

# Son of Joseph

## Just Between Two Criminals

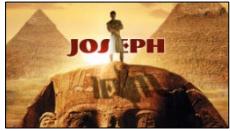
February 8, 2026



**Today we're gonna find the criminal who healed Jesus' heart on the cross!**

**Know what drives me nuts?** When I get an exciting new insight for a sermon, and I'm writing it, and it's going great, and I can't wait to share it – and I realize it'd make a great Easter message! And if I had any sense, I'd put it on pause. So ... all I can say to you today is: Happy Easter!

It all started when I started this message on what to do when it feels like God abandons you. And I was in the process of reworking a sermon from my Joseph series, some 14 years ago, called: The Butler Didn't Do It. Now, Joseph has long been my favorite OT story. And when it begins, **he's a prideful punk who pictures true power and greatness totally backwards.** Like how Paul says we all view truth and greatness through a dark mirror. (1 Cor 13:12) Whereas, as Jesus said:



"Whoever wants [dreams or wishes] to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come [down here] to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." – Mark 10:43-45 NIV



[Therefore] "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." – Matthew 23:11-12 NIV



Because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. [And that's the story of little Joe's journey] – 1 Peter 5:5-6 NIV



Cuz the Lord turns little Joe's backward life upside down to humble him, to prepare him to save the world, in due time, by serving the world during a 7-year famine. See that shadow? Upside-down in a mirror, it spells: Jesus. Cuz **Christ came to fulfill the law**, (Mt 5:17) which was a shadow of things to come. (Heb 10:1)



[And] This [law, God] established in Joseph as a testimony – Psalm 81:5 NKJ



[And as] [Philip said] "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus ... the Son of Joseph." – John 1:45 NKJ

Under God's mighty hand, Moses wrote the 50 chapters of Genesis. The first 36 cover 2,000 years. But **the last 14 chapters just cover Joseph's life!** And it's quite a story. As you may know, little Joe is despised and rejected by his brothers (the tribes of Israel) for sharing how God showed him that **God destined him to be their savior.** But before he can rise in power, he's gotta be betrayed and thrown into a dry cistern (that little Joe in there is true-to-scale), sold into slavery, falsely accused of a capital crime, and then shut up in a tomb-like dungeon – in the kingdom of Senusret II, the god of that world. But:

Some time after this, the *cupbearer* of the king of Egypt and his *baker* [allegedly] committed an *offense* against their lord the king of Egypt. [A *crime* so *heinous*, it received *eternal suffering*: after death, the *corpse* is *deprived of mummification* for *afterlife* preparation, and is *instead fed to vultures!*] And Pharaoh was *angry* with his two officers, the *chief cupbearer* [responsible for *tasting* and *guaranteeing* the king's *food* and *drink* to be *poison free*] and the *chief baker*, and he put them in *custody* in the *house* of [Potiphar] the *captain* of the [palace] *guard*, in the *prison* where *Joseph was confined*. – Genesis 40:1-3 ESV



Why not just execute 'em? Because the *crime* was obviously *discovered* in the *process* of being *committed*, before it *killed* the *king*. So the *king's not sure* which suspect – or *both* – are *guilty*! Spoiler alert: the *butler* didn't *do it*. That's how King James translates *cupbearer*. He's a *good guy*. And the *royal cupbearers* were *treated* as part of the *family*. Picture Mr. French from *Family Affair*. It was *funny* to see him *carrying* Buffy's *doll* for her. I *keep it fresh* for the *kids*. But, know *why* I'm reaching *back* to the *1960s* to use Mr. French? So I can *tell* you that Pastor Nick *arrested* him, *back* in the *day*. *Kind of*. Officer Harris gave him a *speeding ticket* in *Anacortes*, and Mr. French (a.k.a. *Sebastian Cabot*) wanted to be *taken in* to *pay it off*.

