

April 16th

SOLD INTO SLAVERY

“They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.” (Genesis 37:18–20, ESV)

GENESIS 37:18-20

“**L**ord of the Rings is an epic story of good versus evil. The depths of the human heart are captured vividly by Tolkien as he unpacks the quest for good to conquer over evil. Another book has a similar title: “Lord of the Flies”. If you compared the two stories, you’d think they were nothing alike. However, if you look deeper, you can see that both stories describe despicable evil. Evil that lurks in the hearts of men. Lord of the Flies describes boys that are stranded on a deserted island. Near the end of the book, a group of boys are ready to kill another boy. The point of the book is that just under a civilized world lies evil. Maybe the author had read the story of Joseph! What we find in Joseph’s story is the world of evil and hatred for others. What does God want to teach us through these events?

The stage is set by Moses with one word: “Shechem.” The same place where villagers were murdered by Simeon and Levi. From Jacob’s residence, Shechem was about 50 miles. It would have taken Joseph about five days to get there. But they weren’t in Shechem, they were in Dothan, another 14 miles further from Hebron. These details show why Jacob would have been so worried about Joseph’s brothers. What we may be surprised about is that he sent Joseph to a dangerous place to check on them!

Dothan is where the chaos happens. You don’t get much information here from Moses about what the brother’s heard from Joseph as they threw him into the pit. But Moses does include Joseph’s words later in 42:21: “Then they said to one another, ‘In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.’” The brothers want to kill Joseph, but they are talked about of it by Reuben. Their evil hearts are shown even more when the next words are: “then they sat down to eat.” Hearing your brother’s cries evidently works up an appetite for these men!

You might be surprised about what you find when you take a closer look at Dothan. Even while Joseph is thrown into a pit and sold into slavery, Dothan is a place where God works. God sometimes lifts our cloudy eyes to see His work. Elisha the prophet is surrounded by hundreds of men that want to kill him and his servant (2 Kings 6). Then the servant’s eyes are opened: “And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” God protects Elisha...and God protects Joseph. Yes, Joseph is sold into slavery and carried away into Egypt. But God.

Men, we can see here that God works in all of these events. Indeed, He purposes them, as Joseph describes in Genesis 50:20. The end of Genesis 37 names Egypt as his final destination. The same Egypt that God promises in Genesis 15:13: “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there...” They can’t get to Egypt and be saved from their famine unless Joseph goes first. The selling of Joseph for silver is eerily similar to another sale of an innocent man into slavery...His name is Jesus! We can’t be saved from the slavery of our sin without Jesus dying for our sin on the cross. Which was exactly planned by the Father before the world began! Praise God for His perfect work that always accomplishes what it set out to do!

Spend some time thinking more about the parallels of Joseph and Jesus. How many can you find? Thank God the Father for working perfectly for His glory.

For Further Reading: 2 Kings 6:8-23