

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

..... *GENESIS*



The Kingdom Family: Genesis 36-37

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The structure of Genesis is a genealogy. The genealogy is how Moses moves the narrative forward. Moses records historical stories to illustrate theological truths. We should remember that Moses did not tell us everything that happened in Adam's, Noah's, Abraham's, Isaac's, or Jacob's life. Instead, Moses selected some events to include and others to exclude, and this selection was not haphazard but intentional. In other words, Moses had a reason for including the historical events he included in Genesis. They vividly describe to us that God is faithful to his plan, no matter what.

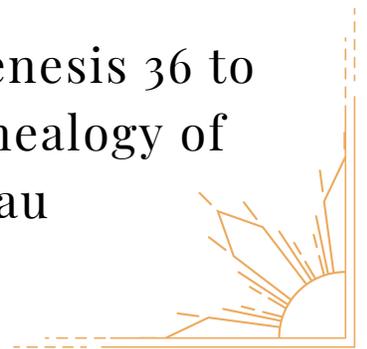
In the final fourteen chapters of Genesis, Moses continues to elaborate on this point. We see different shades of this truth in these last fourteen chapters that are breathtaking. For example, we will learn that God is faithful to his plan because of a faithful

covenant human pattern. Doesn't that point to Jesus, church family, since he is the ultimate covenant keeper? We will also see the amazing truth that the things we intend for evil, God works out for glorious, good ends. Doesn't that also point to Jesus, church family, since on the cross we see the evil intentions of man accomplishing the good plan of God! Moses masterfully elaborates on the truth that God is committed to establishing his kingdom on earth. We are in for an exciting time as we conclude our study of Genesis.

Our text for today is Genesis 36-37, and the title of this sermon is the kingdom family. The sermon's main idea is that God is committed to establishing his kingdom on earth, but I want to emphasize an essential detail about this truth: God works out for good what Joseph's brothers intended for evil. In Genesis 50, we see Joseph tell his brothers these comforting and kind words, and the result is that they have rest. I hope we experience the same effect today.

GENEALOGY OF ESAU: NOT THE FAMILY OF PROMISE (GENESIS 36)

Moses transitions back to a genealogy in Genesis 36 to move the story forward. We have here a genealogy of Esau and a genealogy of Seir, the people Esau conquered to live in their land. When we



approach genealogies, we should understand that they follow a pattern. When the pattern is broken, the author is trying to get our attention. Think of it as a Hallmark movie. Hallmark movies follow the same pattern. Now imagine a Hallmark movie that broke from this pattern; that is, the guy, in the end, is not prince charming but a crook. Your attention would be grabbed and on purpose. The director would be communicating something significant to us.

Likewise, when an author breaks the genealogical pattern in the Bible, the author is communicating something significant. The genealogy's pattern is that a father has a son, a son, a son, and so on. We see this pattern in genealogies in Numbers, 1 Chronicle, and in the New Testament. Here, Moses breaks from that pattern in several places. First, notice how Moses includes the wives of Esau in this genealogy. This detail is on purpose. Moses tells us that Esau married Canaanite wives (36:1-4). He married Adah a Hittite, Oholibamah a Hivite, and Basemath and Ishmaelite.

Second, notice verses 6-7. Esau moves out of the land promised to Abraham and into the hill country of Seir (36:8).

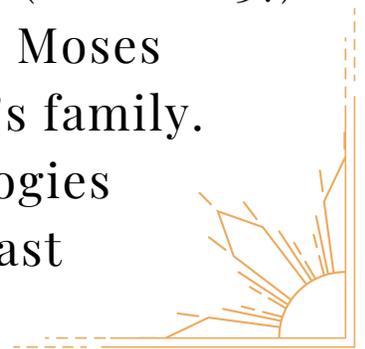
Third, notice verses 31-39. Here, Moses traces the lineage of the kings of Edom, and we should



observe two horrifying realities. 1) Notice how the next person to reign is never a son of the former king. Economic and political stability in the ancient world occurred when a dynasty reigned over a people: that is when a king's son reigned in his place, and then his son reigned in his place, and so on. When the kingship passed from one family to another, that typically meant a bloody civil war between those families. 2) Notice that one of the kings to reign in Edom is named Hadad (36:35-36). Hadad was the Canaanite god of rain and fertility. The Canaanites referred to him as Baal, and at times, the people of Judah and Israel worshiped this god to their demise! What does it mean but something horrific that a descendent of Esau was named Hadad? This nation saw their identity as connected to a false god, not the Lord.

The effect of these three details – Esau married Canaanite woman; he moved out of the Promised Land, and he had a descendent named Hadad – all indicate that his family is not God's family. Esau's kingdom is just another kingdom of this world!

