



LIFE FROM CHAOS: GENESIS
STUDY 9: THE DREAMER'S RULE
Genesis 37-39



 **Key Idea**

As we begin an epic story, we're shown the depths of our sin and our need to come to God's chosen ruler for salvation.

 **Listen**

This study is written to be used together with the sermon preached at Trinity Church which you can find on our church website.

www.trinitybay.church/sermon-archive/

 **Talk About**

1. We're now onto a new part of Genesis. The focus has moved away from Jacob and onto his 12 sons, and particularly the focus is on Joseph. Begin by sharing with the group how familiar you are with Joseph's story. Ever seen an adaption of the story? (Movie or Musical etc.)

 **Explore**

Although we're now moving our focus away from Jacob, he still looms fairly large in the background. Particularly today, we see that his favoritism of Joseph over his other sons causes some serious issues. He and his brother Esau had some pretty serious issues around being favoured by their different parents so you'd think he'd know better, right? It's worth remembering what's going on here. If you remember a couple of weeks we looked at Jacob marrying Leah and Rachel? Jacob's 10 eldest sons were born to Leah, and to Leah and Rachel's two servants, while Rachel suffered from infertility issues. Finally after some time, Rachel had two sons - Joseph and Benjamin. Having loved their mother more than his other wives, it's not so surprising that Jacob would love these two sons above his others.

 **Read Genesis 37:1-11**

2. What marker does the passage give that we're onto a new section of Genesis? Who's the focus of the new section?

3. People debate how Joseph should be understood in these verses. Some see him as a bit of a spoilt brat. What in the passage might point us in that direction? Do you think that's a fair assessment?

4. If we assume that the dreams given to Joseph here are from God, what can we then say about God's plan for Joseph?

Read Genesis 37:12-36

5. What do the brothers do to Joseph? How does Reuben come off in the story? And what about Judah? Many brothers aren't named, how are they complicit in what happens?

6. The brothers have rejected God's chosen ruler. How does this remind us of Genesis 3?

7. On Sunday, Matt argued that we should try not to associate ourselves with Joseph here, but should instead see that the passage is trying to help us see that we're more like Joseph's brothers? Do you agree with that conclusion? Why or why not?

Explore

At the end of Genesis 37 we're expecting to see what's going to happen to Joseph in Egypt. Before that, however, we have a pretty strange chapter which revolves around Judah. It would be well worth reading Genesis 38 together if you have time. As you read, you'll see that Judah doesn't come off very well. We've just learnt that we're more like Judah and the other brothers than we are like Joseph. If this is the case then Genesis 38 should help hammer home just how awful our sin is, and help us see the sorts of consequences that sin has. Most striking, I think, is the moment in verse 26 where Judah realizes his sin has been uncovered. Some of us will have something of an idea of what that feels like. The remarkable thing about the chapter, is that these are the people God chooses to use. He uses sinful and broken people like Judah and Tamar, in fact from their union comes the line of Jesus. As we go through Joseph's story we'll see more of Judah, and also more development of this theme of God using human wickedness for his good purposes.

Read Genesis 39

8. What sort of repetition do you see in this chapter? What might this emphasise?

9. How do you think Joseph feels through this story? What picture are we starting to get of Joseph?

Application

10. The sin of Joseph's brothers ultimately leads to something good. If Joseph hadn't gone to Egypt, everyone would have been doomed by the coming famine. Can we say that Joseph brothers' sin was actually a good thing?

11. If we conclude that we are more like Joseph brothers than Joseph, how should we respond? What hope is there for us? Who is the chosen ruler we can come to for salvation?

12. Joseph has had a rough time through this passage (A passage that seems to describe several years), and yet God was bringing him through suffering into something good. Can you think of times where your suffering has ultimately lead to something good? What encouragement could we take from comparing our suffering to Joseph's? What would be dangerous about making this comparison too strongly?

Some Extra Notes

I hope you see in today's passage that Joseph's story is a great picture of gospel. We are like Joseph's brothers - sinners and full of brokenness. But, Joseph, in many ways, points us to Christ. He's God's chosen ruler who God uses to bring about salvation. Like Joseph, Jesus was rejected by his own people, and like Joseph he suffered greatly at the hands of sinful humans. In both cases, that sin leads ultimately to good - in Joseph's story his mistreatment leads to him being able to save his people from famine, whereas with Jesus the sin he suffers leads to him being able to pay the price for the sins of his people. This could lead to your group to questions about whether sin can be excused because it ends up causing something good. I don't think the Bible ever takes us to that conclusion - our sin is an awful rejection of God's rule and never a good thing. What it does show us is the way God's chosen to bring about salvation - he could have destroyed the world completely and made robots instead, but no - he loves his creation and so he chooses to use broken and sinful humans and brings life out of the chaos. We'll talk about this in coming weeks in church so don't be afraid to park those conversations if they come up!

- Question 2 - It's worth noting that the focus is not on Jacob, but his family. The focus of this section is all of Jacob's sons. This would have been significant for an Israelite - this story is about all of God's people.
- Question 3 - It's easy to see why Joseph would come off as a brat, but I don't think that's the conclusion the passage wants us to draw. The dreams in particular show us that Joseph is God's chosen ruler.
- Question 6 - In Genesis 3 God's people reject his rule. Here they reject his chosen ruler.
- Question 12 - It's certainly true that sometimes we'll go through suffering and later be able to look back and see how good came from that hard time. We need to be careful though - we're not all going to have a Joseph story where we can see exactly how our suffering was worked for good and we shouldn't necessarily be expecting a Joseph-style happy ending. Not in this life at least.