

Introduction

1. When I was a college resident assistant my senior year, on multiple occasions I received anonymous late-night calls from someone mercilessly berating me:
 - a. It always puzzled me because I was a nice guy
 - b. I was a responsible, trustworthy, faithful resident assistant
 - c. I always treated the guys on the floor reasonably, even the troublemakers
 - d. I was fair in how I upheld the rules
 - e. But, in spite of this someone obviously still HATED me and they made it clear in their late night rantings that it was because I was a Christian
2. We're starting our study of Joseph this morning and we're going to see something similar in our passage for today: Genesis 37:1-11
3. I'm going to break out passage down into two sections:
 - a. In the first four verses we'll see how Joseph's brothers hated him because he was a faithful and trustworthy son and favored by his father
 - b. In the remaining seven verses we'll see how Joseph's brothers hated him for revealing God's plan

A. Joseph was hated by his brothers because he was faithful and trustworthy and favored by his father (READ 37:1-4)

1. The first thing we learn about Joseph is that even as a young boy he was faithful and trustworthy:
 - a. Verse 2 tells us that Joseph was out pasturing his father's flocks along with his brothers and half-brothers:
 - 1) It stresses the fact that he was young, just "**seventeen years of age**" and adds further emphasis by declaring that he was "**still a youth**"
 - 2) Joseph was the second youngest of Jacob's 12 sons (only Benjamin was younger) and he was 10 years younger than Rueben, the eldest
 - b. Now, verse 2 tells us that after shepherding alongside his brothers, Joseph brought a "**evil (or bad) report**" about his brothers back to Jacob:
 - 1) Some interpret this phrase "**bad report**" to mean that Joseph was a tattler and intended to get his brothers into trouble
 - 2) Others interpret it to mean that Joseph was disparaging or maligning his brothers, possibly saying things that were untrue
 - 3) However, others—and I am in this camp—believe that Joseph was doing what any faithful and trustworthy son would do:
 - a) Jump down to verses 12-14 (READ)
 - b) We see here a very similar situation, but it contains some interesting details

- c) Joseph's brothers are in Shechem tending to their father's flocks and what does Jacob do?
 - d) He sends Joseph to go to Shechem to check on the welfare of his brothers and Jacob's flocks and says "**bring word back to me**"
 - 4) It's quite possible that this is what we see back up in v.2:
 - a) Joseph apparently witnessed something that concerned him about his brothers' behavior and reported it back to Jacob
 - b) This shouldn't shock us because everything we learn about Jacob's brothers in the rest of the chapter are not just bad but outright evil
 - c) Joseph is portrayed as quite the opposite throughout his entire story—from right here in Genesis 37 through Genesis 50
 - c. So, contrary to the suggestion that Joseph was a tattletale or a sought to malign or disparage his brothers, I propose that these verses reveal that he was a faithful and trustworthy son looking out for the best interests of his father and his father's flocks
2. The second thing we learn about Joseph was that he was favored by his father Jacob (RE-READ 37:3):
- a. We learn that "**Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons because he was the son of his old age**"
 - 1) This indicates that Jacob favored Joseph over his other sons because he was one of the last sons he had; in fact, he was the second youngest only to Benjamin
 - 2) Both Joseph and Benjamin were born to Rachel, whom prior passages reveal Jacob loved more than Leah and his two concubines
 - 3) The Bible doesn't state why he favored Joseph over Benjamin, but it might have been because Joseph was the first born of Leah
 - 4) It might also have been because Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin
 - b. Jacob's favoritism led to him making a special garment for Joseph:
 - 1) The words used for the garment are a bit obscure so it's not clear if this was a multi- or vari-colored robe or simply a long robe that extended all the way down to the ankles
 - 2) Most English translations render it as multicolored or ornate robe because the LXX treats it this way and as a result this is the traditional understanding
 - 3) There's also some archeological evidence to support this:
 - a) Archeologists believe they have found the region where the Israelites lived during their time in Egypt
 - b) In the mid 1980s, they've found a palace complex in this region dating to the time of Joseph which was surrounded by two rows of 12 pillars, possibly representing the 12 sons of Jacob
 - c) The palace grounds had 12 tombs, one of which was a pyramid tomb which was typically reserved for rulers (the pyramid tomb for Joseph and the other smaller 11 for his brothers)

