

Genesis Chapter 37 Commentary Part 3 of 4

12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

We remember that Jacob had a purchased possession in Shechem, and that was where the rape of Dinah took place, and where Jacob's sons slew and overthrew the city in retaliation by wicked and deceitful means. Shechem was a place that God told Israel to leave, and Jacob should not have even stopped there in the first place. We remember that the children learned bad things there (and gained great riches by ungodly deeds) and it seems that they do not want to turn it loose yet.

We see this happen in our lives today as we are walking the Christian life. We just can't seem to let go of worldliness so many times. In one way, living the Christian life is the easiest thing to do. When our hearts and minds are centered upon Christ, our head, it is very easy to do that which is right. On the other hand, living the Christian life can be very hard, when Christ is not the full focus of our hearts and minds; then, living the Christian life is very hard. Why? Because, when we are not focused on Christ, our head, we are putting worldliness into first position and that is where the struggle begins. We see this struggle demonstrated in scripture in: *Ro 7:14-25; 14 "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."* As Paul demonstrates here: we are in a continual warfare between our sin nature and our born-again nature.

13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.

Israel knows where the children are gone with the flocks. Israel was concerned they may be in danger, because of the heinous deeds committed by his children when they lived there. Therefore, Israel, the father, sends Joseph, the beloved son, to see how his brethren fare.

"*Here am I*" Did you notice; Joseph is a willing son? Joseph, who knew the hatred of his brethren, was willing to go and do the Father's will. Joseph knew; he would be going to the place where his own brethren had done their unrighteous and violent crimes.

Jesus, the beloved Son, was willing to be sent into the world incarnate, knowing that it would be a very hostile and violent place for him. Jesus left the security and glory of the Father's house, knowing he would have to die, in incarnation on the cross, to secure the salvation of all those that God the Father had given unto him to save.

Joseph was about thirty years old when he came to the position of power as second ruler in Egypt. In this position of power, Joseph called for his family to come to him for sustenance of life. Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry on earth and called for his family to come to him for their sustenance. Jesus is still calling the Father's children unto him, and Jesus will continue to do so, until the last heir of promise is secured.

Our life lesson from this is: As Joseph and Jesus were both willing to go into these ungodly environments; when we are born again; we should be willing to obey our heavenly Father. We should be willing to take up our cross and follow the call of the Shepherd of our souls. Understanding, we have been called to be soldiers of Christ. Knowing that the world around us, in which we must live, is hostile towards us in every way, and even our own flesh is at war with us. Remember the scripture in: ***Joh 15:17-21; 17 "These things I command you, that ye love one another. 18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.***" We should also remember; there is safety and sustenance in the place we have been called to come to eat the bread of life, and to drink from the well of the water of life. Both are found in the church established by Jesus Christ.

14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

- Hebron is from the Hebrew word Chebrown (pronounced; kheb-rone') and means; *seat of association; a society or company.* Hebron is a prophetic picture of heaven, from which Jesus was sent, and is emblematic of where God dwells in a Land of Promise with his people. It demonstrates that as the seat of association we are to be gathered around Jesus Christ who is the center of our worship, and to whom all of God's people must come.
- Shechem is from the Hebrew word Sh@kem (pronounced; shek-em') and means; *ridge, the neck (between the shoulders) as the place of burdens; shoulder.* This definition gives us the picture of an ox who is hooked to a burden by the yoke. The yoke rest upon the neck between the shoulders. Shechem is a picture of the earth, where Christ was sent to bear alone the burden of our sins, by giving his life for us on the cross.

Thinking of the definitions, of the names of these places, we see a picture: Joseph comes to Shechem, the place of burdens, and here is where his troubles begin. His brethren are not where they are supposed to be. They have moved to another place. When Jesus came to earth and began his public ministry, he found that the ones, who were supposed to be fairly and equitably administrating the law service, had left the true use of this service, and moved on to a place that better suited their own wishes. We know this because Jesus often points out the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were the religious leaders of the day.

"and bring me word again." Joseph will not return and give his father a report, until he has come to his position of power and authority in Egypt. Joseph will not see his father or his brethren again; until they come to him in Egypt seeking bread for sustenance of life. Joseph will send his brethren

home to call his family to come and live in the place he has chosen and prepared for them, which is the very best of the land of Egypt. This will be like a resurrection in the life of Joseph; as he is shown and known to be alive, who was thought to be dead.

