

GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Chapter 37 Study Guide

July 18, 2004

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Genesis 37

1. BACKGROUND, CULTURE & EXEGESIS

Lights, cameras, action! The story of Joseph is amazing; somebody needs to turn these next few chapters into a blockbuster movie! For us Christians, it is fascinating to see how many illusions and comparisons we can find between Joseph and Jesus. (The late great scholar Arthur W. Pink lists over 100!) See how many you can find as you track through the next few chapters.

Notice Joseph is very young when the narrative begins; in the opening verses we find out that he is only 17. The writer lets us know from the start that Joseph is the favored son. Even though he is young, he is put in charge. And then there's that coat! Scholars argue that the Hebrew for "many colors" can also be translated "seamless" or "a coat with sleeves" or even a "patchwork of different colors," but one thing is certain: whatever it was, it was special!

One thing we learn early on about Joseph is that he doesn't have a lot of tact. As he retells his dreams, he doesn't do a very good job of reading his audience! His brothers *hated* the dreams and also *hated* him. Even dear old dad reprimanded him about the sun and the moon bowing down; he knew the reference! (By the way, because of this reaction of Jacob, we can understand the dream that is found in Revelation 12 – that is the identity of the woman. Remember, Genesis is a book of beginnings and Revelation is a book of endings). Whatever other ties exist, we can certainly argue that both dreams spoke about Joseph being preeminent over his brothers.

And so the story begins . . . Joseph is sent to Shechem to check on his brothers, but finds they are no longer there. (This should be no surprise, as were undoubtedly not welcomed there. See chapter 34). So Joseph moves on to Dothan (another fifteen miles away), where his life is forever changed by the brothers' plot to sell him as a slave.

Keep in mind that not all of the brothers intended to do Joseph in; it appears as though Reuben had another plan in mind. But what we are about to see is a principle that still applies today: what the devil intends for evil, God can and will turn around for good. Be sure to turn to Romans 8:28!

The stage is set. Joseph is on his way to Egypt and the brothers trick their father into thinking that Joseph is dead because of blood on his coat. (Note the irony: Jacob had used trickery like this with the whole Esau ordeal.)



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Soul-Winner So What

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

Small Groups Question

1. List three parallels between Joseph and Jesus in this chapter.
2. Why were the brothers unpopular in Shechem?

2. THEME & AUTHORSHIP

Themes

A couple of predominate themes are found in Genesis. First is that this is a Book of Beginnings, the great introduction to the drama of redemption.

Second, God is preparing a people. He chooses and tests them. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Noah, God chooses, winnows and purges. Remember, His goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. This is the initial step for man's redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

Author – Moses / **Date** - 1450 – 1410 BC

3. Theology

There are some kids that you just love to hate. I remember having a neighbor when I was young named Darrell. Darrell was the kind of kid that you couldn't turn your back on because he might start tossing pine cones at the back of your head, just for fun. There are some people that for whatever reason are just annoying. They say stuff that doesn't need to be said and do things that just get under your skin. Joseph was one of those kids. In Genesis 37 Joseph is only seventeen which is young enough to excuse some of this behavior but also old enough that he should know better. Joseph is already the golden boy of the family because he was born to his father late in life, but then his dad gives him a coat that is probably more valuable than anything any of the other brothers own. Now a smart, mature kid would downplay all this and try to seek some favor with his brothers by being humble and unassuming, but that just isn't Joseph's nature. So Joseph goes to sleep one night and has a dream, and this isn't just any dream. This is a dream that shows him and his brothers as stalks of wheat and all of his brothers' wheat stalks bowing to his. Considering his current relationship with his brothers, this is the kind of thing he should really keep to himself. But of course he does not, goes to his brothers and describes in detail how he dreamed that they would all bow to him one day. Bad move. Days later, he has another dream, this time not only are his brothers bowing



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before him but now his parents have joined in as well. So again Joseph tells his brothers and his dad about the dream. I've heard wisdom defined as "the correct use of knowledge". Joseph was given knowledge of his future, of what God had planned for him, and he misused this knowledge. With every bit of knowledge that God gives us, he also gives us the wisdom to be able to deal with it. We are, of course, given the choice as to whether or not we want to use this wisdom. Knowledge by itself can be helpful or hurtful, wisdom decides which. Be careful that as God gives you knowledge, you couple it with His wisdom so that that it can be used constructively for his kingdom and your life.

Soul-Winner So What

When God gives you knowledge, combine it with Godly wisdom to produce Godly results.