- d) Inside the pyramid tomb they found the fragments of a six- to nine-foot-tall statue of an Asiatic one (the Jews were Asiatic); they know he was Asiatic and not Egyptian because the head was still partially intact and had a hair style, hair color, facial features, and skin tone all common to Asiatics
 - e) And...guess what else they found? The ruler depicted in the statue was wearing a multicolored robe
 - f) Another interesting fact is that while the 11 tombs still contained bones, the pyramid tomb did not; while it could have been removed by tomb robbers, it's interesting in light of the fact that the Bible states that Joseph's bones were taken to back Canaan during the Exodus to be buried
 - g) While none of this proves absolutely that the complex was Joseph's palace while he ruled in Egypt, or that the statue was of him, it seems highly probable
3. The third and final thing we learn about Joseph in these first four verses is that all of this—possibly the report of his brothers' bad behavior to Jacob and certainly Jacob's favoritism—led to Joseph being hated by his brothers (RE-READ 4)
4. Takeaway:
- a. In many ways, as Christians, we are like Joseph
 - b. Joseph was a faithful and trustworthy son and had his father's favor, but he was hated by his brothers
 - c. In similar fashion, as faithful and trustworthy Christians we also have our Heavenly Father's favor, but Jesus said the world will hate us because it hated Him
 - d. The reality is that when we live in obedience to Jesus, we will face a certain amount of reproach from the world

<p>B. Joseph was hated for revealing God's plan (37:5-11)</p>

1. Dreams are one of the ways God revealed Himself and His purpose and plans in the Bible and we have an example of that with Joseph here in two different dreams:
- a. In the first dream, Joseph dreamt that he would someday reign over his family (READ 37:5-7):
 - 1) Joseph didn't have to interpret this dream for his brothers because they clearly understood what the dream implied:
 - a) **"Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?"**
 - b) The construct of their words actually implies disdain, something more akin to **"You don't REALLY think YOU will reign over or rule over US, do you?"**
 - 2) They already hated him because he was Jacob's favorite, but now the text says, **"they hated him EVEN more for his dreams and for his words"** (8b):
 - a) They clearly hated the CONTENT of Joseph's dreams—that he would reign over them

- b) But, they also hated HIM because he had the dreams and dared to share the dreams with them
 - c) You've probably heard the English idiom "Don't shoot the messenger" or "Hey, I'm only the messenger"; well, Joseph's brothers didn't quite grasp that concept; they hated not only the message but the messenger
- b. In his second dream, Jacob saw something similar to the first dream (READ 37:9-12):
 - 1) In this dream, he saw the sun, moon, and eleven stars all bowing down to him
 - 2) The sun and moon obviously refer to his father and mother, and the eleven stars to his brothers
 - 3) Once again Joseph didn't have to interpret this dream for his father or brothers because like the first dream they knew exactly what it meant
 - 4) And like the rebuke he received from his brothers after the first dream, Jacob also rebuked Joseph with something akin to **"You don't REALLY think WE will come bow down to YOU, do you?"**
 - 5) This time, instead of saying his brothers hated him it says **"they were jealous of him"** which should probably be understood as resentment
 - 6) To Jacob's credit, after rebuking Joseph the text says he **"kept in mind what Joseph said"** which suggests he didn't completely reject Jacob's dreams
- 2. Takeaway:
 - a. Clearly one of the takeaways from this passage is that Joseph's dreams were a foreshadowing or prophesy of how God was going to use Joseph to save his family:
 - 1) As we'll see next week, Joseph was 17 when he was sold as a slave by his brothers and taken into captivity in Egypt
 - 2) 13 years later God raised up Joseph to become the second most powerful official in Egypt, second only to the pharaoh himself
 - 3) God then used Joseph to not only deliver Egypt and the land of Canaan through a severe seven-year famine, but to save Joseph's family
 - 4) Joseph's dreams may have lacked some details, but they were revelation from God Himself
 - b. The second takeaway is that Joseph's own family rejected—even despised—not only what God had revealed but Joseph himself:
 - 1) They hated not only the message but the messenger
 - 2) The same is true of us today: when we reveal what God has said in His Word, the world often rejects and despises it
 - 3) However, it not only hates the message; it also hates us as the messengers:
 - a) Because of this, some will shrink back from speaking the truth out of fear
 - b) Others will compromise God's Word, distort it or twist it in an effort to make it more palatable or accepting to the world
 - c) But, one of the things I am struck by here with Joseph is that even though he was hated for sharing what God revealed, He didn't back down or stay quiet

- d) That should encourage and embolden us to stay faithful and continue to declare what God has revealed in His Word:
- Paul encouraged Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:8: **“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”**
 - Later in the same letter he said, **“For this reason, I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day”**
 - And again in 2 Timothy 2:15, **“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”**
- e) Jacob didn’t stop speaking up in the face of hatred and neither should we