And so from 17 to 39, we have 22 years intervening. From the last time Jacob saw Joseph until he sees him again, there's an interval of 22 years.

So when Judah goes up to his friend the Adulamite and marries the daughter of Shua, we

have time now in this 22-year period for his wife to conceive and bear these three sons, and for them to attain the age of 17 or 18 that would be necessary to get married. And we know that when Ur gets married, he's probably in his mid to late teen years. And then he dies.

And then the next brother, when he's old enough, he marries Tamar. And then he is killed by the Lord. And the third one is not quite old enough yet.

So everything tracks. It makes good sense here. And you would expect that this would be anywhere from 15 to 20 years after the fact that this episode takes place with Tamar on the road.

We know this because when the 70 who accompany Jacob down to Egypt are listed, two of those who are listed as coming down into the land of Egypt with Jacob are Perez and Zerah. So these sons of Judah, which are sort of grandsons slash sons, have been born by the time Jacob goes down to Egypt at the end of Genesis, and they're numbered among the 70. So this all works out fine.

But there's a lot we could say about this. Two things I want to point out. First of all is that when she waylays Judah by the side of the road, and she says, give me a pledge, and he gives her his signet and cord and staff, and then she goes away with them, you get the idea that she knows that she has conceived.

How she could know this is beyond me, but apparently she knows because it says she conceived by him in verse 18, so she arose and went away. This is her plan. She keeps these things for a reason, because she knows later on she's going to have to prove the paternity of the child, or in this case children, that are in her womb.

But what is the payment that Judah agrees to make? It's a kid of the flock. It's a goat. We've already seen the significance that a goat has played in these previous two instances.

And it keeps hammering on it. It mentions this goat like three different times. Because he mentions it in verse 17, I will send you a young goat from the flock, and he gives her the pledge in the meantime, and then he sends the goat in verse 20 by the hand of the Adullamite, and he can't find her anywhere.

And in verse 22, men of the place said there was no harlot, and in 23 Judah says, let her take them for herself, lest we be shamed, for I sent this young goat, and you have not found her. So once again, you have a deception taking place. In this case, Judah is the one who is deceived.

He's deceived once again by clothing, because she veils her face and is covered up. And once again in this deception, there is a goat involved, as there have been in the previous two deceptions. And you get the idea that Judah himself is suffering some of the same

fate that has dogged the footsteps of his father Jacob.

And when the sons are born, and you have the episode with the scarlet thread, why does it bother to tell us all this? Well, scarlet thread is going to show up later in Scripture as a mark for salvation of Rahab the harlot. She's going to bind scarlet cord in the window. Scarlet, of course, the scarlet thread that binds the hyssop to the stick in the cleansing of the leper in Leviticus chapter 14.

And scarlet has significance, obviously speaking of blood, and in a larger sense of salvation. But isn't it interesting here at the end that when these two sons are born, because there has been a wrong perpetrated by Judah, his lack of faith, he doesn't turn to God when his sons are dying. And his sons died because they were wicked and displeased the Lord, but he doesn't figure that out, and he refuses to give his youngest son.

And so as a result, the offspring that are raised up for him are from his own loins, as it were. But these two sons, Perez and Zerah, these are going to be the legacy of Judah. Everybody that's in the tribe of Judah is going to be descended from these two sons that were born through this deception.

And God, again, even in the midst of this deception, in the midst of wrong, this is the line of Judah. Which one of these sons do you think the Lord Jesus Christ has descended from? It's Perez. You find this out if you go to Ruth 4.18 and also in Matthew 1.3. And once again, the idea of the elder being superseded by the younger.

Zerah had his hand out there first. Technically, he's the firstborn, but he withdraws and the younger slips out, and he's going to actually be the line of promise. And then through him will come the great ones in the tribe of Judah, David and ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ.

So once again, there is an amazing amount of information in this chapter. And it reminds us of the importance of personal responsibility. Judah has not taken responsibility at this point for his role in what happened to Joseph.

He hasn't owned up. He hasn't acknowledged to his father the deception that he perpetrated, the sin that he committed against his brother. It's still a big secret.

And as a result of perpetrating that deception through the use of clothing and a goat, he himself, echoing his father, is going to be deceived with clothing and a goat. And yet it does not stop the forward progress of the plan of God. Judah's name is going to be great in Israel.

He is going to be the father of the kings of Israel. He is the direct paternal ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And it is a monument to the grace of God that despite our failures, which can be egregious, there is nothing that can stop the plan of God.

There is nothing that can remove us from His mercy. There is nothing that can take away His love. But we do have to place ourselves in a position to receive it.

And Judah is going to do so. These brothers are all going to learn a powerful lesson when they come face to face with Joseph and find themselves bowing before him just as the dreams foretold. And they are glad to do it.

And they recognize the salvation that has come to them through God's mercy and grace through this brother that they maltreated. So it is a reminder to us in our own lives that we can tend to dwell on the past like the widow of Zarephath. Are you calling my old sins to remembrance that this bad thing has happened to me? God does have lessons for us to learn in each trial and tribulation of life.

Each test, each challenge, there is something to be learned. But He is not just punishing us for old sins. He is seeking to turn us and to get us to pay attention to His plan and His purpose and to respond to His grace.

There is no one rooting for us, if you will, more so than the Lord God. He has given us great resources in the person of His Spirit and in the form of His Word. And that's our opportunity.

We can be educated by these examples in Scripture. You can look at Jacob. You can look at Judah.

You can look at Joseph himself and the various roles that they play in the unfolding of God's plan of salvation and see that there is suffering involved and there is sin and failure involved. But in everything, God is working for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose. So that's our great opportunity as we live from day to day.

We may think, well, my life is not on the epic biblical proportions that we're looking at here. Yes, it is. Our life, our soul is just as valuable to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ died just as much for you and for me as He did for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Judah, anyone else you want to name in the pages of Scripture. And God values our lives and He has spent just as much time and attention on the details of your life and my life as He has on these sample individuals that are found in the Word of God. And we are that valuable.

We are that important. And our decisions do matter that much. And it is critically important for us to remember that and to avail ourselves of the grace of God to benefit from His compassion and His desire for us to have a life that is meaningful and has a purpose.

And so even in the midst of looking at what is kind of a dismal chapter in the family of

Jacob here, you can see the hand of God at work and there is a great hope on the horizon that out of all of this mess, God is going to not only deliver all of the people involved but glorify Himself in the process and foreshadow the greatest work of salvation in all of history, which is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And this is a good place for us to stop. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the privilege of being included in Your plan. We thank You for our great salvation and the love and the faith and the hope of the Lord Jesus Christ as He gave Himself on our behalf. We know that He is seated at Your right hand and that He intercedes for us.

We know that He has sent to us Your Spirit to enable us, to guide us, to activate within our souls the power of Your Word. And we pray that all of those things will be visible to us, will be prominent in our thinking so that we can make each day count, we can redeem the time, even though the days are evil, and be examples of Your saving work and Your saving power. And we can reflect the glory that You have designed us to reflect in this life.

We thank You for the great hope that we have for life with You and with our Lord Jesus Christ in the Millennial Kingdom and beyond. And we pray that we will be found faithful, that we will be servants of whom it can be said, Well done. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.