Jesus will not bring word again to his Father until the completion of his incarnation, and he has shown himself to be the Messiah. When Jesus ascended back to heaven, he brought word to God the Father, I have suffered all the things, that we knew were coming to me when I left my home, and report: I have established the church of salvation by grace, the best of the land of Egypt, and I have sent forth thy sons to call the whole family, both Jew and Gentile, to come to the church for sustenance of their lives in the world.

With Jesus's resurrection and ascension, Jesus brings to God the Father the news: all my brethren, whom you sent me to find, thy sons, have many trials and tribulation to live through before they come into their eternal land of promise; but I have accomplished all that you sent me to do. Thy children are secure in the eternal salvation that I wrought for them on the cross. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? 16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. 17 And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

Dothan is from the Hebrew word *do'-than* for which I found two different meanings: the first meaning found is: *two wells, double feast*, and the second is: *law, custom*.

From the first definition: I see a picture of the establishment of the church by Jesus, which is a well of the water of life to both the Jew and the Gentile. Both are drinking from the fountain of living waters, and both are feasting on the bread of life, and all of God's people are living in the abundance of salvation by grace.

We can easily see from the second definition: when Jesus came incarnate, he found God's people under the demands of the sacrificial law, which required the blood sacrifices for the atonement of sin. Jesus fulfilled this demand by giving his pure holy blood as the true sacrifice for sin and thereby took away the sacrificial law service. Jesus certainly found the Jews living by custom instead of the true law when Christ came. How do we know this? Because Jesus repeatedly pointed out the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees.

On a side note: Dothan is a place situated about 10 to 15 miles north of Shechem. It is the site of future happenings, which are very prophetic. My study bible gives a reference for this verse: **2Ki 6:11-18; 11 "Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? 12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. 13 And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. 14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master!**

how shall we do? 16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. 18 And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha." We see in this reference: Elisha was in this same city of Dothan where Joseph found his brethren. We see the comparison; Elisha was surrounded by his enemies who were serving their king, who sought to kill Elisha. Dothan being surrounded by enemies is picturesque of what happened in the life of Jesus. The king of Syria and his armies are representative of the devil and his followers, who sought diligently to destroy the testimony of Jesus.

We have, from this reference scripture in 2Kings, the prophetic picture: Dothan was the home city of Elisha. The church is the home city for God's people on earth, of whom Christ is the central figure of headship. Dothan was surrounded by the enemy, which sought to overthrow Dothan and take Elisha captive and slay him. The church is surrounded by the satanic evil and temptation of this world. The devil desires to overthrow the church, take the church body captive, and slay its headship.

The servant of Elisha had his eyes opened, which allowed him to see that God was greater than the host of enemies that surrounded Dothan. Jesus, our master, must pray for us for our eyes to be opened, which happens when we are born again. Being enabled to see, we understand we are surrounded by our fleshly nature, which is at enmity with our new life in Christ. However, our spiritual eyes are now able to see our eternal salvation, and the supreme power of God. Eyes that see help us better understand the meaning of the scripture in: **1Jo 4:4 "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."**

There is another aspect that we can see from this reference also. Elisha did not slay the Syrians who had come to kill him. He mercifully spared their life by smiting them with blindness and sent them back to their king, which is exactly what Christ did for us. Christ did not slay those who fought against him. He simply left them to their own king, the devil. However, Elisha did save the inhabitants of Dothan, just as Jesus saved the inhabitants of the church.

One lesson we can draw from our Genesis study, in combination with the 2Kings reference, is: Though we may not be where we should be, Christ will always find us. When he finds us, we will be living under the law and the penalty of death. When he opens our eyes and causes us to see our sins, which would take us and hold us captive and even bring us to death: we, like the servant of Elisha, see that Jesus Christ is our personal Saviour and our salvation. We will see that we have come under his divine protection, and see our eternal salvation is sure and steadfast.

Praise the Lord! for eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that understand, and a Saviour who wrought salvation and eternal life for us. Hallelujah!

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