Genealogy of Jacob: The Family of Promise (Genesis 37)
Comparing the Genealogies: In Genesis 37, Moses transitions to give us a genealogy of Jacob's family. Moses intentionally puts these two genealogies side by side so that we compare and contrast



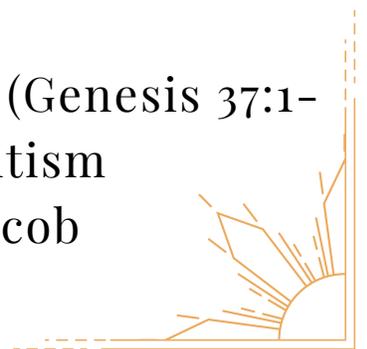
essential details about them. The first detail we see is that Jacob lived in the land of Abraham and Isaac. Whereas Esau moved out to inherit his land, Jacob stayed in the land God promised to Abraham and Isaac (37:1).

Second, Moses immediately breaks the pattern of the genealogy! We learn about Joseph in verse 2, but Moses does not immediately tell us about his son, grandson, great-grandson, and so on. Instead, Moses breaks from the pattern and provides for us several historical events that span Genesis 37-50! Let's again compare this detail. Moses took just a few verses to list Esau's grandchildren (36:9-14) and only a few more to list generations of kings (36:31-39); yet, we do not learn about Joseph's children until Genesis 41!

These details indicate that the funnel of salvation history has narrowed to Jacob and his family, not Esau and his family, and we see in these chapters that God's promise to Abraham is being fulfilled in these stories: Jacob lives in the Promised Land with a growing family.

Jacob's family is the family of promise, but we must understand that this family is broken. We learn this in Genesis 37.

Jacob's Favoritism and the Brother's Hatred (Genesis 37:1-4): This brokenness manifests itself in favoritism and then hatred. Like Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob too plays favorites. Isaac's favoritism



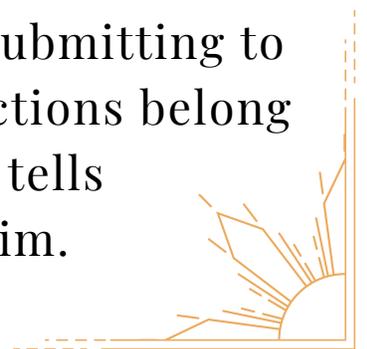
toward Esau and Rebekah's favoritism toward Jacob had devastating results on their family, as we mentioned when we studied Genesis 27-28. Jacob's favoritism has similarly catastrophic effects, as we will soon see.

Joseph's brothers hate him because he is the favorite. Notice how immediate this hatred is. Moses tells us that Jacob favored Joseph in verse 3 and, in verse 4, we immediately learn that the brothers, thus, hated Joseph.

Joseph's Dreams and the Brother's Hatred (Genesis 37:5-11): The brothers' hatred of Joseph grows as he tells them his dreams. Verse 5 summarizes this idea: Joseph told his brothers his dreams, and they hated him even more (6) and were jealous of him (11).

Joseph has two similar dreams. In the first dream, Joseph dreams that his brothers are bundles of grain, and they bow down to Joseph, who is also depicted as a bundle of grain (5-8). The second dream is similar but more extensive. Here, Joseph's brothers are pictured as stars, and they bow down to Joseph. Yet, there is more. Jacob and his wives are pictured as the sun and the moon, and they will bow down to Joseph too (9-11).

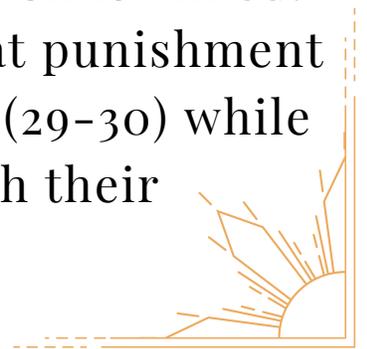
Joseph's brothers cannot stand the idea of submitting to and serving Joseph. Think of it. Jacob's affections belong to Joseph, and the brothers hate it. Now, he tells them that they will literally bow down to him. They hate him even more now.



The Brothers' Evolving Plan of Hatred (Genesis 37:12-28): The scene shifts in verses 12-28 to the pastureland. Jacob sends Joseph to check on his brothers, and as he is approaching them, the brothers determine to kill him (18) and lie about his death (20). Reuben, this firstborn of Jacob, steps in to rescue Joseph. He persuades the brothers not to kill Joseph but to throw him into a pit alive (22-24). Judah then convinces the brothers to sell him to Ishmaelites going down to Egypt (25). The brothers agree to profit on Joseph (26), but before they can act on this plan, Midianites traders find Joseph in the pit and sell him themselves to the Ishmaelites (28).

Again, Moses does not shy away from revealing the sin of God's people. In these verses, we see that hatred and jealousy lead to sins like murder, kidnapping, and human trafficking. Amid this mess of sin, we see one glimmer of hope from Reuben, who steps up to save Joseph. Reuben is fulfilling his role as the firstborn here, unlike what he did when he was intimate with Bilhah, his dad's wife (Genesis 35:22).

The Brothers' Lie (Genesis 37:29-36): The brothers soon realize that Joseph is gone, and their reaction is mixed. Reuben responds selfishly, wondering what punishment he might receive for Joseph going missing (29-30) while the whole group decides to go through with their lie about an animal eating Joseph (31-32).



