

Pictures of Christ: Joseph

Jesus Christ

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Bible Text: Genesis 37:3

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When you look in the Scriptures, as we have over the past several weeks, at the various pictures that the Scriptures provide for us of Jesus Christ, no one provides a more complete picture of Jesus than the Old Testament character Joseph. I read one writer this week who had a list of over 100 different ways that Joseph was similar to Jesus, going through his whole life and the various things and affairs of his life, how they correlated and revealed something similar in the life of Jesus.

I have printed out for you seven. We won't try and take a hundred. That would take too long and we wouldn't even remember them. Seven might even be difficult to remember, but you can take the sheet with you, if you would like.

We will go down through a few of these instances from the life of Joseph and how they picture for us the Lord Jesus.

Just real quickly, Joseph was the son of Jacob. He was the son of his favorite wife Rachel, the first born of his favorite wife. Joseph.

The Scriptures describe him as Jacob's beloved son. Jacob made no bones about it. He loved Joseph more than any of his 11 other sons. He was his clear favorite. In fact, he made for him a coat of many colors in that day, an indication of his favor upon this young boy.

My favorite son, my beloved son he called him.

God the Father called Jesus his beloved Son. At his baptism when John the Baptist baptized the Lord Jesus in the River Jordan it says that after he came up out of the water that the Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove. And John the Baptist saw that and that is crucial. Why? Because God when he called John the Baptist to become the forerunner of Jesus said, "You will know the one when you see the Spirit of God come down upon him. You will know, then, that is the one."

And the Spirit of God came down upon Jesus as he came up out of the water out of baptism. And God spoke from heaven and he said, “This is my beloved Son. Hear him.”

Oh, they had the prophets. They had the writers of the books of the Old Testament. They had the Scriptures. But God said, “Hear him. Listen to him, what he has to say and how he interprets the Scripture, how he applies the Scripture, how he teaches from the Scripture. Listen to him.”

On two other occasions God spoke from heaven with the same words. “This is my beloved Son. Hear him.”

What nature does a son have? The nature of his father. He has the nature of his father. So when God said, “This is my beloved Son,” he declare him as more than like we sometimes term ourselves as children of God and we view all of mankind and humanity as children of God. They are God’s creation and they are part of humanity. Oh, but that wasn’t the way God described Jesus. You see, Jesus wasn’t just a mere created being like you and me. When God called him the Son of God, my Son, he had the nature of his Father making him God in the flesh, far different from you and me.

“This is my Son, carrying my image, my nature, one with me. Listen to him.”

So as Joseph was the beloved son of his father Jacob, so Jesus the Scriptures call the beloved Son of his Father.

“This is my beloved Son,” God said, “Listen to him.”

As Joseph matured and grew in age, he became a shepherd. He worked for his father. His father had multitudes of herds and flocks. He had cattle. He had sheep—a wealthy man. As Joseph grew up he assumed the responsibility, as his other brothers did in caring for the sheep. He worked in the family farm as a shepherd. He took care of the sheep out in the fields and knew what it was like to have those responsibilities on behalf of his father.

Jesus declare, “I am the good shepherd.”

Now the responsibility of a shepherd in that day and in our day is not too different, but we have many conveniences that the shepherds of that day did not enjoy. The shepherds of that day literally stood between their care of sheep, their responsibility and the enemy, whether it be people or animals. And so they, in a very real sense, laid their life on the line on behalf of their sheep.

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep.”

Jesus has a flock. He has sheep. He has those that he calls his own. He cares for them just like a shepherd would care for his flock. And Jesus calls to his sheep as a shepherd calls his sheep. And Jesus laid down his life on behalf of his sheep, on behalf of people just like you and like me.

As Joseph became a shepherd and tended the flocks on behalf of his father, so Jesus came as a shepherd to care for the sheep, those whom the Father gave to him, the responsibility that he laid down his life on their behalf.

We notice another interesting aspect of the life of Joseph. His brothers betrayed him and sold him. How could a brother do that? How could a brother have such hatred and animosity for his own flesh and blood to sell him to a wandering tribe who would take him away from them, in their thoughts, never to see him again? Such hatred and animosity boggles my mind. But they did that. They sold him. They hated him so because of his father's favor upon him and they despised the very ground on which he walked. And when they had the opportunity to get rid of him, they sold him, betraying him as their brother.

We read the same thing about the Lord Jesus. Not his physical brothers, but those close friends of his and close associates of his, one very close to him, a disciple, a follower of Christ, one who went with him throughout all of his ministry and saw all of the wondrous miracles and deeds of love and of kindness that Jesus did. One man that day Judas rose up and betrayed him, sold him to the enemy for 30 pieces of silver.

