

Genesis 37- Joseph - a representation of Jesus

Joseph Study – Introduction

Jesus and Joseph Comparisons

1. Miraculous Birth
2. Sent to save mankind
3. Sold and Betrayed for pieces of Silver
4. Despised by his brothers
5. Jesus had 2 thieves on either side of him at the cross (1 went to heaven and 1 did not). Likewise, Joseph had the Butler and the Baker one was restored to serve the King and the other was executed.
6. Jesus went to the cross before the throne likewise Joseph had to go to the pit and prison before he was at the throne.
7. Jesus was tempted greatly and prevailed as did Joseph.
8. Jesus was 33 when he was risen and Joseph was in his early 30s when he was called up to the throne from prison.
9. Jesus carried out the Father's will as did Joseph.
10. Jesus is the bread of Life and Joseph provided bread to the whole world.

Themes:

- Joseph is an optimist despite circumstances.
- He is faithful to God, Father, Potiphar, Jailer, brothers and Pharaoh.
- God is in firm control throughout his life.
- Joseph is a picture of Humility always giving God the Glory.
- Joseph's life seems to have had a destiny or a vision God planted in him.

Issues / Topics in Study

- Broken Relationships
- Cost of following Jesus
- Answered and Unanswered Prayers
- Temptation
- Integrity
- Discernment
- Long Range Planning
- Forgiveness/Restoration
- Perseverance

Gen 37 - McGee

As we resume the story of the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we come to the fourth outstanding fixture in this last section of Genesis. From here, all the way through the Book of Genesis, the central figure is Joseph, although we are still dealing with the family of Jacob. More chapters are devoted to Joseph than to Abraham or Isaac or to anyone else. More chapters are devoted to Joseph than to the first whole period from Genesis 1–11. This should cause the thoughtful student to pause and ask why Joseph should be given such prominence in Scripture.

There are probably several reasons. One is that the life of Joseph is a good and honorable life. He is the living example of the verse: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue,

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and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Php_4:8). God wants us to have whatever is good, virtuous, and great before us, and Joseph's life is just that.

There is a second reason, and it is a great one. There is no one in Scripture who is more like Christ in his person and experiences than Joseph. Yet nowhere in the New Testament is Joseph given to us as a type of Christ. However, the parallel cannot be accidental. As we go on into his story, we shall mention many of these parallels. There are at least thirty which I shall list later.

So now we resume the story of the line of Jacob which is that line leading to the Messiah, the Christ. Jacob is living in Canaan as the story of Joseph begins.

Joseph's Dreams

Gen 37:1-2 Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father.

Jacob has moved down, apparently, south of Bethlehem and has come to Hebron. This is the place where Abraham had made his home. This is the place of fellowship, of communion with God.

We can see that the bunch of boys Jacob had were real problem children (with the exception of Joseph and Benjamin). It took these men a long time to learn the lessons God would teach them.

Notice now that the emphasis shifts from Jacob to Joseph. Joseph was only seventeen, just a teenager, when this incident took place. He was the youngest of the boys out there with the flocks. Benjamin was still too young, you see, and was still at home. Joseph brought to his father a bad report about the other boys. Of course, they didn't like that. I'm sure they called him a tattletale.- McGee

Gen 37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors.

Gen 37:4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.

Jacob should have learned a lesson in his own home. He knew that to play favorites would cause trouble in a family. His own father had favored the elder brother, and Jacob knew what it was to be discriminated against. But here he practices the very same thing. We can understand his feelings, knowing that Rachel was the wife whom he really loved—she was the one fine thing in his life—and Joseph is really a fine boy, and Jacob loves him dearly. While all this is true, it still is not an excuse. He should not have made him that coat of many colors.

Another possible translation of "coat of many colours" would be the "coat with sleeves," a long-sleeved robe. You see, the ordinary robe in those days consisted of one piece of cloth about ten feet long. They would put a hole in the middle of it and stick the head through this hole. Half of the cloth would drop down the front of the body and half the cloth down the back of the body. They would tie it together around the waist or seam up the sides, and that would be their coat. They didn't have sleeves. So to put sleeves in the coat of any person would set him off from the others. And certainly a coat of many colors would set him apart, also. Naturally, the brothers hated him for being the favorite of his father. They couldn't even speak peaceably to him. So here we see strife in this family also. I tell you, I don't care whose family it is, sin will ruin it. Sin ruins lives, and sin ruins families; sin ruins communities, and it ruins nations. This is the problem with our families and cities and nations today. There is just one cause: God calls it sin.

