

## *Open Heart, Open Bible*

Genesis and Luke's Gospel

Linking Theme: Covenant

*Passage for weekly reading (week 9):*

*Genesis ch's 37 – 43*

Bearing the yoke whilst young – the account of Joseph

Lamentations 3 v.27 tells us that it is “good” for a man to bear the yoke while he is young, and I take this to mean getting yoked in with Jesus, understanding the phrase in the light of our Lord's teaching (Matthew 11 v.'s 28-30). There were two outstanding O.T.saints who were called by God to this early yoke-bearing, one the prophet Jeremiah, the second being Joseph, the son of Jacob by Rachel. Although Genesis 37 is introduced as “the account of Jacob”, by far the dominant personality is Joseph, until his death at the age of 110 at the end of the Book.

The scripture gives us a sense that there is some distance between Joseph and the rest of the brothers as they grew up. Joseph clearly didn't like some of their ways, and would “grass” on them if need be, and his father's favouritism made things worse. His God-given dreams increased the dislike his brothers already felt. Whatever Jacob's motives were in sending him out to join his brothers in grazing the flocks, they backfired, and he is sold into slavery and taken to Egypt. The deception concerning the robe convinces Jacob of his death.

Ch.38 is again one of those chapters that breaks into the main narrative to give an important insight into another sequence of events. Again we see here the unholy side of the chosen people, this time Judah, who will become the leader of the twelve tribal heads. He would have had Tamar summarily put to death had it not been for the pledge she had requested from him. She knew what she was doing! When his effects are returned to him, he admits his wrongdoing (v.26). The unusual account of the birth that follows, with the jostling of the twins as they come from Tamar's womb, is again a case of God working through human failure to achieve His purposes. Both Perez and Zerah (as well as Tamar) are listed in Matthew's genealogy of the Lord Jesus (Matt 1 v.3), and Perez appears in Luke's list (Luke 3 v.33). The Lord is pleased to use anyone who is willing to be corrected and taught by Him. Tamar had been wronged and Judah admitted as much when found out. Their “wrong” liaison was a vital link in the Davidic line of descent through which the Saviour of the world would come. What a mighty (and merciful!) God we serve!

The main account of Joseph's fortunes now resumes in ch.39. He begins a period of service in the household of Potiphar, the Egyptian official, brought to a sad end by

the folly of his wife. Even in prison, however, God's hand on Joseph's life is soon evident (39 v.23). The respective dreams of the cupbearer and baker are accurately interpreted by him, but he is left in custody for another two years as the restored cupbearer forgets to mention him to Pharaoh. After this period, Pharaoh himself has dreams which disturb him, which jogs his servants' memory. The rest of ch.41 is history – Joseph is released because of his obvious wisdom, and becomes, effectively, the Prime Minister of the land, answerable only to the Pharaoh. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord – the adulteress can do nothing to change that! (see Psalm 37 v.23, K.J.V.).

When the predicted famine begins to bite, it affects “all the world” (41 v.57), and ch.42 tells of the journey made by Joseph's brothers to Egypt for grain. After Joseph has seen them, he insists that they return with Benjamin, but Jacob cannot release him, in spite of Reuben's bravado (v.'s 37&38). However, the increasing severity of the famine makes the need for a return journey essential, and Jacob is left with no choice but to let Benjamin go (43 v.14). When they arrive, Joseph is deeply moved to see his own brother by Rachel, but is able to compose himself sufficiently to feast with them. They are amazed that he has seated them in the order of their respective ages. How could he have done that?

### ***Food for thought / discussion / prayer***

1) Ch.38 is important in the record it gives of the continuing Messianic line. Scarlet is the colour which represents our sin (Isaiah 1 v.18), and the thread mistakenly tied to Zerah's wrist is symbolic of that sin. There is also a scarlet cord tied by another prostitute, Rahab, from the window of her house at Jericho, through which her life was spared. Both Tamar and Rahab appear in the family line of Jesus presented by Matthew, and Perez and Boaz (Rahab's son), are part of Luke's record. Jesus said specifically that He had not come for the “righteous”, but for “sinners”, and, in the incident of the “sinful woman” (Luke 7 v.'s 36-50), He also said that those who had been forgiven much, love much. Many people who have been drawn by the Lord into the family of believers from a fairly “regular” background (i.e.- no obvious, “deep-dyed” sin), feel that they haven't been forgiven all that much, and that they are a bit “cold” as a result, spiritually speaking. Is this true of you? Should anybody feel this way?

2) Joseph and Daniel are the outstanding characters in the O.T. in regard to dreams and their interpretation. We are told by the prophet Joel (Joel 2 v.28) that there will come a time when dreams and visions from God will be far more commonplace, and Peter links this with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Have you had any experience of dreams/visions which has excited you, either first- or second-hand?

**Next week's passage:** Genesis 44 - 50

