

Joseph of Egypt: Foreshadow of Christ

Much of Genesis 37–50 is dedicated to the narrative of Joseph of Egypt; in fact, more chapters and verses in Genesis pertain to Joseph than to any other character in that book, including prominent figures like Adam, Eve, Abraham, and Sarah.

These chapters reveal specific incidents in Joseph’s life, beginning with Joseph as a seventeen-year-old shepherd tending flocks with his brothers. On that occasion, the text explains that Israel “made him a coat of many colors” and that his brothers “hated him” (Gen. 37:4). So great was their hatred that they devised a plan wherein Joseph was stripped of this special garment and sold as a common slave for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. 37:28). His purchasers then took him to Egypt, where his experiences

continued. Years passed, and eventually Joseph turned thirty years old, a pivotal time in the life of this prophet.

These experiences and many others paralleled similar instances in the life of Jesus Christ, making Joseph a type and shadow, or similitude, of Jesus Christ. Jesus, too, was a “good shepherd” (John 10:11–15), who cared for His Father’s sheep. Jesus began His ministry at thirty years of age. Jesus’s brethren and fellow mortals hated and persecuted Him. They devised evil plans against Him, and eventually He too, like Joseph of old, was sold for the price of a slave. Shortly before Jesus’s death, He was stripped of His garment. As the chart indicates, the list of parallels between the lives of Joseph and Jesus is both extensive and significant.

Joseph	Jesus
Jacob “loved Joseph more than all his children” (Gen. 37:3).	Christ is the “beloved son” (Matt. 3:17).
Was given the name <i>Zaphnath-paaneah</i> (Gen. 41:45).	Was given the name <i>Christ</i> .
A shepherd (Gen. 37:12–16; 46:32).	The “good shepherd” (John 10:11–15).
Was promised a future sovereignty (Gen. 37:9–11).	Was promised a future sovereignty (Isa. 9:6–7).
Granted rule over all except the Pharaoh (Gen. 41:40).	Granted ruler over all (1 Pet. 3:22).
His brothers “conspired against him to slay him” (Gen. 37:18).	The rulers conspired to slay Him (Matt. 26:3–4; John 5:16; 11:49–53).
Joseph’s brothers “stripped Joseph” of his garments (Gen. 37:23).	Soldiers took Jesus’s garments (John 19:23–24).

Joseph	Jesus
Joseph's brothers betrayed him (Gen. 37:27).	Jesus was betrayed (John 18:28–40).
Imprisoned (Gen. 39:20).	Imprisoned (Matt. 26:57; John 18:13–15).
Joseph's family eventually sought forgiveness of him.	Many seek forgiveness of Jesus Christ.
Judah recommended selling him (Gen. 37:26–27).	Judas [Greek for <i>Judah</i>] betrayed Him for money (Matt. 26:14–16).
Garment dipped in the blood of goats (Gen. 37:31).	Garment stained with blood (Luke 22:44; Isa. 63:1; Rev. 19:13).
Sold for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. 37:26–28).	Sold for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15).
Sold to Potiphar, an officer of the Pharaoh (Gen. 37:36; 39:1).	Delivered to Pontius Pilate, a governor of the Roman emperor (Matt. 27:2).
God was with him (Gen. 39:2; Acts 7:9).	God was with Him (Luke 2:40; John 8:29; 16:32).
Was tempted with great sin but refused (Gen. 39:7–12).	Was tempted with great sin but refused (Matt. 4:1–11).
Revealed things of future (Gen. 50:24–26).	Revealed the future (Matt. 24).
Was falsely accused (Gen. 39:13–19).	Was falsely accused (Matt. 26:59–61).
Source of great knowledge to those of his day.	Source of great knowledge to all.
The Pharaoh arrayed Joseph in a ruler's vestments (Gen. 41:42–43).	Soldiers dressed Jesus as a king as they "mocked him" (Matt. 27:28–31).
Was thirty years old when he served in the Pharaoh's court (Gen. 41:38–46).	Was thirty years old when He began to minister (Luke 3:23).
Joseph's brothers bowed to him (Gen. 42:6; 43:26, 28).	All will bow to Jesus Christ: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. 2:10–11).
Joseph stated, "God did send me . . . to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5, 7).	God sent Jesus so that "whosoever believeth in him should . . . have everlasting life" (John 3:16).
Joseph gave bread to his family (Gen. 47:12–13).	Jesus, "the true bread" (John 6:32–35), gave bread to His disciples (Matt. 14:15–21; 15:32–38).