



## Genesis 37-50

# Messiah ben Joseph

Joseph was the first born son of Rachael, Jacob's favorite wife. Jacob loved Rachael, but married Leah through the deception of her father (Genesis 29).

There was already a house of siblings by the time Joseph arrived, sons of Jacob and Leah. The antagonism of being the favored son grew into outright hate by the time he was a teenager. One day Joseph suggested the idea that in a dream he saw them along with his father and mother bowing down to him! When he was seventeen Jacob sent Joseph to the fields to check on his brothers. They saw him coming and determined to kill him. His oldest brother Reuben interceded and threw him in a pit hoping to rescue him later. While he was gone the other brothers saw an Ishmaelite caravan passing by and sold Joseph as slave to them. They killed a goat, dipped Joseph's coat in blood and told their father that they had found the blood-soaked coat. They let him conclude that a wild animal had killed his favorite son.

Ancient rabbis saw in Joseph a type of the coming of the Messiah. They distinguished the difference between the reigning sovereign king Messiah and the suffering Messiah. The future sovereign king they called Messiah ben David, and the suffering Messiah they called Messiah ben Joseph. Many noted scholars have drawn the comparisons between the life of Joseph and Jesus the Messiah. Without getting fanciful and flighty let's examine some highlights and comparisons of these two outstanding men.

- **Joseph and Jesus were both loved by their fathers.**

Genesis 37:3 says, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons . . ." Jacob's love for Joseph is demonstrated overwhelming in his grieving of his "dead" son.

On three occasions in the life of Jesus there was the clear testimony of the Heavenly Father's love for His Son. The Father declares Jesus to be His Son. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus testified to that love saying, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). In John 5:20 Jesus said, "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel."

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## **Joseph and Jesus were both hated by their brothers.**

Regarding Joseph Moses wrote, "And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms" (Genesis 37:4). This hatred provoked their evil plan to kill him.

Jesus came unto His own and His own rejected Him. Jesus observed the following behavior toward him by the members of His own nation. He said, "He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause " (John 15:23-25). On another occasion, while Jesus was teaching, someone said, "Look, your brothers and sisters and mother have come for you." Jesus responded with a gesture by saying those who were His true mother, brothers and sisters were those who listened to Him and believed His words. His own brothers in the flesh did not believe in Him until after He was raised from the dead.

- **Joseph and Jesus were both conspired upon by their enemies to be put to death.**

The brothers of Joseph saw him approaching from a distance and "before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death" (Genesis 37:18).

You don't read very long into the Gospel accounts until you encounter the enemies of Jesus seeking to put Him to death. After watching Jesus heal on the Sabbath his enemies, "the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6).

Although Joseph was not put to death, he was accounted for dead by his father. He was presumed dead based upon the news from his brothers and the blood stained robe. They told their father, "We have found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." Joseph examined it, and said, "It is my son's tunic." Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. It was taken for granted by his father that Joseph was dead.

Jesus, on the other hand, actually died and was buried. History proves this fact. The historian wrote: "And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. . . At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left" (Matthew 27:35, 37). Roman soldiers certified to Pilate that Jesus was actually dead before he would release the body for proper burial (Mark 15:44-45). Roman soldiers guarded the entrance to the tomb. No man, dead or alive, could have entered or left that tomb without their knowledge of it.

- **Jesus and Joseph were both recognized after their deaths.**

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Joseph was understood to be dead for 21 years, and when Joseph's brothers went to Egypt looking for food, he was waiting for them. However, he was not waiting for vengeance, but in anticipation to give them food and deliver them from their famine. He was their savior after 21 years of being assumed dead.

Jesus' own brothers and members of the family of Israel recognized Him, after His resurrection from the dead. "They saw Him and worshiped Him." Two of His disciples recognized Him on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:31-39). Thomas emphatically declared that he would not believe in the resurrection until he saw Jesus with his own eyes, and put his hands into the nail prints and reached into His side. That very same Thomas stood in the physical presence of Jesus and exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:24-31).

Another agnostic gave his testimony after seeing Jesus. "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also" (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). The implication is, if you don't believe me, ask these witnesses. Most of them were still alive at the time Paul was writing his letter to the Corinthians.

Many more comparisons can be made, but hopefully these will whet your spiritual appetite. With the Apostle Peter we can proclaim, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The apostle Paul tells us why the innocent sufferer had to die. "He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). It reminds us of the suffering predicted by the Hebrew prophet Isaiah when he wrote, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." (Isaiah 53:4-6).

Jesus Christ was the innocent sufferer dying for the guilty. It was not because He had committed some crime or was paying for His own sins. He never experienced personal sins. He died as a substitute on the cross to pay our sin debt. The wages of sin is death . . . (Romans 6:23a). But this sufferer died to give life eternal. Yes, The wages of sins is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23). God was satisfied in the innocent suffering of His Son. He was the lamb that takes away the sin of the world. His suffering enabled Him to become our Savior. He now sustains us with the bread of eternal life every day.

It is all of grace. We love Him, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). What is your response to such an outpouring of love? When God came to us in the person of His Son, our response was to kill Him. But He kept on coming. There is no greater love than this. There is no greater suffering servant than our great God and Savior!

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