As Joseph felt the sting and the pain of his brother's rejection and denial and greed, so the Lord Jesus experienced the pain of rejection by those who said they loved him, those who followed him, those who traveled with him over three years of ministry up and down the course of the land of Israel. And when given the opportunity, betrayed him, sold him to the enemy.

When Joseph's brothers sold him to a wandering, nomadic tribe that they saw passing by, that tribe took Joseph in chains to Egypt. When they arrived in Egypt they sold him again. This time they sold him to a high ranking official in the land of Egypt, a man by the name of Potiphar and Joseph became Potiphar's slave. In a far land, distant from family, cut off from all that he knew and loved, in a strange land a slave, starting at the very bottom of the rung ladder.

When Jesus came, when he left the glories of heaven to come to earth and inhabit human flesh like ours, it says he came to be a servant. He came to be a slave. I want to read those verses. I listed them on mine, not on yours, but if you want to jot it down it is in Philippians chapter two where it describes how Jesus left his position and his rank with the Father and took upon himself human flesh and became a servant.

Philippians chapter two starting in verse number five we read this:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped...¹

¹ Philippians 2:5-6.

Let's stop there. Did you hear what that said/ what that is telling you is that Jesus did not have to grasp after Godness. He didn't have to grasp for it. He didn't have to fight for it. He was God. He was with the Father in the glorious splendors of heaven sharing eternity with his Father.

But notice what it says.

...but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...²

You will either bow the knee here or you will bow the knee there. You *will* bow the knee.

Now it is possible that you will bow the knee more than once, because if you come to Christ you may not physically get down on your hands and knees, but you will bow before him. You will recognize your nothingness. You will recognize your inability in your sinfulness and you will come before him humbling yourself before him, bowing before him, recognizing his superiority to you. And then you will do that often during your life until you die and then you will bow the knee again, because the Father will establish him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. And every knee will bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things beneath the earth.

Who is beneath the earth? Satan is beneath the earth. Who is going to bow the knee to Jesus? His enemy. Do you hear that, my friends? His enemy will bow the knee. He humbled himself.

“...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”³

Jesus, for a short time, 33 years, took upon himself human flesh, humbled himself, born of a virgin, a unique person, God in the flesh, fully, man, fully God and became a servant that he might become the Savior of sinners like you and like me.

Let's move on. Joseph resisted temptation. In the house of Potiphar he slowly grew in rank, because Potiphar recognized his tremendous skills and abilities and God blessed him in whatever he did. And slowly Joseph assumed greater and greater responsibility until Potiphar gave him the responsibility of his whole house, everything in his house, everything of his possessions, everything that belonged to him he gave the responsibility of managing those things to Joseph.

One day as Joseph worked in the house of Potiphar, Potiphar's wife saw him and said, “Man, there is a good looking hunk of man. I want him. I want him to come and lie with

² Philippians 2:6-10.

³ Philippians 2:11.

me and have sex with me. This is a tremendous young man.” And she pursued him and pursued him begging him, pleading with him day after day after day. “Come and lie with me.”

Do you realize what kind of temptation that is? Some of us don’t get past the first day. Joseph resisted daily the temptation. And finally she came to him and grabbed him and said, “Come and lie with me.” And he fled leaving behind his coat.

She took the coat and said, “See that man that you brought in here to overlook you affairs? That man wanted to rape me and I screamed and he fled.”

Well, Joseph resisted temptation. Not easy. Imagine his loneliness. Imagine the physical temptations of being drawn to a beautiful woman. He resisted. No, no. I will not dishonor God. It is against God’s law. I will not do that.

We read that Jesus also resisted temptation. After his baptism the Scriptures tell us very clearly that the Spirit of God drove Jesus in the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He didn’t come by mistake. It came purposefully. God drove him by his Holy Spirit out into the wilderness to be tested by the devil it says 40 days and 40 nights without food or drink during those days. And Satan came at him and tempted him of all of the kinds of temptations that he could throw at Jesus, hunger.

“You know, you could turn these stones into bread if you really were the Son of God.”

Temptation of fame and popularity and authority.

“You know, if you would just bow down to me, I will give you all of these kingdoms. These will all be yours.”

And all the ways that the devil tempted him and Jesus said, “No. It is written. It is written. It is written.”

And you notice how Joseph resisted the temptation that came at him.

“I will not dishonor God by committing sin with you.”

And Jesus himself when tempted by the devil used the Scriptures that I will not dishonor God. In fact, you must honor me and you must honor God and him alone. He resisted temptation.

