

The Story of Joseph

A Prequel to the Exodus

The story of Joseph is the continuing story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The story of Joseph is really and essential foundational stone to the story of Moses and the Exodus. Without it we have no continuity and no way of seeing that God is *weaving all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.* (Romans 8:28) In fact, Joseph's faith conclusion to the whole matter of his brother's betrayal was that God was in control weaving the good, the bad and the ugly together for their good and God's glory.

Genesis 50:20

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

NKJV

"But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Let's review a little of the history leading up to this story. (See *the Bible Project video*) You will find it in Genesis 37, 39-40. Chapter 38 isn't about Joseph but is inserted to give us a feeling about the sinfulness of his brothers.

- What are some questions and curious things in the story that come to mind?
- Who are the main characters?
- Who do you like most? Who do you like least?
- Why do we need to know the sons of Jacob, or the 12 Tribes of Israel?
- Is it important? If not, why is it repeated so often throughout the story?
- All men of God have personal flaws and failures – what were Joseph's flaws?
- Why did Jacob give one son a coat of many colors? Was this favoritism? Was it fair?
- What do you think about Joseph telling his brothers about his dreams?
- Why do you think Jacob kept thinking about his dreams? What prophecy did he remember?
- How old was Joseph when he was sold to the caravan?
- How long was Joseph in prison in Egypt?
- How long was he in Egypt before his brothers arrived?
- Why do you think Joseph asked to keep Benjamin behind?
- How did you feel when you read about Joseph revealing himself to his brothers?
- How long did Jacob live in Egypt?
- How long did Joseph live in Egypt?
- How old was Joseph when he died?
- Where was he buried and what was his dying request?
- Have we missed any details that would help us narrate the story?
- Who would you be in this story? Why?

Did you know or remember that God told Abraham that his family would be 400 years in Egypt?

Read Genesis 15:13 *And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;*

Do you have other questions? What are they?

Contend for the Faith Once Delivered to the Saints

It hardly seems necessary to point out that the Bible is under attack by a world of rationalism and naturalism. Even in the church there is a de-emphasis on the miracles of the Bible as being hard to believe. Attempts are being made in scholarship to debunk the miraculous stories of the Scriptures in favor of a more rationalistic and scientific approach. It doesn't seem to matter whether it is Creation, The Flood, The Exodus, Jonah, David, or even Jesus, all are being minimized as non-factual stories sown together to make a narrative for Israel to claim her legitimacy.

In recent years it seems that the story of the Exodus is under particular scrutiny. Just search the Internet and you will find myriads of blogs, articles, and commentaries that attempt to disprove there ever was an exodus of Jews from Egypt. The question before every Bible believing Christian or Jew is, "Does it matter?" Does it matter that Jesus rose from the dead? Does it matter that David killed Goliath with a sling and a stone? Does it matter whether creation took place in seven days or seven billion years? Does it matter if there really was a worldwide flood that annihilated all living things except those in the Ark? Does it matter if Jonah was swallowed by a whale and survived three days in its belly?

The answer should be a resounding, "Yes! Of course it matters!" If the Word of God cannot be trusted in matters of factual stories can we rely on its commandments and promises? The Apostle Paul said it best in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 (*I have added the **If...**(then) for emphasis.*)

*"**But if** it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, **(then)** how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? **If there is no** resurrection of the dead, **(then)** not even Christ has been raised. And **if Christ has not been raised**, **(then)** our preaching is useless and **(then)** so is your faith. More than that, we are **then** found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him **if** in fact **(then)** the dead are not raised. **For if the dead are not raised**, **(then)** Christ has not been raised either. And **if Christ has not been raised**, **(then)** your faith is futile; **(then)** you are still in your sins. **(then)** those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. **If only for this life** we have hope in Christ, **(then)** we are to be pitied more than all men."*

As we take on the story of the Exodus we need to at least attempt to reconcile the data of archeological finds and ancient documents to the story of the Bible, keeping in mind that *archeology is an imperfect science that is never complete, and dates are attempts to reconcile people and events in their proper sequence.* When it comes to the Exodus there are at least ten biblical facts that are being attacked.

1. Joseph did not really play a role as second in command to Pharaoh.
2. Moses wasn't raised in Pharaoh's household.
3. The plagues of Egypt and undocumented therefore doubtful.
4. There is no evidence that Pharaoh's first born died.
5. The Passover is a fable.
6. There could not have been 2 million people wandering in the wilds for 40 years.
7. The pillar of fire and the cloud by day are all figments of imaginative minds.
8. Manna from heaven every day for 40 years is just not reasonable.
9. The crossing of the Red Sea as the Bible describes it is fiction.
10. Moses did not receive 10 Commandments written by the finger of God.

If these facts don't matter (as some liberal theologians propose) then all the truth of God's word can and should be called into question. It DOES MATTER that God's Word is true! To admit the Bible is not true is to realize that there are not moral laws and there is no life after death and no judgment to come.

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Jude 1:3-4

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

1 Timothy 6:20-21

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.

Deuteronomy 29:29

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Conclusion:

So then our task is not just to read the stories and believe them, but also to...

- 1) "earnestly defend the faith once delivered to the saints"
- 2) "be ready to give an answer to every man who asks a reason of the hope that is in us."
- 3) "be wary of "opposing scientific knowledge" that is nothing more than man's theories"
- 4) "to realize that we do not have all the answers. Some things will only be known in heaven."

Our task then is not to prove the Exodus Story but to present reasoned arguments in favor of it.

There isn't a miracle in the Bible that science doesn't reject. Think about that. They oppose anything supernatural, anything that cannot be explained by natural causes and laws of physics. Yet science and humanism accepts a lot of things by faith. They accept evolution by faith. They accept the age of the earth and the age of the universe by faith. You yourself cannot prove the existence of atoms, germs, or viruses. At one time science and medical doctors refused to believe in germs and bacteria, and they persecuted and imprisoned *Ignaz Semmelweis* when he proposed that surgeons wash their hands after working on cadavers, and not go directly to delivering babies. Miasma (vapors, bad air) was the prominent theory of the transmission of disease.

Science is constantly changing its beliefs and theories, yet the Bible stands firm for all time. Just as the Lord "changes not" so the Word of God does not change because of men's ideas of science, be it biology, history, archeology, physics or medicine.