

## Genesis Chapter 37 Commentary Part 1 of 4

### 1 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

Stranger is from the Hebrew word *maguwr* (pronounced; maw-goor') and means; *a temporary abode; pilgrimage, be a stranger*. This simply means that Jacob's father Isaac, was not living in this land with prominence. He was not known, to be of the mindset of the current inhabitants, and did not believe as those around him did. He was an inhabitant of the land, but a stranger in the land because it is not yet known nationality as the kingdom of Israel. This would happen about four to five hundred years later.

This definition of stranger gives us the meaning of a temporary place of residence. Applied today to our lives, we are pilgrims and strangers living in the world. Our nation is not a natural kingdom of the earth. Our nation is the kingdom of God, which is identified as the church, whose king is in the eternal heaven. The kingdom of God will exist eternally when all of God's saved people are gathered into that eternal land of promise. Our permanent home is the place that Christ has gone to prepare for us.

### 2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

'**Generations**' here uses the meaning: *history*, rather than the definition: *genealogy*. This chapter is the beginning of the history of the life of Joseph. Joseph's lineage does not lead us to Christ, so why all this scripture about Joseph? Joseph is a type and foreshadow of Christ Jesus, and the preservation that God has made for his people through Christ. The life of Joseph will give us a picture of the suffering, and the triumph, of Christ, who wrought salvation for all those that God the Father gave him to save.

"**and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.**" Bilhah and Zilpah were the handmaids that Laban gave to Rachel and Leah when they were married to Jacob. In their conquest, to win Jacob's special love, they gave their handmaids to Jacob as wives to bring forth children. Bilhah's children were Dan, and Naphtali. Zilpah's children were Gad and Asher. Though we are not told what the evil report was, we know it must have been bad for Joseph to tell on his brethren. Our heavenly Father has already received the report on all of mankind, (us included) seen in:

- **Ps 14:3 "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."** Well, that's Old Testament some will say. Here's New Testament scripture.
- **Ro 3:9-18; 9 "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes."**

Thus, we see, there is only one kind of people inhabiting the earth, (past, present, or future) which is the sinner. Praise the Lord that he chose to save some from this deplorable condition. They are known still as sinners, but they are sinners saved by the grace of God.

Now would be a good time to point out; scripture does not record any sin or error in the life of Joseph, which is emblematic of the sinless life of Jesus incarnate. We know that Joseph was a sinner but there is just no recorded sin action from his life in scripture.

Our life lesson from this would be: We should live, like Joseph and like Christ; godly and sinless lives that bring glory and honor to our Saviour and Lord.

**3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.**

**"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children"** Why did Israel love Joseph more than the rest of his children? The birth of Joseph was miraculous; by virtue of being born to Jacob in his old age, and being the firstborn of Rachel, who was heretofore barren. The miraculous birth of Joseph reminds us of the miraculous birth of Jesus: who was born of a virgin by the miraculous working of God. This is a picture of God the Father's love for God the Son, and we have this testimony from God the Father in: **Mt 3:17 "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**

Why was God pleased with Jesus? Here are some obvious of reasons:

- He was the only begotten, in human flesh, Son, of God the Father.
- He was the only, totally obedient man in the flesh.
- He lived a pure and sinless life.
- He fulfilled the sacrificial law service to perfection, giving his life for the redemption of the sins of all God's chosen people, and the completed work, of eternal salvation by Christ, was an accepted work by God the Father.
- Jesus established the church of salvation by grace; that not only the Jews, but the Gentiles also might be saved, seen in: **Mt 12:18 "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles."** Christ made a way for the Gentiles to be grafted into the family of God, which will provide them a means of sustenance from the great drought of the sinful habitation of the earth.

We see the great extent of the preferential love of God, in; **Joh 3:16-21; 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."** As we consider this text we see, not a preferential love, in the sense that we see Israel's love for Joseph, but rather, God the Father's special love, which love was willing to sacrifice his only begotten Son, for the life of the whole family.

**"A coat of many colours"** Israel openly displayed his special, preferential, love for Joseph by this coat of many colors. This preferential treatment, of Joseph by Israel, will add to the source of hatred for Joseph by his brethren.

The coat of many colors demonstrated the preferential treatment of Joseph; and that Israel was giving the rights of the first-born to Joseph; which blessing of the first-born was justly taken from Reuben. We find in scripture that the firstborn birthright blessing was Joseph's by God given right, and this is proved by scripture in: **1Ch 5:1-2; 1 "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. 2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's:)"** Do you understand why the birthright was Joseph's? Jacob's one true love, and one true wife was Rachel, Joseph's mother, and Joseph was the first-born son from her. Jacob had other children by his other wife, Leah, and the handmaidens, but his one true wife was Rachel. Although, he was married to Leah first, that marriage was done by the deceitfulness of Laban, and though we, like scripture does, recognize that Leah was Jacob's wife: however, Rachel was his true love and true marriage.