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So here we find that this boy Joseph is the object of discrimination. His father discriminates in his love for him. The brothers discriminate in their hatred against him. - McGee

Gen 37:5-6 Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:

How can we explain his conduct here? Why would he go to his father and tattle on his brothers in the first place when he knew it would incur their hatred? Well, I think he just didn't know how bad this world can be. He had no idea how bad his brothers were. I'm of the opinion that he was a rather gullible boy at this time. It took him a long time to find out about the ways of the world, but he certainly did learn. Eventually he probably knew as much about the world and the wickedness of man to man as anyone. But that was later on, not now.

You can just imagine how Joseph has been protected. His father centered all of his affection on Rachel. He had fallen in love with her at first sight and had worked fourteen years for her. Then many years went by before she bore him a child. Finally Joseph was born. What a delight that must have been for Jacob. But now Rachel is gone; so he centers his affection on this boy. He shouldn't have done that—he has other sons to raise—but that is what he has done. Joseph has been loved and protected. - McGee

Gen 37:7-8 There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf." And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Can't you imagine how they sneered? I'm sure they were cynical. They didn't really believe that he would rule over them. Yet, they hated him because he had this dream. This doesn't end the dreams, though. He had another one. -McGee

Gen 37:9 Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

Gen 37:10 So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

Gen 37:11 And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

e told them this dream and they understood what he was talking about. This same image appears in Rev_12:1 where a woman is described clothed with the sun, and the moon is under her feet, and she had a crown of twelve stars upon her head. That means the nation of Israel. These brethren understood that Joseph was telling them about themselves, the sons of Israel.

We are seeing the nation of Israel at its beginning here. Genesis is like a bud, and the flower opens up as we go through the Scripture. Here is a bud that is not going to open up until we get into the Book of Revelation. It is a late bloomer, by the way, but it is going to open up there. We need to understand what is being said rather than try to make guesses. We don't need to be guessing when it is made this clear.

Old Jacob understood it exactly, and he chided, "Does this mean that your father, your mother, and your brothers are going to bow down to you?" All Joseph could answer was, "That was the dream." He didn't try to interpret it because it was evident. His brothers just dismissed it, paid no attention to it. They thought it wasn't even in the realm of possibility, as far as they were concerned. They knew that not one of them would ever bow down to Joseph! But Jacob observed the saying. - McGee

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Joseph Sold by His Brothers

Gen 37:12 *Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.*

Gen 37:13 *And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am."*

Gen 37:14 *Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.*

Now this is quite a journey, and he is sent to his brothers that hate him, wearing "the coat of many colors" which might as well have been a red cape at a bull fight!

If you are Joseph, do you ask questions here or do you just say "yes, Here I am send me!"?

Gen 37:15 *Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?"*

Gen 37:16 *So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks."*

Gen 37:17 *And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.' " So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.*

I can imagine that this man had seen Joseph pass his tent several times; so he asks him who he is looking for. Dothan is a long way north of Shechem. It is near the Valley of Esdraelon, and this is where the brothers have moved the sheep. And at last Joseph found them—there they were. - McGee

Gen 37:18 *Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him.*

Gen 37:19 *Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!"*

Gen 37:20 *Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"*

ow they hated Joseph! Here they are probably almost one hundred miles from home, and they say to each other, "Let's get rid of him now, and we'll see what will become of his dreams!"

Before we go on with the story, I want to call to your attention the comparison of Joseph to the Lord Jesus. You just should not miss the analogy.

1. The birth of Joseph was miraculous in that it was by the intervention of God as an answer to prayer. The Lord Jesus is virgin born. His birth was certainly miraculous!
2. Joseph was loved by his father. The Lord Jesus was loved by His Father, who declared, "This is My beloved Son."
3. Joseph had the coat of many colors which set him apart. Christ was set apart in that He was "separate from sinners."
4. Joseph announced that he was to rule over his brethren. The Lord Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah. Just as they ridiculed Joseph's message, so they also ridiculed Jesus. In fact, nailed to His cross were the words: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

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5. Joseph was sent by his father to his brethren. Jesus was sent to His brethren—He came first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

6. Joseph was hated by his brethren without a cause, and the Lord Jesus was hated by His brethren without a cause.

As we return to the story now, remember that Joseph is approaching his brothers, and they are plotting against him. He is wearing that coat of many colors or with the sleeves, which was a mark of position. We must remember that Joseph was younger than his brothers yet was in a position above them. So there is all this hatred and jealousy—to the point of murder!

Reuben has already lost his position as the firstborn. However, he stands in a good light here. He has more mature judgment than the others. - McGee

Gen 37:21 But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him."

Gen 37:22 And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

Gen 37:23 So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him.

They would have killed him right then and there if Reuben had not intervened. It was Reuben's avowed purpose, after Joseph had been put into the pit, to slip back again and take him out of the pit and take him home to his father. That coat Joseph wore was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. They hated it because it set him apart from them. According to the law of primogeniture, the older brothers had a prior claim; so they stripped off from Joseph the hated coat. - McGee

Gen 37:24 Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Gen 37:25 And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt.

