

A MURDEROUS PLAN

The dreams that Joseph had experienced did not change the attitude of his brothers. They had no respect for God and whom He chose to do His work. They were interested only in their own perspective and position in their large fractured family.

JOSEPH SENT TO SHECHEM v 12-17 – Shechem was about 50 miles from Canaan and would have been a two-day journey to reach. It was the place where Dinah had been taken captive by the prince of Shechem and where Jacob's sons had deceived, killed and ransacked the city (ch 34). The family still had flocks there and were away looking after them. Jacob, perhaps aware of all the past tensions, wanted news of them so sent Joseph to find out how things were and let him know. Helped by a stranger, Joseph discovered the flocks had been moved northwards to Dothan, and eventually came within sight of his brothers. We can draw a parallel picture with the Son of God. He was sent by His heavenly Father into the world, to His own people, the children of Israel, thousands of years later. However, they too, had moved a long way from the place where God had guided them.

MURDEROUS PLANS v 18-22 – Joseph was easily recognisable with his special multi-coloured coat, so his brothers saw him approaching. Their hatred of him and his dreams spilled over into a wicked plan to murder him, pretending that an evil beast had killed him. They did not accept that his dreams were given by God or that He had any prophetic warning for them. Hearing of their plans, Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob, warned against murder, suggesting instead they hide him in an old well shaft. He hoped to rescue Joseph later and give him back to their father. When the Lord Jesus came to earth, sent by His Father, the family of Israel rejected His apparently low connections and social inferiority (Matt.13:53-58). They did not accept that His message came from God and dismissed His warnings. It was not long after He began His public ministry before the religious rulers plotted to kill Him (Mark 3:6).

CAPTURED AND SOLD v 23-28 – unaware of their evil plans, Joseph arrived. He was seized, stripped of his father's beautiful coat, carried over to the empty pit and dropped out of sight. His terrified cries for mercy were unheeded as the brothers simply sat down to eat a meal (Gen.42:21). The Lord was with Joseph though, and made a way of escape in the form of Ishmaelites travelling to Egypt to trade. Noticing their approach, Judah came up with another plan, avoiding murder and making money. Joseph was hauled up out of the pit, and sold as a slave for twenty pieces of silver. Echoing this, the Lord Jesus was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver by Judas (Matt.26:14-16), but there was no escape for Him. He was taken away by soldiers to be crucified (Matt.26:50).

DECEIT AND DESPAIR v 29-36 - Reuben was appalled when he later returned to the pit only to find it empty. As the eldest son he felt responsible to his father for Joseph's absence. Thus, the brothers added the final colour to Joseph's multi-coloured coat, dipping it in the blood of a dead animal. When the Lord was crucified, His garments were given to the soldiers as lottery prizes (Matt.27:35). In the same way that the brothers concocted the deceitful tale of Joseph's death, so it was, two thousand years later, that the High Priest and religious rulers endeavoured to deceive the nations by saying they had slain the eternal Son of God and He had not risen from the dead. In both cases the plot worked (Matt.28:11-15). The sons of Jacob composed their faces and brought the coat to their father. He concluded, as hoped, that Joseph had been attacked by a wild animal and he became unconsolable. Deceit had again corrupted the family. However, God was at work in the life of Joseph and despite his apparently hopeless situation, dreams were yet to come true.

In what way are multicoloured clothes used today?

Which of the patriarchs was mocked when a child? (Genesis 21:8-13)

Jealousy is a strong emotion that we all feel from time to time. In what situations within a church might we become jealous? How can we manage those feelings in a God honouring way? (Gal.6:1-5, James 4:1-8, Phil.1:15-18)

Although Joseph was in the grip of evil, God was behind the scenes watching over him. What do you do when life seems to be out of your control? Who or what do you rely on for stability?

*'For where there are envy strife and divisions among you
Are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?'*

1 Corinthians 3:3