And *then* there's the *baker*. He's a *bad guy*. So, here's Joseph, *left alone* and *imprisoned* and *feeling abandoned* by God, when *these two accused criminals* suddenly *show up*. And guess who would've been in *charge* of *investigating* the *crime* – the *Captain* of the *Palace Guard*: Potiphar Schwarzenegger. And guess what Potiphar's *big plan* was for getting to the *truth* of the *innocence* and *guilt* in the *matter*: Joseph! So:

The *captain* of the [palace] *guard* *assigned* them to Joseph, [so he can *get to know* 'em] and he *attended* them. [And] After they had been in *custody* for *some time*, each of the two men—the *cupbearer* and the *baker* ... had a *dream* the *same night*, and each *dream* had a *meaning* of its *own*. – Genesis 40:4-5 NIV

One from a *good conscience* and one from a *guilty one*. But *both* apparently *prompted* by ...

Pharaoh's *birthday* [which] came *three days* later, and [as everyone *knew*] he gave a *banquet* for all his *officials* and *household staff*. – Genesis 40:20 NLT

[So] When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked ... "Why are your faces so sad today?" "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not *interpretations belong to God*? [Who knows the *thoughts* and *desires* of the *hearts* and *minds* of *all* mankind; and I know Him, so] Tell me your dreams." – Genesis 40:6-8 NIV

Says the guy who's trying to *come to grips* with *how a dungeon* is *part* of the *interpretation* of the *dreams* that God had given him. And *this* is where my *mind* began to *wander* to the *cross*. Because **Joseph is assigned to judge the hearts and minds of these two criminals** – one who *dreams* of *serving wine*, and one who *dreams* of *serving bread*. And just before the Son of Joseph is *crucified* between two *criminals* to whom He was *assigned*:



The Lord Jesus, on the night *He* was *betrayed*, took *bread*, and when He had *given thanks*, He *broke* it and said, “This is My *body*, which is for you; do this in *remembrance* of Me.” ... [Then] He *took* the *cup*, saying, “This *cup* is the new covenant in My *blood*; do this, whenever you *drink* it, in *remembrance* of Me.” – 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 NIV

[You know, the *One* who said] “I am the *true vine*, and ... you are the *branches*. Whoever *remains* in *Me* and I in him will *bear* much *fruit*” – John 15:1-5 NAB

[And *also* said] “I am the *Bread of Life*; [because] whoever *comes* to *Me* will never *hunger*, and whoever *believes* in *Me* will never *thirst*. – John 6:35 NAB

For *righteousness*, for they will be *filled*. (Mt 5:6) And *true* to His *Word*, **one of the *criminals*** who hung *beside* Him turned to Him and **was restored to eternal life through the Son of Joseph**. But *that's not the part* I'm so excited to share. But first, let's get those two dreams *out* of the way.

So [with a *clean conscience* and without *hesitation*] the chief *cupbearer* told Joseph *his* dream. ... “I saw a *vine* in front of me, [as did the *criminal* on the *cross*] and on the *vine* were *three branches*. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its *clusters ripened* into *grapes*. ... and I took the *grapes*, *squeezed* them into Pharaoh's *cup* and put the *cup* in his *hand*.” ... Joseph [having known him for “*some time*”] said to him. [The king's *feast* is in *three days*, so] “The *three branches* are *three days*. Within *three days* Pharaoh will *lift up* *your head* and *restore* *you* [because *this* is going in your *report*, cuz your *clean conscience* is *clearly telling* you that] ... you will put Pharaoh's *cup* in *his hand*, just as you used to do ... But when *all* goes *well* with you, [when you *take* the *cup*] remember *me* and ... mention *me* to Pharaoh and get *me* *out* of this *prison*.” – Genesis 40:8-14 NIV

And *true* to *his* *word*, **on the *third day*, the *cupbearer* receives a *life sentence*** (the *good* *kind*) **when his *head* is *lifted up***. Sound familiar? Cuz the *true Vine* in *full view* at the *cross* had said:

“And *I*, when *I am lifted up* ... will draw *all* people to *myself*.” – John 12:32 ESV

And *He is the *head** [after *all*] of the *body*, the *church* – Colossians 1:18 NIV



