

# The Story of Joseph

## *Born Into Brokenness*

Part 1 - January 8, 2012



The book of Genesis covers 2000 years in 50 chapters!

But from chapter 12 on, the focus narrows to the family of Abraham, the father of Isaac, the father of Jacob, the father of Joseph. And the story is packed with jealousy and hate and bitterness and pride. These are people who are deeply flawed; they lie, deceive, and rebel.



In other words, they're *normal*. They're not superheroes. They're ordinary, broken, people. The stories aren't there to show us how to live a good life, as much as to show us how the grace of God persistently breaks in, to rescue and redeem us from the brokenness we share in common, and the sin we can't overcome on our own.

The stories reflect back and lay bare our hopes and fears and desires and rage and resentment and secret guilts & shame.

It's a story of the one true God, who creates from nothing and justifies the ungodly. That's pretty much on every page.

Genesis isn't an academic resource to be *accessed* and *referenced* ... it's a real-life world to be *entered*. And that's what I want us to do with the story of Joseph. The last 13 chapters, 25% of Genesis, is a continuous narrative of his riveting life.



My usual goal is to see how much we can get *out* of God's Word. But with this series my primary goal is to see how much we can get *into* it! Because the more you get into it, the more it'll get into *you*; and the more God will be able to reveal himself to you, and to speak directly into your heart.

We'll begin reading it next Sunday. Today we set the stage ...

Noah's three sons and their 16 sons established various nations that we're named after their particular ancestor.

This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood. ... The sons of Ham: Cush, **Egypt** [some translations say Mizraim (MIZ-ray-im), the Hebrew word for Egypt], Put and **Canaan**. – Genesis 10:1, 6 NIV

The descendants of Canaan, or Canaanites, worshipped false gods, and practiced human sacrifice. And they were a cursed people.

May Canaan be the slave of Shem. – *Genesis 9:26b NIV*

Shem's great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandson is Abraham. (Luke 3:34-36) And *Shemite* becomes Semite. And the land of Canaan (modern day Israel and Jordan) becomes the *Promised Land* when God pledges it to Abraham's offspring.



I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. – *Genesis 12:2-3 NIV*

This is the commencement of God's people through whom the Messiah will come to save all *peoples* from sin and shame and brokenness and death. But it won't happen overnight.

Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, [that's Egypt] and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ... In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here [land of Canaan] ... – *Genesis 15:13, 16a NIV*

Childless, old Abraham moves his clan to Canaan and waits for his promised son. But after ten years, he gets tired of waiting on God and sleeps with Sarah's Egyptian maidservant, Hagar.

The result is Ishmael, a son of impatience and doubt. Then, 13 years later, barren Sarah miraculously gives birth to Isaac and un-miraculously has Abraham cast out Hagar and Ishmael!

And when Abraham's great grandson, Joseph is sold into slavery by his bitter brothers, who do you suppose was there to buy him?

They looked up and saw a caravan of *Ishmaelites* coming ... Judah said to his brothers ... Come, let's sell him to the *Ishmaelites* ... – *Genesis 37:25-27 NIV condensed*

Abraham's faith is severely tested when God asks him to sacrifice his miraculously begotten, much beloved son, on Mount Moriah. Many scholars identify Mount Moriah with the Temple Mount. Noting that the highest point, where the Dome of the Rock sits, would be the most likely place for an ancient threshing floor.



Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite ... – *2 Chronicles 3:1a NIV*

The *same* place Jesus would later offer *himself*. Just as Abraham unknowingly foreshadows the heart of God, Isaac unknowingly foreshadows the sacrifice of Christ.



He carries the wood of his own sacrifice up the hill, trusts his father to the point of death, and willingly lays down his life. But, at the last moment God stops Abraham and substitutes a ram. Now, when you think of Jesus as the “Lamb of God” do you picture horns?

A lamb is a young sheep of *either* sex. But the Passover lamb had to be an unblemished, one-year-old, ram-lamb or ram-kid (goat).

The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. – *Exodus 12:5 NIV*

Jesus was the reality that the Passover lamb represented

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. – *1 Corinthians 5:7b NIV*

And in Revelation, the Apostle John sees Jesus as a ram-lamb with seven horns (which represents perfect power).

Then I saw a **Lamb**, looking as if it had been slain ... He had **seven horns** ... – *Revelation 5:6 NIV condensed*

And when he was slain as the substitutionary sacrifice for *our* sin he was made to wear a crown of thorns. How was the ram presented to Abraham on Mount Moriah?



The ram-of-God had a crown of thorns!

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.” – *Genesis 22:13-14 NIV*

Isaac was a good son, but a pretty lousy dad. He clearly favored his son Esau (who liked to track and hunt and kill) over Esau’s *very fraternal* twin, the scheming Jacob (who liked to make stew). Jacob grows up desperately lacking the love and affirmation of his father; and he uses his stew-powers to trick his older brother Esau out of his birthright. Jacob flees to his Uncle Laban’s to avoid death and find a wife; and on the way, he’s given a vision of God, the perfect Father, who longs for restored intimacy with his children.



He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. – *Genesis 28:12-13 NIV*

The stairway is a bridge between heaven and earth, God and man, and the Father’s desire is to bridge the gap. That’s the whole reason for giving them the Promised Land; it’s part of the plan.

Jesus refers to Jacob's vision when he calls Nathanael.

[Jesus] then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." – *John 1:51 NIV*

Jesus is the reality of what Jacob's stairway represented. He bridges the gap and provides restored intimacy with the Father.

But, Jacob struggled with God all his life and allowed his inner neediness and lack of affirmation to drive him to become what he despised: a husband and father who shows overt favoritism. He idolizes his favorite but barren wife Rachel and openly favors her over his *unloved* wife, Rachel's sister, and the two handmaids they use in their contest to give Jacob the most sons.



When Rachel gives birth to Joseph, Jacob openly favors *him* above his 11 *older* sons, which takes an emotional toll and plants a bitter seed.

While living near Bethlehem, Rachel dies giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. And Joseph becomes the emotional center of Jacob's life. Jacob idolizes Joseph, and Joseph becomes his idol (his primary source of joy and love *instead* of God) and it poisons his family.

His sons are filled with jealousy and hatred. And they justify the sin that helps them temporarily numb their pain ... like adultery and a killing spree. Nevertheless, Jacob will be renamed Israel, and his twelve sons will become the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel, who will conquer the Promised Land and usher in the promised Messiah. But, it's going to require a journey to Egypt, and an incredible foreshadow of salvation through Christ. *That's* the story of Joseph.

Rejected and betrayed by his own; sold-out for the price of a slave, and thought to be dead. Though tempted, he remained pure, though falsely accused, he remained faithful. He's taken down to the depths of humiliation, and raised up to sit at the right hand of the Pharaoh. The story of Joseph is a living example of Romans 8:28.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son ... – *Romans 8:28-29a NIV*

The sin of Joseph's brothers set into motion the very situation God would use to save his family, the line of the Messiah, and thousands of others from starvation. And the heart of the story comes at the tail end.

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. – *Genesis 50:20 NIV*

God takes the very sins of the destroyers, the haters, the killers, and makes it the means of their own salvation! His grace breaks in wherever it can, to flood our darkness and brokenness with his light and love. And reconciliation is *never* too late no matter what you've done.

That's the Gospel according to Joseph; and we start reading next week!