



CHRISTADELPHIAN ISOLATION LEAGUE

BIBLE STUDY

23rd May 2016

SECTION LEADER:

BROTHER COLIN WALTON, 8 QUEENS AVENUE, SHIRLEY, SOLIHULL, WEST MIDLANDS, B90 2NT, ENGLAND

Joseph, Judah and Jesus – the Wonder of Allegories!

(Part 3 of 3)

We finished Part 2 showing how Judah in Genesis 38 is an allegory of the life of Judas Iscariot. We now continue to look at the life of Joseph and once more the allegory continues. We will see how the rest of the life of Joseph covers the temptations of Christ, his sacrifice, his time in heaven, his return, the final judgement of the world and the uniting of Jesus with the saints. All this is there in Genesis 40 to 48.

We cannot in just two pages cover every point but here are some of the key things.

In Genesis 39 we read of Joseph in Egypt. He ends up working for Potiphar who is captain of the guard. During this period we learn that “the LORD was with [Joseph], and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand” (verse 3). Joseph “found grace” in the eyes of Potiphar. This is similar to Jesus as he grew up in the world (Egypt). For we read: “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). But in Egypt Joseph was put under severe temptation and testing. Potiphar’s wife tried everything she could to tempt Joseph to sleep with her. But Joseph overcame those tests. He asks: “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). This is so similar to the testing that Jesus went through – not only in the wilderness but throughout his whole life. Jesus (like Joseph in this incident) overcame all temptations – he did not succumb during his time in Egypt (the world) even once. But Joseph although innocent was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife of doing the very thing she wanted him to do! This is precisely like Christ. The people wanted him to be king and lead a rebellion against Rome but when he refused they accused him of elevating himself as the Son of God – and he was crucified with that charge. But just as Joseph was innocent of all charges, so was Jesus.

So who is Potiphar’s wife in this allegory? She must represent the Jewish leaders and High Priest who bought the false accusations against him (see John 18:29-30). So who might Potiphar be? Well Potiphar was the ruler of his wife and of Joseph. It could be in this case that Potiphar is symbolic of Pontius Pilate. For it was to Pontius Pilate that the High Priest made the accusations. It was Pontius Pilate who then allowed Christ to be crucified, even though he washed his hands of it.

In Chapter 39 Joseph is then thrown into prison. It was actually a prison within Potiphar’s own home. We know this because in 40:3 we read that Joseph was in the in the prison in the house of the captain of the guard. The captain of the guard was Potiphar himself, so Potiphar owned the prison into which Joseph was thrown.

There were two men in prison with Joseph, one a baker who had a dream about bread, and the other a butler who had a dream about wine. The baker’s dream was of three baskets which represented three days (see Genesis 40:18). After three days the baker would lose his life. The butler saw three vine branches which also represented three days. After three days the butler would regain his life. This time in prison is an allegory of the time Christ spent in the tomb. Jesus was there for three days. We remember his sacrifice each week in bread and wine. The bread is symbolic of flesh – of human weakness and human works. Flesh and its works could not inherently save and hence the baker died.

But the wine is symbolic of sacrifice and of a life poured out. A perfect sacrifice could save, hence the butler living, being raised again out of the prison to life again. “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31). 1Corinthians 10:16 speaks to us of the bread and wine we take each week to remember the sacrifice of our Lord.

But now we come to a really interesting point. For two thousand years, groups of believers have remembered Christ in the bread and wine. In the life of Joseph we read: “It came to pass at the end of two full years ...” (Genesis 41:1). Joseph had to wait two full years to become ruler of the whole of Egypt. Jesus has had to wait a full two thousand years to become ruler of the world (Egypt), therefore the two full years are symbolic of the two thousand years that have gone by.

So what happened to Joseph at the end of the two full years? He was summoned by Pharaoh to interpret dreams that he had had. The dreams were about two seven-year periods: seven years of prosperity and seven years of famine. The final period of seven years of famine was going to bring Egypt to its knees. It was Joseph who was going to save Egypt.

It is worth noting some key points concerning the end of the seven-year period of tribulation and the role Joseph played. We read that at the end of the seven years, “money failed” (see Genesis 47:15-16). Egypt ended up totally bankrupt – utter financial collapse – and was forced to turn to Joseph: “We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands” (v18). They then say: “Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh” (v19). So in complete and utter desperation the people of Egypt offer to sell themselves and their land to Joseph. And so: “Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh’s” (v20). This is remarkable. The whole of Egypt was actually owned by Pharaoh at the end of the time of tribulation. The people handed over their lands in return for life. Joseph acted as Pharaoh’s right-hand man. We read Pharaoh’s proclamation: “Thou [Joseph] shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt” (Genesis 41:40-41).

Now compare all this to Jesus who returns after two thousand years. The whole world equates to Egypt. The world will completely collapse financially (see Isaiah 24:1-3). The people of the world will have no option but to turn to Jesus. They will hand over their lands so that the whole world will eventually become one kingdom – God’s kingdom. “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

Pharaoh is symbolic of God who has handed all judgement to His Son. Joseph, as we have said, is symbolic of Christ. We read of him: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22).

What is even more amazing in this allegory is what happens next: “The land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh” (Genesis 47:22). So Joseph did not buy the land of the priests. In fact the priests were given land. In the coming kingdom we are to be kings and priests (see Revelation 5:10). We will be assigned lands and cities to look after: “Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities” (Luke 19:17).

Of course there is one important part of the allegory we have missed out – that is the reuniting of Joseph with his brothers. Joseph had been sent into slavery into Egypt at their hand. But now here is Joseph as ruler of the whole of Egypt! What an amazing turn-around from slave to king; from falsely accused to righteous judge. Imagine the emotion when Joseph was finally revealed to his brothers. Imagine the emotion of the Jews when they finally realize and understand that Jesus really is the Messiah. “And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them” (Genesis 45:14-15); so many tears, so many regrets, but also, so much joy at this incredible uniting.

And of course our emotion will be surely the same. For we in our lives have all too often acted like Joseph’s brothers. We also have betrayed our Lord. We have sold him into slavery by the sin we have committed. We do not deserve a place as a priest in his kingdom – but by God’s grace we will receive just that. The tears will finally be tears of joy when the tribulations, terrors and temptations of the world are over and our King rules over all of Egypt in glory. The Sun of righteousness will rule for ever and we as his brothers like stars will bow before him. Even so come Lord Jesus.

Brother Andrew Walton (Tewkesbury) 23.05.16