

## **The Chosen Brother & the Rejected**

### ***Isaac & Ishmael***

Genesis 21:8-21

June 2nd, 2024

#### **I. Introduction: Cain & Abel**

The first story of life \_\_\_\_\_ of the Garden is the story of two brothers, Cain and Abel. This story not only introduces life outside of the Garden, but life outside of the Garden, so far as Genesis is concerned, never really leaves this story. By the end of Genesis, this story of brothers overwhelms the plot. It becomes the main attraction.

Throughout Genesis, there is a \_\_\_\_\_ brother, and then the \_\_\_\_\_ one. The choice of God puts a target on the favored brother's back. Cain was rejected and Abel was accepted by God, and Cain refused to rule over the sin that sought to devour him. He succumbed to it, he conspired, and he slew his brother in cold blood. This would be the first telling of the violent brotherly rivalry which would recur throughout Genesis.

#### **II. The Text — Gen. 21:8-21**

*So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. . . .*

#### **III. Isaac & Ishmael**

By God favoring Isaac and rejecting Ishmael—this created the occasion for an exacerbated rivalry. It gave occasion for the enmity and anger of the rejected brother and his ridicule of the favored brother, of Isaac. By God exalting Isaac above Ishmael, like Abel over Cain, Isaac—like Abel—had a target placed on his back, and Ishmael—like Cain—had sin he had to rule over. God's choice strained the relationship. But this was only the case because there was already sin in the heart. God's choice forced sin to the surface, as it did with Cain. It was the *occasion*, not the \_\_\_\_\_ of the sin. And like Cain, it was an opportunity for Ishmael to rule over it. Which he, like Cain, failed to do.

#### **IV. Joseph & His Brothers**

With the story of Joseph and his brothers, we come full circle back to Cain and Abel. The rejected brothers have vented their wrath on the favored. But this time around, the story doesn't end there. Joseph isn't dead, and the story goes on. As the story goes on, the Lord begins to explain what all of this is about. Thus far we've only seen the phenomenon on repeat. The resolution of Joseph's provision for his brothers and for the entire known world is the key to understanding this phenomenon of the brotherly rivalry brought about by God's favor. God's favor ultimately prepares His people for a great \_\_\_\_\_. In the chosen seed, as Abraham was told, all the nations would be blessed. And here in Joseph we come to the climax. In the chosen Joseph, not only are all the other brothers blessed and saved—but so also are the nations, for all the surrounding nations were able to come to Egypt and find food.

## V. Jesus

In Jesus' life and death this familiar story is likewise played out. The favored Brother becomes the lightning rod for all the envy, hatred, and bloodthirsty anger of His brothers. And as with Joseph so with Jesus, this is all to prepare God's people for a great deliverance. Jesus is chosen by God so that we can all be blessed in Him—so that He could shore up life for us in our famine. God sent Him ahead of us so that His grace might abound over all our spite and hatred and malice—our spite and hatred and malice that put Him on the Cross.

## VI. In the Season of Favor

*When we experience God's favor upon us how are we to respond?*

**First, what we have seen directs us to \_\_\_\_\_ and gratitude.** God did this. God exalted you. God's hand rests upon you. All the gifts, talents, personality traits, etc., that you have, that have contributed to your success—these are gifts from God. See 1 Cor. 4:7.

**Second, Scripture directs you to joy.** At no point should you feel ashamed or guilty of God's blessings upon you, whatever form those blessings might take. Joseph basked in his father's favor. He wore that coat with joy. And so we are to wear all that we have with joy, resting in our Father's love. God loves us, and He wants us to be happy in that love.

**Third, we are directed to strive to remain in that favor.** God loves us, so rejoice—and \_\_\_\_\_ in His love. Do so by obeying His commandments with the love of a son, of a daughter. See Jn. 15:9-10.

**Fourth, we are directed to lay down our lives for the \_\_\_\_\_.** The favored son is exalted, but in his exaltation he is marked out for persecution—persecution for the sake of the cast-out brother. We should not be surprised when we meet with envy, with anger, with vicious rivalry. The favor of God comes with a target. We get to fill up Christ's afflictions, for through us, Christ is reconciling the cast-out brother to God.

## VII. In the Season of Rejection

*When we experience rejection, whatever form it might take, how does God call us to respond?*

**First, you don't get to \_\_\_\_\_.** You don't get to give into hatred and envy and covetousness for any reason. That stuff was in your heart before this inequality, but now God has forced it to the forefront in order for you to deal with it—not to justify it. So put it to death. See Rom. 8:13.

**Second, you must likewise learn to \_\_\_\_\_ with your brothers.** Paul calls us to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). In our seasons of hardship, we are instructed to rejoice with those who rejoice.

**Third, we are to look to \_\_\_\_\_.** In Jesus, in the beloved Son, we are brought into the favor of God. And in Christ Jesus, whatever inequalities you face in this life, the Lord delights to exalt you in due time. See 1 Pet. 4:19.

## VIII. Conclusion