

JOSEPH THE DREAMER

The history of Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, now moves to his twelve sons and the growth of a great nation that bears his God-given name – Israel. It centres upon his eleventh son, Joseph who is the firstborn child of his beloved wife Rachel. Joseph demonstrates ‘Christlikeness’ giving us a picture of the Lord Jesus, and showing the principles of victorious Christian living available to every child of God.

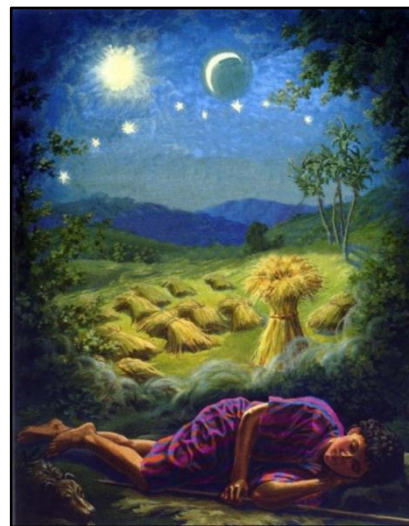
Have you experienced family tensions or jealousy? What impact did it have?

STRANGERS IN A FOREIGN LAND v 1 – Jacob settled back into the land of Canaan after his recommitment to God at Bethel (ch 35:1). It was occupied by people who did not know the living God but followed false gods instead and behaved very wickedly in God’s eyes (Deut.9:4-6). This therefore is a picture of the way in which those who follow Christ live in a world that disowns Him and behave in a way that is opposed to the law of God. Christians are in the world to shine God’s pure light upon it in order to lead people to His love and find forgiveness (John 17:14-18, Matt.5:16).

THE FAVOURED SON v 2-4 – the rivalry and division that typified Jacob’s family continued into his children. Joseph, much younger than his brothers and the long-awaited son of Rachel, who had recently died, was favoured by Jacob. He gave him a special multi-coloured coat to demonstrate his special love for him. His brothers were jealous, and therefore Joseph was bullied by them. These family tensions were further inflamed, when Joseph told his father about the evil behaviour of his brothers when out in the fields shepherding. Away from the watchful eye of their father, they behaved badly. Thus, we have another parallel to the Christian life. Those who are born again are given ‘garments of salvation’ by their heavenly Father (Isaiah 61:10, Gal.3:27). He delights in us if we do His will all the time, not just when we are being watched by other Christians (Psalm 147:11). This distinguishes us from the world and often leads to antagonism and conflict which is particularly painful if it is from within our own family or church.

The Lord Jesus was the special delight of His father whilst he was here on earth. How did the world react to Him, and how are people likely to respond to His followers? (John 15:18-19)

DREAMING OF SHEAVES v 5-8 – the Lord’s purposes for Joseph were revealed to him through dreams. This in itself was a sign that he had been chosen by God for particular service and blessing. Abraham had received a dream at the outset of his calling by God (ch 15:1-12) and so had Jacob (ch 28:12-14). If his brothers had feared God and been mindful of the way God had formed their family, they would have been respectful of the way that He was clearly speaking to Joseph too. However, when Joseph shared his dream about their sheaves bowing down to his sheaf, they reacted in a fleshly and unbelieving way. Their proud hearts reared up against the concept of bowing down to their young brother who was their father’s favourite. They hated him all the more.



What part did dreams and visions play in the formation of the church? (Acts 10:9-16)

DREAMING OF SUN, MOON & STARS v 9-11 – the dream however, was confirmed again by the Lord, with the sun, moon and stars bowing down to him too. Puzzled, Joseph told his father as well as his brothers, but Jacob, rather than mocking him, wondered quietly what it all meant. Were the sun and moon his father and mother? How could his mother bow down to him, especially since Rachel had died! Was this to mean Leah? His brothers though, dismissed any prophetic meaning and their envy of Joseph and his special relationship with their father grew greater.

***'I have given them Your Word;
And the world has hated them because they are not of the world
Just as I am not of the world'
John 17:14***