

RUSSELL SANDERS

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THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – LESSON 4

LIFE IN THE PIT

We saw yesterday how Jacob's favoritism to Joseph caused jealousy and envy among his ten older brothers. This intensified into pure hatred toward the lad with his "coat of many colors" and the two dreams of their obeisance (worship) of him. Today we will see what such hatred can cause.

Finding open pasture for grazing herds was always a challenge, so Jacob sent the ten sons to Shechem with their herds of cattle, sheep, and goats (Genesis 37). After they had been gone a while, Jacob wondered how they were faring. He called seventeen-year-old Joseph to go to Shechem to check on his brothers and see how the livestock was doing.

The teenager arrived in Shechem but did not find the brothers. As he wandered around searching, another man found him and inquired about what he was searching. Joseph told him and asked if he knew where his brothers might be. The man had indeed met them. He overheard them talking about taking the herds to Dothan which was a few miles further north. It was known that Dothan had two water wells to aid in the grazing conditions. Young Joseph set out to find them.

As he drew near, the brothers saw him yet afar off. In that flat wilderness one can see a long way. They could tell it was Joseph because he was wearing his coat of colors. Some of them immediately began to conspire how to get rid of "this dreamer."

Their plan was to kill Joseph, take his precious coat, throw him into a pit to rot then kill a goat to apply its blood to the coat. Then, upon returning home they would present the bloody coat to Jacob. Genesis 37:20 says, ***"We shall see what will become of his dreams."***

Wow! What a prophetic word that turned out to be! They thought it would bring his dreams to naught. However, they would actually see the dreams' fulfillment. Yes, God can even use sinners to utter his words of prophecy. The story of Balaam with Balak (Numbers 22-24) gives a great example of that.

Reuben, being the eldest son knew that it was he who was ultimately responsible for the boy. In verses 21-22 he said, ***"Let us not kill him...shed no blood...(just) cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness."*** The assumption was that he would die of thirst in a deep dry pit. However, Reuben intended to safely extract him from the pit that night under cover of darkness and send him on his way back home.

It turns out that the pit was one of Dothan's two wells that had gone dry, so it was indeed too deep for anyone to climb out. The brothers stripped Joseph of his coat, covered it with goat blood and cast him into the dry well. His life was now "in the pit."

Does Joseph perish in the dry deep well, or does God have a different plan? Who is in control here?

Who is in control of your circumstances? Has something ever felt hopeless for you? Have you survived it, or did God bring you through it?

Tomorrow we shall see how God delivered Joseph from this very bad circumstance only to deliver him into another seemingly bad one.... slavery. What was God thinking?