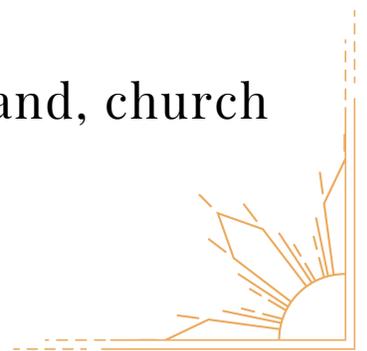
Jacob's reaction is terrifying, as one would expect. He mourns and refuses to be comforted. He will mourn until he dies. Jacob's response is one of utter loss.

IMPLICATIONS

First, God's people are broken on this side of eternity. In Genesis 37, we see favoritism, jealousy, hatred, deceit, a murderous plan, and a plan to traffic Joseph into slavery. Humanity is broken, and this brokenness affects God's people too. We must remember this, church family. The members of our church are broken, even your pastor. We will all at times act out of our brokenness. We should expect this and be ready to be quick to forgive and to show grace.

Second, what we intend for evil, God uses to accomplish good. Although Jacob was wrong to show favoritism to Joseph, although Joseph was naïve for sharing his dreams with his brothers, although the brothers were wrong for hating and trying to kill Joseph, God was sovereign over all of this sin! He was not only in control of all of it, but he was orchestrating it out for the good of humanity (Genesis 50:20).

These are two truths that we must understand, church family.

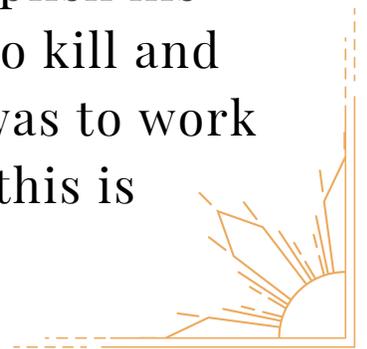


APPLICATION

How should we respond to this message today? First, if you have yet to turn from your sins and trust in Jesus, I would encourage you to do that today. If you are tired and broken, then come to Jesus today. Turn from your sins. This turning does not mean perfection, but it does mean that you hate your sin. Trust in Jesus: believe that when he died, he died for you to take away your sins. Do this today!

Now, if you have been a Christian for one second or decades, how should you respond? First, think biblically about your sin. Joseph's brothers did a terrible thing to Joseph. They sinned awfully against him with a heinous sin that betrayed those who bear the image of God. They did not show faithfulness or loyalty to Joseph; instead, they treated him as an object. The brothers' sin was great. As we think about our past sin, do not rationalize it. It is awful.

Second, think biblically about God's sovereignty. God did not make sin, nor does he cause anyone to sin (James 1:13-15, 17), yet he uses sin to accomplish his amazing purposes! The brothers intended to kill and sell Joseph – this is awful. God's purpose was to work through this to save many people (50:20) – this is amazing. Now, let's think about this for a

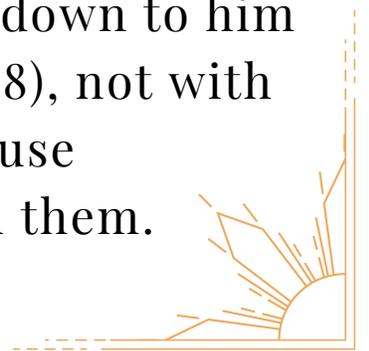


moment. Joseph is a son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who, through his covenant faithfulness, blesses the nations! We see a partial fulfillment of Genesis 12. Genesis 37-50 is a vivid picture that points beyond itself to Christ, who is the ultimate son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who saves the nations through his covenant faithfulness. God is sovereignly orchestrating all things, even your awful sin, to accomplish his purposes.

Third, think biblically about the purposes of God. God's goal is to do good to the nations (Genesis 50:20). Let's think about that reality: the sovereign king of all nations uses his control to orchestrate realities that are good for us. Thus, Paul says in Romans 8:28:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

The good that God had in mind was to save the nations from famine. Moreover, the good God had in mind was to reconcile together Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's brothers hated the idea of bowing down to Joseph in Genesis 37. Still, in Genesis 50, they bowed down to him and confessed themselves as his servants (18), not with teeth grinding in hatred, but willingly because Joseph spoke kindly to them and comforted them.



The hatred of the brothers in Genesis 37 highlights the character of Joseph! He forgave them and cared for them. He did this because he rested in God's good control over everything, even the bad things in life.

Therefore, let's be a people who think biblically: let's have a biblical view of sin, of God's sovereignty, and his goodness to sinners.

Once we begin to think biblical about God, we should have rest. Joseph comforted his brothers and spoke kindly to them despite them. Church family, this pictures to us powerfully our God. He speaks kindly to us despite us. Let's rest in his grace this week, church family.

PRAYER

Help us think biblically about our sin, your control, and your purposes, and let these thoughts move us to rest. Thank you for your grace to us. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.