

Case Study: Rueben – A Chip Off The Old Block

Description

18 And when they saw him far off, even before he came near to them, they conspired
19 And they said one to another, See, here comes this dreamer and master of dreams
20 So come on now, let us kill him and throw his body into some pit; then we will
21 Now Reuben heard it and he delivered him out of their hands by saying, Let
22 And Reuben said to them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit or well

Genesis 37:18-22 AMPC

The original family of Israel is a complex, dramatic, and interesting family, much like every other family in history. Sibling rivalries, “baby mama drama,” jealousy, resentment, favoritism, it was all present in the first family and it manifested in several toxic ways. We’ll look at Rueben, Jacob’s first born son and overall child, the son of Leah, Jacob’s first wife, and the son who would receive the inheritance according their culture. I don’t know what life was like for Rueben as he came of age, but I imagine that it was mentally, and emotionally damaging. Rueben would have been raised with the responsibilities, and expectations of a first born son destined to receive the inheritance. Rueben would have spent his childhood and maturation in the fields assisting Jacob with his livestock/cattle, looking after his siblings that were born of Leah, and last but not least, a comforter and innocent bystander to the emotional and mental turmoil that his mother experienced. Please go back on this site to read the case study on Leah, but very quickly I will say that Leah was locked into a bitter, very lopsided competition with her sister Rachel for the love, affection, and approval of Jacob. Relating this back to Rueben, I imagine that he would have observed his mother’s tears, heartbreak, depression, anger, and rejection as a result of her relationship with Jacob. Rueben would have seen and overheard Jacob’s rhetoric towards Leah, and possibly her children, especially in comparison to Rachel and her children. It becomes easier to understand how Reuben and his brothers had developed animosity and contempt towards Joseph as a result of Jacob’s favor towards him. Rueben likely realized that Joseph’s existence was a direct threat to his opportunity to receive the firstborn, and become patriarch of the family. In the text above, Joseph’s presence in the pasture presented the best opportunity for his removal, and Rueben’s claim to the inheritance. However, we must understand something about Rueben, or better yet his familial line and inclinations. Jacob, Leah, Rachel, Laban (Genesis 29:14-28), Sarah, and Abraham were schemers. Rueben came from a family of professional schemers, in fact he had been “conscripted” into a scheme by his mother without his awareness

‘So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. “You must come and sleep with me tonight!” she said. “I have paid for you with some mandrakes that my son found.” So that night he slept with Leah.

genesis 30:16 NLT

To some, this may seem like a stretch on my part, but you must understand not only a person’s bloodline, but also the environment they were raised in to understand some of their ways. How do I

relate this example to Rueben's behavior in the text above? When Leah didn't receive Jacob's love, she conspired to force his hand, or manipulate others. Switch to Rueben, it was likely that he saw the writing on the wall that Joseph was more highly favored by Jacob, and would likely be given the firstborn inheritance. With this in mind, in spite of Rueben's brothers desiring kill Joseph which would have possibly guaranteed Rueben's future and been to his material benefit, he resorted to manipulation and scheming to "move" the hand of Jacob in his favor.

He was trying to get Joseph out of their hands in order to rescue him and deliver him again to his father.

genesis 37:22 ampc

Rueben's actions and thoughts weren't out of love for Joseph, or even in consideration of Jacob, but merely what he believed would ensure his own future. Rueben, reminiscent of his father was willing to trick his sibling(s), AND his father to attain what he valued above all else. I want you to realize something very important about this situation, yes Rueben's actions were "redeemed" and orchestrated by God in his purpose and plan for Joseph's life and the saving of Israel, BUT his actions were not godly. Rueben's actions was solely for his "scheme" and plan to be patriarch of the family through gaining the approval and blessing of Jacob. He suggested to place Joseph in a pit rather than kill him almost like the pot of lentils that his father offered for his uncle's birthright. He desired to "gift" Joseph back to Jacob as a protective and capable brother like Laban, his grandfather agreed to give Rachel in marriage in exchange for 7 years when in his heart he knew that planned to give Leah instead.

Reflection Time

Rueben in some ways had "no chance" to escape the ways of his family, given that he was raised and groomed in dysfunction. However, to believe that would be to dismiss the redemptive power of God. Rueben like us had every opportunity to receive God's healing power and be led by his spirit IF he would have submitted his own "material," and selfish desires. The saying, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree is true, BUT not absolute. The apple is nourished and fed by the "physical" tree that it develops on, but is also fed and nourished by the water, sunlight, and environment that acts on it externally which is just as important for its development. What am I saying; the apple, like us, has natural connections and influences that aid in its development, but to solely consider the natural connections/influences would lead to a incomplete conclusion. We can NOT discount the power of God and his Holy Spirit in being able to renew our minds, and transform our hearts to reflect him in ALL things. I challenge you to evaluate your characteristics and mind, to see if you reflect your nature and environment, or God.

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