

Joseph, a picture of Je

*Providence, Betrayal,
and the God Who Saves*

by Robert J. Neral

A Study of Joseph, a picture of Jesus

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A STUDY OF JOSEPH, A PICTURE OF JESUS

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INTRODUCTION: THE SON WHO SAVES

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There are stories in Scripture that we read for information. And then there are stories we read because they carry something deeper — a picture, a promise, a pattern that reaches far beyond the events themselves and points us toward Someone greater.

The story of Joseph is one of those stories.

Before we open Genesis 37 and meet the seventeen-year-old boy in the coat of many colors, before we hear about the dreams that made his brothers hate him, before we watch him descend into slavery and prison and then rise to rule over Egypt — before any of that, I want you to understand what this story is really about.

This is a story about Jesus.

Not in a vague, symbolic way. Not in the way that every good character in the Bible might remind us a little of Jesus. This is a story where Joseph — the son, the beloved, the one rejected by his brothers, the one thrown into suffering he did not deserve, the one who saved the very people who betrayed him — stands as a living picture of the Savior who would come centuries later and do the same thing on an eternal scale.

Joseph is Jesus represented. Jesus is a Son of Israel but hated by His brothers. And the story we are about to walk through together is, at every turn, preparation for the moment when God would send His own Son into the world, and the world would respond exactly the way Joseph's brothers did.

Let us read carefully. Because every chapter of Joseph's life is teaching us something about the heart of God and the mission of the One who came to save.

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SECTION ONE: THE FAVORED SON AND THE DREAMS THAT DIVIDED

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We cannot understand the story of Joseph until we understand Israel. Not the place — the person. So let us start at the beginning.

"So He said to him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Jacob.' And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.'" (Genesis 32:27–28)

The name Israel literally means one who struggles with God. That was true in the beginning, and it is true today.

Israel is not a place, but a person — formerly known as Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, and each of those sons formed his own tribe. These became the twelve tribes of Israel. Hopefully you can now understand that Israel is not a place but a nation — a nation that struggles with God, made up of the descendants of the twelve tribes.

Now let us meet Joseph.

"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." (Genesis 37:1–2)

Joseph was seventeen. He was the youngest son of Jacob's favored wife, Rachel. And Jacob — now called Israel — loved Joseph more than all his other children.

"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. 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." (Genesis 37:3–4)

A coat of many colors. That detail is not decoration — it is a declaration. In the culture of that time, such a coat marked Joseph as the heir, the one set apart, the one through whom the family blessing would continue. His brothers understood exactly what that coat meant. And they hated him for it.

Think about this for a moment. Joseph had done nothing wrong. He had not stolen the blessing. He had not deceived his father or manipulated the family structure. He was simply loved — and that love, visible and undeniable, became the source of his brothers' rage.

Does this remind you of anyone?

Jesus was the beloved Son. The Father declared it openly: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And the religious leaders of His day — His own brothers according to the flesh — hated Him for it.

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## THE DREAMS — UNDERSTOOD AND REJECTED

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Then Joseph had a dream. And when he told it to his brothers, their hatred deepened.

"So he said to them, 'Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: 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.'" (Genesis 37:6–7)

The brothers were not confused by the dream. They understood it correctly.

"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." (Genesis 37:8)

They understood it correctly and rejected the idea that Joseph — or more correctly, Jesus — would rule over them.

That is the critical detail here. The problem was not that they misunderstood. The problem was that they understood perfectly and refused to accept it. Joseph was claiming a position of authority over them. He was saying that one day they would bow before him. And they hated him for saying it out loud.

Then Joseph dreamed a second dream.

"Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." (Genesis 37:9)

Eleven stars. The sun. The moon. His brothers again. His parents. The entire household bowing before him. Even his father rebuked him for this dream.

"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?' And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind." (Genesis 37:10–11)

Notice that his father did not totally reject the meaning but kept pondering its future fulfillment.

