



I am a big fan of Christopher Nolan films. He is so good at making you step back and think, 'There is far more going on than I could comprehend.' That is what is happening in this final quarter of Genesis. Joseph is the main character right? Not quite... What about Judah? Fourth born, wants to make some quick cash by selling

Joseph to Egypt, marries an Egyptian woman, sleeps with his daughter-in-law, returns to the family home, heads to Egypt with the rest of his brothers to get grain to save his family. Is he the main character? No. It has been all about God, working in and through the mess, using both mundane and terrible events in the service of his good plan of deliverance, restoration and transformation that is made possible only by a descendant of Judah, Jesus Christ. Deliverance, restoration, transformation. The deliverance of his people from sin. The restoration of his people to himself and with one another and the transformation of his people into the image of his son. This is good news for us today because God is at work in the lives of his people, bringing these things to pass. He doesn't select the elite; he selects the rude, the improper, the poor, the not good enough, the flop, the you and me. And by grace he transforms us, he delivers us and he restores us.

The transformation of Judah There is a problem. Despite showering them with mercy, as we saw last week, Joseph still does not know the true nature of his brothers, whether they have changed and whether he can trust them again. Also, how could he know if they were going to come back again. So Joseph constructs one final test. How will they fare when under pressure of being made out to be guilty when they are innocent? More so, what if Benjamin was the one made out to be guilty. If this was 20 years ago and Joseph was made out to be guilty, the brothers would have happily walked away and left Joseph by himself. Will they treat the new favourite, Benjamin, the way that they would have 20 years ago? Will we see the work of God in their lives?

Before we get to that, let's just spend a minute on the cup. Verse 5 reads, "Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination." if Joseph took part in divination and used the cup for it, it would be a great sin indeed. Engaging in occult practices, Ouija boards, magic and divination is not for God's people. So far in this series, we have seen many people engaging in things that God's people ought never to do, and yet despite this, the Lord in His kindness and grace has shown complete undeserved mercy to His people. However, we must not knowingly enter into sin, presuming upon God's mercy. That is a terrible abuse of God's grace. As we read this, we must not use this as an excuse to engage in the occult and presume upon God's grace because that is what Joseph received. There is the very high possibility that Joseph did not use the cup for divination. We saw that when Pharaoh elevated Joseph to his position, he was given many things: robes, gold chains, rings, a wife... He may have received this cup as part of his position and never used it for its intended purpose. We have to remember that at this point, Joseph was still playing the role of an Egyptian to his brothers. He didn't sit at the same table to eat, he used an interpreter so calling this cup 'the cup my master drinks from and uses for divination' may have been part of the act, despite it being something that he has never used for divination.

But anyway, upon finding this cup in Benjamin's sack we read, verse 13, "They tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city." This verse massively understates what has gone on here. Nothing was going to help them now. The pressure was on. What were they going to do? Blame Benjamin so they could escape with their lives? Take care of themselves and leave Daddy's favourite to rot? Their case was hopeless, how would they respond? Are they going to look after their brother and stand by the promise they made to their father? Now, 20 years later, we see Judah speaking with genuine ache and concern for his father. He is nailing his allegiance to the patriarch and stepping into the role of leader among the brothers. But then Judah takes it even one step further. Verse 30, "So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the grey head of our father down to the grave in

sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life! Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.'" Transformation confirmed. God has been at work in this man. Like his greatest descendant, he is sacrificing himself in the place of another. That greatest descendant, Jesus, said these words, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ...No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." Just like Judah did on behalf of Benjamin, Jesus did on behalf of all who would believe. He took our place, took our sin, took our guilt, took our punishment, took wrath that was due to be ours so that we could go free. So we could leave this foreign land where we are strangers and exiles and return home. So that we could be declared innocent, so that we could be with the Father. Just like Jesus who remained behind on the cross, Judah was willing to remain behind in Egypt. Just like Jesus who bore our sin Judah was prepared to bear the punishment but not as a duty, he was fourth in line, He wanted to do the right thing. Jesus, For the joy of you being with Him for all eternity, glorifying him, endured the cross. No one forced Jesus to be your substitute, No one forced Judah to be Benjamin's substitute. This is a transformed man. A man who has been changed by God, who has been met with mercy and grace. A repentant heart.

The Great Deliverance In chapter 45, we now have the big reveal. (v1-3), "They were terrified in his presence". Would Joseph exact revenge?! No, he had faced it head on until he had come to a place of true forgiveness. He is not harbouring hatred. He is not trying to make the brothers feel bad. In fact, if we do that, it is a sign of unforgiveness! And now, from that place of true forgiveness, Joseph explains how he has forgiven them and then gives them a little theology lesson. Verse 4, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!" Flat out, straight away, tells them what they have done and doesn't make light of it. But then he says, "... it was not you who sent me here, but God." So, who did send Joseph into Egypt? Both. You sold me into Egypt, but God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth. This is where the sovereignty of God meets the agency of man. Joseph's brothers acted out of evil intentions, but God acted out of redemptive intentions. The most evil act that has ever happened and will ever happen is the crucifixion of Jesus. The intention of Pilate, the roman guards, the high priest, the pharisees in getting Jesus killed was evil yet God was working with the most glorious of intentions that is the redemption of his people from sin. This is what is happening in your life too. There are people sinning against you daily, you are sinning against people daily. Yet what they are intending for wrong, God is intending for good! He is a redeeming God. Joseph sees God's good intentions working through his brothers' sinful intentions. When we can see this we bow before God and say, "your ways are higher than my ways. You are able to do immeasurably more than I could ever ask or imagine." He has worked a great deliverance through Joseph for his brothers. And he has worked a great deliverance through Jesus for us.

Tears Of Restoration "And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him." (v15) That is restoration. Have you noticed that Joseph is a bit of a crier? Now there is nothing wrong with that, real men cry. But there is something interesting going on. Over the course of this narrative in Genesis, chapters 37 to 50, Joseph cries seven times: a)Genesis 42:24, b)Genesis 43:30, c)Genesis 45:2, d)Genesis 45:14, c)Genesis 46:29, b)Genesis 50:1, a)Genesis 50:17, This works as a poetic device called a seven part chiasm where verses 1(a) and 7(a) are similar, as are verses 2(b) and 6(b), 3(c) and 5(c) but verse 4(d) stands alone as unique as he reunites with his brothers, physically and relationally. This is the work of God. No one else could have reunited this family into a joyful, snotty, blubbing cuddle from where they were 20 years ago.

So here we have it, The transformation of Judah, The great deliverance, The tears of Restoration . Just like a Christopher Nolan movie, there is far more going on here than just the life of Joseph. This has never been all about Joseph. It has never been all about Judah. It has been all about God, working in and through the mess and using both mundane and terrible events to bring deliverance, restoration and transformation to a people he calls his own to the praise of the glory of his grace.