

Easter

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Joseph as a type of Jesus

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JOSEPH POINTS US TO JESUS

The Bible claims to provide a framework for analyzing all of world history. It tells us how we humans originated, how we arrived in our present condition, and what is going to happen to us in the future. Central to this story is the claims concerning Jesus Christ. The claim of the Bible is that He is part of the Triune Godhead, that He became a human being, that He died on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of humanity, that He rose again from the dead, that He ascended into heaven, and that someday He will return to earth. If we humans will trust in this Jesus Christ and what He did for us, we can have eternal life and forgiveness of sins.

One of the evidences that the Bible provides that the story about Jesus is true is what the Old Testament says about Him. Specific things predicted about this Messiah of the Jews who would appear in history centuries later can only have a divine explanation.

These Old Testament evidences fall into two categories. One is direct proofs. These are statements that are made in the Old Testament about details of the life of the coming Christ. These prophecies concern the place of His birth, the miraculous powers that He would display, the nature of His suffering, His death, His resurrection from the dead, His second coming, and His eventual rule over the earth.

The second category is indirect proofs. The first kind of indirect proof is statements that appear in the Old Testament that are later discovered to have a fulfillment in the life of Jesus. An example of this would be Psalm 22. In that Psalm we have a description of extreme suffering that is later recognized to be an exact description of crucifixion, which had not even been yet invented at the time that the Psalm was written. The Psalm even speaks of the victim's clothes being divided up by lot, which we find to happen in the crucifixion of Jesus. This is an indirect proof in that there is no statement in the Psalm that this is describing the future Messiah of Israel.

The second kind of indirect proof is typology. Here are a couple of definitions of types, or typology: (PROJECTOR ON--- DEFINITION 1) This first scholar defines a "type" as **"a real ... happening in history which was directly ordained by the omniscient God to be a prophetic picture of the good things which**

he purposed to bring to fruition in Christ Jesus.” (Wayne Jackson, *Christian Courier*, 11/3/1999) That is a bit of a mouthful. He is saying that types are events, and I would add--- people, in ancient times who picture, to a remarkable degree, events or people connected with Jesus later in history. We are especially talking here about Old Testament and New Testament history.

The New Bible Dictionary defines typology in this way: (DEFINITION 2) Typology is **“a way of setting forth the biblical history of salvation so that some of its earlier phases are seen as anticipations of later phases, or some later phase as ... the fulfillment of an earlier one.”** (p. 1214, 1996 edition) Again, typology may involve people as well as events. An example of an event would be times of suffering and judgment in the Old Testament which are described as “the day of the Lord.” This day of the Lord finds its complete fulfillment in the Book of Revelation in a time of future history that is described by Jesus not only as the Day of the Lord but also the Great Tribulation. (Matthew 24:21) (PROJECTOR OFF)

An example of an individual in the Old Testament who is a type is Elijah. In the New Testament Gospels, in Matthew #11 v. 14, Jesus calls John the Baptist “Elijah who is to come.” In other words, Jesus regards Elijah in the Old Testament as a divinely intended picture of John the Baptist in the New Testament. Elijah is the Old Testament type. John the Baptist is called the antitype, the fulfillment of the picture of the type.

In terms of persons who are types in the Old Testament of someone in the New Testament, the most common antitype is Jesus. In other words, there are a number of people in the Old Testament who picture the future Messiah of Israel. The Apostle Paul recognizes this correlation in the Book of Romans. (PROJECTOR ON--- ROMANS 5:14) In #5 v. 14 he writes, **“Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.”** Paul goes on to explain that both were representatives of humanity. Adam sinned, and so all future humans were infected by a sin nature. Jesus represented humanity in dying on the cross. All humans who trust in Him receive a new, spiritual nature. Adam is the type. Jesus is the antitype.

Central to the claims about Jesus is the Good Friday-Easter story. A few scholars have sought to claim that the whole death and resurrection deal was derived from stories about other gods in ancient mythologies. But University of Chicago professor Jonathan Smith a couple of decades ago put that claim to rest. (JONATHAN SMITH QUOTATION) He says, **“There is no unambiguous instance in the history of religions of a dying and rising deity.”** (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2005, 4:2535) None, until Jesus. The story of Jesus and Good Friday and Easter is unique.

