



Leaders Note

Acts 7: 9-19 Joseph

Thought

“Every story whispers his name” — that’s the subtitle of The Jesus Storybook Bible. In Joseph’s story His name is whispered through a bullhorn. The Joseph story is the crowning story of the book of Genesis and the outlines of the path of Jesus are seldom more colorfully on display. Also on display is a clear summons to us — a divine summons to transcend present grief and pain and bitterness from past wrongs done to us. Beautiful feet bearing good news are linked to hearts bearing no simmering grudges. The eyes are then free to see the bigger picture of what God is doing in this world, our ears to hear the tune of the dance he invites us to join. Joseph had every reason to end up paralyzed, victimized by life. Who could blame him? Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, lied about, forgotten in prison on a trumped up charge. It has all the makings of a classic tale of sweet throat-slitting revenge. And though perhaps Joseph may have enjoyed the testing of his brothers a bit too much, ultimately it was a tune of divine forgiveness and sovereign purpose to which he moved — a salvation tune that still plays, inviting us to join in the dance.

Context

Joseph's Wisdom/ Dreams: The belief in dream oracles is well attested in the ancient world, including in the Bible. Job’s friend Eliphaz stated that he had received in a dream a divine message relating to Job’s misery (job 4:12-21). Elihu also expressed his knowledge that dreams are one means by which God communicates with people (Job 33:14-18). The Lord visited the patriarch Jacob in a nocturnal vision (Genesis 28:11-19). His son Joseph also received prophetic dreams (Genesis 37), as did Solomon (1 Kings 3:3-15), prophets in general (Numbers 12:7), Daniel (Daniel 7) and Joseph the carpenter (Matthew 1 and 2). Dream oracles were not exclusive to Israel, however. Joseph interpreted the dreams of the pharaoh and his servants. Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Daniel 2 and 4) and the Magi were warned in a dream not to return to King Herod (Matthew 2). Of course, not all dream oracles can be considered legitimate. If the omen portended in the dream encouraged the worship of anyone besides the one true God or if the apparent implication of the dream did not come to pass, that message did not issue from the Lord (see Deuteronomy 18:20-22). Dreams were one of the many ways people of the ancient world believed that humans received divine messages. It is important to observe, however, that the Bible contains no guidebook for interpreting dreams. There is no magical code we can follow. If God communicates by a dream, only God can give the interpretation (Genesis 40:8)

Prison/ House of the captain of the guard: Some scholars read between the lines in the story of Potiphar's wife and suggest that Potiphar may ultimately have had a better grasp of his wife's nature and the true facts of the case. This would account for him not having Joseph executed or sent to a worse prison than he did. Regardless, God continued to show up in the flow of Joseph's circumstances...

Joseph revealed himself: It had been 21 years, and his brothers had probably changed a little. But Joseph was seventeen when they had last seen him. And now he was in an unexpected position of authority, shaved like an Egyptian (Hebrews always had the beards!), dressed like an Egyptian, and speaking to his brothers through an interpreter.



Learning Session

Read the passage above and give a little of the context above. The issue of dreams may also come up in discussions and so the paragraph above may prove useful. It would be good to stress, if or when it comes up, that in our Vineyard we hold that each dream requires God's wisdom and revelation. We do not buy, like some, into formula's of interpretation. Split up into small groups and discuss the following questions:

1. Why do you think Stephen is now referring to Joseph?
2. What kind of a young man was Joseph? What do you find most striking about him?
3. What was the root of his brothers' jealousy?
4. Joseph had it tough for **a long time**, where are you experiencing hardship in your life right now? Which traits of Joseph can help you to weather these famine like conditions?

Gather together for a time of feedback, hopefully people would have been open in sharing and you may want to make feedback shorter if you feel there is a lot of ministry on the cards. The main points to stress about the passage are as follows:

- Joseph reflects Jesus on many levels, rejected by his brother yet exalted by the King! He had a forgiving heart and he saw the bigger picture. He understood that the world was not about him, maybe he needed to suffer so that he would grasp that fully.
- Sibling rivalry can get out of hand!
- We need to be a lot more patient during our hard times than what we are.

Discussion Questions

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