Gen 37:26 So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?"

Gen 37:27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened.

Gen 37:28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

This was a caravan of traders that was going by. Now Judah intervenes when he sees some traders going by. It is a very mercenary plan that he has, but at least he doesn't want murder to take place. He doesn't want the blood of Joseph to be on their hands. The brothers were satisfied with the suggestion because what they wanted was to get rid of him—they didn't care how it was accomplished. They realized the Ishmeelites would take him down to Egypt and would sell him there as a slave. At least they would be rid of him. Slavery in most places was a living death, and they knew they would certainly never hear from him again.

Who are the Ishmeelites? They are the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham. Who are the Midianites? They are the descendants of Midian, a son of Abraham. Ishmael was the son of Abraham by Hagar, and Midian was the son of

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Abraham by Keturah whom he married after the death of Sarah. They are all brethren—they are actually kin to this group of boys who are selling their brother! At this time, who was an Israelite? They would travel together. - McGee

Gen 37:29 *Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes.*

Gen 37:30 *And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?"*

Gen 37:31 *So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood.*

Scripture does not tell us whether they told Reuben what they actually had done, but I'm of the opinion they did. And they probably said it was no use chasing after the merchants because they were a long way off by now; so he might as well help them think up a good story to tell Jacob. - McGee

Gen 37:32 *Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?"*

Gen 37:33 *And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."*

Pretty clever, isn't it? They act as if they had never seen Joseph. They pretend they just found this coat. Believe me, they knew that hated coat! But they pretend they don't recognize it and ask their father whether he recognizes it. Jacob knew whose coat it was. He comes to a natural conclusion and, of course, the conclusion to which the brothers intended for him to come.

Let's pause and take another look at this. They killed a kid of the goats and used that blood on the coat. Does this matter of deceiving a father with a goat remind us of something we've heard before? Remember that when Rebekah and Jacob were conniving, they used a kid for the savory meat dish, and they took the skin of the goat and put it on the hands and arms of Jacob to deceive his father. Now the brothers of Joseph are using the blood of a goat to deceive their father, who is none other than Jacob himself. They hand the coat to him and say, "Do you recognize it? We just found it up there in the mountains. It looks like a wild beast must have got to him." Old Jacob came to the conclusion that his son Joseph had been killed.

Notice this very carefully. Jacob is deceived in exactly the same way that he had deceived. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal_6:7)—not something else, not something similar, but the same thing. This man Jacob did some bad sowing. He used deception, and now that he is a father, he is deceived in the identical way that he had deceived his own father years before.

When we sow corn, we reap corn. When we sow tares, we reap tares. We get exactly what we sow. This is true in any realm you wish to move in today. It is true in the physical realm, in the moral, and in the spiritual realm. That is true also for the believer. If you think you can get by with sin because you are a child of God, you have another thought coming. In fact, you'd better take that other thought and not commit the sin because God is no respecter of persons. He said this is the way it is going to be, and you are not an exception. I talked to a minister who had gotten involved with another man's wife. As I talked with him, he tried to justify himself on the basis that he was someone special to the Lord. He felt that because he was who he was, he could operate on a little different plane and by a different rule book than anyone else. But he found that God is no respecter of persons. - McGee

Gen 37:34 *Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.*

Gen 37:35 *And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.*

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Perhaps some will think his grief is a demonstration of how much Jacob loved his son Joseph. I'll admit that he certainly loved this boy. But it reveals that Jacob had not learned to walk by faith yet, friend. You recall the experience he had at Peniel. It was the deflation of the old ego. The flesh collapsed there, but now he must learn to walk by faith. He hasn't learned that yet. In fact, the faith of Jacob is mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, but nothing in his life is mentioned there as an example of his faith until the time of his death. Then faith is exhibited.

Compare his grief here to the grief of a man like David (2Sa_12:15-23). David wept over the baby boy of his who died. He loved that little one just as much as Jacob loved Joseph, but David was a man of faith. He knew the little one couldn't come back to him, and he also knew that he was going to the little fellow some day. What faith! You see, Jacob is not walking by faith, friend. This is abnormal grief.

Christian friend, perhaps you have lost a loved one. Perhaps you just can't get over it. I want to say to you kindly, not brutally, but kindly: learn to walk by faith. You manifest faith when you recognize that you can't bring that one back by grieving. It does no good at all. If you are a child of God and you are grieving over one who is a child of God, then walk by faith. You will see that one again and never be separated. The world has no faith—they grieve as those without hope. Christian friend, you can walk by faith.

Gen 37:36 Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.

To Be Continued in Chapter 39.