There is direct and indirect proof in the Old Testament that points toward the Messiah of Israel who is identified in the New Testament. (PROJECTOR OFF) What I would like to do this morning is to look at the life of the Old Testament character Joseph, who is a fascinating type of Jesus. Joseph was the son of Jacob, who was the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham. He lived about 18 centuries before Jesus. The events of his life parallel in remarkable ways events in the life of his future descendant Jesus. They are too remarkable to write off as simply coincidences. They point toward the claim that the Jesus story is true.

So we take up with Joseph in Genesis #37. Joseph is the eleventh of twelve sons of Jacob, who is also called Israel. (PROJECTOR ON--- GENESIS 37:3) In v. 3 we read, **“Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons...”** At the baptism of Jesus, the Gospels tell us that a voice came out of heaven proclaiming of Jesus, **“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.”**

Joseph has a dream, which he tells to his brothers and which gets him into trouble with them. He dreams that his brothers will bow down to him and that he will rule over them. The claim of Jesus, as Pontius Pilate acknowledged, was that Jesus was the King of the Jews, that he was the rightful ruler of His Jewish brothers.

In Genesis 37 we learn that Joseph is from a family of shepherds. We have seen in our study of John’s Gospel that Jesus claimed to be the Good Shepherd. Joseph’s brothers are jealous of their Father’s love for Joseph. In fact, they plot to kill him. On one occasion when they are out in the fields, they take Joseph and throw him into a pit. (GENESIS 37:26 & 27) According to vv. 26 & 27, **“Then Judah said to his brothers, ‘What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites...’”** What do you suppose is the Greek equivalent for the name Judah? It is Judas.

So they decide to sell Joseph to Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver, two shekels for each brother. The youngest brother Benjamin is at home with his father. The Ishmaelite traders take Joseph down to Egypt. So there is this Egypt connection. Joseph’s ancestor Abraham spent time in Egypt. The nation of Israel ends up in Egypt for four hundred years. Eventually Jesus will also spend time in Egypt. Jesus in Egypt is safe from the Jewish king who wants to kill Him. Joseph in Egypt is safe from his brothers who have threatened to kill him.

Chapter 38 in Genesis describes how Judah, Joseph’s older brother, strays away from God morally and is in need of a spiritual rescue. In the Gospels, we learn how the nation of Israel, now named after Judah--- Judea is also in need of spiritual rescue.

In Chapter 39 we learn that Joseph has been bought by the captain of the Egyptian bodyguard, a man named Potiphar. (GENESIS 39:2) According to v. 2, **“The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man.”** Do you remember the Hebrew term that is used to describe when God is with someone? Immanuel. It is a name later used to describe Jesus.

(GENESIS 39:3) According to v. 3, **“His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.”** This Gentile recognizes that God is with Joseph, but his brothers did not. This is likewise to be a problem with Jesus. For the most part, the Jews will not recognize that God is with Him. He will receive a better reception from the Gentiles.

(GENESIS 39:4) The story continues in v. 4, **“So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.”** As Joseph grows from his teenage years into his twenties, he finds favor with both God and man. The Gospel of Luke (LUKE 2: 52) says this about the maturation of Jesus: **“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”**

Back in Genesis, in v. 6 (GENESIS 39:6), the author says this about the type of Christ: **“Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.”** Joseph, by virtue of being a human being, was a sinner. But he is also one of the very few major characters in the Old Testament to whom no specific sin is ascribed. He is seemingly without fault. He is a picture of the future, sinless Christ.

Joseph then encounters a situation of temptation. (PROJECTOR OFF) The wife of Potiphar is attracted to Joseph. He is a younger, handsome man. He succeeds in whatever he does. She asks Joseph to go to bed with her. He refuses. She persists. One day she finds him alone in the house and takes hold of his outer garment. He runs away in some kind of state of undress. Potiphar’s wife becomes a woman scorned. So she joins the “Me Too Movement.” She shows her husband and the other household members the outer clothing of Joseph and accuses him of sexual assault.

If we are looking for parallels with Jesus, we will be reminded of His temptations in the wilderness. After His baptism by John, He went out into the wilderness and was tempted by Satan. Yet He overcame all of these temptations.

Joseph is falsely accused. He has done nothing wrong. Potiphar puts Joseph into prison. My suspicion is that Potiphar didn't really believe his wife's story. If a foreign slave really had assaulted his wife, there would have been nothing to keep Potiphar from killing Joseph. But if he wants to live with his wife, Potiphar has to do something. So he puts Joseph in jail.