Well, Joseph not only knew the pain and suffering of servitude and rejection by his brothers, but he also knew the pain of unjust condemnation. For when Potiphar’s wife saw that Joseph had fled from her presence and left his coat, her thoughts ran thusly.

“I will show you.”

And took revenge against him and lied about him, deceived her husband and those in the house. And when Potiphar came home and heard the story from his wife and the others in the house, he took Joseph and without even a trial, without any kind of hearing that we have recorded in Scripture or in history, threw him in prison.

Now just one little thing I would like to mention here. He could have had him killed for the accusation made against him by his wife. But he simply sent him to prison, bad enough, harsh enough in those days. You may picture the prisons that we see on the news in our day of cells, yes, and a cot and a sink and a toilet and bars over the windows and over the doors and certainly a rugged life to live. That doesn't come anywhere near the description of that day. It was a dungeon below ground, damp, dark, no escape. Unjustly condemned.

When Jesus stood before King Herod and then before Pilate and they passed judgment upon him, Pilate himself even said, "Why do you want to crucify him? I don't see anything wrong in him. He has done no wrong."

But then he committed him to their hands that they might crucify him. I do not practice law. I do not have a law degree. So I can not speak from the authority of a legal profession training experience, but I have read those who do have that as their background and have listed the multitude of ways in which the trial of Jesus violated numerous fair trial practices. No witnesses, condemned unjustly, crucified on a cross for sins he did not commit, condemned unjustly.

The last picture we will examine just briefly. Joseph ultimately became the savior of his world. While in prison he interpreted the dreams of two men who worked for the pharaoh. And both of those came true. One of them, in an untimely fashion, he died at the hand of the Pharaoh. The other one resumed his position with the pharaoh. And as time passed, pharaoh had a series of dreams that he could not understand. And he came to his wise counselors and he said, "What do these dreams mean?" They could not interpret them.

Then the one who had his dream interpreted by Joseph and it came true said, "Oh, wait a minute. Several years ago when I was in prison there was a man there by the name of Joseph who interpreted my dream and the dream of my friend and both of the dreams came true. Maybe he can interpret your dream."

So the pharaoh went and sent for Joseph and brought him before him and told him his dreams and Joseph, being the wise, godly man said, "I don't interpret dreams. God gives the interpretation of dreams. You tell me your dreams and God will give the interpretation of it."

So the pharaoh told him his dreams and his dreams foretold of seven years of tremendous bounty followed by seven years of horrific famine. And Joseph, again, the wise young man said, "You know, Pharaoh, you really need somebody that you can put in charge of all of this, hint, hint, hint, hint. You really need someone who is wise and capable to

manage these affairs and make sure that during the good years you save up the excess for the years of famine that people not die and perish.”

Well pharaoh must have heard Joseph’s record of in the house of Potiphar, because Potiphar worked for the pharaoh. And he certainly heard of his service in prison, because in the dungeon, again, God blessed him and he progressed, if you can call it progressing up the ladder while in prison, but became successful in the prison that the head of the prison put him in charge of all of the prison.

And so the pharaoh chose Joseph and said, “I don’t know anybody more capable of handling all of these affairs than you, Joseph. I will put you in charge of all things, everything except me. I will remain in my position of authority above you, but everything else is in your hand.”

Do you think he thought of revenge? Do you think he thought of Potiphar’s wife? Do you think he thought of Potiphar? We don’t know. But he assumed the responsibility of all of the land. And it tells us and describes for us that as the famine began and as it increased, people from all the nations all around heard that there was food in Egypt and they came down to Egypt to get food and guess who they had to meet before they could get food? Joseph. Joseph had charge of it all. And through Joseph God provided for all of the nations of that day, a savior for not only the children of Abraham, his blood relation, but for all of the other nations as well.

The Scriptures describe for us the Lord Jesus as more than a Savior like Joseph, the Savior of sinners like you and me. Jesus said, “God loved the world in such a way that he gave his only Son, me, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. I am come not to condemn the world, but that the world through me might have life. Jesus came as a servant, as God in the flesh that he might die on the cross and pay the penalty of sin that your sins and my sins and people like you and like me, we deserve that death. But he died on behalf of people like you and like me and became a Savior that all who call upon him and come to him in faith will be saved. He became a Savior.

Jesus himself said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father, but by me.”

Well, as we look at these references and pictures from the life of Joseph and how they describe for us and picture for us the Lord Jesus, we also get a glimpse into the character of God and the nature of God. We find God revealed to us as sovereign, absolutely sovereign over everything. Nothing left out of his control, in charge of everything, in charge of people. The Scriptures describe for us Joseph in dealing with his brothers when they came for food, he recognized them and ultimately he revealed to them who he was, their brother whom they had sold as a slave. And do you know how he described that to them? He said, “You didn’t send me here. You mean it for evil, but God sent me here for good that through me he might save many people.”