Then *comes* the *baker*. Now, Joseph *knows*, as *part* of the *baker's daily routine*, he *carries baskets of bread* on his *head*. Cuz *that's* how they *did* that. And when *crossing* the *courtyard*, the *bread* *had to be covered and protected from Pharaoh's Chickens (Egyptian vultures)* and *other sacred, filthy birds*, that *hung* out at the *kitchen*. And Joseph *knows* that *one* of 'em *committed* this *crime*, and that ... the *butler* *didn't do it*! So, could Joseph's *pleading* be *part* of a *plan* to get that *guilty baker* to *open up* about *his dream*? Because:

When the [*traitorous*] chief *baker* saw that Joseph [seemed *desperate* for *favors*, and] had given a *favorable* interpretation, he said ... “I too had a dream: On my *head* were *three baskets of bread* ... for Pharaoh, but the *birds* were *eating* them *out* of the *basket* *on my head*.” [His *guilty conscience* *clearly confessing* to *causing contamination*] ... [Joseph said] [Looking around like, “*Seriously?* It was the *baker* with the *poison* in the *kitchen*.”] “Within *three days* [when Pharaoh *lifts up his head*] Pharaoh will *lift off* *your head* and *hang* *you* [by *impaling* *you*] *on a tree*. And the *birds* will *eat away* *your flesh*.” – Genesis 40:16-19 NIV

Because **he partook in the bread of death!** Whereas we partake of the body of:

Christ [the *Bread of Life*, who] redeemed us from the *curse of the law* by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: [in the *Law of Moses* and established in the *testimony of Joseph*] “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” – Galatians 3:13 NIV

And in fact, on the *third* day ... [Pharaoh] restored the chief *cupbearer* ... but the chief *baker* he [hung] impaled [on a tree] – Genesis 40:20-22 NAB

But what I'm excited to share is a **new addition to what took place on the cross!** Cuz we know that:

[People] kept insulting Him ... the chief priests, experts in the *law*, and elders ... even the criminals who were crucified with Him kept insulting Him. – Matthew 27:39-44 EHV

And John (19:28-29) says that *Psalm 69:21* was fulfilled on the cross when: “They gave Me poison for food, and for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.” But look at the verse just before it:

“Insults have broken My heart, so that I am in *despair*. [As in: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Ps 22:1)] I looked for pity, but there was *none*” – Psalm 69:20 NRS

**Their insults broke His heart.** That'd be the *saddest addition* to the *story of the cross* if it ended *there*, and Jesus died in *despair*. But **it takes three crosses and three hours to tell the whole story.** Because **one cross speaks of profound sacrifice; and one depicts defiance and rebellion; but one is a demonstration of deliverance and restoration.** Including Jesus' own broken heart. Because later:

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at [Jesus] ... [and] the other criminal [suddenly pitied Jesus and] rebuked him. [The other criminal! saying] ... “We are punished *justly* ... but *this Man has done nothing wrong*.” – Luke 23:39-41 NIV

But what's he referring to? **Three hours of physical and verbal abuse.** And though a *nonstop stream of insults* hurled and *heaped* on Jesus sent Him into *despair*, **He only ever responded with concern and care**, saying “Father, forgive them.” (Lk 23:34) So, **the very thing that broke Jesus' heart softened and changed this criminal's.** And Mark (15:27-28) says that *Isaiah 53:12* was fulfilled on the cross when: “He was numbered with the *transgressors*”. But look at the two verses just before:

He has put Him to *grief*. [But] When You make His soul an offering for sin ... He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. ... Because He *poured out* His soul unto *death*, and He was numbered with the *transgressors*, and He *bore* the *sin of many* – Isaiah 53:10-12 NKJ

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the *truth*, today you will be with Me in *paradise*.” – Luke 23:42-43 NIV



Because **he humbled himself under God's might hand.**



But if he hadn't **started the day by taunting Jesus**, *Psalm 69:20* wouldn't be fulfilled. And if he didn't **finish the day by trusting Jesus**, *Isaiah 53:10-11* wouldn't be fulfilled. But he did. And they were. And Jesus, the Son of Joseph, sighed and died quite satisfied, cuz **at the end of the day, He wasn't going home empty handed!** Happy Easter!

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Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.