An Egyptian prison in ancient times was probably not a very nice place. No TV, no electricity, no running water, no air conditioning, lousy food. Yet even in that difficult situation, Joseph experienced success and favor from God. The warden of the prison recognized Joseph's abilities and put him in charge of the place.

Chapter 40 tells us that two top government officials were put into prison with Joseph. One was the cupbearer to the king. The other was the chief baker. They had committed some offense against the king. Thus we move into parallels with the Good Friday story where Jesus is literally hanging around with two criminals. The two government officials in the Joseph story both have dreams on the same night. Joseph offers to interpret them. He tells the cupbearer to the king that his dream means that he will be restored to his previous position in the presence of the king in three days. He tells the chief baker that his dream means that he will be hung and killed in three days. Thus it came to pass.

On Good Friday Jesus was hung on a cross between two criminals. They committed some offense against the Roman king. Common criminals were dealt with by Jewish courts. It was only perceived rebels against Rome who faced execution at the order of the Roman governor.

Both of these rebels initially mocked Jesus and joined in the verbal attacks upon Him. But one of them had a change of heart and expressed faith in Him. Jesus proclaimed that this repentant criminal would be in the presence of the heavenly king that day. The fate of the other criminal was eternal oblivion.

Joseph had asked the cupbearer to intervene with Pharaoh when he got out of prison. Nothing happened. The cupbearer forgot about Joseph. So he was in prison for two more years. But then the Pharaoh had a dream. At the beginning of Genesis 41 (PROJECTOR ON--- GENESIS 41:1-2), we have a description of that dream: **"After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. (GENESIS 41:3-4) And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. (GENESIS 41:5-6) And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. And**

behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. (GENESIS 41:7) And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.”

Pharaoh can't figure out the meaning of this dream. It troubles him. So he calls in his top advisors. None of them have a clue. It is then that the cupbearer remembers Joseph. So Joseph is brought out of prison. (GENESIS 41:14) According to v. 14, **“Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh.”** The king calls Joseph out of the pit. Do you see the parallels with the Easter story? We find out later that Joseph's brothers are convinced that Joseph is dead. But now he is raised up from the pit and brought into the presence of the most powerful king in all the earth, and he is wearing new clothes.

Joseph tells the Egyptian king that the two dreams refer to the same thing. There will be seven plentiful years in Egypt when the land will produce abundant crops. But then there will be seven very bad years when there will be a terrible famine. Joseph advises the king that preparation needs to be made for those seven very difficult years. Jesus, likewise, warned His followers that there was a time of great tribulation that was coming which would affect all of the earth. He said that preparation needed to be made for it. Other Scriptures identify this tribulation as lasting seven years.

Pharaoh is impressed by Joseph and his interpretation of his dream and his advice for preparation for the coming time of famine. Beginning in v. 38 (GENESIS 41:38) we find out what happens. **“And Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?’ (GENESIS 41:39) Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. (GENESIS 41:40) You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.”** Thus Joseph is called from the pit and placed at the right hand of the most powerful ruler in all the earth.

There are a number of New Testament passages which refer to Jesus rising from the dead and ending up at the right hand of God the Father. An example of this is Romans #8 v. 34. (ROMANS 8:34). There the Apostle Paul writes, **“Christ Jesus is the one who died--- more than that, who was raised--- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”** Such is the Easter type that Joseph provides for us, which points to the future resurrection of Jesus. Now Joseph is going to intercede for his brethren.

Back in v. 43 of Genesis 41 (GENESIS 41:43) we are told, **“And he [Pharaoh] made him [Joseph] ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, ‘Bow the knee!’ Thus he set him over all the land**

of Egypt.” Bow the knee. Remember what the New Testament says will happen to Jesus? **“Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”** (Philippians 2:10)

Three verses later, we are told this: (GENESIS 41:46) **“Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”** How old was Jesus when He began His public ministry? (Pause) **“Jesus, [PROJECTOR ON--- LUKE 3:23] when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph...”**

So Egypt has seven years of great agricultural abundance. Joseph takes a lead in building storage facilities to put away the surplus crops. He is also given a wife who is the daughter of a leading priest in Egypt and proceeds to have two sons.

Then the seven years of famine come. The famine extends well beyond Egypt. Joseph is in charge of Egypt’s food reserves. Thus we read in the last verse of #41, (GENESIS 41:57) **“Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.”** Do you see, it is Gentiles who first search out Joseph, because he possesses the bread of life. He is the intermediary who provides the food that is necessary for life. It is his brothers who are slower to come to Joseph to have their need met.