There are many and varied opinions of the significance of the colors of this robe. When I think of them, my first thoughts go to the rainbow and its significance to us. When we see a rainbow, we are reminded of God's promise to not destroy the whole earth with a flood of water again. We are also reminded; God saved those who found grace in his sight, from the flood of destruction.

Now, think of the coat of many colors, and think of all the offices, which Christ fulfilled as he lived on earth in human form. He is identified in scripture by many different titles, such as: Prophet, Priest, High Priest, King, Redeemer, Saviour, Messiah, Beloved Son of God, the sacrificial Lamb, etc. Consider; Joseph is the saviour of his family, as we shall see as we continue our study of the life of Joseph. When he calls his family to come to him for life sustenance; Joseph gave his family the best possession of property in Egypt. Christ is our Saviour, and he is calling us to come into the church, which is the best possession on the earth. Jesus has gone to prepare us a permanent home, in heaven, in the presence of God. Aren't you glad that God the Father had a beloved Son? One preferred above all others.

**4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.**

I think we can see several reasons why Joseph's brethren hated him so much:

- He received preferential treatment from his father.
- He was living a righteous life, which made theirs even more obviously sinful.
- He reported the ungodliness of his brethren to their father Jacob.
- They were jealous that Jacob had conferred to Joseph the right of firstborn. Joseph was the 11<sup>th</sup> of 12 children born to Israel. The right of firstborn, conferred to Joseph, meant to them, that in time to come, they would have to submit to his headship. Jesus was "the firstborn of many brethren" and his family, the law church, would not yield to his headship.

Now let's look at the comparative picture of hatred of Joseph and Christ. Was ever a man more hated of his brethren than Jesus? Why? Because he was the beloved Son. Because God gave him power to heal, to forgive sins on earth, to raise the dead, miracle working wonders, and divine love,

which both brought glory to God, and which drew people to follow him. Because Jesus kept telling the Scribes and Pharisees how they were wrong, in their thinking, and actions, of interpreting the law commandments. Jesus pointed out; the Scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites because they interpreted the law commandments one way and walked in another. This caused the jealousy of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were his brethren by association of the children of Israel.

**"they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."** We have plenty of evidence of this in the New Testament scripture. Just look at how many times the Scribes and Pharisees spoke to Jesus, not to learn of him, but to tempt him to break the ceremonial law, so they could have occasion to discredit him. The more he demonstrated their hypocrisy, the more they hated him. Do you believe they spoke peaceably to him when they had Jesus on trial? Not only did the Scribes and Pharisees ill treat Jesus, but they also incited the multitudes (both Jew and Gentile) to castigate, and to rale upon him.

What life lesson can we draw from this? As parents, we should not show favoritism among our children if we wish to have peace in the family. We should teach our family that the gift of special preferential love, of being saved by grace, is to be directed to our Saviour and our God. We should demonstrate to them, that as a family; we have a special preferential love that we share equally with one another. We should teach them the differences of this special love and the common love for mankind in general.

We can apply these same principles to our spiritual lives and our walk in Christ in the church.

- First, we should have the greatest preferential love for our Saviour and Lord, as commanded by scripture, see in: **Mt 22:37-38; 37 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment."**
- Second, we should have preferential love for our brothers and sisters in Christ as seen in: **1Jo 4:21 "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."** Here, "**love his brother**" is a different love than the common love of mankind, as demonstrated in: **1Jo 3:14 "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."** This is the preferential love of the church.
- We are to love our church family without partiality as demonstrated in scripture in: **1Ti 5:21 "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."** And further seen in: **Jas 3:17 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."** This text shows us: if we don't truly love our brethren; we are not born-again children of God but hypocrites.
- We are to love our fellow man, seen in: **Mt 22:39-40; 39 "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."** "**love thy neighbour as thyself**" demonstrates the common love of mankind, not the preferential love that we have for our brethren.

We find further in scripture some more foundational scripture for preferential love, seen in: ***Eph 3:19 "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."*** Being born-again; we are filled with this preferential love of Christ.

- Aren't you glad that God the Father has a preferential love for God the Son?
- Aren't you glad to have the knowledge of how the special, preferential, love is to be used in living our Christian lives?
- Aren't you glad that God the Father has demonstrated that special, preferential, love to you?

Our life lesson for this portion of Genesis chapter 37 is: Having had this preferential love of Christ revealed to you: What are you going to do with it? Are you going to hide it under a bushel, or bury it in the earth? What you should do is put on Christ, by making that public profession of faith in him, by joining the church and walking in the ordinance of baptism. If you have already done these two things: then you should do what Jesus taught us in: ***Joh 13:34 "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."*** Oh! the depths of the riches of this commandment! May God help us to touch the hem of his garment, and thereby demonstrate this great preferential love of Christ to one another!

Praise to God the Father, for his preferred love of Jesus, and for all God's chosen people, that our salvation and eternal life might be founded in him! Hallelujah!

**Continued in Part 2 of 4**