

QUESTION 5

- a) Is it going too far to suggest that the appearance of a stranger to give directions is God's providence?
- b) The alternative explanation has to be coincidence, or chance. But how is 'coincidence' controlled?
- c) If we believe in the providence of God, then we have a fresh approach to the more difficult aspects of our lives. Whilst it's only as we look back we see the whole picture; we walk by faith as we go through our lives.
- d) This points us to the 'all things' in **Romans 8:28**. These things are not random but are continuously leading us towards God's purposes (see **Psalm 139:16**).
- e) A belief in the providence of God gives us confidence to go forward.

QUESTION 6

- a) Jesus, like Joseph was the beloved of the Father.
- b) He was to be the special instrument to ultimately bring salvation to those who opposed Him.
- c) God the Father sent His Son to His brothers (the Jews).
- d) They hated Him and were jealous of Him. *"The religious leaders of His day hated Him and were jealous of Him because His righteous life exposed their unrighteousness"* (Theodore Epp).
- e) They rejected Him (see **John 1:11**).
- f) Their intention was to kill Jesus.
- g) However, not all rejected Jesus; as John goes on to write in **John 1:12-13**.

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES – STUDY 2

QUESTION 1

We might observe two reasons for Jacob's actions here:

- a) Firstly, he may have wondered what his sons were up to.
 - In our last study we had a glimpse of what the brothers were like from **Genesis 35:2, 22; 38:2**. We noted that they were behaving more like the Canaanites than they are the people of God.
 - Jacob could trust Joseph, although he might not have considered what might happen if he sent him to check up on his brothers?
 - We would expect that Jacob would have some idea of the resentment they had towards his favourite son.
- b) Secondly, he was concerned about their well-being.
 - Shechem; some fifty miles away, had good grazing land and was known for having plenty of water. Indeed, Jacob had bought some land there in **Genesis 33:18-19**.
 - However, we see in Genesis 34 that his daughter had been raped there. This led to a violent encounter whereby the males of the city were killed and the city plundered by the sons.
 - As it happens the brothers have moved 20 miles beyond Shechem to Dothan.

QUESTION 2

- a) Whatever it was, led them to the extreme intention to kill Joseph.
- b) He was their father's favourite; which had always caused friction (**verse 4**). Note how in verse 23 they strip him of the robe that symbolises the father's favour and their hatred.
- c) Now he seems to be on a 'spying' mission from their own father.
- d) But their hatred was also borne out of Joseph's revelation of God's truth.
- e) In verse 19 they describe him as *"this dreamer"*. Their motive for killing Joseph is to eliminate the dreams. Of course; they cannot dispose of God's purposes.

QUESTION 3

- a) In study 1 (*see Q3f of the leader's notes*) we saw that Reuben had forfeited his position as heir through his sin back in **35:22 (see 1 Chronicles 5:1-2)**.
- b) Whilst that might give him reason to hate his brother, he didn't want to break his father's heart again. Perhaps, despite everything, he feels a sense of responsibility as the first-born?
- c) Although he didn't have the courage to put a stop to the brothers' plan immediately, his intention was to save his brother's life.

QUESTION 4

- a) It will be helpful for the group to define what we mean by God's providence:
 - *"It refers to God's good government of our lives. We are not the victims of luck, fate, or karma. Rather, God has mapped out our path from before time began"* (Goligher).
 - *"Providence is how He orchestrates, through natural means and processes, all things necessary to accomplish His purposes in the world"* (Macarthur).
 - *"God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions"* (Shorter Westminster Catechism).
- b) Although God's name is not to be seen anywhere in this chapter; his presence is everywhere.
- c) We have already seen this in the dreams which will come to fulfilment later in the story. We see it here, through the actions of the father and brothers.
- d) Indeed, God's providence is even found in the encounter with a stranger who finds Joseph wandering in the fields. This is no chance encounter.
- e) We see God's providence in the way Joseph's life is spared and Reuben's suggestion is taken up. It doesn't seem much at the time, but as we look back over the whole story we see its full significance; despite the fact that Reuben's plan is not allowed to succeed.
- f) As this story unfolds it is helpful to keep in mind God's promise to Abraham in **Genesis 15:13-14, 16**. It is what this story is all about!