

## 2021 BLACK HISTORY MONTH RESOURCES - SERMON

God's Family and God's Promise,  
Captain A.J. Zimmerman

Revelations 5:9

During the pandemic, I made some new friends called Netflix, Hulu, and Disney Plus. In my boredom I scoured these platforms looking for something to keep me entertained. I binge watched a lot of shows! A lot of shows! The shows I enjoyed most were the ones with a compelling story that gave insight into who the main cast were. Each episode could be wild and random as long it served the purpose of telling the greater overall story.

In good shows characters develop and each season guides the audience through the story showcasing the life and decisions of the main cast. Episodes make up the season and the season makes the show. A show (or Good shows) leaves little clues and hints to let you know the direction the show is going. You can look back to see plot points developing. The older I get and the more I immerse myself in God's word the more I start to see it as one book instead of a collection of stories like I use to when I was younger. The old testament is pointing forward to Jesus and the New testament reveals truth and points back to God's plan. The old testament sets a foundational structure to stand on. You see the character of God! You see how He interacts with people. And like all good stories and shows, the ending is SO IMPORTANT!

In the book of Revelations John has a vision from the Lord of what is to come. In revelations chapter 5, verse 9 it says **"You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seal and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."** At the end of the Bible there is this beautiful picture of heaven breaking out into song, singing Jesus' praise for saving mankind and every tribe and language and people and nation is included! There is this triumphant victory at the end of the bible! And it is inclusive! There is this dream, this prophetic word, and it is inclusive!

I am reminded of another dreamer in the beginning of the bible name Joseph. I know you have probably heard sermon after sermon about Joseph's life. But I want to look at parts of his life in the context of promise and vision. Sometimes when we look at scripture its easy to read the story and say, "Okay, I get it". But I want you to put yourself into Joseph's shoes. Unlike you, he didn't know how his story would turn out. All he had was a dream/vision from the Lord, that one day his family would bow down before him. He told them about the dream/vision that God gave him, and they were not happy. They plotted to kill him! Over the years you might have heard siblings say empty threats like "I'm going to kill you" or "I'm going to hurt you" but, Joseph's brothers had killed before. In fact, in Genesis chapter 34, his brothers killed a whole town of men because one guy raped their sister. Joseph's brothers were jealous, and they wanted to get rid of him. They did not like the dream/ vision the Lord gave Joseph and they wanted to change the outcome. They eventually settled on selling him into slavery and lying to

their Father saying Joseph was dead. But still they wanted to change the dream/vision the Lord gave.

**Point One: You cannot change the dreams/visions of the Lord just because you don't like it.**

Over the years many believers have conveniently skipped over the inclusiveness of the Gospel. They have accepted with open arms the parts of the Bible that benefits them and have left out the parts that cause us as believers to be humble, forgiving, and to care for those less fortunate than ourselves. Much like Joseph brothers, when something doesn't please us, we try to change the narrative to fit us. Interestingly enough, **nothing they did changed the dreams/visions of the Lord!**

God continued to be with Joseph wherever Joseph went. When he was enslaved, God was with him. When he was falsely imprisoned, God was with him. When it seemed like all hope was lost, God was with him. When he was promoted, God was with him! In Genesis 39, "Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned." In Genesis Chapter 41 verse 37 Pharaoh says, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?"

1. The Dream/ Vision had not changed despite the ups and downs of life.
2. God continued to be faithful.
3. Other people who are not "Believers" were noticing God's hand.

**Point two: The dreams/ visions don't happen the way you want it.** I find it so interesting that people who are not believers are the ones doing all they can to align themselves with the God they see in Joseph. They see that the Lord is working, and they too want to be blessed, so they stick close to God's servant. This also brings me back to the scripture in Revelations. God starts off with setting people apart for His glory. Showing the world what it looks like to partner with God. Allowing the world to see the victory, the protection, and the power He is, He gives, and He has. His purpose was not to elevate one people group because they were better than others but to reveal His glory to the whole world and redeem it! We cannot get caught up on what tribe, language, people, or nation is better because no one is better than God. And God loves and wants us all! His blood was ransom for all!

We live in a crazy world and many have questioned the validity of this dream/vision of John. But just like God was with Joseph, God is with his people. Though it may not seem like it, sound like it, and feel like it... God's plans are still moving forward. God is using these situations to craft a greater story of victory. What is impossible with man is possible with God. God took Joseph from the pit, to prison, to power! And at the end of the day, God's vision was made real. I believe John's vision will also be made real. The diversity of Heaven will shout and sing God's praise! Nothing will stop it. And if unbelievers see what God is doing and align themselves with him, they will also be saved because of what Christ Jesus did.

**Point three: The Vision doesn't come without trials.** Joseph has two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. His first son Manasseh means "causing to forget" or forgetfulness. God had been so good to him that he forgets the bad stuff. The bad stuff was hard and long! Joseph was in the pit at age 17 and didn't come to power until age 30. 13 years of pain! But God was there! Joseph names his first son this as a decoration saying, "IT WAS WORTH IT"! His second son is Ephraim "being fruitful" or Fruitfulness. He gave him this name because God has made Joseph fruitful in Egypt. He was raised from the pit to the pinnacle of power and God fulfilled his promise! Do you see the connection? We can't be "**Ephraim**" until we are first "**Manasseh**." If you want the promises of God, you must be willing to endure! You must be willing to depend on God! You must be willing to be faithful! Because Ephraim will come!

It doesn't matter how much pain we have in our history! God's vision will come through. It does matter who tries to change it to fit their agenda or who tries to stop it because it causes them to give up power. God's vision will come true!

Are you overwhelmed with the injustice and inequality you see in the world? God was with Joseph even when times were bleak and didn't appear to be getting better. We have hope! Our God will not fail!

Today I am asking for you to trust in God like Joseph did. Know that God is with you! Take God wherever you go and bring His truth with you! Treat people like they are a part of your kingdom family. Bring heaven on earth with the blood that was a ransom for many.

Let us pray. Lord today we remember these words from revelations "**You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seal and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.**" No one can change your vision. Your vision does not happen the way we want it or understand it, so Lord give us the ability to trust you. Lord when we want to give up, Lord give us strength because we know blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trials, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Lord you never said it would be easy. Give us hope when we stray, peace when we stress, and victory when it is all said and done. Unite your people and help us to bring heaven on earth. This we ask in the most powerful name, Jesus! Amen.