Small Groups Question

What knowledge have you gained in your life that you have either coupled or not coupled with wisdom and what was the result?

4. WORD STUDIES

Vs. 11-26 Judah and Tamar

You have heard the question: If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it really make a noise? Many of us have rewritten the question this way: If a person does something immoral or unethical and no one is hurt or no one sees it, is it really wrong?

Our boy Judah convinced himself that he was entitled to little immorality and that as long as no one knew and he didn't hurt anybody, his sin had no consequence. He discovered, however, that sin is always wrong, always has consequences, and always hurts someone. Notice that he did not admit his own guilt until his sin was exposed.

Soul-Winner So What

Know that your sin hurts your relationship with God. He sees everything you do in secret.

Small Groups Question

When are you tempted to think, *this won't hurt anyone or no one will ever know*? Do you act the same when no one is watching you? Do you act one way in public and another way in private? Are you critical of other people's sins, while not recognizing your own?

5. Gospel/ Prophecy/ Pictures of Christ

Genesis 37:1-2

And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob...



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In a previous study, we looked at the meaning of *types*. A *type* is an Old Testament institution, event, person, object, or ceremony which has reality and purpose in biblical history, but also by divine design foreshadows something which is yet future.

A type is similar to, but not the same as, prophecy. Both point to the future, but prophecy is more specific and teaches doctrine, while a type only illustrates a doctrine taught elsewhere. A type differs from a symbol in that a symbol is a timeless sign pointing to the past, present, or future. A type, on the other hand, always points to the future.

Joseph is the most complete type of Christ in the Old Testament. Look up the following verses (most of which are here in Genesis 37) and compare them to the New Testament verses. See if you are able to determine the parallel between Joseph and Jesus.

Genesis 30:22-24; Luke 1:35: Both were _____

Genesis 37:3; Matt. 3:17; John 3:35: Both were _____

Genesis 37:4; John 15:24-25: Both were _____

Genesis 37:8; Matt. 21:37-39; John 15:24-25: Both were _____

Genesis 37:23; Matt. 27:35: Both were _____

Genesis 37:18, 24; Matt. 26:3-4, 27:35-37: Both were _____

Genesis 37:28; Matt. 26:14-15: Both were _____

Genesis 39:4; Phil. 2:7: Both became _____

Genesis 39:11-20; Isaiah 53:9; Matt. 27:19,24: Both were _____

*As Joseph is a type of Christ in humiliation, so he is also in exaltation.
Both were raised from humiliation to glory by the power of God.*

Soul-Winner So What

How has learning about types better equipped you to share about Christ from the Old Testament?

6. Attributes of God



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Soul-Winner So What

Joseph received favoritism from his father. To make things worse, he bragged about it. No matter what gifts God gives us, we will be best off to remain humble.

Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Cor 10:12

Small Groups Question

We can do *nothing* without what God has given us!

How have you failed to be humble in the gifts God has given you or credited yourself for your success?

7. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES / PROBLEM PASSAGES

What was the significance of the multi-colored coat?

The coat marked the one whom the father intended to be the future leader of the household. This honor was normally given to the first-born son. However, in this case, Jacob saw something special in Joseph which prompted him to go against tradition and follow the direction of God. This change in tradition also gave birth to the dangerous sin of jealousy. From the outside looking in, it looks like it's all over for Li'l Joe! . . . To be continued . . .

jealousy: wanting what someone else has

There are different stages of jealousy, but it all starts with step one. We have to ask ourselves, why am I jealous?

What good thing can come from jealousy? Nothing!

How do I know if I'm jealous? You'll know you're jealous if you find yourself keeping score of what others have. Check yourself!

If you feel just a little bit of jealousy, don't give it a chance to grow. Rebuke it right away in the name of Jesus and ask him to permanently take it away, filling you instead with the fruits of the Spirit.

Soul-Winner So What

Throughout history as well as life, when there is a jealous spirit in us, there is usually a void in our relationship with God. When that hole remains in disrepair, jealousy, as well as many other works of the flesh, has a chance to grow. This growth usually spells trouble (Galatians 5:19-21)! If you remember, about 32 chapters ago, the first murder was committed and it all stemmed from *jealousy*. Before the act occurred the murderer had an opportunity to repair the hole in his relationship with God, but because he failed to fix it, the jealous spirit had a chance to grow and brought forth death (James 1:13-15). The root of the problem was not jealousy – it was in a broken relationship with the man and God.