Jacob knew something his sons did not yet see. He had wrestled with God. He had been given a new name and a new future. He understood that God speaks through dreams — and that the dreams God gives always come true. So even though he rebuked Joseph for the boldness of it, he kept the matter in mind. He was watching. Waiting to see how God would bring it to pass.

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THE SUN, THE MOON, AND THE TWELVE STARS

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Before we continue with Joseph's story, I want to show you something that will help you understand not just this passage but a much later one that puzzles many readers. Let us turn to the book of Revelation.

"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars." (Revelation 12:1)

Who is this woman? We find the explanation in Genesis where Joseph had the dream concerning the sun, the moon, and eleven stars.

The difference is that when Joseph had the dream, he was not part of the eleven stars. In the book of Revelation, he is part of the twelve. This mystery woman is Israel. Let us read on applying this understanding.

"Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth." (Revelation 12:2–4)

Israel is with child. Who is that child? Here we should understand that Satan was the one who took a third of the angels out of heaven.

"And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." (Revelation 12:4–5)

Jesus is of course the male child that was to rule over all nations with a rod of iron. Let us connect this teaching to another verse in Revelation to be absolutely certain.

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head

were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God." (Revelation 19:11–13)

Remember John 1:1 — "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

"And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:14–16)

Not hard to see how Scripture teaches Scripture in these verses and also understand that the male child will be the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

"And her Child was caught up to God and His throne." (Revelation 12:5)

Is that not exactly what happened to Jesus?

"Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days." (Revelation 12:6)

About two thousand years later, in the middle of the seven years of Tribulation, God will take the true Israel somewhere in the wilderness to a place that He has prepared for them. They will be protected from the army of Satan, which at that time will be concentrating on

eliminating Israel.

The sun, the moon, and the twelve stars. Joseph's dream was not just about his family bowing before him in Egypt. It was a prophetic picture of Israel herself — the woman who would one day give birth to the Savior, the male child who would rule the nations with a rod of iron.

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## SECTION TWO: BETRAYED, SOLD, AND CAST INTO PRISON

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Now back to the story of Joseph. We would be here all day if I tried to teach you this entire story in every detail, so I am going to walk through the middle quickly so we can reach the end, which is really important.

Jacob sent Joseph out to the fields to check on his brothers, who were tending the sheep.

"Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, 'Look, this dreamer is coming! 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!'" (Genesis 37:18–20)

His brothers saw him coming and plotted to kill him. They called him "this dreamer" — mocking the very thing God had given him. But Reuben, the eldest, intervened and suggested they throw him into a pit instead, intending to rescue him later.

"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. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it." (Genesis 37:23–24)

They stripped him. They threw him into an empty pit. And while he was down there, helpless and alone, they sat down to eat bread as if nothing had happened.

Then a caravan of traders came by, and Judah had an idea.

"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." (Genesis 37:27)

So they sold Joseph into slavery for twenty pieces of silver. They lifted him out of the pit, handed him over to strangers, and watched him disappear toward Egypt in chains.

Then they took his coat — the coat of many colors, the visible sign of their father's love — and dipped it in the blood of a goat. They brought it back to Jacob and let him believe that Joseph had been torn apart by a wild animal.

"Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days." (Genesis 37:34)

Jacob mourned. Joseph was carried into Egypt. And the brothers went on with their lives as if the dreamer was gone forever.

But God had not forgotten Joseph.

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THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH

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Joseph was sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. And here, in the middle of what should have been complete disaster, we read two of the most important sentences in the entire story.

"The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian." (Genesis 39:2)

The LORD was with Joseph. That is the first anchor. No matter what happened — betrayal, slavery, false accusation, imprisonment — the LORD was with him. God's presence did not leave when Joseph's brothers threw him in the pit. God's favor did not evaporate when the caravan carried him into Egypt.

The LORD was with Joseph.

Potiphar saw it. He saw that everything Joseph touched prospered, and he made Joseph overseer of his entire household. But then Potiphar's wife set her eyes on Joseph and tried to seduce him. Joseph refused.