In our study of John’s Gospel on Sunday mornings we have seen that one of the seven “I am” statements made by Jesus was “I am the bread of life.” After performing the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes (JOHN 6:35), John #6 records this: **“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”** Joseph in his control of the grain in Egypt seems to foreshadow the claim of the future Messiah to be the bread of life.

Finally, in #42, Joseph’s brothers become so desperate that they, too, go to Egypt to buy food. They come to Joseph himself, (GENESIS 42:8) but they do not recognize him. **“And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.”** They do not recognize their own brother. They do not recognize that he is their savior.

In the next several chapters, Joseph puts his brothers through several tests. (PROJECTOR OFF) He accuses them of spying out the land of Egypt and stealing from him. He puts one of his brothers in prison and says that he will not be released until his youngest brother Benjamin is brought to him.

Benjamin is the only full-blooded brother that Joseph has through his mom Rachel. He is also the youngest brother in the family and, since the supposed death of Joseph, the favorite of his father. Finally, Benjamin comes down to Egypt on another trip to get food. Joseph reveals himself to Benjamin and the other brothers. They are dumbfounded. They fear that Joseph may seek revenge. He does not. He tells them to bring his father Jacob down to Egypt because there are several years of famine that remain.

Jacob, whose name has been changed by the Lord, to Israel, finds it hard to believe that Joseph is alive. But he comes down to Egypt and is reunited with his son. Joseph brings Israel to Pharaoh, and the family is given a prominent position in the land. They are situated in the land of Goshen, which is in the Nile delta. There they prosper. Perhaps there is a picture here of the position that Israel will one day have when Messiah Jesus returns to earth.

After Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers express fear that Joseph may finally take revenge upon them. But Joseph makes this reply (PROJECTOR ON--- GENESIS 50:20), **"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."** Several translations speak of saving many people. This foreshadows the story of Jesus, doesn't it? For the most part, Jesus' fellow Jews, the people of Israel, did not accept His claims. They were responsible for His death. But it was His death that provided the means of eternal salvation for many people, for Jews as well as for Gentiles.

Thus it is that we have another evidence for the truth of the Jesus story. (PROJECTOR OFF) That the life of Joseph should picture key events in the life of Jesus in so many specific ways seems to be beyond coincidence. The writers of that story lived centuries and centuries before the time of Jesus. They had no way of knowing that Joseph would serve as a type of the future Messiah of Israel. But he was. The hand of God in ancient times was directing our attention to the claims of the gospel story about Jesus. It is a story that has a certain climax in our Easter celebration. Jesus made an extraordinary claim to be God who had become a human being. He did miraculous deeds. He told His followers that He was going to be killed. But His death would serve a divine purpose. He was dying to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. The fact that He rose from the dead on the third day gave proof to that claim. The body of Jesus is still missing.

The death and resurrection of Jesus is great news for us. But there is one important responsibility that we have to benefit from that. In 1829 George Wilson was involved in several instances of robbing the US mail in eastern Pennsylvania. In one robbery a mail carrier was assaulted and injured. George Wilson was finally caught and brought to federal court on six charges. He was convicted and sentenced to

death. George Wilson had friends in high places. President Andrew Jackson was persuaded to offer the criminal a pardon, which he did on June 14, 1830.

The official pardon said this: **“I, Andrew Jackson, President of the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, divers other good and sufficient reasons me thereunto moving, have pardoned and do hereby pardon the said George Wilson the crime for which he has been sentenced to suffer death, remitting the penalty aforesaid, with this express stipulation, that this pardon shall not extend to any judgment which may be had or obtained against him in any other case or cases now pending before said court for other offenses wherewith he may stand charged.”** For reasons which Wilson refused to explain, he rejected the presidential pardon. Government officials were taken aback by this and were uncertain how to proceed.

The case ended up going to the Supreme Court. In a unanimous decision in 1833 Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the opinion of the Court. He said, **“A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which, delivery is essential, and delivery is not complete, without acceptance. It may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if it be rejected, we have discovered no power in a court to force it on him.”** So it was that George Wilson was hanged for his crime.

The Bible tells us that all of us humans are sinners. We are all guilty of violating God’s laws. The penalty for that is eternal death. But Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for those sins and rose again from the dead on that Easter Sunday. He has thus provided us with a pardon. But in order to benefit from that pardon, we must accept it. We must put our trust in Christ and what He did for us.