The sovereignty of God, it was a sovereign God who moved upon Jacob to send Joseph to find his brothers who threw him in a pit, who sold him to the traders, who took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar and Potiphar threw him in prison and from prison he rose to second in command in Egypt. How did that happen? It didn't happen through positive thinking. It didn't happen by somehow working hard and diligently. God made that happen through working with people, through events and ultimately bringing great abundance and then followed by great famine. Who brought those? God did. God was in charge of those. Who was it that moved upon all the nations to come down to Egypt to find food dispensed under the control and authority of Joseph whom he had appointed and chosen? God did. God is sovereign over all things. He is sovereign over weather. He is sovereign over events. He is sovereign over people. He is sovereign over you. And he is sovereign over me. That is why we need to bow the knee.

We also see God revealed to us as exclusive. There is no other God. In that day—not unlike our day—every culture had its own god. And you go throughout our nations today, throughout the world. Every culture has its own god. In that day they had multitudes of gods, a god or a specific territory geographically, gods over crops. There was a god for wheat. There was a god for corn. There was a god for animals. There were fertility gods.

In his sovereignty God showed himself exclusively God. There is no other. He made a show and a display of them openly and showed himself in charge of all things, not the highest of gods like many tempt to place him.

“Oh, he is just the best god.”

No, the only God. Not just one of many gods, but the only God. Not just one that is the God of our nation—oh, that he were the God of our nation—but the only God.

He describes himself through the prophet Isaiah, “I alone am God. There is none like me and I do all my pleasure. There is no one who can resist my will. I do all my pleasure.”

That, my friends, describes God. Anything other than that you cannot rightly call God. Only God can say that.

And through the life of Joseph we see God revealing himself.

Well, what do you think the people of Moses' day concluded as they read this account that he provided for them? Well, they certainly got a picture of how God chooses a leader and the kind of characteristics and features he wants in a leader. And, ultimately, throughout the rest of Scripture God reveals progressively more and more clearly this one who was to come to be the Savior that he had promised to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the one who would come who would crush the head of the serpent. And we find in Joseph description upon description of this one.

We also find that through these pictures, God reveals how it is that people like you and I come to know God. He provides a Savior.

Now throughout all of the Old Testament we find them as humans, kings, prophets, judges, men like Joseph whom God elevates and puts in position to save his people. All of them a picture foretelling of this Savior that God had promised to Adam and Eve who was yet to come and every picture in the Old Testament including all of these from Joseph and all of hundred different ways in which he pictured Jesus we find fulfilled completely in only one person in history, Jesus, only one, only one, every one of them without fail to the minutest detail.

What does that mean to you and me? How do these things correlate to you and me?

These events took place centuries ago. How do they relate to you and me? They relate in this fashion. Because God has revealed to us through Joseph pictures of his Savior the Lord Jesus and their complete fulfillment not just of Joseph, but of all of the pictures in the totality of Scripture, fulfilled in one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore, you and I must reject all other notions of Jesus other than the ones that he has revealed in his Word. And we must bow the knee to him, because he alone is God and he is the one whom the Father has sent to us to become a servant that he might become ultimately then a Savior of sinners like you and me.

There is a commercial. Maybe you have seen it, a picture advertising oil filters for cars by Farm the filter people. And it was a mechanic that was tearing down a car that had become destroyed because the person didn't take care of his car by replacing the filter on the engine frequently enough. And the line of the commercial says this. The mechanic says—he lifts up the filter and he says, "You know, pay me now or you will pay me later."

Jesus says, "You must bow the knee to me. You can either do it now or you will do it later. And at that later time here is the difference. Now if you bow the knee to him and trust his provision in Jesus Christ, you will now begin to experience his eternal life within you. And at that day when you join the hordes of history and bow the knee, when you have finished bowing the knee you will hear him say, "Come and join me and enter into my kingdom."

Those who bow the knee to him on that day for the first time will not hear those words. He will say to them, "Be gone from me. I cast you into outer darkness. I never knew you."

You can bow the knee now or for sure later. I pray you will bow the knee now. Call upon Jesus. Trust him.

You say, "Oh, I don't understand it all."

That is why it is called faith. That is why it is called trust, because you will never understand it all. Understand simply that the Father sent him to be the Savior of people like you and like me. And Jesus himself said, "Every one who comes to me, I will not cast out and whoever believes upon me shall have eternal life." That is all you need to know. You need him. He has made provision for people like you. Trust him.

I pray that you will.

Let's close with a word of prayer.