"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9)

He was righteous. He honored God. And because he honored God, Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of the very thing he had refused to do. Potiphar had Joseph thrown into prison even though he was innocent.

Does this sound familiar? Jesus was falsely accused. He was innocent. He suffered for righteousness' sake. He was handed over to be punished for crimes He did not commit.

And here, in prison, we read the second anchor sentence.

"But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." (Genesis 39:21)

Again: the LORD was with Joseph. Even in prison. Even after being falsely accused and unjustly punished. God was working carefully to bring about the important ending to Joseph's trouble.

This may at first glance seem strange that Joseph, a righteous man, is going through all these troubles. But I want you to hold on to these two verses. They tell you how God is protecting Joseph and preparing him for something far greater than Joseph could have imagined.

God always makes a way.

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FROM THE PRISON TO THE PALACE

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While Joseph was in prison, he interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officials — the chief butler and the chief baker. The interpretations came true exactly as Joseph said they would. The butler was restored to his position. The baker was executed. And Joseph asked the butler to remember him when he was released.

But the butler forgot.

Two full years passed. Joseph remained in prison. Forgotten by men. But not forgotten by God.

Then Pharaoh had a dream. Two dreams, actually — one about seven fat cows and seven thin cows, one about seven healthy heads of grain and seven withered heads. None of his magicians or wise men could interpret them. And finally the butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about the Hebrew prisoner who could interpret dreams.

They brought Joseph out of the dungeon, cleaned him up, and brought him before Pharaoh. And when Pharaoh described his dreams, Joseph gave the interpretation immediately.

"Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land." (Genesis 41:29–30)

Seven years of abundance. Seven years of famine. And Joseph told Pharaoh exactly what to do: appoint a wise man to oversee the storing of grain during the seven good years so that Egypt would survive the seven bad years.

Pharaoh looked at Joseph and said:

"Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" (Genesis 41:38)

And Pharaoh made Joseph second-in-command over all of Egypt. From the prison to the palace in a single day. From a forgotten slave to the man who would save a nation.

"So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.'" (Genesis 41:41)

Joseph was thirty years old. He had been in Egypt for thirteen years — betrayed, enslaved, falsely accused, imprisoned. And now he stood at Pharaoh's right hand with authority over everything.

This is not coincidence. This is God showing us, through Joseph's life, what He would one day do through His Son. Jesus descended into suffering He did not deserve. He was betrayed, falsely accused, condemned, and executed. And then — on the third day — He was raised and seated at the right hand of God with all authority in heaven and on earth.

Joseph is Jesus represented.

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SECTION THREE: THE FAMINE, THE BROTHERS, AND THE MOMENT OF RECOGNITION

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The seven years of abundance came exactly as Joseph said they would. He stored grain in every city. The storehouses were so full that they stopped measuring because the grain was like the sand of the sea.

And then the seven years of famine began.

"Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine." (Genesis 47:13)

The famine was not limited to Egypt. It spread throughout the region — including Canaan, where Jacob and his sons were living. When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent ten of his sons to buy food. He kept Benjamin, the youngest, at home.

The ten brothers came to Egypt and bowed before Joseph to buy grain. They did not recognize him. Twenty years had passed. The last time they saw him, he was a seventeen-year-old boy in a pit. Now he was a man of power, dressed like an Egyptian, speaking through an interpreter.

But Joseph recognized them immediately.

"Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them." (Genesis 42:7)

He remembered the dreams. The dreams where his brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. The dreams they hated him for. And now, twenty years later, those brothers were standing before him with their faces to the ground, buying bread from the very one they had sold into slavery.

The dreams had come true.

Joseph tested his brothers. He accused them of being spies. He kept Simeon in prison and sent the others home with grain, telling them not to return unless they brought Benjamin with them. He wanted to see if they had changed — if they would abandon another brother the way they had abandoned him.

When they returned with Benjamin, Joseph revealed himself.

"Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Make everyone go out from me!' So no one stood with him

while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud." (Genesis 45:1–2)

He wept. Not with anger. Not with bitterness. He wept because the long separation was over. The family was reunited. And the God who had been with him through every dark hour had brought him to this moment.

"And Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph; does my father still live?' But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence." (Genesis 45:3)

They were terrified. They had sold him into slavery. They had lied to their father. They had assumed he was dead or lost forever. And now he stood before them with the power to destroy them all.

But Joseph did not destroy them.

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YOU MEANT EVIL, BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD

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Listen to what Joseph said to his brothers — because these words are the heart of the entire story.

"And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God." (Genesis 45:7–8)

The brothers were feeling guilty about selling Joseph into slavery. But here Joseph tells them that was God's plan and not theirs.

Not you who sent me here, but God.

Joseph did not deny what they had done. He did not pretend it was not evil. But he saw the hand of God working through their evil to accomplish something far greater than any of them could have imagined. God had sent Joseph ahead to save lives. To preserve the family. To make a way for the entire nation of Israel to survive the famine.

"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

You meant evil. God meant it for good.

In the end of time, people will ponder all the hateful things done against Jesus and He will reply, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

The cross was the greatest evil ever committed. The innocent Son of God was betrayed, mocked, tortured, and executed by the very people He came to save. But God turned that evil into the greatest good the world has ever known — the redemption of sinners, the defeat of death, the opening of the way back to the Father.

Joseph's story is a picture of that. A preview of what God would do through His own Son. Betrayed by brothers. Suffering innocently. Exalted to save the very ones who rejected him. And at the end, offering forgiveness instead of revenge.

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SECTION FOUR: THE FAMILY MOVES TO EGYPT

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After Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he told them to go back and bring their father and the entire household to Egypt.

*"God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine." (Genesis 45:9–11)*

Pharaoh himself confirmed the invitation.

*"Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land." (Genesis 45:18)*

When Jacob and his family came to Egypt, he did not just get some land. He got the best land in Egypt.

The brothers returned to Canaan and told Jacob that Joseph was alive. At first, Jacob could not believe it. His heart stood still. But when they showed him the carts Joseph had sent and told him everything Joseph had said, the spirit of Jacob revived.

*"Then Israel said, 'It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.'" (Genesis 45:28)*

Jacob took his entire household and traveled to Egypt. On the way, God spoke to him in a vision.

*"I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes." (Genesis 46:3–4)*

This is a very important promise from God because we know that after 400 years of living in Egypt, God delivered them back into the promised land during the Exodus.

God promised two things: I will make you a great nation in Egypt. And I will bring you back.

Both promises came true.

*"All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all. And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy." (Genesis 46:26–27)*

I mention these small numbers because 400 years later when they left Egypt they were about 2.5 million.

Think about that. Seventy people entered Egypt. Two and a half million left. God's promise to Abraham — that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand of the seashore — was being fulfilled right there in Egypt during a time that looked like exile.

God is always faithful to His word.

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THE BEST LAND IN EGYPT

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Joseph brought his family before Pharaoh, and Pharaoh confirmed what Joseph had already promised.

*"And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in their families." (Genesis 47:11–12)*

The land of Goshen. The best land in Egypt. Fertile. Abundant. Protected. While the famine raged everywhere else, Jacob's family had grain and livestock and everything they needed.

But the rest of Egypt was not so fortunate.

As the seven years of famine continued, things got very bad. The people of Egypt spent all their money buying grain from Joseph. When their money ran out, they traded their livestock. When the livestock was gone, they came to Joseph with one last offer.

*"They came to him the next year and said to him, 'We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh.'" (Genesis 47:18–19)*

Most of the time when we study people who have become slaves, we find that some evil ruler takes their country by force and also takes the people as slaves. In this story it is much different because it is the people themselves who are going to sell themselves into slavery.

They sold themselves. Willingly. Out of desperation. And Pharaoh became the owner of all the land in Egypt except the land belonging to the priests.

