

Text: Genesis 36:1-37:36

Title: Esau's Lineage and Joseph's Trouble

Truth: God permitted evil for a good reason.

Date/Location: Sunday June 4, 2023 at FBC

I. Genealogy of Esau, Genesis 36

- A. This is another of the genealogy chapters of Genesis (see chapters 5 and 10-11), with tons of names. Maybe try sometime to diagram this genealogy and see what it looks like!
- B. Esau is the ancestor of the Edomites, who come up again and again in Biblical history. This seems to be a main point of the chapter, as the “Esau is Edom” phrase is repeated four times – in verse 1, 8, 19, and 43.
- C. The value of this chapter is that it introduces you as a reader of the Bible to an important people group and therefore helps give you context and helps you understand what God has recorded for us.
- D. Consider some key places where Edom appears in the Biblical narrative.
 1. In Genesis 25:30, Edom got his name from being red and hairy, and from trading his birthright for red stew. Edom means *red*, so Edom was *Red*. We use the same nickname for someone with red hair or a ruddy (red, splotchy) complexion which is often associated with working outdoors.
 2. Edom does not appear again in Genesis, and only once in **Exodus** 15:15 in the Song of Moses when Moses wrote poetry that mentioned the dismay of peoples around about Israel who would hear about the power of the God of Abraham.
 3. In **Numbers** 20:14-21, 400 years after Edom was alive, the nation of his people refused a simple kindness to the people of Israel leaving Egypt. Edom would not let them pass through their land to shorten their journey, even if Israel paid for water and such. This was a very discouraging detour for the people of Israel (Num. 21:4).

4. **Psalms 137:7** calls to memory when Edom gloated over the destruction of Jerusalem.
 5. **Ezekiel 25:12-13** prophesies deep judgment by God against the nation Edom; **36:5** inveighs against Edom for taking the land of Israel as their own.
 6. **Amos** predicted that Edom would be judged by God for their transgressions (**Amos 1:11**). They were themselves victims of persecution by the Moabites (**Amos 2:1**). In the latter days, the nation of the Jews will possess the remnant of Edom and rule over the Gentile nations (**Amos 9:12**). James used this prophecy in **Acts 15:16-17** to show how reasonable it was that God begin to work with Gentiles in the present age—to build from them a people for Himself.
 7. The entire short book of **Obadiah** is a prophecy against the nation of Edom for its pride.
 8. **Malachi 1:4** mentions that God loved Jacob but hated Esau. This even though God blessed Esau during his lifetime. It was the way that Edom treated Israel and their unrepentant evil-doing that left them outside of God's good favor.
 9. Edom is mentioned elsewhere in Judges, Joshua, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel 11:41, and Joel 3:19.
 10. The Bible is, after all, a premier book of history, so it is logical that it contains information about one of Israel's nearest neighbors with whom they had much interaction.
- E. Edom's ancestral territory included Mt. Seir to the south of the Dead Sea in modern-day southwest Jordan. The famous city Petra was in their territory. It too was red because of the color of its dominant sandstone.

II. Introduction to Joseph, Genesis 37

About a decade had passed since the family moved from Haran to the promised land. Joseph was born apparently close to year 14 of Jacob's stay with Laban. Jacob stayed 6 more years, so I estimate

that Joseph was about 6 or 7 when he traveled home with the large clan to meet Esau and move back. He was now 17 years old.

- A. Joseph Hated, 37:1-11. There were four reasons that Joseph's brothers hated him. They are: a) he brought a bad report about the brothers back to their father (37:2); b) Their father loved Joseph more than the other sons and gave him a very special and probably expensive gift (37:3-4); c) Joseph had a dream that his brothers would bow down to him (37:5-8) and this just magnified their hatred for him; and d) Joseph had another dream that his father, mother, and brothers would bow down to him (37:9-11), which even brought rebuke from his dad.

You can imagine the seething anger that they had toward their kid brother. He was arrogant, they thought, and a tattletale, and somehow was "father's pet."

Notice that favoritism pops up in the family once again (see 25:28). The implication of this was that hatred developed in the "non favorite" offspring. Mere favoritism should not cause such a response, but in the context of sinful people, it often will do so.

Rarely in history does God reveal His plan in a dream. We should not try to find divine meaning in all our dreams.

We will read on and find out that the dreams turned out to be true. But the brothers did not understand what the Lord was showing them—or even that the Lord was behind the dream. In general, people who do not trust God often misunderstand what He says (1 Cor. 2:14). Either they say that it is not a message from God, so they can safely ignore it, or that God is wrong. It is not lack of clarity that causes this, but spiritual blindness. The brothers understood the metaphor or picture of the dream having to do with Joseph ruling over them. But they could not conceive how *that* could possibly come to pass. That is, they understood what the prophetic dream said, but not its fulfillment.

The brothers hated and envied Joseph. But Jacob "kept the matter in mind" like Mary pondered in her heart the things that happened surrounding her Son Jesus (Luke 2:19).

B. Joseph Thrown into a Pit, 37:12-24. Now begins a tale of murderous treachery and deception that lasted for 20 years. The brothers colluded to defraud their father of his favorite son. They did this to their own kin! And why? Could they not simply write off Joseph's dreams as delusions of grandeur from a boyish mind? They had a complete disregard for human life.

As a result of their hatred, they wanted to kill Joseph (Matthew 5:22, 1 John 3:15). Even while he was coming on a mission from their father Israel (Jacob), about 60 miles away to see if all was well with them, they expressed this murderous desire. Reuben exhibited a bit of sanity and stopped them from killing the boy and had them throw him into a hole in the ground instead, because he planned later to rescue Joseph. They sat down to eat a meal after doing that to their brother. Seared conscience...

C. Joseph Sold as a Slave, 37:25-36. While Reuben was absent, some Ishmaelite traders came by on their way to Egypt. The other brothers hatched a plan to sell Joseph into slavery. This way, they won't kill him, they will make some money, and they will get rid of him for good. Add greed to their envy and hatred. They sold him for 20 pieces of silver, 2/3 of the traditional price of a slave. They only received about 2 shekels apiece.

After Reuben discovers that Joseph is gone, it is not clear that the brothers told him what they had done. To cover up whatever happened (Reuben) and the sale (other brothers), they splatter blood on the multi-colored tunic and send it back to their father to deceive him into thinking that Joseph is dead (no DNA testing was available back then to prove it was not Joseph's blood!). This charade goes on for years, and Jacob mourned for many days for a lie. (Lie not to one another, Colossians 3:9.) Note that an animal died to carry out their sinful plot.

Meanwhile, Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar, a high-ranking officer in the Egyptian Pharaoh's army. Man-stealing and selling into slavery is a capital offense in God's eyes (Deut. 24:7).

Conclusion

I am jumping ahead a little bit because most of us are familiar with how this situation turned out. God allowed evil to bring good. This is an illustration that you could use for the “greater good theodicy” that explains why God permits evil. On the face of things, there seems to be no good way to accomplish sending Joseph to Egypt for a future rescue operation. It seems that he would not leave his dad voluntarily. We might imaginatively figure out some circumstance that would bring Joseph to Egypt, but it seems unlikely he would have encountered the same people in similar ways to allow him to rise to power. And, after all that was done, we would not have the bold lesson of good coming out of evil that God wants us to learn from Joseph’s experience.

Over the centuries of human existence, people have noticed other situations where God has arranged for some bad thing to happen that brought some good thing about. The highest example of this is the cross of Jesus Christ—the worst injustice ever perpetrated on a human being resulted in the salvation of millions of souls.

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