So this is how the tribes of Israel came to Egypt and received the best of everything and how the Egyptians sold themselves into slavery.

The Egyptians were weak because they just sat around and ate rich food. The tribes of Israel were growing stronger because they were working hard.

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## **SECTION FIVE: JOSEPH DIES, AND THE PROMISE REMAINS**

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Jacob lived in Egypt for seventeen years. Before he died, he blessed his sons and his grandsons — including Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, whom he adopted as his own. Then Jacob died, and Joseph buried him in Canaan as he had requested.

After Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers were afraid. They thought that Joseph had only been kind to them because their father was still alive. Now that Jacob was gone, they feared Joseph would take revenge.

*"Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, 'Behold, we are your servants.'"*  
(Genesis 50:18)

Again, the dream. The brothers bowing before Joseph. But this time they were not bowing to buy grain. They were bowing in fear, offering themselves as servants to save their lives.

Joseph's response is one of the most beautiful moments in all of Scripture.

*"Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.'"*  
(Genesis 50:19–20)

Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God?

Joseph had no intention of repaying evil for evil. He understood that vengeance belongs to God, not to him. He understood that his entire life — the betrayal, the slavery, the prison, the exaltation — had been orchestrated by God to accomplish something far greater than Joseph's personal comfort or justice.

God meant it for good. To save many people alive.

That is the verdict Joseph rendered over his own suffering. And that is the verdict that will one day be rendered over the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then Joseph lived to be 110 years old. He saw his great-grandchildren. He saw the nation of Israel growing and multiplying in Egypt. And before he died, he made one final statement that carried the weight of everything God had promised.

*"And Joseph said to his brethren, 'I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.'"* (Genesis 50:24)

Even though things were bad, Joseph promised the people that God had promised He would deliver them from slavery in Egypt and return them to the land He promised to Abraham — the land we now know as Israel, the promised land.

Joseph died. But the promise did not die. The promise was alive in the hearts of the people who remembered what God had said. And four hundred years later, that promise would come true.

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## **SECTION SIX: THE NEW PHARAOH AND THE PROMISE FULFILLED**

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Four hundred years is a long time. Generations came and went. The people who had known Joseph died. The people who remembered the famine died. And a new king rose in Egypt who had never heard the story of how Joseph saved the nation.

*"Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." (Exodus 1:8)*

He did not know how Joseph had saved them from the famine. He did not know that Egypt owed its survival to a Hebrew slave who became second-in-command. All he saw was a population of Israelites

growing larger and stronger with every generation.

*"And he said to his people, 'Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.'" (Exodus 1:9–10)*

So the Egyptians made slaves of the Israelites. They set taskmasters over them. They forced them to build cities and work in the fields with brutal labor. They tried to crush the people of God under the weight of oppression.

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

*"But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel." (Exodus 1:12)*

God's promise to Abraham could not be broken. God had said He would make a great nation. He said He would bring them out of Egypt. And no king, no Pharaoh, no amount of affliction could stop what God had set in motion.

At one point Pharaoh ordered all the male babies of Israel to be killed. But God always has a plan, and He provided a way that the baby Moses would be saved out of the river.

God always makes a way.

Moses grew up in the house of Pharaoh even though he was not an Egyptian. One day when Moses was watching how the Egyptians were beating his Jewish brothers, he got mad and killed an Egyptian. He then ran off into the desert for forty years until God called him back to Egypt to lead the tribes of Israel out of slavery. He was eighty years

old — the same age as me — when God called him back to Egypt.

*"Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them." (Exodus 2:23–25)*

God heard their groaning. God remembered His covenant. God acknowledged them.

How many promises does God keep?

All of them.

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## **THE PLAGUES AND THE EXODUS**

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Moses returned to Egypt and stood before Pharaoh with a simple demand: Let My people go.

*"Then they will heed your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, 'The LORD God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go." (Exodus 3:18–20)*

When Moses came back to Egypt, he demanded that Pharaoh let his people go. But just as God said, Pharaoh would not let the people go. So God used Moses to bring plague after plague on Egypt. The waters turned red. The land was covered with frogs and locusts and lice and flies.

Over and over again Moses told Pharaoh what would happen if he did not let the people go. But Pharaoh continued to say no.

Each time God would bring another plague on Egypt, the Pharaoh would get madder and madder and he would treat the slaves even worse. One time he even commanded that they make bricks but gave them no straw.

Moses cried out to God:

*"Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all." (Exodus 5:22–23)*

But God was not done yet with His plan.

*"But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, 'Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!' So Moses said, 'You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.'" (Exodus 10:27–29)*

So Moses, under the direction of God, brought one last plague on Egypt.

*"Then Moses said, 'Thus says the LORD: "About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; and all*

*the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again. But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."'''  
(Exodus 11:4–7)*

At midnight, the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.

*"So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead." (Exodus 12:30)*

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night and said:

*"Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the LORD as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also."  
(Exodus 12:31–32)*

So Pharaoh finally bowed to the will of God and let the tribes of Israel go free.

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## **THE RED SEA AND THE FINAL DELIVERANCE**

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There is however one more event that must happen before the people are truly free.

As you remember, the people had sold themselves to Pharaoh as his slaves, and while he was still alive they were still rightfully his slaves.

After Pharaoh let the people go and he realized that he did not have any more slaves, he decided to take his army and go after the slaves to bring them back.

God, however, had another plan. When Pharaoh tried to follow the slaves through the Red Sea, God drowned them all — Pharaoh and all his army.

Now with the Pharaoh dead and his son also dead, nobody in Egypt had any authority over the slaves and they were 100 percent free just as God promised.

God keeps His promises. Every one of them. He promised Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for four hundred years — and then He would bring them out with great possessions. He promised Jacob that He would go down to Egypt with him and bring him up again. He promised through Joseph that He would visit His people and deliver them.

And He did exactly what He said He would do.

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CONCLUSION: THE SON WHO SAVES

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We have walked through the entire story of Joseph together — from the coat of many colors to the moment his brothers bowed before him in Egypt, from the pit to the palace, from betrayal to reconciliation.

And at every turn, we have seen the same pattern repeating: a beloved son, hated by his brothers, cast into suffering he did not deserve, raised up by God to save the very ones who rejected him.

Joseph is a picture of Jesus. Not a perfect picture — Joseph was a sinner like the rest of us, and he needed a Savior just like we do. But the shape of his life, the movement of his story, the way God used his suffering to accomplish salvation — all of it points forward to the One who would come later and do the same thing on an eternal scale.

Jesus was the beloved Son of the Father. His brothers according to the flesh — the nation of Israel — rejected Him. They conspired against Him. They handed Him over to be crucified. And while He hung on the cross, they mocked Him and said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save."

But God raised Him from the dead. God seated Him at His own right hand. God gave Him a name above every name. And one day — just as Joseph's brothers bowed before him and recognized him as their savior — every knee will bow before Jesus and confess that He is Lord.

The dreams came true for Joseph. And the promises of God will come true for Jesus.

You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

That is the verdict of the cross. The greatest evil ever committed became the greatest good ever accomplished. The death of the innocent Son became the life of a dying world. The rejection of the King opened the door for rebels to be reconciled.

If people develop faith in the Word of God, the Word of God will lead them to Jesus. Joseph's story is part of that Word. And if we read it carefully, with eyes that are willing to see, we will find Jesus on every page — betrayed, suffering, exalted, saving.

The God who was with Joseph in the pit and in the prison is the same God who was with Jesus in the garden and on the cross. The God who raised Joseph to Pharaoh's right hand is the same God who raised Jesus from the dead. The God who turned Joseph's suffering into salvation for many is the same God who turned the cross into redemption for the world.

That is the message of Joseph's life.

And that is the message we carry into the world today: God meant it for good. To save many people alive.

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# **END OF A STUDY OF JOSEPH, A PICTURE OF JESUS**

By Robert J. Neral

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